



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Advent 2017

Dear partners in the Gospel,

Every day purposeful and future oriented ministries are happening in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod!

Thousands of leaders are blessed to be engaged in endeavors that promote a vital Lutheran witness in our five-county region. I count myself doubly blessed to have partners like you who support the work of our Synod with your prayers, encouragement, and financial resources.

As we approach the holiday season, I want to share with you some of the important work we are doing, and ask you to prayerfully consider a gift to our annual *It Takes All the Saints* appeal as part of your year-end philanthropy. Here's just some of what is happening:

- I deeply appreciate **the quality and commitment of our pastors and deacons**. Across the ELCA, a significant number of rostered ministers will be retiring in the next decade. We recognized this challenge early, and have intentionally attracted missional pastors (many under age 40) to serve in our Synod. Thanks to the diligent work of our Synod staff and deans, we continue to have strong leadership for the future.
- We have also seen a major increase in the number of people, many recent college graduates, seeking candidacy for ministry through our Synod. This year **the number of new applicants to seminary has more than doubled!** This stretches our staff and candidacy committee, and puts pressure on our limited funds for scholarships, yet it is an exciting sign of revitalization in the church.
- In the last two years, our staff and deans have **accompanied 60 congregations through the call process**. That is more than one-third of our congregations in a brief period! Helping congregations to identify the right pastoral leaders for their contexts is a major focus of the Office of the Bishop.
- Our **new Anti-Racism Team** is working with congregations to engage the difficult and often divisive topics of race and xenophobia. The team is ready to come visit your congregation or conference to facilitate conversation.
- Under the Synod's leadership, a dozen congregations have participated in a **pilot cross-generational ministry project**, learning how to engage all ages in worship and faith formation.
- To **keep you connected to Synod and ELCA news and events**, we have increased the frequency of the MinistryLink e-newsletter, and we are working on a major redesign to the synod website to make it more informative and easier to use.

These are just a few of the highlights accomplished by our staff and volunteers. All the while the day-in and day-out work of overseeing ministry and supporting congregations and leaders in transition or crisis continues. We do this even though **our staff today is less than half the size it was 12 years ago, and our budget (in real dollars) is the same size as it was in the late 1980s!**

I hope you see why your support is so important. The *It Takes All the Saints* appeal helps us to start new initiatives that otherwise couldn't materialize, and avoid cuts in programs necessary to support congregations and leaders.

Thank you, again, for your continued partnership in ministry. **I hope you will be generous in supporting our Synod's work during this season of generosity and light.**

Sending Advent Blessings

The Rev. Claire S. Burkat, Bishop

My gift, payable to "Southeastern PA Synod," is enclosed.

Name:	Congregation:
Address:	Email:
City: State: Zip:	Phone:

My gift is enclosed in the amount of \$ _____
Suggested gift ranges: \$1,000 or more \$500-\$999
 \$250-\$499 \$100-\$249 \$25-99

My check is enclosed.
 My pledge of \$ _____ will be paid by 1/15/2018.
 My gift is in honor/memory of _____
 This gift qualifies for a corporate match from _____

Please charge my Visa MasterCard Discover
Account _____
Exp ___/___ Security code (on back of card): _____

Mail to: Finance Office, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, 7241 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119