



**New England Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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**BISHOP**  
The Rev. Margaret G. Payne

**ASSOCIATES**  
**TO THE BISHOP**  
The Rev. Theodore W. Asta  
The Rev. Alice Kerr Laird

September, 2011

Dear Colleagues in the Gospel,

This past year has been challenging in many ways – economic struggles, high rates of unemployment, constant political bickering and many natural disasters.....along with all the usual ups and downs of human and congregational life. But here is a piece of good news in our work together: you have been so faithful in your giving that we have been able to maintain steady support for the synod budget throughout the year. It is a joy to me that we have chosen goals that are both realistic and faithful, and are meeting them on a monthly basis.

Our theme of “Doing What Matters” and the powerful experience of the synod assembly have reaffirmed that God’s Spirit is guiding us to reach beyond ourselves to do God’s work of compassion and justice. That work takes many different forms according to context and the gifts of the people, but it is always a sign of God’s presence when we are nudged out of comfort zones into newness and toward care for those who are overlooked and marginalized.

In New England we are growing in support for ministry, new kinds of mission and financial giving. After cutting back to 54% from 55% last year, the Synod Council has voted to move to 54.2% in 2012. It is not a huge step, but we believe that it is achievable, and is an important sign. The spirit of this decision by the Synod Council is the desire to move back toward our expected synod obligation to the ELCA and to share the financial health of the synod. Even though there continue to be struggles for all of us to meet obligations and reduce spending, there is the blessing of “enough” to be able to do what God is calling us to do.

I ask that you think and pray about the proportionate share of your mission support for 2012. Our hope is that congregations will choose a percentage between 10% and 15% to pass along to the wider church. Even when there is financial uncertainty, either personal or institutional, God calls us to share beyond ourselves and to grow in our giving.

Please choose some percentage of growth that is reasonable and achievable for your congregation, and send in the forms as soon as you can. As we did last year, we will be calling parish pastors during the fall to ask about your goal and to hear from you about the successes and challenges that have marked your ministry recently. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Bishop’s Convocation and in visits in the year to come.

Blessings to you in this new program year, and thanks for your faithful partnership.

In Christ,

The Rev. Margaret G. Payne, Bishop  
New England Synod

Enclosures

MGP/lm