



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.
1930 Highway 33, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

July 3, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

Tomorrow many of us will mark Independence Day with fireworks, cookouts, family gatherings, and music. While not a church holiday, it is a day to think about what independence and the promise of freedom mean for us who profess interdependence as a core value. While we will celebrate the birthday of our nation, as Lutheran Christians, we do not equate the freedom we have in Christ with any system of government or political affiliation. We show our love for our country by waving flags, volunteering in our communities, voting in elections, running for public office, and advocating for just policies but we don't conflate these activities of civic life with our faith in and allegiance to Jesus Christ. Tomorrow may be a good day to bear witness to the God who transcends boundaries to embrace the entire world with love.

What follows are some updates about our life together.

Generosity

Thank you for your ongoing generosity (another core value of our synod). Your contributions through mission support allow us to carry out the ministries we agreed on when approving our 2023 spending plan. While receipts are currently behind projections based on your commitments, we are thankful for the continued and regular giving we have received.

Because of your generosity, we were able to award summer program grants to 11 congregations totaling \$10,000. This is "on the ground" ministry that is making a positive difference in the lives of our neighbors and communities. Look for pictures and stories of how these grants are being used in future Jersey Jottings.

Our Jehu Jones Mission Fund, which is a result of your generosity for the bishop's challenge in 2021-22, has awarded grants to leaders of African descent totaling more than \$26,000. These grant recipients will be attending the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) Assembly in Atlanta in July with the goal of establishing an ADLA chapter in NJ. Because of these grants, I believe we will have the largest contingent of any synod in attendance!

We are in Phase 3 of our Excellence in Ministry, Unleashed (EMU) initiative. EMU is the result of a matching grant between the Lily Foundation and our synod. In phase 3, EMU is continuing to focus on stewardship education and financial literacy with the addition of helping congregations imagine new ministry opportunities. So far this year, EMU has given \$39,000 in new ministry seed grants with more to come. I can't wait to see how these grants grow into expanded ways of sharing the gospel.

Wurffel College Scholarship applications were due July 1 with awards being announced later this month. These scholarships are funded by a legacy gift from Karl, John, and Elizabeth Wurffel many years ago. This is one example of the enduring generosity of faithful church members whose planned gift continues to reap benefits for generations beyond their own.

In all of this, we give thanks to God for the generous love which is poured out on us and shared throughout the synod.

Interdependence

Keeping with our core values, here are a couple of opportunities to embody our interdependence this summer.

Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center is ready for summer camp. I'll be blessing the staff on July 8 in preparation for the first week of youth camp which begins July 9. Youth camp, high school camp, and family camp each provide opportunities for faith formation, enjoying God's beautiful creation, and building strong friendships. Please check out all the camp programs at the Cross Roads [website](#) and register today for a week of life-changing camp.

Earlier this year we revamped our advocacy ministry by launching justice groups to work on specific social justice issues of interest. Some of you are already engaged in a justice group and attend the monthly online meetings. Others are still curious about what these groups are and how to get involved. Here's your chance to learn more about the justice groups and meet others who are engaged in this advocacy work. On July 20 at 4:00 pm, the **Justice Group Picnic** will take place at Abiding Presence, Ewing. This event is free, but [registration](#) is required.

Jersey Jottings is our weekly e-newsletter and primary source for sharing information about our synod activities. Please encourage others to [sign up](#) to receive Jersey Jottings and feel free to forward it to your friends. It is intentional that each issue begins with prayers for each other, congregations in our synod, synods across the ELCA, and companions around the world. Praying for and with one another is a tangible way to live out our interdependence.

I pray you have a beautiful summer,



Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew