



Office of the Bishop
New Jersey Synod, ELCA

Letter to Rostered Leaders

July 22, 2016

Gracious and holy God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW p.76)

Dear Colleagues,

The prayer cited above has been on my heart and my lips throughout this summer. It is one of many prayers found in the "Civic Life, Government, Nations" section of our ELW which helps give voice to a people experiencing unrest in civic life and preparing for national elections. I commend these prayers to you for use in public worship as well as a personal resource.

I am disturbed by the vitriol that has infected our national conversation and shuts down any true dialog on important areas of our common life, including racial justice, immigration reform, gun violence, national security, mercy, eradicating poverty and eliminating hunger, and pursuing peace. As followers of Jesus, our call to love our neighbors is second only to love of God - there is no place in that call for hate-filled words or unkind actions. I know that our congregations are places where honest conversations and real solutions can be and are discussed across political divides. Thank you for your commitment to living your faith out loud for the sake of the world.

What follows is a series of short announcements important to our life together as synod. We engage in the ministries highlighted below because we are a servant church that cares about making a positive difference in the lives of all God's children, in our own neighborhoods and across the globe. Make note of dates, pray for our common work, and celebrate with your colleagues as appropriate!

Hopping on planes, buses, cars and more...

Several groups have been (and will be) traveling on our behalf this summer. The Bosnia International Servant Trip has returned from another fruitful time providing peace camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina. You can learn more about this mission on their website servanttrips.org as well as see pictures from this year's trip on their [Facebook](#) page. This ongoing peace-making ministry is helping children and adults live into a brighter future.

Junior High youth and their adult leaders have returned from a week in Washington, DC where they learned, served, and had fun in our nation's capital. Discovering ways to walk alongside people living in poverty and advocate for positive social reforms are life-long gifts that will serve these young people well.

There is still room for participants in two other ventures later this summer - the first is our Senior High Servant Trip to [Detroit](#) (August 21-26). Building on the excitement of being in Detroit for the Youth Gathering last summer, participants will work alongside local groups making a positive difference in the city.

Finally, [Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center](#) still has openings for summer camp weeks - for children, youth and families! Check it out if you are still looking for a fun and hands-on way to deepen your faith, meet new friends, and spend time in the beauty of God's creation!

Thank you to all who have helped chaperone, drive, make arrangements, pray for, or otherwise contribute to these travels!

On to NOLA (in the heat of the summer)...

Our church will gather in assembly in New Orleans August 8-13. Along with worship, Bible study, service, and fellowship, we will consider actions related to the unification of the lay rosters, memorials concerning a variety of issues important to our life together, elect a new vice-president, and get ready for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. You can participate by watching the [live stream](#) of worship and plenary sessions. Please pray for the voting members from our synod and the work we will do together:

Ms. LuAnn Barnes* (Holy Trinity, Manasquan)
Rev. Karen Bernhardt (St. Paul, Millville)
Mr. Arundel Clarke (Resurrection, Hamilton Square)
Mr. Ray Collazo (Santa Isabel, Elizabeth)
Rev. Annemarie Cook (Holy Trinity, Maple Shade)
Rev. Mona Fitch-Elliott (St. John, Jersey City)
Ms. Debra Goidel (St. John, Jersey City)
Mr. Jim Harris (Zion, Egg Harbor City)
Mr. Eric Kim (Holy Trinity, Red Bank)
Rev. Sara Lilja (St. Matthew, Moorestown)
Ms. Cassandra Mack (Redeemer, Jersey City)
Mr. Wayne Olsen (St. Paul, Teaneck)
Ms. Ella Peterson (St. Matthew, Moorestown)
Ms. Lynn Perry (Grace, Mendham)
Rev. David Stoner (Temple, Pennsauken)

* replacing Ms. Karen Kelly, DM

Alongside the Churchwide Assembly, hundreds of others will be attending the Grace Gathering - a time of learning, service, worship, and fellowship. I do not know who from our synod is attending; if you are or know of someone who is, please let me know. Nobel Prize recipient, Leymah Gbowee, will be the keynote speaker at the Grace

Gathering.

500 years goes by fast...

Our synod's Ecumenical and Interfaith Team has been meeting and working on ways to observe this significant anniversary. We will not be holding synod-wide gatherings but rather encouraging local communities to gather with ecumenical partners in prayer services, book studies, service projects, etc. We will publicize local events on our website and through Jersey Jottings as we are made aware of them. The importance of this anniversary is not to celebrate the brokenness of the church or to sit in a history class, but to ask how we will continue to be a church that is re-forming to serve God's mission going forward. Strengthening relationships with your local Roman Catholic colleagues can help us to witness to the reality that this is a new day in the church! Augsburg Fortress has some wonderful [resources](#) available to help us in our planning as does the website ELCA500.org. In October, I will be inviting you to join me in a "one synod, one book" conversation using [From Conflict to Communion](#). More on the anniversary later!

Get out your calendar...

Hold the dates October 18-19 for Bishop's Convocation. We will be gathering to talk seriously and honestly about reducing gun violence. This is an issue that holds a lot of emotion, theological significance and practical implications. We will address them all. Details on location, cost, and speakers will be forthcoming. For now, mark your calendar and plan to attend.

Finally...

Thank you for all of the ways you faithfully serve. Even if I have not spoken to you personally in recent days, I read your newsletters and look at your Twitter and Facebook posts. You are serving God's mission in ways that impact the lives of the people around you. You are joyfully living out our core values of faithfulness, respect, diversity, change, generosity, and interdependence in all that you do. Summer programs abound! Know that I am praying for and with you and cheering you on. As followers of Jesus, we generously live, love, and lead for the sake of the world, and that is not always easy. Thank you for being a partner with me in this work.

Your sister in Christ,



The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew
Bishop

