



**La Crosse Area Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's Work. Our Hands.

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Rev. Jim Arends, Bishop  
Rev. Elizabeth Howe, Dir. for Evangelical Mission/ Asst. to the Bishop

December 29, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ,

My time of serving as Bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod has come to an end. So, I am taking this opportunity to thank you. It has been an honor to serve as your bishop, to represent you throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and beyond. It has been a pleasure to serve with you in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through word and deed. And, while it has been challenging at times to lead us through difficult times, changes in our church, and a pandemic, I have always been aware of your prayers for my work, for our work, for Christ's work. Thank you for your efforts, your gifts, and your prayers.

One does not serve in this office without making mistakes and stepping on toes. I ask your forgiveness where my words and actions have hurt you. My intent has always been to build up the Body of Christ. I know this has also been your calling.

On January 1st I lose the title of the office and retain the title I have been called to carry for over 39 years, that of pastor. Pastor Chris Boerger will start his work as your interim bishop. You will find him to be more than capable, accessible, and a servant of the church. He has served as Bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod and as the General Secretary of the ELCA. He has also been my good friend for the last 12 years. I know you will give him and his spouse Dede a warm welcome.

In June you will elect the fourth called bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod. I know you will select a good servant and leader. The election will be in my prayers.

So, I return to thanks with a huge thank you to the staff of the La Crosse Area Synod office. For 12 years five of us served together – Pastor Libby Howe, Melanie Timmerman, Deb Wold, Alice DaFoe, and myself. At the end of this past August we thanked Deb and wished her well in retirement. Brianna Iverson has come on board and joined the solid and constructive work these people do on your behalf. Add to them all the volunteers who serve and I am overwhelmed with thanks.

Thank you all for candid and constructive meetings in synod work and in your fellowship halls. Thank you for raising up great candidates for ministry – some of the best people I have had

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the opportunity to know. Thank you for supporting work to feed our local hungry folk as well the hungry throughout the world. Thank you for the opportunity to proclaim God's goodness in your pulpits. I have great memories of you, of colleagues in the greater church, of siblings in Christ in Ethiopia, Peru, the Czech Republic, and beyond. Thank you for healthy and hearty laughter as we share joy in Jesus. Thank you.

I pray the Lord will bless you richly and use you greatly in the years to come.

Peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James A. Arends". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. James A. Arends  
Bishop