

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Moving Forward as Church Together

A Farewell from Bishop Zeiser



I want to say thank you to all who served the assembly as voting members. Your patience, your willingness to accompany this synod in a new direction, and your faithful participation to the end of the assembly are important components of this synod's strength, and sure signs that "We Are Church Together".

During Assembly 2020, it was especially encouraging to see such a gifted slate of nominees and candidates for the office of bishop. Thank you to all who were open to the stirring of the Holy Spirit by allowing their names to go forward in the balloting.

I have known Bishop-elect deForest for ten years, and I have worked with him as he helped envision, plan, and produce our last six synod assemblies. Now, he and I have been, and will be, working together to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. I know that God has given Christopher substantial gifts to serve in this office and to work with the Rostered Ministers and congregations of the Northeastern PA Synod. Just as I look forward to my retirement, I also look forward to Christopher's leadership as Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

A Greeting from Bishop Elect deForest

These are challenging times. I don't need to tell all of you what that means. But these are also times to give deep thanks. And to hold tight to the promise that Jesus is here, and Christ is coming. Advent. Christmas. Epiphany. Ash Wednesday. Lent. Holy Week. Easter. They are all coming. They will be here, soon. Not to bring us more anxiety and more things to do. But to bring us love, joy, peace, and hope.

This is also a time of opportunity: to heal, to grow, to dream, and to act. Working alongside Bishop Zeiser, I hope to hear from many different voices to seek their wisdom, guidance, expertise and involvement going forward. I'll be hearing from our Synod staff. From congregational leaders.

From other synods and their leaders. From other faith communities. And from the others who were nominated to this office of Bishop at last month's Online Assembly. And I can promise you that I will be praying, listening, and learning, in these days to come, to help us all discern how to be, and to act, and to remain: Christ-centered, Spirit-Led, and God-Reliant.

And so, I am here to commit to you that when I take office on January 1st, 2021, I will begin my tenure as your Bishop by taking a sabbath rest. I will not come into the Synod offices or do any work until Monday, January 11. No email. No social media. Only time for rest, with my family, and with our God. I want to start my time working with you as the most sabbath-rested servant-leader I can possibly be.

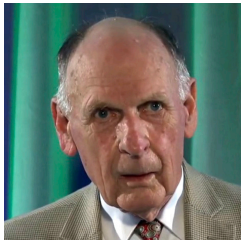
And then, after resting, let us return - refreshed, and ready to go where the Spirit is leading, centered in Christ, relying on God. We wish you blessings, love, joy, peace and hope, in this season and into this bright new year. God bless.



Online Assembly 2020 - We Did It!

Our Synod was the first in Region 7 to hold an online assembly, and it went really well.

Elections were held. Resolutions were adopted. Reports were received. Events were celebrated.



Elections. The process for electing a bishop was overseen by Mr. Ed Cool and by Mr. William "Bill" Horne II, Vice President of the ELCA, who also brought greetings and a report from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Pastor Christopher deForest was elected to serve a six-year term as bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod on the 5th ballot, with 260 votes. Pastor Ryan Hersch, of Atonement Lutheran Church in Wyomissing, received 222 votes. The other five candidates were Pastors Charles Grube,



Becca Middeke-Conlin, Nelson Quiñones, Susan Ruggles, and Martha Sipe.

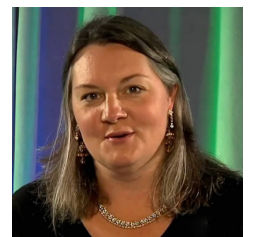
Additionally, Pattie Corcoran, Joshua Fink, Pastor Gregory Frey, and Louise McCoughan were elected to the Synod Council either by their Mission District or by the Assembly; and Dr. Margaret Ann Rapp and Pastor Michael Ware were elected to the Synod Discipline Committee.

Worship. Assembly worship was coordinated by Deacon Michael Krentz, who also composed a hymn "We Are Church Together" especially for Assembly 2020. Opening worship was a Service of the Word and included participants from around the synod, as well as a sermon by Bishop Zeiser. There was also music and prayer throughout the course of the Assembly.



Celebrations. A highlight of the first Friday evening was a video celebrating 50/40/10, the 50th anniversary of U.S. Lutheran churches' decision to ordain women, the 40th anniversary of the ordination of the first women of color, and the 10th anniversary of the ELCA's decision to officially ordain people in same-gender committed relationships. The Assembly also recognized major anniversaries of rostered ministers, especially those celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry.

Vice President Kristen Edelman-Weiner's Report. Vice President Kristen emphasized the importance of "Moving Forward as Church Together." Using the metaphor of an old tree line on her property and the efforts she made to revive it, Kristen acknowledged that new growth doesn't happen easily. It requires hard work; attention to caretaking; patience; the willingness to take risks and encounter failures; and above all, faith in God's promises and an optimistic hope in the future God intends for us.



**Because of COVID-19 safety concerns,
Bishop-Elect deForest will be installed at a future date.**

Please visit the synod website at godslove.org for updates.

Synod News is published monthly by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA
2354 Grove Road, Allentown PA 18109; 610-266-5101. nepsinfo1988@gmail.com.

View the full color edition online at <http://nepasynod.org>.