



The Spirit

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News for the congregations of the Northwest Washington Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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An Advertisement On A Bus by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



Driving to the office last week I was passed by a Metro bus with an advertisement that read, "Yes, Virginia there is no God."

I had heard of this ad from a pastor the Sunday before so it was not a complete surprise. It does describe the culture

into which we are called to witness to the love and power of God.

It would be easy to dismiss the ad as a statement of an increasingly militant form of atheism. It would also be easy to jump to some form of competing advertising campaign.

The reality is that we are not called to do the easy thing. We are called to share the hope that is in us with those around us. Like Paul in Athens, this ad may well serve to begin a conversation about this God that the ad dismisses.

If we allow the anti-religious arguments to define God or what it means to be the church, then we will have failed in our call to witness to the Triune God. There is an attempt to lay the problems of violence and intolerance at the doorstep of religion. There is much historic evidence to support such claims. We are

however called not to repeat our sins of the past but to define ourselves in the light of the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

We see the reality of sin around us daily. The wars and rumors of war, the greed that endangers whole economies, the prejudice against others not like ourselves, and the misuse of creation are daily headlines in the paper.

The problem is that they are seen as merely problems and not as sin. We contribute to this and we suffer because of this brokenness.

But God, in mercy for us and the world came among us in Jesus. We are not left with the judgment of death. We have the promise of life and hope in Jesus. The response to Virginia's letter to Santa Claus was to point to the good being done through the "myth" of Santa Claus. Our response to the current ad campaign must be to speak to the good being done by God in our lives and in the life of the world.

It is time for us to define ourselves in the world. We are the people of God. It is God's action in Jesus and through the Holy Spirit that makes faith possible.

So we use the Means of Grace, the word and the sacraments, to become instruments of the Spirit's work in the world. The sign is not the ad on the bus, it is the cross and empty tomb that brings hope to the world.

This Advent season consider giving family and friends a gift from the ELCA Good Gifts. You can easily support a seminary, provide food or water, provide farm animals, etc. The selection are endless and the choice is yours. Visit the synod's website at www.lutheransnw.org and click on ELCA Good Gifts on the homepage. Blessings to you this season.

Around The Synod

- In the summer of 2010 the fourth delegation of youth from the NE Seattle partner churches (**Faith, Maple Leaf, Prince of Peace and University**) will head to Ailanga Lutheran Junior Seminary in Usa River, Tanzania. The youth are currently busy raising funds to support this mission outreach project. Past delegations have raised funds that helped the school to build dormitory space, a science lab and a computer lab. Some school scholarship money has also been raised.
- **University Lutheran in Seattle** was part of the U Distric Conversation on Homelessness held in November. The conversation included discussions centered around how services with homeless people can be better coordinated throughout the University District as well as how to advocate for these individuals at a city and county level.
- The Sky Valley Food Bank has recently been providing enough food each month for more than 50,000 meals. **Morning Star in Monroe** supports the food bank.
- **Bethany Lutheran on Bainbridge Island** held a humor fundraiser to raise funds for LATCH. Besides having a lot of fun more than \$1300 was raised. The congregation also recently held a Fair Trade Fair where more than \$3000 was raised to address poverty world-wide by providing sustainable wages for artisans' families.
- **At Holy Spirit in Kirkland** the confirmation program is focusing on service. In October the confirmation class put learning into action as 18 students and their adult leaders dined with Tent City residents.
- In October members of **Nativity in Renton** provided more than 200 pairs of socks for Operation Nightwatch's *Sock It To The Homeless* fall ingathering of socks nad articles for the homeless population of Seattle.
- In November the Sunday School children and WELCA from **St. Peter in Clinton** prepared 20 Health Kits to be sent overseas as part of the Fall Pacific Northwest Ingathering of Kits for Lutheran World Relief.
- In January members of **Faith in Redmond** will be providing dinners on two separate

nights for homeless men who are able to stay at Redmond Methodist Church. The church provides a warm place for them to sleep and the kitchen facilities for them to make breakfast and lunch with donated provisions. Faith is just one of many churches who provide dinners to the men.

- The Sunday School classes at **Our Savior's in Stanwood** are using their offerings from December to be used for *God's Global Barnyard*. So far they have collected enough money for one pig and a flock of chickens.
- **Central in Seattle** has received a \$10,000 grant from Seattle Public Utilities to remodel their parish hall. Central received the grant because the congregation is part of a project to rescue food from the waste stream in Seattle. It is estimated that one third of all waste in Seattle is from food. Community Lunch (a program at Central) receives food from restaurants and supermarkets, and they estimate that they recover 96 tons of food each year.
- **Trinity in Freeland** supports the homeless in Seattle through meals, clothing and other items. In late October they were able to feed 100 people a lunch and give some much needed, and appreciated, clothes and quilts.

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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