



Office of the Bishop
New Jersey Synod, ELCA

Keeping in Touch

January 5, 2016

12th Night or Eve of Epiphany

Dear Sisters and Brothers of our NJ Synod,

Blessings to you in this New Year! As we prepare to conclude our Christmas celebrations and move into Epiphany, I am writing to update you about our life together and remind you of a couple things.

New Year, New Staff...

As you may be aware, we have been awarded a grant from the Lilly Foundation (in partnership with the SW Minnesota Synod) to address financial literacy among our pastors and congregations. Titled "Excellence in Ministry Unleashed" (EMU - NJ), this three year project will seek to better prepare and equip our pastors in the field of personal finances and stewardship in order to strengthen their leadership within congregations. EMU-NJ will also provide resources for congregations to address financial issues that hinder experimentation and risk-taking for the sake of the gospel.

Pastor Scott Schantzenbach will serve as the director for EMU-NJ as well as remain



our synod's stewardship specialist. In addition, he will work with congregations seeking new forms of ministry and with legacy planning. His work will be paid for by the Lilly grant and a synod council designated bequest from the estate of Mathilda Motiska (a former member of First, Montclair). I hope that moving Pastor Schantzenbach into this new position will affect positive change in the lives of our pastors and congregations. With the advent of EMU-NJ and the resources to pay for a staff position, the synod council voted to extend a call to a new Assistant to the Bishop with money already designated in the 2016 spending plan which was adopted at our last synod assembly.

It is my pleasure to announce that Pastor Kimberly Vaughn will join our staff in early February as Assistant to the Bishop for Multi-Cultural Ministry. Pastor Vaughn received her M. Div. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and has served congregations in NE Ohio and SW Texas. She has experience in outdoor ministry, youth ministry and community organizing. Pastor Vaughn brings conversational Spanish language skills as well as a passion for sharing the gospel across a diverse landscape.



Every assistant to the bishop works closely with the bishop to provide mission resourcing for congregations and representing the bishop at official functions when asked. Mission resourcing includes walking with congregations in times of transition, providing assistance when conflict arises, assisting in mission planning and outreach.

In addition, the assistant for multi-cultural ministry will work to help congregations strengthen their connections with the neighborhoods where they are planted in order that they may reflect the diversity present - whether that is economic, racial, ethnic, or generational. Pastor Vaughn will also help our synod as a whole better reflect the diversity that is NJ. She will serve as staff to the discipleship and witness mission team and the anti-racism team as well as sit on the Mission Advocacy Table. I trust you will welcome Pastor Vaughn with invitations to visit your congregation.

A couple of reminders...

One of the commitments we make to each other - congregations and synod, rostered leaders and congregations, rostered leaders and bishop - is to be mutually accountable for the work we are called to do. This happens in a number of ways. At this time of year this happens most directly by completing reports of ministry for the year that has just ended.

Rostered leaders, you soon will be receiving your annual reports to the bishop via email. As was true last year, you will be encouraged to complete them online and submit them as soon as possible.

Parochial reports (Form A) are another way to look back over the past year and reflect on your ministry. You should have already received the report for your congregation. Along with the usual categories asking for numbers - of people and finances, there is additional reporting that asks for an assessment of ministry that is less numbers focused. Some of you have been asking for this type of tool and here

it is! You can follow-up with more in-depth analysis and conversation regarding this assessment by contacting Pastor Maristela Freiberg, Director of Evangelical Ministry (maristela.freiberg@elca.org).

The 2015 books for the NJ Synod will close on Wednesday, January 13, 2016. This means that any mission support for 2015 needs to be in the office by that date. Thank you to those who have generously contributed throughout the year. It is not too late to submit an additional gift!

Mission Support intents for 2016 should be submitted as soon as they are approved by your congregation. You can submit those intents by going to the Stewardship page of our website (njsynod.org/stewardship) and clicking the green "share your mission support intent" button to the right. Thank you for sharing those in a timely fashion.

May the Light of Christ continue to shine on you in this year and may our witness to God's Love be bold and joyful!

Your sister in Christ,



The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop

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