



**New Jersey Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

December 2019

Dear Christian Friends,

At this date of my writing, we are two weeks into Advent. And during these two weeks, we've heard of swords and spears being transformed into plowshares and pruning hooks (*Isa 2*), and we've heard about a small shoot growing out of what was formerly observed as a barren stump (*Isa 11*).

We know what these images suggest: God doing something new in ways that may be overlooked, are discrete and less triumphant than one may instinctually ascribe to God. And yet we also know what else is meant: that absolutely God's kingdom draws near and we are called to keep alert.

In so many ways, that is what your mission support gives expression to: transforming this world's instruments of division into tools that feed; witnessing that God's Life does stir in corners and crevices of this world where formerly we may not have believed God's Light may shine. This is accomplished in so many ways from ELCA Advent Calendars and 'Good Gift' piggy banks, to transformative ministry as described in the ELCA's 'Stories of Faith in Action,' to the compassion of Christ you extend locally with one another and neighbors in need. All of this and more are just a few -and yet important- ways the Advent faith given us is shared. And we may not know always what a difference it makes. By some it may be missed, dismissed or overlooked. And yet even still, God's transformation, God's growth does come! That is God's promise renewed through God's proclaimed Word.

And so, let me just say 'Thank you!' Thank you for those ways, in the course of this year, your congregation has participated in our Synod's mission and ministry. And thank you not only for what you have shared in the past, but for joining in God's hope for tomorrow. This is what the mission support you have shared has done; and this is what we shall accomplish going into the future: being a church that both witnesses and works toward a day that God's incarnate blessing may be shared by all.

In that Spirit of awakened thanks and gratitude, if you would be so kind to observe the following:

- consider where your congregation is with regard to your original intent and know that if you'll be fulfilling that pledge, those additional offerings need to be received by January 15, 2020 so that they may counted in 2019.

- consider that, just as your congregation shall be blessed with unanticipated end-of-the-year offerings, you may extend that same blessing to your synod (again, please remember the January 15, 2020 date above so they may be counted in 2019).
- And finally, if you would return your 2020 Mission Support Letter of Intent (or submit electronically by going to [www.njsynod.org/stewardship](http://www.njsynod.org/stewardship)), it would greatly help those who serve your Synod in its planning and ongoing ministry.

We are the NJ Synod of the ELCA together!

Advent and Christmas Blessings be with you,



Rev. Dean R. Brown

Assistant to the Bishop