



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

Office of the Bishop

July 30, 2018

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
(Ephesians 3:20-21)

Yesterday's Epistle text for Sunday, July 29, 2018 is one of my very favorite scriptures. I was moved to realize this lesson was the reading for my departure as bishop after twelve extraordinary years. Always blessed, often exhausting, sometimes heartbreaking, mostly joyful, daily gratifying, and led by the power of God, our ministry as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has accomplished far more than I could have hoped for or imagined.

Today, as I say farewell, my heart is full of love and gratitude for your support and trust in our partnership together. Since the weekend of my retirement cookout at United Lutheran Seminary on Saturday July 7, and the Gala on Sunday night July 8, I have been busy packing up my office, attending to work needing to be done before I leave, and saying goodbye to those who have worked most closely with me. For the many cards, letters, emails, gifts and expressions of appreciation, I thank and bless you. I intend to read and savor every one in the days after my official retirement when I have time to think, pray and thank you without the pressure of a full schedule.

I have learned and experienced so much, and had opportunities to grow in faith in surprising ways with people and in places of which I could never have dreamed. This call has truly been new everyday.

I am so thankful for our pastors and deacons, for lay leaders and ministry supporters, for deans, synod council, synod officers, and synod staff, for our Lutheran social ministry organizations, for our college, camp, and seminary staff, students, and faculty, for my colleagues in the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and my ecumenical and interfaith partners here in the greater Philadelphia area and throughout the county. For our global companion, the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania, and our sister synod the Southeast Michigan Synod, and for all whom the Holy Spirit has sent to teach and uphold me during these twelve years, my gratitude is more than I could ever recount.

I know you will give our new bishop, the Rev. Patricia Davenport, the support, generous assistance, love, hope and prayers she will need to lead our synod in these challenging times.

To Christ be glory in the Church – the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – for many generations to come.

Please join me in this prayer of trust:

*Lord God,
you have called your servants
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In Christ,

+ *Claire S. Burkat*

The Rev. Claire S. Burkat
Bishop

**Evening Prayer, Evangelical Lutheran Worship*