

A Pastoral Message from the ELCA Bishops of Pennsylvania

Advent 2024: A Season of Waiting and Hope

Dear Pennsylvania Lutherans and Partners in Ministry,

As we begin the season of Advent, we are reminded of the holy call to wait with hope and expectation. In this time of preparation, we recall the promise of God's presence among us—Emmanuel, God with us—and the call to be attentive to the needs of our neighbors, especially those on the margins. We hear the voices of those who continue to express concern and care for our communities following the election, particularly for our immigrant and refugee neighbors, those experiencing poverty, those seeking gender justice, and others whose lives are marked by vulnerability. Be assured, we have not forgotten these concerns.

As your bishops, we are committed to accompany you in this time of waiting, prayer, and action. We are meeting regularly to discern how we might faithfully respond to the needs of our communities. Together with the Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa) and United Lutheran Seminary, we are exploring more opportunities for continuing education and advocacy focused on equipping congregations to live out the Gospel in meaningful ways.

LAMPa recently provided resources to support congregations in caring for immigrant and refugee neighbors, including guidance on discerning becoming a welcoming or sanctuary congregation. These resources invite us to embody God's hospitality and justice, extending the love of Christ to those seeking safety and belonging. We encourage you to explore these materials and prayerfully consider how your congregation might engage in this important work. You can access these resources here: [Caring for Our Immigrant and Refugee Neighbors \(Resources for Caring for Our Immigrant and Refugee Neighbors\)](#).

Advent is a time of waiting; yet it is not passive. It is an active waiting that calls us to prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts, homes, and communities. It calls us to be attentive to the cries of our neighbors and to join in God's work of justice, mercy, and reconciliation. As we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, may we be reminded of the light of Christ that shines in the darkness and is never overcome.

Let us continue to hold one another in prayer, advocate for justice, and bear witness to the Gospel in all that we do. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, so that you may overflow with the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the hope of Christ,



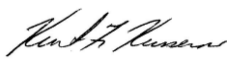
The Rev. Barbara J. Collins, Interim Bishop
Allegheny Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. Christopher deForest, Bishop
Northeastern PA Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. James S. Dunlop, Bishop
Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop
Southwestern PA Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. Michael L. Lozano, Bishop
Northwestern PA Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. Craig Miller, Bishop
Upper Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA



The Rev. Bryan J. Penman, Bishop
Southeastern PA Synod of the ELCA