



Upstate New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

September 1, 2021

Dear Siblings in Christ,

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" (Ps. 118:24)

These words from an ancient psalmist are how I've greeted the communities I've served every Lord's Day. "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice!" It is a statement of faith and a proclamation, a witness to God's love active in the world.

Some days these words sound foreign; as when I have used them to greet an assembly gathered to commend a beloved one into God's eternal care; or on the day after 9/11, or in the midst of a pandemic.

But these words are no less true, even when the "earth should change, [and] the mountains shake in the heart of the sea" (Ps. 46:2).

God is with us. God has been with us all along. The Divine continues to walk with us, alongside us, feeding us (that's what all of these "bread" Sundays have been about after all) and leading us forward, together.

I am privileged, humbled, excited, and just a bit fearful, as we begin this call together as church and servant-bishop. I look forward to learning about God's love made present in the world from you. I look forward to growing with you, activated by the one who has created us in an image of loving-kindness, and set free to do the liberating work of the gospel.

I know that the pandemic has been exhausting in many and various ways. This can't be overstated. I believe as God's people, saved and transformed by the sacrificial love of Christ and his death on the cross, we are raised up to new life, to be the church for such a time as this. I also believe, that as we come through the pandemic together, we do so with heightened needs for community and connections, for relationship and real purpose in being together. Our intentions have been focused and we are collaborating in new ways for the sake of our siblings. This is an incredible time to be the church!

I look forward to connecting with you this Fall as we begin our ministry together and renew our relationships throughout our synod, which is Christ's church, together. Join me at your local conference Fall Assembly where we'll have some time to meet and listen to one another. Join me as well in praying for all God's people, for our communities throughout the Upstate New York Synod, our ELCA, the Lutheran World Federation, and for all people in need everywhere.

Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel. Thanks be to God for the ways that love activates us in the world to do justice and share in the joy of Christ!

"This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Yours in Christ,



