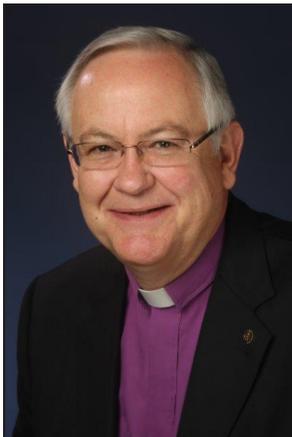


The Spirit

A Lifelong Learner by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. -Romans 10:17

It was a joy for me to be able to share in midweek worship with the gracious people of Gethsemane and The Garden in Seattle. Dinner consisted of a hearty bowl of chili and bread that was enjoyed by those of us seated at round tables.

Pr. Joanne Engquist was our guide as she helped us explore the depth of God's love for the world. She helped us move beyond the understanding that the creation is simply a back drop for our daily lives or something to be exploited for our own use. We explored together God's desire to redeem not just human lives but the whole creation.

Pr. Engquist masterfully introduced us to a variety of scriptural passages which helped us to see how reconciliation is not something that happens just between human beings. She graciously pointed out the tendency to reduce salvation as an act directed only at individuals and opened for us the expansive desire of God to reconcile all people unto God's self. Then she took us yet one step further as she taught us that the word for world in "God so loved the world" is cosmos. We were now exploring the cosmic dimensions of God's love.

Ceil Fjellman was seated at our table. Ceil was married to the late Bishop Gib Fjellman. Gib was my bishop when I first came into ministry. The Fjellmans have contributed immensely in shaping a deep love of the church for Kim and me. We hold them both as dear friends.

Ceil is very likely to see 100 years of age. This is due in no small part to the way she continues to seek out opportunities for worship and learning. I was so inspired to see Ceil participating fully in the conversation. She resonated with the notion that God loves the whole world. Ceil was articulate in her delight that God's love reaches far beyond the Christian community. I marveled at her openness and her willingness to expand her understanding of God and the whole creation.

The journey through God's love of the cosmos was coming to an end as we were about to move into the chapel for Holden Vespers. Ceil was still ruminating on the evening's word when she shared with us how her understanding of the creation had deepened through the conversation. "I have always thought of the creation as something beautiful that I have enjoyed but now I see that it is even more than that."

Sitting in my chair I could not help but think how amazing it was to watch a person who has lived so many years still enamored with God's word and willing to take in new understanding about the length and depth of God's love. Oh, that we might all be so open and willing to learn.

NW Washington Synod of the ELCA -- 2014 Synod Assembly -- May 16 & 17
Edward D. Hansen Conference Center, Comcast Arena, Everett
Online Registration Open Now ... **Registration Deadline May 2**
www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly-2014

Synod Assembly - Joining God's Parade - FAQ

Q: When & where is the assembly this year?

A: The assembly begins Friday May 16 and concludes on Saturday May 17. The entire assembly will take place at the Edward D. Hansen Conference Center at the Comcast Arena in downtown Everett, Washington.

Q: Who can come to the assembly?

A: Register in one of the following categories: Voting Member - Voice & vote; Observer – Voice, no vote; Visitor – No voice, no vote. Not sure which category? Call the Synod Office.

Q: How do I register?

A: Online registration only: www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly-2014. Deadline is May 2.

Q: What about becoming more paperless?

A: During registration you may select to have a notebook of printed materials prepared for you OR bring your own computer/tablet with the materials downloaded. All of the materials will be available on the synod website as they are prepared. We are also utilizing a new APP through Guidebook to make it easier for those who wish to be paperless. Go to your App Store, search for Guidebook – get it – it's free! Click Redeem Code - then enter 'lutheransnw' - you will then have all of the Assembly details at your fingertips instantly!

Q: What does it mean to be a voting member?

A: Voting Members are not delegates, they are selected by their congregation to serve on behalf of all the synod members, making decisions according to what they believe God is calling this church to do. They preview all materials, attend all sessions, listen attentively to and participate in discussions, learn about those nominated for election, seek the guidance of the Spirit, and report back to their congregation.

Q: When should I be there?

A: Registration opens at 8am on Friday. The Voting Member Orientation begins at 9:15am, followed by the opening of the assembly at 10am sharp. We will conclude at 5:30pm on Friday. We start bright and early at 8am on Saturday, wrapping up our time together by 5pm that afternoon.

Q: What happens at an assembly?

A: It is the annual gathering of members from the congregations and new mission starts from around the NWWA Synod. We expect to have nearly 400 people participate in worship, join in fellowship, be inspired by guest speakers (Dr. Tony Jones is our Keynote Speaker & Pastor Linda Norman, ELCA Treasurer is our Churchwide Representative,) and conduct the business of the Synod. Our business this year will include the elections of a Synod Vice President, a Synod Secretary, and Synod Council Members. We will hear various reports, vote on a Synod Budget, and consider resolutions that come before us. Friday afternoon we will offer a fellowship hour - with appetizers, live music and a no-host bar. And, don't forget to peruse our Ministry Partner & Book Parlor tables in the Display Area!

Q: How is an assembly conducted?

A: Bishop Kirby Unti will run the business meeting using the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. David Swartling will lend assistance by serving as our parliamentarian.

Q: Where can I find all of the info?

A: All materials will be posted on the synod website as they are finalized: www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly-2014 OR through the Guidebook APP.

Q: What's up with voting?

A: We will use electronic voting devices. These aid us in accuracy and speed. We will practice with them before officially using them. Proxy and absentee voting is not permitted.

Q: What about lunch?

A: Lunch each day is "on your own." You are encouraged to mingle with other attendees and check out the local restaurants (see the listing of local restaurants on the website). Be sure to let your server know that you need to be back by 1:30pm sharp for the afternoon sessions!

Q: Where should I stay overnight on Friday?

A: We have a special rate set up at the Inn at Port Gardner: www.innatportgardner.com or call 888-252-6779. Just let them know you are part of the Lutheran Synod Assembly at the Edward D. Hansen Conference Center at the Comcast Arena.

Q: How do I best prepare for the assembly?

A: Pray. Read all of the materials on the website thoroughly. Attend a pre-assembly Cluster Gathering for conversation about the matters coming before the assembly.

Q: What if I have further questions?

A: Contact the Synod Office, we will put you in touch with the right person!

The Spirit, a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is intended for members, leaders, and clergy of synod congregations and organizations. Congregations are encouraged to copy ***The Spirit*** and include it in their own newsletters. ***The Spirit*** can be downloaded from the Synod website.

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