

Prepare to respond

By Bishop Shelley Wickstrom



Shelley Wickstrom, bishop of the Alaska Synod.

The public service announcements tell us to have five to seven days of food and water at home in case of a disaster. Has your congregation thought about what to do in a disaster?

At our synod assembly (April 24-25 at Fairbanks Lutheran Church), Rick Cavens, a National Guard chaplain, and Don Warble of the American Red Cross of Alaska will offer workshops in disaster preparedness for congregations.

Warble is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Wasilla, and has provided the following to assist in our preparation. The goal is that every congregation in this synod will be prepared to respond in a disaster. “God’s work. Our hands.”

BE INFORMED. Fostering awareness in your congregation about potential hazards and having a plan set in place can save time, resources, money and, most importantly, lives.

Potential disasters in Alaska range from earthquakes, wildfires, severe weather, floods and tsunamis to hazardous materials incidents, and possibly even a terrorist attack. Knowledge that these incidents can occur at any time and could overwhelm a community (including public safety and a city’s critical infrastructure) is important for organizations and individuals to have. People will need to help themselves. Knowledge is a powerful tool in faith and in the need to protect oneself and others from harm.

Once everyone knows the kinds of disasters or emergencies that can occur in their community, it is time to move forward with the creation of emergency supply kits for the home, car, workplace, school and church. Map out emergency fire escapes and evacuation plans. Know how you will communicate and reunite with family. Pre-planning today helps everyone gather strength to move forward and begin the road to recovery when a disaster strikes.

BE INVOLVED in community preparedness activities and

citizen-based training programs to help your community be ready.

In 95 percent of all emergencies, bystanders or victims themselves are the first to provide emergency assistance or to perform a rescue. Refer your congregation to www.fema.gov or to their city website to find out more about training and volunteer opportunities. No matter where your church members live there are opportunities for all to get informed, get prepared and be involved in preparedness.

The individual citizen is the most valuable tool in the prevention of crime and terrorism. Help your community and others around our state better prepare for any kind of disaster or emergency. Church family members will turn to their faith in times of need, for comfort and support. Start today: welcome the message of preparation into your house of worship.

BE READY. Prepare your congregation by sharing these Scripture references.

Isaiah 41: 17-20; 61:1-3

Psalms 9:9-10; 23: 4; 46, 55:22; 57:1; 100:5, 121

Matthew 5: 1-10; 25: 34-40

Luke 10:25-37

John 9:2, 10:1-10

Acts 5:32

Romans 8:31-39

1 John 3:17-18

IDENTIFY A TEAM that will create a disaster plan for your local church. All members of this team may or may not be part of the group that implements the plan in the event of a disaster. The team will design a plan specific to the needs and requirements of the local congregation, including suggestions for these questions:

- What should be done to prepare church property prior to a disaster and who should be involved in the preparation?
- How will the church care for the congregation during and after a disaster?
- How can the church use existing resources before, during and after a disaster?
- How will the church serve the community before, during and after a disaster?

The disaster response ministry should support the mission and vision of the church. □

‘Joining God’s Parade’

By Bishop Brian Kirby Unti

F*iddler on the Roof* is one of my favorite musicals because of the way it holds in tension the deep value and importance of tradition on the one hand and the need to allow new forms and expressions on the other hand.

It is my hope that the 2014 Northwest Washington Synod Assembly, with its theme of “Joining God’s Parade,” will capture this same paradox as we wrestle with what it means to be the church in the world today.

Lutheran DNA is deeply rooted in paradox!

Joining God’s Parade is intended to be a reformation movement. We join Martin Luther in advocating the importance of providing access to the means of grace. Just as Luther translated the Scripture into German, we will explore how to translate the gospel into language that is accessible to the people in our neighborhoods.

Joining God’s Parade takes seriously that God is not only discovered within the four walls of the church but that God is constantly up to something out in the community. It is an invitation to develop eyes that begin to see where God may be at work. It is an encouragement to listen deeply to the cry of the people that we might be where God is present.

Joining God’s Parade is an opportunity to dialogue with keynote speaker Tony Jones, who is recognized as a leader in the emerging church movement (see page C). Jones comes with his own scar tissue and deep desire to engage in honest dialogue with those who may never enter the doors of our church. These people were created by God and are hungry to know an alternative to the consumer narrative that has shaped their lives. We hold this alternative narrative in our tradition. It is known as the theology of the cross. How do we make it accessible to the emerging culture?

Joining God’s Parade will be blessed by the presence of the Rev. Linda Norman, ELCA treasurer (see page C). She

will serve as our church-wide representative. Norman is about far more than dollars and cents. She is on fire for mission and is gifted in her ability to share this with others.

Joining God’s Parade is about exploring together how to be stewards of our Lutheran inheritance and discovering new ways to express it.

