



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Office of the Bishop

October 7, 2017

The Rev. Ruth F. Santana-Grace,
Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of Philadelphia
915 East Gown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19150

Dear Rev. Ruth Santana-Grace, Rev. Kevin Porter, Stated Clerk; Rev. Dr. Janel Dixon, Moderator; Elder Linda Rutkosky, Vice-Moderator; and the disciples of the Presbytery of Philadelphia:

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask for or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21

On behalf of the 154 congregations, missions, agencies and institutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I want to express my profound blessings, congratulations and kudos on this wonderful milestone as the Presbytery of Philadelphia celebrates 300 years of ministry in our region!

I regret I cannot be with you in person today as I am ordaining our newest pastor in the Lawncrest neighborhood of Philadelphia.

As the oldest Presbytery in our nation, your vibrant ministries inside and outside the walls of the Presbyterian congregations are models of faith active in love, service, and advocacy for all people – no exceptions! From generation to generation the faith communities and social ministry organizations of the Presbytery have invited people from every neighborhood and circumstance into relationship with Jesus Christ. Your Presbytery is a strong and courageous advocate for peace, justice and an end to violence in any form. What a blessing that today ecumenical and interfaith partners in the greater Philadelphia region have joined together to multiply our efforts to work together for justice.

For three centuries the Presbytery has blessed the greater Philadelphia area with institutions such as Presbyterian Hospital, the Orphanage, and the Home for Widows. Only God knows how many lives saved, healed and restored have occurred through these ministries. And in this generation, it is inspiring to see the many ways the Presbytery is collaborating with organizations like: Rhawnhurst Turning Point, Restorative Justice and Mural Arts, and School-to-Prison Pipeline. Through these partnerships, and others too numerous to mention, it is evident that the Presbytery stands alongside the marginalized and those who are the most vulnerable, in the greater Philadelphia area.

And on this 500th year of the Reformation, I am especially pleased and excited that as full communion partners we will continue to seek new ways to worship, serve and align with God's mission to bless, heal and reconcile the world.

And now may God's power at work within us continue to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask for or imagine.

With and in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Claire S. Burkat". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Claire S. Burkat, Bishop