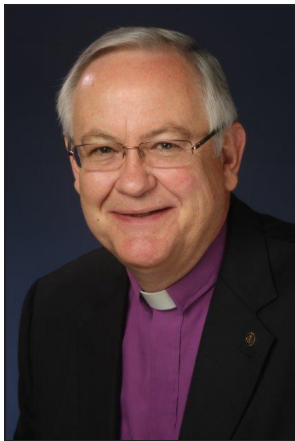


The Spirit

Eyes to See

by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



One of the great gifts in serving the office of bishop is the opportunity to be invited to see the many expressions of the ELCA here in the Northwest and throughout the country.

The learning curve has been extremely steep and the work very demanding. What balances this is the inspiration and joy that I

experience in getting to learn from so many of you.

I am seeing a church that is experiencing great vitality in these many expressions. We have passionate, gifted lay and rostered people who love this church and who serve it well.

I am eager to share my joy with you because I believe for too long we have been looking at the church and only noticing where it is in conflict or in decline. It is true we have ministries that are experiencing painful brokenness and ruptured trust. It is true that dollars have been tough to come by and attendance waning.

Perhaps the institution is in decline but the presence of the spirit and the working of the body of Christ is very much alive.

What we are experiencing reminds me of the feeding of the 4,000 in Mark. The crowds had been following Jesus and they were weary. Looking out

at the landscape of that moment it appeared bleak and surely not enough resources to respond to the hunger.

Jesus asks the disciples to make available what it is that they had - a few loaves and fishes. He then divided the offerings and proceeded to feed the entire crowd with leftovers to spare.

The disciples then cross over to other side with Jesus and he warns them to be mindful of the yeast of the pharisees and that of Herod. I suggest to you this is the yeast of scarcity. They wondered if Jesus warned them because they had no bread.

Jesus asked them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see and understand?"

He then goes on to remind them of how they had witnessed the feeding of the four thousand and the five thousand.

When we focus on what we think is the scarcity of our situation we fail to see the great capacity that we have to meet the needs of a hungry world.

I invite you in whatever context you are doing ministry to open your eyes and ears to see and hear where feeding is taking place. Where is there life? Where is their excitement?

May our joy be restored as we begin to see anew what is so right with the church. All of this made possible by a generous God of grace.

All Rostered Leaders - November 14th 8am - 3pm

Fall Bishop's Convocation: Dishing Up Grace

at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Bellevue

Register online.

Is God calling you to rostered leadership in the church?

Might you have a future vocation as a Deacon or Deaconess? An Associate in Ministry? A Pastor? A Diaconal Minister?

Writer and Episcopal priest Frederick Buechner tells the story of informing his family of his sense of call to ordained ministry at the family dinner table. His grandmother piped up, "Is this your own idea, or were you ill informed?"

The call to ministry is certainly always broader than just one person's idea! The consideration of a sense of call to rostered ministry in the ELCA is something that takes considerable thought, prayer, and community conversation. The place for that conversation to begin is in your own congregation where no doubt people with whom you worship regularly – perhaps even your pastor – have floated this thought, "Have you ever thought about becoming a pastor..."

When that Spirit begins to stir within you, the place to begin beyond your own heart and congregation is with our Synod's Candidacy Committee. Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Nancy Winder, will be happy to explore with you the initial steps of the candidacy process. You can easily reach her at candidacy@lutheransnw.org. Before you begin to think about a seminary education, or internship, or even, "is this a good idea?" the Candidacy Committee will begin its involvement of formation and nurture with you as a potential rostered leader for the church.

First steps look like this:

- registration with your home congregation
- an initial interview with a member of the Candidacy Committee
- a series of psychological tests and a background check
- your composition of an essay outlining your walk of faith and sense of call

All of this will lead to an entrance interview with the entire candidacy committee at the synod office. We will be eager to meet you and begin this journey together. At the time of your entrance, the synod and your congregation will enter into a covenant to support this potential ministry, and the congregation will be asked to contribute \$1000 toward the initial costs of your entrance into the candidacy process.

Seminary, practical work in a parish or other ministry setting, Clinical Pastoral Education

(CPE for short), and a host of other opportunities will be in your future as you make your way toward further discernment about how God is calling you to serve. All along the way, the Candidacy Committee, your local pastor and congregation, our Bishop, and the members of your seminary faculty and community will be your partners in prayer, discussion, education, and formation for the role of being a public leader of God's people.

In the Northwest Washington Synod, we have one of the most robust rosters of candidates for ministry of any synod in the ELCA. Our students in preparation for ministry study at ELCA seminaries across the country, and ecumenical institutions located right here in Seattle. We are grateful for having among our current candidates those hoping to serve on each of the four rosters of the ELCA: Ordained Pastors, Deacons/Deaconesses, Associates in Ministry, and Diaconal Ministers. In fact, just last month Elizabeth Culver was invested (ritually welcomed) into the deaconess community at a liturgy in Chicago.

Still interested? Great! Get in touch with Pastor Winder, Bishop Unti, or me and we'll arrange for the process to open before you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
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