



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

*When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. (Mark 16:1-2)*

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I have been pondering the story of the Resurrection this year, I have taken special notice of the reality of companionship. It seems significant to me that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went together to the tomb of their friend and teacher, Jesus. Going about the ordinary chore of anointing the body of Jesus was made lighter by doing it together. Bearing the burden of grief and sorrow over the loss of their hoped-for Messiah was a bit easier because of the companionship they shared.

The same can be said about us this past year. We have been in this time of pandemic and pandemonium together – bearing with one another, supporting each other, crying together, marching together, working together, and waiting expectantly together. While we have not all had the same experiences, nor have we borne this crisis equally, all of us have had companions on the way.

Our congregations have walked together as synod, our members have walked together as congregations, our faith communities have walked with neighbors across our state, our synod has walked with churchwide partners – and all of us have been following and walking with Jesus.

On that first Easter morning, Mary, Mary, and Salome, encountered a stranger who had a message that would change not only their lives, but the life of the world. I imagine that as they heard the words spoken to them, they looked deeply at each other, held each other up, and stumbled together out of the tomb. Having each other was a gift that allowed them to take in what they heard and saw.

God gifts us with companions on our journey – those in our lives with whom we can take in and share the reality of the world we inhabit. In baptism, companions become family; those to whom we are joined by the relationship the Risen Christ establishes with us.

I give thanks to God for you, companions in Christ, as we share the new life which is ours today.

Happy Easter, dear family,

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew