



**The Rev. Claire Schenot Burkat  
Bishop**

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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The Rev. Claire Schenot Burkat assumed office as the fourth bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (SEPA) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on July 1, 2006. She serves as spiritual leader for about 95,000 members and nearly 170 ELCA congregations in the City of Philadelphia and Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.

During her tenure Bishop Burkat has streamlined the Synod staff and realigned staff roles with the key missional priorities of the Synod: connecting and resourcing congregations, evangelical outreach in the five county region, and empowering lay and clergy leaders. She has led the Synod through an extensive strategic planning process focusing on new priorities for Lutheran witness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This process seeks to align these directions with God’s mission and equip congregations and leaders to respond to the challenges they face. Under her leadership the Synod is moving its offices to the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia to create a Lutheran Center at the Mt. Airy campus.

Bishop Burkat has been a leader in local and national ecumenical and interfaith initiatives. She is co-convenor of the Religious Leaders Council of Philadelphia, which brings together Christians, Jews and Muslims on issues of concern to the region. She is a member of the steering committee of Christian Churches Together in the USA, a national body inclusive of the diversity of Christian families in the United States --Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, historic Protestant, and historic Black churches. She serves on the ELCA Ecumenical Task force, and is a trustee of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and Muhlenberg College.

At the time of her election, Bishop Burkat served as mission director for the Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, responsible for planting and nurturing new congregations and supporting transformational ministries. She previously served as an assistant to three Synod bishops and as mission director for the New Jersey Synod. She has overseen the planting of 16 ELCA congregations and designed a strategy for redevelopment of at-risk congregations that has been adapted for use in the ELCA. A respected consultant and trainer, she is the author of a number of publications including “Transforming Regional Bodies” (Alban Institute, 2001), co-authored with Roy M. Oswald.

A native of New York City, Bishop Burkat is a graduate of City University of New York, Queens Campus and received her master of divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1978. Bishop Burkat resides in Ambler, Pennsylvania, and is a member of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion in Philadelphia.

