



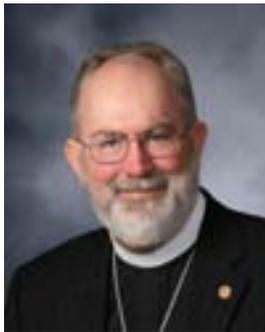
The Spirit

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

November 2011

God's Generous Response by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



How do we give thanks this year?

That is not a question about what is on the menu for the annual Thanksgiving Feast. It is a question about how we see our world and ourselves.

Walter Brueggemann in his book *Journey to the Common Good* argues

that the forces of empire and Pharaoh are always working from the scarcity, fear and control. In contrast, the people of Israel learned in the Wilderness that God brings abundance, shalom and the presence of God. He argues that Jesus' feeding miracles continue this pattern.

We live in a time when our consumer culture wonders if there will be enough (scarcity). Our threats used to be color coded and the world seems out of control. Brueggemann argues that this is how the world is when we ignore the Word of the Lord that has come to us. It is a compelling argument.

It is easy to over-focus on what we don't have or what we might lose. While our anxiety increases, our fears look to quick fixes so that we can say that we are doing something about our situations. Our desire for a church that was like we remember is a symptom of our participation

in this longing. Like the people of Israel complaining in the wilderness that they at least had meat when they lived in Egypt, so we look back with longing to times that were not as good as we remember them.

The Word of the Lord came to.....That is the good news in Brueggemann's analysis. The Word became flesh and lived among us. That is the good news for us. Our relationship with God and with the rest of creation comes from the abundance of God who comes among us. Samuel Torvend argues that our response to the poor comes from God's abundance at the Eucharist. Our life together, the common good, is based in God's abundant and generous response in creating and re-creating us.

The harvest is in. The economists will tell us if we have enough. The people of faith should rise up and affirm that we have more than enough. We have the blessings of God to share and these blessings, like manna, are sufficient for each day. We give thanks to God for God's presence in countless ways. So the food that we eat, we can share. The grace that we live in is not ours, but God's to be extravagantly poured out into the world. The hope that we have comes from God.

Thanks be to God.

Gifts That Make A Difference

Did you know that the average American plans to spend \$700 on Christmas gifts this year?

Challenge yourself and your congregation to rethink the tradition of gift-giving by participating in ELCA Good Gifts. Together as the ELCA, we

do more than we could ever do alone: grow our congregations, inspire new leaders and care for those around the world who live with hunger and poverty.

ELCA Good Gifts are a creative way to do just that. Visit www.elca.org/goodgifts to learn more.

Congratulation Leymah Gbowee!

Just two days before learning that she was a recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, Leymah Gbowee was speaking to a captivated audience at Queen Anne Lutheran Church in Seattle.

The Nobel Peace prize was awarded to Gbowee for “non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work.”

Gbowee, a member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, is responsible for organizing a non-violent women’s movement that brought an end to a 14-year civil war in Liberia.

The starting point of the women’s movement was war fatigue, said Gbowee, a mother of six children. She grew tired of watching children die from hunger and “waking up every morning and not knowing whether a tomorrow was possible. You can’t plan for the future.” Along with thousands of other women from across



Leymah Gbowee speaking at Queen Anne Lutheran in Seattle.

Liberia, Gbowee wanted to dream of a better community. She decided it was time to stop the war and called together women of all faiths—Christian, Muslim, indigenous and others—from across Liberia to “step out,” recognizing that Liberian women can play a critical role in peace building.

Gbowee’s story is chronicled in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. She has just completed her memoir, *Mighty Be Our Powers: How*

Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War -- a book that examines “the power of women and the power of faith in getting you (out) from the darkest place in your life,” she said.

Gbowee was a keynote speaker at this year’s Triennial Gathering in Spokane. For the full press release on Gbowee please visit www.elca.org.

FAN’s Positions On Initiatives

Faith Action Network (FAN) takes positions on three ballot initiatives:

- **Recommend Opposing Initiative Measure No. 1125;** limits transportation funding.
- **Recommend Endorsing Initiative Measure No. 1163;** improving long-term care for elderly.
- **Recommend Opposing Initiative Measure No. 1183;** concerning the sale of liquor (spirits).

For more information about these positions visit www.fanwa.org or call 206-464-4133. The organization FAN is the merger of Washington Association of Churches and Lutheran Public Policy of Washington.

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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