



Behold! I Make All Things New NJ Synod Assembly 2025 Recap

The NJ Synod met in Assembly on June 5-7 at the Hilton, East Brunswick. 376 voting members and 59 visitors worshiped, celebrated, elected a bishop, and conducted the synod's business during these days. Below is a brief recap of our time together.

Worship

We began the assembly with a service of Holy Communion. Bishop Bartholomew preached and presided, Vice-President Arundel Clarke assisted. Pastors new to the synod, along with lay members distributed communion. Assembly musician, Brian Conover (Reformation, Galloway/Absecon) provided accompaniment throughout the assembly and was assisted by James Harris on trumpet (synod treasurer) and Pastor Linnéa Clark on flute and drum (St. Mark, Hamilton). Pastor Kat Steinly (Zion, Oldwick) joined Pastor Clark in leading the assembly in Holden Evening Prayer on Friday evening. Thank you to all our worship leaders.

In addition to opening worship, we sang and prayed throughout the assembly, returning to the theme song, Behold! I Make All Things New by John Bell at the beginning of every plenary. Prayers at the beginning of our plenary sessions included Pastor Burton Vincent (celebrating the 65th anniversary of his ordination), Pastor Moacir Weirich and Nicole Krenz (St. Stephans Grace, Newark) who led us in a litany for immigrants, and Deacon Shirley Talluri (newly ordained chaplain at Hackensack Meridian Health Hospice).

Resolution/Memorials

We adopted one resolution and two memorials. The resolution calls us to oppose attacks on the civil liberties of transgender/nonbinary (TGNB) adults and children and to advocate for and protect our TGNB neighbors.

Memorial 1 calls for the ELCA to affirm transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people of God by speaking out on behalf of these neighbors and consulting with them as to the best ways to advocate with them.

Memorial 2 calls the ELCA to eliminate gendered language in all governing documents.

Both memorials now go to the Churchwide Assembly for action. The resolutions and memorials can be found on the synod website (njsynod.org/assembly).

Synod Council Elections

We elected the following members to serve on synod council:

Jennifer Emerson (St. Mark, Oaklyn), Delaware Mission District
Jose Sanchez (Bridge of Peace, Camden, 2nd term), Delaware Mission District
Nansi Krauss (Abiding Love, Kendall Park, 2nd term), Middle Mission District
Cari States-Codding (Living Waters, Ringoes), Middle Mission District
The Rev. Jane McCready (Faith, New Providence) Western Middle District

Rob Rinderer (St. Paul, Beachwood), Shore Mission District

Agnetta Fasasi (Redeemer, Trenton), at-large youth

The Rev. Jack DiMatteo (Holy Trinity, Rockaway and Shepherd of the Hills, Sparta) at-large clergy

Celebration of the Bishop's Challenge: Caring for God's Good Creation

On Friday evening we celebrated the completion of our year-long Bishop's Challenge with a return of our superheroes who introduced the challenge to us a year ago. They presented awards in several categories to synod congregations. These "Tracies" went to:

Worship and Education – **St. Mark, Hamilton** for their Lenten study "Our Kairos Moment"

Building – **First, Clifton** for their Building First in Faith renovations

Grounds – **Good Shepherd, Weehawken** for The Good Shepherd Garden Project

Programs – **St. Timothy, Wayne** for their Bring Your Own Mug Project

Community Action/Activism – **St. Matthew, Jersey City** for their Food security, food stewardship, food salvage

Compost Award – **Zion, Egg Harbor City** for their Composting and Earthworm Farming and Composting Coffee Grounds projects

Solar Award - **Prince of Peace, Marlton** for their new Solar Installation

Plant-Based Award – **St. Stephen, Woodbury** for their Meatless Sunday Social

Youngest - **St Michael, Cherry Hill** for their Wildlife Habitat-Pollinator Garden Development

Oldest – **Holy Trinity, Manasquan** for Supporting and Expanding the 100th Anniversary Monarch Waystation & Pollinator Garden

Teamwork Awards – **St. Mark, Oaklyn** and **Bridge of Peace, Camden** for their Feed My Sheep/Community Garden

St. Bartholomew, Trenton and **Prince of Peace, Princeton Junction** for their Reducing Waste by collecting soft plastic for NexTrex project

Overall Award – **Living Waters, Ringoes** for their various efforts in the building, on the grounds, and in the community.

While the Bishop's Challenge has concluded, the work of caring for God's good creation continues.

Election of a Bishop

Through a process of prayer and discernment, the assembly elected The Rev. Dr. Christa Compton (Gloria Dei, Chatham) to serve as the next bishop of the NJ Synod. Pastor Compton was elected on the fifth ballot. Results of all the ballots can be found on the synod website (njsynod.org/assembly). We thank all of those who allowed their names to go forward in this election process.

Pastor Compton's term begins on September 1, 2025. Until that time, Bishop Bartholomew continues in office. Please respect Pastor Compton's transition time as she bids farewell to the congregation she has served for 12 years, moves, and gets oriented to this new call. Now is not the time to contact her for bishop related questions; you are invited to pray for her during this transition time and for the people of Gloria Dei. Installation of the new bishop will be held on Saturday, August 23, 1:30 pm at First Baptist Church, Lincoln Gardens, NJ. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will preside at this service.

And more...

The assembly recognized significant anniversaries of rostered leaders and congregations. Congregational

anniversary videos are posted on the assembly page of the website and will be shared throughout the year in Jersey Jottings.

The 2026 Spending Plan recommended by synod council was unanimously approved. Details of the plan can be found in the Bulletin of Reports on the website.

In addition to these official actions, we said farewell and thank you to Pastor Sara Lilja as she prepares to leave our staff to become the Executive Director of the NJ Coalition of Religious Leaders on July 1. We honored her at the banquet and presented her with gifts to the Culinary Institute of America and to ELCA World Hunger in her honor. We will miss Pastor Lilja's presence on our staff, even as she leads us in this interfaith effort of expanding our advocacy efforts.

We also said thank you to Bishop Bartholomew for her 12 years of service as bishop and presented her with a jar of well-wishes and a song. A fuller goodbye will take place at a dinner dance on Sunday, June 29; you can register for that dinner at njsynod.org/bishopcelebration.

This recap does not do justice to the spirit of joy and gratitude that was present throughout our time together. You can watch the live-stream of the assembly on our synod's YouTube channel – feel free to share it with others.

Plans are already underway for the 38th Assembly to be held Saturday, May 30 at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset, NJ. We hope to see you there!