

SYNOD NEWS

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA

Synod Assembly 2021 & MinLab

Our assembly is virtual to protect the most vulnerable around us, but we will be holding an in-person Ministry Laboratory (MinLab) on August 14, 2021. The MinLab will be held at the Lutheran Center. It's open to anyone, even people who were not voting members to the Synod Assembly. The Lab will allow participants to engage, in real time, with ministry ideas, congregations already participating in ministry projects, and allow space for participants to experiment with ideas, eat good food, and have fun!

Together we'll wonder about how we're healing the hurting, loving the land, and engaging the stranger!

The Good News

June is here, and hope is busting out all over. We can worship outdoors, reducing greatly the still ongoing threat of the pandemic. The vaccines are effective and safe, and I urge everyone to get their doses, so we can move back indoors more safely this fall. Our synod just hosted its first event addressing racial issues, on May 22. Our online Synod Assembly June 4 and 5 is giving us new opportunities for "**growing young and vital**," as we share ministries that **heal the hurt, love the land, and engage the stranger**. And going forward from here, we are discovering how to partner more, as we are "**gaining strength**" and "**going beyond death to life**."

See the **boldface** type? Yes – I've just written a paragraph incorporating ALL the new vision and direction that we are exploring together! But more than just boldface words...what are we called to BOLDLY FACE – as ELCA, as synod, as congregations, and as baptized children of God?

The answer comes to us, simply and directly, from our scripture, both Old and New Testaments: St. Paul writes "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..." (Romans 1:16). The prophet Micah declares: "[The lord] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

With these **bold directions**, how will we, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, proceed? HEAL THE HURTING: "**[Jesus told them]: 'As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.'**" (Matthew 10:7)

LOVE THE LAND: “[The lord spoke to Moses]: **The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.**” (Leviticus 25:23-24)

ENGAGE THE STRANGER: “[The Son of Man will say when he comes in his glory]: **‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...’**” [Matthew 25:34-35]

These are just a few of the bold words, given to us by the God who created everything; who led the marginalized Hebrew people God loved out of slavery, through the wilderness, into the promised land; who came to us in the person of Jesus, healing the sick and raising the dead; who died for all for the forgiveness of all our sin; and who is raised from the dead and reigns forever, and will return to judge the living and the dead and live here forever with us in our resurrected creation.

This is a **bold promise**. We are called to **bold action**. And in this lovely month of June, one of those bold actions can be, that we love our LGBTQIA+ neighbors, who still feel like strangers in our midst. One bold action – simple, small, but significant – is my request to change our SYNOD NEWS banner, to reflect the BOLD RAINBOW COLORS of June Pride Month. I en-**courage** all of us to engage in more conversation and work together with our members and leaders who are Queer, to learn more and share more of the Good News and the good work of God, together. As Paul writes: **“For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”** (Galatians 5:14)

In God’s love,
Bishop Christopher deForest

Did you know we are a “Reconciling in Christ” Synod?

Way back in 2001, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod at its Synod Assembly adopted a Continuing Resolution (#39) to make known its caring and concern for LGBTQIA+ people, their families and friends. Across our synod, congregations and organizations have themselves discerned and decided to join the RIC journey. “Reconciling in Christ” is a Lutheran movement led by the group RECONCILINGWORKS, whose vision is “to keep expanding the welcome, liberating those who are forced to live in the margins; to keep dismantling barriers and building bridges; and to keep working until all of God’s beloved have equity.”



An independent, Lutheran, membership-supported organization, RECONCILINGWORKS advocates for the acceptance and full participation of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions within the Lutheran Church. To find out more, go to www.reconcilingworks.org.