

2024 NJ Synod Assembly Recap

How Can I Keep from Singing?

On May 11, nearly 400 NJ ELCA members and visitors gathered in assembly at the Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ, for business, inspiration, learning, and worship. Our assembly was marked by a spirit of joy and unity in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What follows are highlights of our day together.

Our theme, *How Can I Keep from Singing?*, based on the hymn of the same name, grounded us in reality and hope. Assembly musician, Brian Conover (Reformation, Absecon), accompanied us in this and several other songs throughout our day. In our closing worship, Brian was accompanied by synod treasurer, Jim Harris on the trumpet. In addition, Pastor Frank Watson led us in procession on the bagpipes. Music carried us through the whole day!

We adopted significant updates to our synod's constitution and bylaws. These can be found on our synod [website](#). Secretary Blake Scalet helped us understand the rationale for these updates and is available to help you with updating your congregation's constitution and bylaws as well.

We elected members of the synod to various positions of leadership. Thank you to all who stood for election and congratulations to those elected.

The following people were elected to synod council:

The Rev. Joseph Grauman (St. Stephen, Woodbury)
Gail Gugliotti (Holy Trinity, Hasbrouck Heights)
Jaime Howey (Zion, Egg Harbor City)
Fred Humcke (Zion, Long Valley)
The Rev. James Krombholz (St. Paul, Edison)
The Rev. Danielle McCleary (St. Matthew, Secaucus)
Wayne Olsen (St. Paul, Ridgefield)
Wanetta Phillips (Prince of Peace, Denville/Rockaway)
Aretha Richardson (Trinity, Jersey City)
The Rev. Eric Trozzo (St. Matthew, Moorestown)
The Rev. Kimberly Vaughn (Christ our Redeemer, Jersey City)

The following people were elected to serve as voting members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and will join Bishop Bartholomew, Secretary Blake Scalet, and Vice-President Arundel Clarke:

Janasia Carter (Young Adult, Christ our Redeemer, Jersey City)
Sharla DeLawter (St. Paul, Ridgefield)
Agnetta Fasasi (Youth, Redeemer, Trenton)
Andrea Gerrard (St. Stephen, Woodbury)
Michael Hozik (St. James, Folsom)
The Rev. Sara Lilja (St. Matthew, Moorestown)
The Rev. Psomi Psomas-Jackloski (St. Andrew, Parsippany)
Damian Vince (Holy Counselor, Vernon/Sussex)

Members elected to the Consultation Committee are:

Jack Bryant (St. Stephen, Woodbury)
The Rev. Haydee Colon-Hernandez (St. John, Passaic)
Susan Homza (Reformation, West Long Branch)
Taylor Latourette (Holy Trinity, Manasquan)
The Rev. Michael Linderman (Redeemer, Ramsey)
Cassandra Mack (Holy Trinity, Red Bank)
The Rev. Margarete Ouji (First, Montclair)

Members elected to the Committee on Discipline are:

The Rev. Ramon Collazo (Santa Isabel, Elizabeth)
William Emerson (St. Mark, Oaklyn)
The Rev. John Mack (Holy Trinity, Red Bank)
The Rev. Carol Lindsay (retired, St. Stephen, South Plainfield)
Laura Sanchez (Bridge of Peace, Camden)
Joy Serena (Cape May, Cape May)
Emanuel Smith (Redeemer, Trenton)
The Rev. Pamela Werner (St. James, Folsom)

A new Bishop's Challenge was launched for 2024-2025 – *Caring for God's Good Creation*. A team of superheroes introduced us to the ways we contribute to the destruction of God's good creation and ways we might begin to live more gently on this earth. Every congregation was given a tree seedling to plant as well as resources to help accept the challenge to try one new practice this year to care for creation. You can find those resources [here](#), as well as a tool to report how your congregation is rising to the challenge.

We adopted the 2025 Mission Spending Plan of \$2,054,300. The planned income to support this plan comes mostly from your generosity in sharing mission support. Once again in this plan, 50% of the mission support you share is passed along to the ELCA churchwide expression. Thank you for your ongoing support for the work we do together.

Two resolutions were adopted that have implications for our life together. [Resolution 1](#) calls for the synod council to establish a task force for prison and re-entry ministry. [Resolution 2](#) calls for the synod to stand in solidarity with those calling for ceasefire, humanitarian relief, and release of hostages and prisoners in the Holy Land and provides resources to do so.

Finally, our day concluded with the reception of Santa Isabel as a newly organized congregation of the ELCA, NJ Synod. It was a delight to officially welcome this community after 16 years of mission in Elizabeth, including outreach to support immigrants at the detention center in Elizabeth. Pastor Ramon Collazo and members of Santa Isabel led the assembly through the Grounds for Sculpture to a tent for a bilingual Spanish-English worship service. Pastor Collazo preached, Santa Isabel was officially received, members of anniversary congregations and recently retired pastors served communion, and all of us left singing praises to God.

Our assembly made me proud to be a member of the NJ Synod. Thank you to all who made the day such a powerful witness to the gospel. The recorded livestream is on our [YouTube channel](#). Next year we will gather June 5-7 at the Hilton East Brunswick – mark your calendars now and plan to be there!

With a song still in my heart,
Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew