



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

February 1, 2023

Dear Friends,

I'm entering February with a heavy heart. Everywhere I turn violence seems to win the day: with mass shootings in places of learning, celebration, worship, and work; in the brutality we witnessed with the murder of Tyre Nichols at the hands of those charged to serve and protect us; in the language we use to speak about those who disagree with us; with legislation against our trans siblings; in daily gun deaths both random and targeted...the list could go on.

Yet, I am not without hope. I know God in Christ is present amid these heartaches and will redeem the messes we make. I know God's Spirit breathes through the sorrows we experience. I know God's word of life will have the last word. So, I pray and work for the justice that will lead to peace for all of us. I know you do as well – this is what it means to be church together.

Let us pray: Rise up and come to our help, merciful God, for we are in need. Our spirits are weighed down with fear; our bodies feel as fragile as the dust from which we came. All that we have trusted seems hidden from sight. Although this moment has come upon our nation, you have not forgotten us. We do not trust in our own power or strength, but in your steadfast love in every generation. Show us your face in this time of trial, remind us of your faithfulness, and save us for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(All Creation Sings, Prayer for Civic Distress)

What follows are updates and highlights of our common ministry.

Thank You! Our 2022 mission support sharing came in strong. Of the \$1,717,034.83 congregations intended to share, \$1,699,423.87 was received (1% less than estimated). This is good news! Most of our congregations met or exceeded their commitment. Generosity is a core value of our synod and you demonstrated it is a core value we actually live out. Your mission support allows us to support and walk with each other to strengthen our mission across the synod, the ELCA, and around the world. Thank you!

As we enter Black History Month, a reminder that our Jehu Jones Mission Fund has grants available for educational enrichment opportunities for emerging leaders of African descent. Criteria and an application can be found [here](#). These grants are a result of our 2021-2022 Bishop's Challenge.

Conversations of how we are church in this time are happening across our synod. At the Mission District meetings, we will spend intentional time with each other looking at ways to support, encourage, and challenge each other to work together for the sake of our neighbors. Please plan to attend your Mission District meeting where we will also elect leaders to serve on synod council. The schedule of meetings along with election categories can be found [here](#).

It can't all be grace, can it? Rostered minister reports and Congregational Reports A and C (Parochial Reports) are due. If you need assistance with finding them or completing them, please contact [LuAnn Barnes](#).

Finally, I will be traveling to the Holy Land February 2-12 with a small group of bishops and spouses from the northeast and some folks from United Lutheran Seminary. We will be meeting with officials from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ECJHL) and their ministries. I haven't been in that region since I visited Dan Whitener who was serving as an intern at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. I'll be looking for the plaque that marks the site of our engagement on Christmas Eve 1986! Please pray for those we will meet who call this land home.

Trusting in God's abundant mercy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracie L. Bartholomew".

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew