



From the bishop:

Take a moment to say thanks

To the saints of God in the New Jersey Synod:

November begins with a day of thanksgiving and remembrance for all the saints of God in Christ who have gone before us. Some of us also pause on All Saints Day to give thanks for the newly baptized saints in our communities who will follow in Jesus' footsteps after we are gone.

Who are the saints in your life for whom you give thanks? Who are the people who taught you the stories of faith and showed you grace in action? What names and faces, sounds and smells, and rituals and special occasions come to mind when you celebrate All Saints Day?

This year I will think again of Sunday school teachers and their extreme patience for any fidgety, know-it-all middle schoolers. I will smell again the wine of communion and be transported back to first communion class with my pastor where everything seemed mysterious and holy. I will remember the members of my first congregation who taught me how to be their pastor. I will hear the opening lines of "For All the Saints" and see clearly those who gave their lives for a more just and peaceful world. I will smile at the newly baptized baby adding life sounds to worship.

It is important that we pause each year on Nov. 1 to give thanks and honor the memory of the saints

of the church—those ordinary sinners, baptized children of God claimed and sent into the world to share the love and grace of our Savior. You are counted among those for whom we give thanks. You are part of the cloud of witnesses called saints.



Bishop Tracie
Bartholomew

Take a moment to name those for whom you give thanks. If they are still alive, consider making a phone call or writing a note. If they are among the blessed dead, say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for their place in your life and this world.

Almighty God, you have knit your chosen people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 59.)

Your sister in Christ,
Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew

Trip to Bosnia makes lasting connections

Sixteen Americans and 13 Bosnians teamed up June 16-27 for the New Jersey Synod's 19th Bosnia International Servant Trip. The 2018 crew served about 1,000 children in seven day camps and our four-day middle school leadership training retreat.

The intergenerational, interfaith BosniaST is truly a ministry of relationship and accompaniment. It's a rare opportunity within the synod for adults, young adults and high school students to work side-by-side as equals in service. It's a chance to contemplate our own faith as we work with Roman Catholic, Serbian Orthodox and Muslim Bosnians.

And it's a way to make lasting connections. Take, for example, three children from the mountain village of Sipovo, where every year we've offered music, games, storytelling and a servant project. This year a little boy named



Andi Gerrard of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Woodbury, with her Bosnian friend, Lazar.

Lazar sprinted toward team member Andi Gerrard and gave her a giant hug. Although they had spent only an hour together in 2017, he was so happy to see her again.

Another camper—a teenager—greeted several of us by name and proudly announced it was her 10th year attending the event.

And one of the school's best English students, Vesna Kvrjic, whom we met as a grade-schooler, joined our 2018 team as a translator. We got to discover the country with her, as she visited Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, and other cities for the first time.

We go to Bosnia to promote hope, healing and peace. We come home having been graced ourselves by all three. ♣

Submitted by Cynthia Henry, team leader.

For more information, search BosniaST on Facebook or go to servanttrips.org. At press time, the tentative date for the next trip is June 21-July 2, 2019. Interested? Sign up on our website.

Working with our full communion partners

Is your congregation connecting with one of the ELCA's six full communion partners?

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19).

The unity of the body of Christ is lived through our relationships with other churches and communities of faith. Since 1997, the ELCA has formed full communion partnerships with six denominations: Our full communion partners are Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church in America, and the United Methodist Church.

A full communion relationship does not mean congregations are merging. Instead, we affirm our differences while recognizing our relationship in Christ. This relationship comes to life through Lutheran clergy serving in partner churches (an example is St. Michael's Episcopal Church in

Trenton where an ELCA pastor, the Rev. Mark David Johnson, serves), shared worship services, and a commitment to witness and service in the world.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Brant Beach (holytrinitylb.com) worked with our partners in the Moravian church to host their second Lovefeast. Congregants and pastors from Egg Harbor City Moravian, First Moravian of Riverside, Palmyra Moravian and Redeemer Moravian in Philadelphia spent the afternoon singing, praying, eating and worshipping Christ together.

Dawne M Kresge-Thumhart of Holy Trinity said about the day: "Our particular service consisted of wonderful music by the combined choir, Scripture reading, beautiful hymns which resounded throughout our big beamed church. Then halfway through the service there was the sharing of the meal, which consisted of Moravian sugar cake and iced tea. The meal is served to the congregants as we sit in the pews. While we ate our Lovefeast meal, we shared and talked quietly among those around us about our spiritual walk (or whatever else came to mind). It was such a beautiful warm feeling that emanated from the service. I personally cannot wait until next year, when we will host our third Lovefeast with our Moravian brothers and sisters in Christ."

Is your community working with ELCA full communion partners? Share your story with the New Jersey Synod by sending an email to Dawn Roberts at droboterts@njsynod.org. ✉



Attendees at the Lovefeast listen to the combined Lutheran and Moravian choir.

An update



We announced the start of the Bishop's Challenge in May and we're moooved by all the support! At the 2018 New Jersey Synod Assembly, Bishop Tracie Bartholomew invited congregations to increase their support for ELCA World Hunger. All funds raised will not just support the Global Barnyard, but will be distributed to ELCA World Hunger programs where there is the most need. Congregations that participate and are able to raise \$500 will be invited to bring a "cow" to the 2019 assembly. Cow "cutouts" will be provided for congregations to decorate, name and bring to display!

If you're looking for ideas to help in this challenge, head over to our website (njsynod.org/bishopschallenge) and download The Bishop's Challenge: Calendar. We have a list of activities for every month so that you can grow in awareness, generosity, service and advocacy in response to

hunger. Here are just a sample of ideas for the coming months:

November. Thanksgiving is a perfect time to focus in worship and prayer on gratitude for all of God's gifts. How will your congregation share generously with ELCA World Hunger?

December. The Advent season embraces a call to compassion and justice. How are you preparing for Emmanuel? ELCA Good Gifts is an opportunity to give a gift of hope and opportunity.

January. The season of Epiphany suggests reflection upon migration and hunger concerns. How can your congregation support people displaced due to war and famine.

We can't wait to see the udderly amazing ways the Spirit will move us this year! 🐄

Winter Youth Assembly

Feb. 8-10, 2019

Our synod's exciting, faith-filled senior high youth retreat (ninth-twelfth graders), The Winter Youth Assembly, is a great opportunity to connect with other Lutheran youth from around New Jersey and explore God's love and how together we can make a difference in the world.

The 2019 WYA will be held at beautiful Fairview Lake YMCA Camp (fairviewlakeymca.org) in Newton, N.J.

Visit njsynod.org/youth-events for more information and to sign up.

