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| December 11, 2017Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the Florida-Bahamas Synod,Wow! I can hardly believe I am sending this notice to you as your BISHOP!?! Sometimes I still have to remind myself that the Assembly really did happen, and that I am really beginning this new phase in my ministry. God is indeed a God of surprises!In fact, it makes me think of someone else who got a surprise from God. A young woman encountered an angel who gave her a message that she would bear a child, and that the child would be called Emmanuel. Talk about surprises! Shepherds watching their sheep on a hillside outside Bethlehem are overwhelmed by a choir of angels who proclaim to them that the Messiah has been born. Talk about surprises! I know each of us could share stories of how we have been surprised by God in big and small ways. In this season of Advent, as we wait in anticipation for all that God has in store for us, please share those stories of surprises with those around you.The last few weeks since I was elected bishop have been a whirlwind. I have been blessed by the prayers and support of the people at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Pompano Beach. I have been blessed by the prayers and support of Bishop Marcus Lohrmann and the rest of the staff in the synod office. I have been blessed by the words of affirmation and encouragement I have received from so many of you. I have been blessed by my wife Aura, my children, and my family who continue to encourage and support this step in my ministry.As I begin this work as your bishop, I am convinced that the surprises we will receive from God are not over. In the days ahead, our congregations will tell that great story of God surprising humanity by coming into the world in the form of a baby. Through worship, choir concerts, children’s pageants, Christmas parties, and more,  I pray this story fills your life with joy this season. In the weeks ahead, I will share with you more about my thoughts and vision about the ministry to which I have been called. I am aware that there are questions about the impact of a new bishop on the synod office. Our synod is blessed to have a great team of capable people as staff. It is an honor for me to work with them.  I ask for your prayers as I continue to seek candidates as Directors for Evangelical Mission to continue the work previously done by Pr. Jim Graeser and Pr. Jaime Dubon. I am grateful to Pr. Terrance Jacob, Pr. Wally Meyer and Pr. John Mocko for their willingness to continue serving in part-time interim capacity for a few more months. The makeup of the staff will continue to evolve as we dwell together in prayer and discernment, and as the Spirit reveals to us who God has called to serve the Florida-Bahamas Synod at this time. I pray that this season of Advent is full of your own surprises—opportunities to be surprised by all that God is doing in and through your life and ministry. I look forward to getting to hear those stories as I begin traveling around the synod, and I look forward to the way we TOGETHER will be surprised by God’s presence in our midst.Peace,*+Pedro*Bishop Pedro M. Suarez |

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