Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Lutherans Together: Loving God, Loving Neighbor

"Humankind was created as God's reflection: In the divine image God created them; Female and male, God made them." – Genesis 1:27 (The Inclusive Bible)

Dear Faithful Saints of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod,

Thank you, saints, for witnessing to God's extravagant love and grace in this five-county region around Philadelphia. Through our annual All Saints appeal, we give thanks for our ministry together, we celebrate what the Holy Spirit is doing in our synod, and we invite your financial support and your prayers for what's next. The highlight of 2026 continues our synod assembly theme Imago Dei—the belief that every person is created in the image of God and worthy of dignity, belonging, and love.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod knows the Church is strongest when we recognize God's image reflected in one another.



The spirit of Imago Dei continues to shape our ministry together. It calls us to see Christ in our neighbors, to listen deeply across differences, and to embrace the diverse gifts God has entrusted to the church. It reminds us that every congregation, every baptized child of God, and every act of service participates in God's ongoing work of renewal and reconciliation.

Together we are **reimagining how new leaders are called into ministry**. We are providing **increased flexibility** in our traditional candidacy process so that classroom learning and practical congregational experience can be completed closer to home, working with the schedules of family life and other employers. We are creating **alternative pathways** for lay members to serve as Synod Authorized Ministers, providing a pastoral presence for congregations that remains supervised by a rostered minister while increasing the number of congregations we can match with leadership coverage. We **honor authenticity** within our leaders around race, gender, and sexuality, and we **honor other vocations** for our leaders called to be spouse, caregiver, parent, and already gainfully employed.



We are **redesigning and strengthening synod programming to respond to the needs of congregations**. Our Ponder Anew transition process **gives agency** to congregations to discern their own future through transformation, partnership, and resurrection. Education opportunities for congregations and our rostered ministers are **address the unique challenges** faced by rural and urban congregations, well-attended congregations and more intimate worshipping communities, as well as those encountering broad diversity in age, race, and/or socioeconomic status. We have hosted Building Summits, Evangelism Strategy Meetings,



Bishop's Convocation, Assembly Workshops, Love Revolution, Faith Alive, and other vitality trainings to **equip the saints for ministry**.

We continue our work with the SEPA Anti-Racism Team, Inclusive Communities Committee, and appropriate boundaries education to **expand safety and belonging** for all parts of the Body of Christ within our synod.

We invite you to invest in expanding the work of seeing each other as God sees us.

Gifts to the All Saints Appeal stay 100% local and are used to directly fund the ministries of our synod. Congregational mission support does not fully fund the synod budget. We rely on a network of saints investing in this important kingdom-building work. We invite you to give today in honor of the saints in your life who have shared their faith with you. Give in anticipation of the new people God will use to proclaim the gospel in our congregations and communities. We're pledging our own gifts to support our synod's mission as we give thanks for each of you – for your witness, for your financial support, and for your ongoing prayers for this work we do together. Every dollar you give translates into direct mission in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. It takes all of the saints to make this possible.

Visit our website (https://www.sepa.org/donations) or use the enclosed pledge form to make your gift to the All Saints Appeal today.

Thank you for being SEPA Saints! God bless you!

+ Bryan J. Penman

Karen M. Sease

The Rev. Bryan J. Penman,
Bishop

The Rev. Karen M. Sease,
Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations

Please note: We are sunsetting All Saints Appeal after 2026 and will be rebranding as a springtime Annual Appeal in 2027.

This change will enable us to cultivate greater donor clarity around the campaign's purpose, to champion at Synod Assembly the needs and opportunities raised in the campaign, and to shift our funding request away from other year-end giving when donors have said they're feeling overwhelmed by the number of organizations requesting support.

We are grateful to those who first imagined the All Saints Appeal, to all of you who have faithfully and generously contributed over the years, and for kingdom-building ministry that we are able to do together.

Thank you for your gifts that transform lives and communities in SEPA Synod!