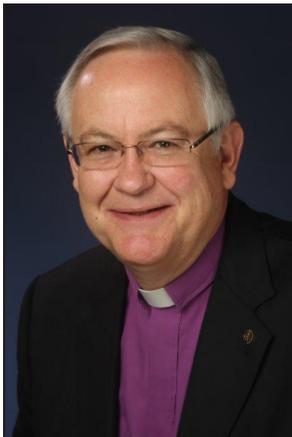


The Spirit

Fireworks & Forgiveness by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



“Return to the Lord your God for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” Joel 2:13

I was in the third grade. The Fourth of July had passed when my neighbor Johnny Buck and I found some duds - fire crackers that were lit but had not exploded. Johnny Buck and I knew

from watching the big boys on the block that you could explode them by ripping them in two, pouring out a little of the powder and lighting them with a match. Our attempt to light them on the front porch of our house was interrupted by our inability to keep the match lit. Being the rocket scientists that we were we decided to take them inside the house. My mother's dresser seemed like the perfect hard surface to complete the task. Sure enough we kept the match lit and had ourselves a swell explosion. What we hadn't taken into account was the black scar it would leave on the dresser top. Fortunately mom and dad were not home so I covered the spot with a magazine hoping against hope that it would never be discovered.

The problem was my conscience began to eat me alive. I was absolutely miserable by the

time my parents arrived home. They barely made it into the house when I blurted out my confession and broke into tears.

My father who meted out the punishment at the end of a belt went with me to examine the crime scene. Once the magazine was removed, the extent of the irreparable damage was obvious. I knew what I had coming. Honestly a spanking was better than trying to live with the guilt. What happened next took me totally by surprise. Just when I expected my father to unbuckle his belt he turned to me and said, “Kirby, your mother and I are very pleased you told us the truth. Telling the truth is the most important lesson you can learn.” That was it. No lecture, no punishment, and no spanking. It's fair to say those fire crackers were not duds. They left a lifelong impression upon me.

For me Lent is a season of invitation in which we are invited to explore more honestly the truth about who we are. It is a time to come to grips with what it means to be human. It is an opportunity to look at the shadow side of our lives. Lent is made possible precisely because of the invitation. “Return to The Lord your God because God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

Yes, we have a God who truly wants the best for all of God's children. May your Lenten journey be bold and full of truth and grace.

Synod Assembly - Joining God's Parade - May 16 & 17
Edward D. Hansen Conference Center, Comcast Arena, Everett
Online Registration Open Now
www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly-2014

Ideas for your Lenten Journey

The Big Class: Making Sense of the Cross Online Course

March 5–12, the Rev. Dr. David Lose, professor at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, will teach The Big Class, a program of ChurchNext. The course will expand on the popular Making Sense of the Cross, a six-session, small-group course published by Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis.

Dr. Lose will moderate the course and answer online questions during the week of The Big Class. Participants can take the class anytime during the week at churchnext.tv. The course will take 45 minutes to complete and need not be taken in one sitting. No special software is required.

The Big Class is a worldwide online course for all who want to go further in their walk with Christ and is free to everyone, everywhere, thanks to the support of Augsburg Fortress. Special materials will be available for congregations and education classes that desire to take the class together as part of a Lenten study.

Register: www.churchnext.tv/school/catalog/course/the-big-class-making-sense-of-the-cross-with-david-lose-free/

Family Friendly Calendar for Lent 2014

The Lutheran Magazine shared this FREE downloadable calendar from Rhonda Kindig of St John Lutheran in Abingdon, Va.

Here is the article: www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=11786

Download the calendar here. www.lutheransnw.org/files/resources/forty_days_of_lent_calendar_2014.pdf

“For God so loved the world...” Global Resources for Lent

Resources are now available for Lenten suppers, services, classes, events and offerings. See the attached pdf or find it and more at: www.ELCA.org/globalmission-resources.

Book of Faith - Lenten Journey

A series of seasonal Lenten Devotional resources. Each Lenten Journey offers opportunities to open scripture and engage in conversations about the Bible, with friends, family, or a small group during the season of Lent. In addition to the devotional content for each day, free downloadable worship helps are available for congregations that want to connect the devotional content with Lenten worship:

www.bookoffaith.org/

Into the Wild: A Lenten Liturgy and Intergenerational Study on Hunger

This five-part program follows the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and explores what it means to live out our faith in a world of hunger, suffering and hope. How does faith move Lutherans to respond to human needs, especially hunger? Each session is divided into small-group and large-group settings and can be adapted to fit your congregation's educational forums, workshops and mid-week gatherings.

Download and print this resource:

download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Into_The_Wild.pdf

There is also a family discussion guide:

download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Into_The_Wild_Parents_Guide.pdf

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.

Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

5519 Phinney Ave North
Seattle, WA 98103-5829
Telephone: 206-783-9292
Toll Free: 1-800-244-6997
Fax: 206-783-9833

Email: office@lutheransnw.org

Website: www.lutheransnw.org

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