



# Jesus sends us out

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop



*Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leav-*

*ing that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere (Luke 9:1-6).*

It's important for us to notice that when Jesus sent out the disciples all they received was the call and the authority to act on his call. They did not receive special training or a grant from the larger church. They received the gospel and were sent out with that charge.

We hear stories of mission being accomplished around us with thanksgiving. They tell that the work of the Spirit is still taking place among us. We are the instruments that the Spirit chooses to use in sharing the good news of Jesus

in word and deed.

As you read the stories in *The Lutheran*, you are reading about what God is doing. These stories are important for us to hear in order to push us into using our gifts in reaching out to our communities. I have often said that when the church becomes an institution, it can become more interested in its survival rather than its mission. The survival of the church is God's work. Our work is to be sent out to proclaim the reign of God and to heal the brokenness of our world.

I recognize that a large part of my current call is about the institution. But if I were to dwell on that alone, I would not be faithful to my call as a baptized child of God to share the gospel in my community and among my friends or the strangers who live around me.

It is essential for us to see that God is at work in our congregations, the synod and in the whole church. We have "branded" this church with the phrase "God's work. Our hands." The stories that you read are God's work. Your hands and mine are some of the tools God uses to accomplish this work. Our response is always thanksgiving and a renewed hearing of Jesus' call. In the church Jesus has called us together and given us power and authority and now sends us out. Jesus sends us out the front door of our homes and our churches into God's mission field. □

## It's all about food

"It's all about the food!" people say. God uses food to bring people together like nothing else.

In Everett, Faith Lutheran Church's fellowship hall was filled with good smells of hot food. The room was packed. And our ears were filled with both English and Spanish. The church was filled with music. The lawn outside was filled with children, some Latino and some Anglo, taking their turns at the colorful piñata hanging in the sunshine.

At this free family fiesta, Faith introduced our south Everett neighborhood to Esaú Cuevas, who started his pastoral intern-



**The Rev. Kari Reiten, Faith Lutheran, Everett, chats with Esaú Cuevas, the congregation's intern.**

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## How is God calling us?

By the Revs. Darla DeFrance and Rachel Bass-Guennewig

**C**olumbia City is a neighborhood on the southeast side of Seattle that has existed for many years—it's far from new. Recently the neighborhood has received quite a bit of press and attention for its new developments, rich diversity and strong sense of community. Over the years many faces have changed and just enough is different that it feels like a new neighborhood in a significant way.

And now the ELCA is doing a new thing in the neighborhood.

We (Darla DeFrance—three-fourths time and Rachel Bass-Guennewig—one-fourth time) have been hired as a team to develop

a community of faith out of the deep and faithful foundation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, now known as “Columbia City Church of Hope.”

When Bethlehem voted to close this spring, members donated their building to Compass Housing Alliance with the intent of developing it into low-income senior housing in the future. In the meantime, the new start will use the building as several former members of Bethlehem join in the work of tilling the soil for the new mission.

This new start will take shape around practicing our faith in various ways and connecting people to Christian community through many spokes of faithful living. In this exciting time of new beginning, we are asking ourselves: How is God calling us to reach out to our neighbors and to form a community of faith that reflects Christ's love for all people?

As we seek to incarnate Christ's love through face-to-face encounters with our neighbors, here are a few of the focus areas for our life together:

**Hospitality.** Through the summer and fall, the team gathers regularly for prayer and visioning while going out to visit other churches and stir up memories of what it feels like to be a stranger in a community of faith. We will draw

on those feelings to lay a foundation of gospel hospitality.



**The Revs. Rachel Bass-Guennewig (left) and Darla DeFrance at the farmer's market in Columbia City.**

The new start will also join in neighborhood festivals and continue to welcome community groups such as a chorus and children's theater camp to share the building. Organizations such as Lutherans Concerned and the Kaleidoscope Institute will guide us in shaping a community that is truly welcoming to all people.

