



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. CHRISTOPHER deFOREST
Bishop

A Message to the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod from Bishop Christopher deForest

Dear siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Over these past weeks, I have found myself giving thanks to God again and again for you—for the congregations, ministries, rostered ministers, lay leaders, volunteers, Synod staff, Synod Council, and all the faithful people who make up the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. It is a privilege to serve as your bishop, and that privilege continues every day through August 31.

As you know, on September 1 we will joyfully welcome Bishop-Elect Jennifer Dee as the next bishop of our synod. I hope you will join me in praying for her each day during these weeks of transition.

Transitions are holy moments. They invite us to trust God's timing rather than our own. They call us to be patient, gracious, and attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit.

For that reason, I encourage all of us to give Bishop-Elect Dee the gift of space during these transition weeks. She has important work to do before she begins this new call. She is preparing herself prayerfully for the responsibilities that lie ahead, while also saying goodbye to a congregation she dearly loves, the people of Trinity Lutheran Church in Robesonia. Those leave-takings deserve her full heart and attention, just as this new beginning will deserve hers and ours when the time comes.

Between now and September 1, I remain your bishop. Please know that nothing is changing in the life of our synod during these weeks. Our Synod staff continue their ministry with the same dedication and excellence they always have. Our Synod Council continues faithfully in its leadership. I will continue to serve you with all the energy, care, and commitment I can bring to this office, while also working closely with our staff and council to ensure Bishop-Elect Dee receives the strongest possible beginning for her ministry among us.

I do so with tremendous hope.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is in a good place. Across our territory, I see congregations discovering new life, embracing fresh partnerships, entering into ministry covenants, and finding creative ways to proclaim the Gospel in their communities. We are learning to share resources, encourage one another, and imagine together what God is calling us to become. Transformation is not something we are waiting for someday. It is already happening among us.

That is why I believe God has called the right leader for this moment. Bishop-Elect Dee brings gifts, wisdom, faith, and a deep love for Christ and Christ's Church that will serve this synod well in these hopeful—and yes, sometimes hazardous—times.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans:

"Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds..." (Rom 12:2)

Transformation is God's work. Our calling is to remain open to it—to trust the Spirit, to encourage one another, and to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

And I also hold close Paul's promise in Philippians:

"...the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil 1:6)

Notice that in this translation Paul says *among you*. God has begun a good work in this synod—not in one bishop or another, but in the whole Body of Christ. God has been faithful through every season of our life together, and God will continue to be faithful in this next chapter.

So let us keep moving forward.

Let us pray for one another.

Let us support Bishop-Elect Dee with our encouragement and our prayers.

Let us continue serving our neighbors with joy.

And let us remain open to the transforming work that God is already accomplishing among us.

There will be time later this summer to reflect together more on the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another. But for now, we continue the work God has placed before us, with confidence, hope, and gratitude.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your bishop. It remains one of the greatest honors of my life.

God's peace be with you all.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Christopher deForest
Bishop, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
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