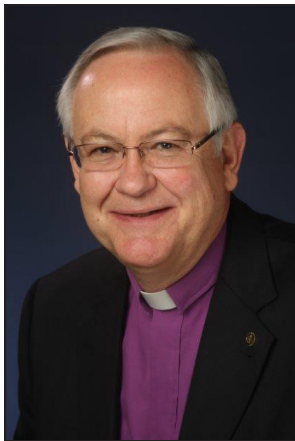


The Spirit

The Journey That Leads to Easter by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



The call came from the Patient's Advocacy Office at the Medical Center. A family I had never met before was requesting a visit from a Lutheran pastor to a young mother who, during a routine hysterectomy developed complications which placed her in a coma. The Patient Advocate explained to me that it was a very sad situation surrounded with great uncertainty. I walked

out the door feeling helpless. I prayed as I drove to the hospital that I might be able to be a person of grace for this family. Kathy was the mother of two young children. Her mother and husband introduced themselves to me when I entered the room. It was obvious they were frightened, their faces wearing the stains of their tears. Kathy lay in the bed surrounded by all the paraphernalia of an ICU room. My heart broke for them as they shared what little they knew. They asked if I would pray for Kathy which I did.

Over the next weeks I visited on a regular basis talking to Kathy as if she were able to hear and comprehend my words. I met her beautiful children and tried to support her husband and parents. It was an endurance contest for them and their hope was fading as alternative arrangements were being spoken about. One evening I dropped by the hospital. There was no family in the room when I entered.

I barely made my way in when Kathy said to me through her impaired speech, "Hi Pastor Kirby, I am so glad you are here." I was stunned. How did she know it was me? How did she know my name? Remember, we had never met before. I don't even remember what we spoke about. What I do remember is driving home in almost trance like state. Kim was taking a sewing class at the local fabric store. I had to tell her. I walked into the classroom and just blurted out, "Kathy woke up!" The class must have thought I was going off the deep end.

Kathy struggled mightily in the weeks and years to come to regain some sense of her life as her brain tried to rewire itself. She had to learn how to do everything new again. The people of St. Matthew's will never forget the day she walked on her own, haltingly to the communion rail. Her marriage would end but her two children would see their way through confirmation. Her mother and other extended family became part of the faith community. We all were amazed at Kathy's resolve in spite of the never ending challenges she faced.

Fast forward 25 years and Kathy's kids have grown up and she has remarried. Life continues to provide her with many challenges all which she seems to take in stride. Kathy's story for me is a reminder of why Lent invites us to practice the discipline of appearing before God daily, confessing our helplessness never too sure if God is aware of our presence or not. In fact "not knowing" is for me a major part of my Christian journey. Yet I continue to seek trusting that my Easter Days will come when God will speak my name, "Hi Kirby, I am so glad you are here."

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 1
www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly-2014

Get Ready to Serve!

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday

is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America — one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. On Sunday, Sept. 7, 2014, ELCA congregations will gather once again to serve communities in ways that share the love of God with all of God’s people.

As part of the ELCA’s 25th anniversary in 2013, the first-ever “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday provided ELCA members of all ages an opportunity to live out their faith in service to others. As a church that believes God is calling us into the world together, our congregations shared Jesus’ love with their neighbors and communities through a multitude of service projects.

The response from our members was moving and inspiring. Stories and images were shared about the impact the day of service had among congregations and their communities.

Was your congregation able to participate last year? We would love to hear from you! To share your storiee, ideas and expertises, touch base with Susan in the synod office.

Please help spread the word about “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday, Sept. 7, 2014. To assist you, information and resources will be available on www.ELCA.org. Download a toolkit which includes ideas for service projects, discussion questions, a checklist and tips for how to publicize your congregation’s activities with your local news media. You can also find bulletin inserts and flyers, designed to help your congregation plan their day of service. T-shirts will once again be available from Old Lutheran to help increase the visual impact across the ELCA.

What could we do?

First, take a walk around the neighborhood in which your congregation is located. Ask the neighbors closest to the church what they think would be helpful.

Contact local schools, parks, retirement homes, and service agencies and find out what projects they may have available.



Consider the many talents and skills in your congregation. God has given you much to share!

Build a planning team that includes all ages.

Brainstorm additional ideas on how best to show God’s love through your hands in your neighborhood.

Here is the beginning of a brainstorm list. May it ignite some ideas for your congregation as you plan!

Yard, trail, park or school clean up

Put together “Soup Kits” for a local food bank

Sponsor a game day at a local senior center

Offer a free concert and lunch for the community

Put together “Homeless Helper Kits” (sealable plastic bag with trail mix, jerky, dried fruit, toiletry supplies, gift certificate for a meal, etc.)

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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