

The Spirit

The Season Of Epiphany by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



Let me express my thanks for all of the prayers and greetings these past few weeks as my Mother died. She was an outstanding student and teacher of the Bible. I am confident of God's gracious love for her and for all of us. That is the legacy that I received from her.

Your witness of faith and of compassion is also a treasure for me and for my family. Thank you.

Now we move into the season of Epiphany. This season is about the revealing of the grace of God to all of creation. Beginning with the visitors from the East through the Mount of Transfiguration we will hear how Jesus was revealed to the faithful and the stranger.

That is still our task.

The church is about this revealing of God to a world that increasingly wonders if God is real or truly cares. The 24-hour news cycle was forced to ask this question in the horrible wake of the shootings in Newtown, Conn.

The question of where is God or where was God was asked openly and with feeling. It is our task to say that God wept with us on December 14. God is not absent from our times of pain. God is not our servant rescuing us from situations that will cause pain. God stands with us and the innocent victims and, perhaps most scandalously, with the ones who inflict the pain.

Epiphany is about our saying that God in Christ is in the world as it really is. Ours is not a

God that only shows up when there is joy and comfort.

The Bible is full of texts reminding us that God favors the poor, the outcast and the stranger. These are the ones who know what suffering and loss is all about. God stands with them and beside them, and expects the church to be beside them too.

Too often we have debates between the social gospel and the evangelical gospel. God does not have such debates. God is in the cup of cold water given to the thirsty child and God is in the call to receive the grace of God through the work of the Holy Spirit in faith. God is revealed in both. In both, the church is another sign of God's epiphany.

As we begin this New Year, may we be the people who do reveal the love of Christ in our homes, workplaces and to those whom the world has left behind.

I have heard the comment that it is not the church that has a mission. It is God's mission that has a church. We are that church and it is time for us to get to work.

Nominations For Bishop

Nominations for the Bishop Election opened on Friday, November 16, and will close on Saturday, February 16, 2013.

Information and guidelines are available on the synod website at www.lutheransnw.org/bishopselection.

Here 'n There

- The **Candidacy Committee** is holding an informational workshop (click here for flyer) from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 9, at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, Seattle. This is an opportunity to learn more about the process. Email candidacy@lutheransnw.org.
- The **Gethsemane Lutheran Church Mission Endowment Grant** process is now open. To learn more about the process please visit www.urbanfaith.org. Applications are due by February 28, 2013.
- Ballard Ecumenical Ministry (**Ballard First Lutheran Church in Seattle**) has been serving local mentally ill homeless since 1998. BEM provides guests with a warm, inviting atmosphere, a good meal, evening companionship, and a safe overnight place to sleep. The mission is to be companions. The objective is to provide a warm and safe shelter in an atmosphere of respect.
- One day a week, for almost 20 years now, members of **Queen Anne Lutheran Church in Seattle** prepare lunches for almost 250 people for Community Lunch on Capitol Hill (Central Lutheran Church in Seattle). Members also serve the donated food and help clean up. Of course, there are many others who also volunteer.
- *Safe Parking* at **Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church in Seattle** is no longer a "pilot", it is a "program" and is included in the Seattle City budget. *Safe Parking* is a place for those who have no shelter except for their vehicle.
- **Oak Harbor Lutheran Church** participates in the "roadside pickup" program. In 2012 ten members participated at various times, collecting 44 bags of trash along a two-mile stretch of Hwy 20 north of Oak Harbor.
- In November members of **Bethel Lutheran Church in Shoreline** welcomed their newest on-site ministerial partner: Aaron's Place. Aaron's place was started in 2004 to meet the serious needs of day services for young adults who have recently graduated from high school. The arrival of Aaron's Place means that 24 groups regularly use the space at Bethel! Groups include day programs, 12-step groups, an on-site counselor and other worship communities.

End Malaria Event On Saturday, February 2

What is a mosquito for you? A nuisance? There are millions of people in the world for whom a bite of a mosquito can cause malaria and infect them with a life-threatening disease.

On Saturday, February 2, the End Malaria Team of our synod invites you to an event to learn about our efforts to end malaria. It is our goal to raise \$150,000 by the next Synod Assembly in May. (Presently, we stand at \$70,000.)

This event is not necessarily a fundraiser by itself. Rather it is meant as an opportunity to hear and learn about malaria, and about programs and initiatives that have taken place in our synod to raise both awareness and funds.

Our financial support will help people in many sub-Saharan countries to receive insecticide-treated mosquito nets, medical assistance, and education about malaria prevention. To help end malaria is a communal effort of our synod. Together we can reach the goal to help people who are also made in the image of God.

The event takes place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 2, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 6215 - 196th Street SW, Lynnwood, 98036. There is a \$10 fee. Lunch will be provided. To learn more or to register visit www.lutheransnw.org/endmalaria.

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.

Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

5519 Phinney Ave North
Seattle, WA 98103-5829
Telephone: 206-783-9292
Toll Free: 1-800-244-6997
Fax: 206-783-9833
Email: office@lutheransnw.org

Editor: Margit Peiffle

Email: margit@lutheransnw.org
Telephone: 206-783-9292
Website: www.lutheransnw.org

Information for the March issue of *The Spirit* is due to the Synod Office by Wednesday, February 6.