**Justice & sustainability.** Blessed with a location in the heart of the most diverse zip code in the U.S., the new start will seek to work for justice with and for our neighbors, developing ties with local organizations and issues such as immigration reform, hunger and care of creation.

**Worship.** As part of our spiritual life together, Bass-Guennewig (a registered and experienced yoga instructor) offers a yoga practice three times a week. Yoga is a way for people to listen to the Spirit in the quiet movements of their body and in the stillness of their breath.

Other small groups will form, oriented toward Bible study, service and fellowship.

Sunday worship begins this fall at the new start, meeting the third Sunday of each month. In February, we plan to officially launch with weekly Sunday worship.

Please keep us in your prayers as our God who makes all things new stirs up new life in our midst. □



**Columbia City Church of Hope, formerly Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Seattle.**

# The work of the Holy Spirit

In every way, the Sudanese who chatted with Jane Prestbye, pastor of Kent [Wash.] Lutheran Church, about membership were a surprise.

It was a surprise they would pick a downtown church, serving a diverse population but mostly formed of white parishioners. It was a surprise that they wanted to be part of the community, not just a parallel congregation. It was a surprise when the Sudanese leaders of the incoming group were all named Gach, a word that means “surprise” in Neur.

“Not only do I like pleasant surprises but I have been amazingly surprised by the work of the Holy Spirit to bring these families to gather with

us at Kent Lutheran,” Prestbye said.

And in each way that the emerging Sudanese ministry was surprising, it was also exciting for the existing congregation.

Kent’s Sudanese ministry is unique, Prestbye said, because the new parishioners want to be part of the established congregation, not just use the building for their separate ministry.

For example, after the June 13 welcome service, where 85 Sudanese joined the church, they invited the rest of the congregation to a potluck the following week. Unlike other church potlucks, the Sudanese congregants had no intention of having their fellow parishioners bring cheese platters or potato salad. The potluck was a way for them to introduce their new community to their culture—meals, music and clothing.

For many of the Sudanese members, the Pacific Northwest was not their first destination in the U.S. Refugee programs first sent them to Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota, where they experienced weather so different from what they were used to.

Now at Kent Lutheran, they have settled into a permanent community where they can raise their children, most of whom were born in the U.S.

“Our youth ministry has suddenly tripled in number and the task before all of us is clear,” Prestbye said. “Not only will we continue to welcome and befriend but we will also step up to the responsibility of shaping the faith of our young people with kindness and care, participation and encouragement, prayer and witness.”

Even while maintaining their own culture and history, the Sudanese parishioners are involved with the rest of the congregation. And the established congregation, in turn, is determined to welcome the new parishioners with open arms.

“I am inspired by the faithful worship of those who do not yet understand the English language,” Prestbye said. “We will have so many chances to serve each other and together serve our community.” □

Heather Meier

*Meier is a member of Kent [Wash.] Lutheran Church.*

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ship at Faith in September. Earlier this year, Cuevas had jumped into his internship, coming each Thursday to help with our English Language Learning Class. Most of the students are Latino and have connected well with Cuevas—often staying after class to *charlar* (chat) and play guitars and sing.

Cuevas never imagined that he would be called to serve in bilingual ministry. His experience had been with Spanish-speaking El Camino de Emaus Lutheran Church, Burlington. This internship at Faith will stretch him in his pastoral call. Faith Lutheran, while dreaming of bilingual ministry for a long time, could not have imagined what God had in store through this internship.

But God has been working in mysterious and surpris-

ing ways to bring us together.

And why has God called us together? Is it *really* “all about the food”? Yes, but not about the pizza we served at the family fiesta. It’s all about the *heavenly food* we receive in the bread and wine, the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is what has brought Cuevas and Faith Lutheran together. And we will be following this same Jesus into the new territory of sharing the gospel in new and challenging ways.

Glory be to God! □

The Rev. Kari Reiten

*Reiten is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Everett.*