

The Spirit

God Has Called Us To Be The Church

by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



It is that time of year for annual meetings, reviews of the past year and preparation for the new year. It is time for the annual health risk assessment. It is time to file the parochial report and for rostered leaders to send in their annual report to the bishop. It is

a time of evaluation and renewal.

I continue to ask for these reports and reflections. They are not our primary work and there are good questions being asked if they even reflect the church we should be or just the church that we used to be. I do think that this is a good question.

How do we actually share the information about what our congregations and worshipping communities are doing? Is it in the numbers or the activity or in some other statistical measurement?

I am confident that the numbers do not tell the whole story. But the numbers are giving us a disturbing picture. As a synod, most of our congregations are seeing declining numbers in worship, in membership and in educational classes. That may not be a complete picture but it is a warning symptom of changes we need to face.

The ELCA Conference of Bishops is asking questions about what will the church, specifically on the local level, look like in the future. Can we afford full time professional clergy? Are our buildings tools to advance the gospel mission

or monuments to an institutional past? How should we share the gospel with the neighbor and the stranger and give a cup of cold water to those in need? These questions do not have easy answers. The complexity of the issues cannot be dismissed.

These are the times in which God has called us to be the church. The church is the Body of Christ in the world for the life of the world and the work of God. That is our mission.

We have a long history as an institution. What it will mean for the future is not clear. The church, as God's work, will continue. I am confident that God is still calling us to do God's work in the world, in our neighborhoods and in our homes. How we will train leaders is changing. How we will assemble as the local communities of faith is changing. How we will work together as God's people around the globe is changing.

So I ask you to file the appropriate reports. I know that they do not tell the whole story. As we have these conversations it is helpful for us to see the partial snapshots that these reports give us. We will be changed and that is good news.

2013 Synod Assembly and Bishop Election

Thursday, May 16, through Saturday, May
18

Lynnwood Convention Center

www.lutheransnw.org/assembly2013

Here 'n There

- **Women of Region 1 Gathering at Heathman Lodge, Vancouver WA**—ELCA Women from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana will be gathered together for a weekend of fun, fellowship and learning. Keynote Speaker is author, Jane Kirkpatrick. Introduction to the fall “Gather” magazine Bible Study by author Bishop Kay Ward. Registration begins at 3 p.m. on June 21, with dinner at 6 p.m. The event ends at noon on Sunday, June 23. The location is: Heathman Lodge, 7801 NE Greenwood Dr., Vancouver, WA. Need more information? Nancy Quale at 425-746-6559 or email her at nquale@comcast.net.
- The Holiday Food Basket Ministry at **Advent Lutheran Church in Mill Creek** has grown to become a community-wide effort with many sponsors: US Navy Commissary in Marysville, Staples, Central Market in Mill Creek, Lowe’s and Costco. To fuel the volunteers, coffee was donated by Starbucks and dozens of donuts arrived from three local donut stores. All told, 100 volunteers filled grocery bags that were then delivered to 200 families, around 800 people.
- **Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber**, an ELCA pastor in Colorado and mission developer, was well received as she spoke to the 40,000 youth at 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. Our synod youth will have a chance to hear her again at 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 2, at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, 3030 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue 98004. This event is aimed at the youth/youth groups of the synod. A free will offering will be asked to help offset costs. If you have any questions about the event or to express interest in attendance, please contact Janet Cederberg, Associate in Ministry, at janet@slukes.org.
- The **installation of the newly elected bishop** (elected at the 2013 Northwest Washington Synod, May 16-18) will take place on Sunday, September 15. Time and location to be determined.
- The **opening worship service** for the 2013 Northwest Washington Synod Assembly will take place on Thursday, May 16, at

Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynnwood. **ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson will participate in the worship.** Everyone in our synod is invited to join assembly voting members in this worship service. Time to be determined. More details will be available on the synod’s website at www.lutheransnw.org.

- **Germany in December 2013?** Faith Journeys presents a 10-day Reformation & Christmas Market Tour to Germany this December with host **Pastor Bjoern Meinhardt of Vashon Lutheran Church, Vashon Island.** Contact Pastor Bjoern for more information at vlc98070@centurytel.net or 206-463-2655.
- In April, members of **Kent Lutheran Church in Kent** will be headed to South Sudan for their second mission trip. The group’s primary goal is to drill a well in Malual, South Sudan. The reason? Eighty percent of fatal diseases in Africa’s developing countries are preventable with clean water. The travelers will also be delivering essential first aid and medical supplies; education supplies; Nuer Bibles; and, as space permits, Little Dresses and Little Shorts for Africa. Learn more at: <http://www.klcsouthsudan.blogspot.com/>

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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