

## Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey Weekly Witness | May 16, 2017

We hear in the first lesson and in the Gospel reading from John that God promises not to leave us orphaned but sends an advocate to be with us on Earth. God is alive in and around us; the Holy Spirit fills us with the joy of loving our neighbors. But what does God look like and how can we identify God at work in our lives and communities?

At the recent assembly (convention) of the New Jersey Synod, Pastor Birgit Solano, who serves a multi-lingual congregation in Weehawken, asked those gathered to close our eyes and picture who we would like to sit around our table, sharing bread and wine.

Did we see a table of reconciliation? A table filled with laughter from people of all ages? A table with a seat for recent immigrants and longtime New Jerseyans, communicating in a cacophony of languages? Were we from an urban area and pictured having a meal with those from rural parts of our state? Did we envision a gathering of people with many different abilities? Was it not just bread and wine, but a potluck of foods from around the world?

New Jersey is [one of ten states](#) whose population of young adults is majority non-white, indicating a change in demographics that will eventually be represented throughout the state. More than [one-fourth](#) of New Jerseyans speak a language other than English in their homes. Each Sunday, our churches have services in German, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and more, and we offer "[noisy liturgies](#)" for persons who find it difficult to sit quietly for long periods of time.

As God abides with us, surely it is at tables, in sanctuaries, and in communities reflecting the diverse rainbow of God's people! Navigating relationships with people different than ourselves is never a simple task; but knowing that God is present in these interactions can inspire hope for a strengthening community.

The 78th General Assembly of the Episcopal Church outlined four components to "[Becoming Beloved Community](#)," assembled in a labyrinth structure, shown here. Through this resource, the vision is that, "Together, we can share the journey and become instruments of the healing and reconciling love of Jesus, whose loving, liberating, and life-giving way we follow."

This week the NJ State House will take up important legislation for the protection of persons with developmental disabilities. Nicknamed the [Stephen Komninos Law](#) (A2503), it has been crafted as a result of Stephen's untimely death because proper standards of care were not in place. As we work to become the beloved community, we must always be mindful that God has created so many different people with a wide variety of abilities and gifts. [Click here](#) for more information on persons with developmental disabilities in New Jersey.

How can your communities talk, work, and heal together around difference, whether ethnic, developmental, or demographic? Begin by discussing or illustrating the rainbow of brothers and sisters who are present in your community and identifying where God is present in your everyday lives.

### BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY AN EPISCOPAL JOURNEY TO RACIAL HEALING, RECONCILIATION & JUSTICE



Pray for a day where all of our tables are fully integrated with voices of myriad experiences. Trust that God is here to guide us and give us courage to have difficult conversations and grow as the Body of Christ. Consider inviting LEAMNJ to facilitate a conversation in your community.