Joining God’s Parade will lift up our ministry partners who serve deep in our neighborhoods. You will have an opportunity to visit with representatives from social agencies, synod committees, Lutheran colleges and seminaries, and more. We have also invited the Book Parlor (a ministry of Salem Lutheran Church, Spokane, Wash.) to bring a collection of materials for sale that will encourage, support and equip us for our work together.

Joining God’s Parade is about calling people to serve who have a passion for mission in the Northwest. We will elect leaders to the following positions: vice president (lay-person), secretary (clergy or lay), and 14 Synod Council members (including a youth, a young adult, and various lay and clergy positions).

Pick up the instrument that God has made you to be and participate in the joyous music-making that happens when together we “join God’s parade.” □



Brian Kirby Unti, bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod.

Northwest Washington Synod Assembly, May 16-17, Edward D. Hansen Conference Center, Comcast Arena, Everett.

Northwest Washington



Members of the 2012-2014 Northwest Washington Synod Council.

Striving to be faithful and effective

By Georganne Robertson

“What do you do?” These four words are asked again and again, in many settings, in many ways. Sometimes it’s asked politely, by strangers or new acquaintances, at large social gatherings or in the confines of economy class flights—times and settings where there is actually little interest in the answer. This time the question came indirectly, in an email invitation to write about the Synod Council.

Is the question “What does the Synod Council do?” answered by our constitution, which describes it as the synod board of directors, the interim legislative authority, and lists eight functions? Our former ELCA Secretary David Swartling, who is also this synod’s former vice president, frequently pronounces that our constitution is a missional document. I believe the answer includes the word mission, God’s work.

Is the question answered in our Scriptures? “Do not be afraid.” “Do unto others ...”

Six times a year 30 individuals elected by our synod assembly gather as the Synod Council. We participate in the governance of our synod through review of the mission and vision that calls us to serve. As we strive to be both faithful and effective in supporting the mission of the church, we seek to contribute leadership as we:

- Bear witness to the vision and direction of the Northwest Washington Synod.
- Provide for strategic planning for the ELCA in the Northwest Washington Synod.
- Support our bishop, the synod staff and one another as elected leaders.
- Establish and monitor synod policies.
- Advocate and assist with the development of financial resources for synod and churchwide ministries.
- Serve as stewards of the resources entrusted to us by our constituents.

Faithfully we seek to boldly walk with the synod staff, the congregations of this synod, and other ELCA and ecumenical partners doing God’s work. What do we do? We do God’s work, as trustees of the mission we share. □

Author bio:

Robertson is Northwest Washington Synod vice president and a member of Queen Anne Lutheran Church, Seattle.

‘Joining God’s Parade’

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Tony Jones

Keynote speaker

The 2014 Northwest Washington Synod Assembly theme is “Joining God’s Parade.” May 16-17 we will welcome Tony Jones, who has a master of divinity degree and a doctorate, as our keynote speaker. We look forward to engaging with him around the issues of Christ, culture and church.

Jones is the author of *The Church Is Flat: The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement* and is the theologian-in-residence at Solomon’s Porch in Minneapolis. Additionally, he teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., and at St. Cloud [Minn.] State University.

He serves as a senior acquisitions editor at sparkhouse, a division of Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA publishing house. Jones is the author of additional books on Christian ministry and spirituality, including *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* and *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life*. He co-owns a social media consulting and event planning company.

The married, father of three children lives in Edina, Minn. In his spare time, he trains his yellow lab, Albert, and takes him hunting for ducks, grouse and pheasants.

Jones has blended fun and information in his recent development of an iPhone app called “Ordain Thyself.” This is how he describes the app on his website: “Do you want to be a minister, but you just don’t have the time for seminary? Or maybe your desire is to be a rabbi, imam, priest or swami? Well, this app can’t actually ordain you, but it can show you what you would look like and believe if you were ordained.”

Churchwide representative announced

To each assembly we welcome a representative from our churchwide partner. This year we are delighted that ELCA

Treasurer Linda Norman will join us at our gathering. She will bring a report from the churchwide expression of the ELCA and be available for conversation throughout the assembly.

Norman is responsible for proposing financial policy and provides for the implementation of the financial, accounting, audit, investment, banking and related systems and services for the units of the churchwide organization. In this role she also provides oversight of Information Technology and the building’s Management Services for the churchwide organization in Chicago.

A graduate of Trinity University in San Antonio, Norman holds a master of science degree in accounting from Trinity University in San Antonio and a master of divinity degree from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She worked as a certified public accountant for several years before entering seminary. After her ordination she accepted a call to Bethel Lutheran Church in Chicago.

Norman joined the staff of the ELCA churchwide organization in 2006, serving first as controller and then as chief financial officer for the ELCA Foundation. In February 2011 she became controller and treasurer for the ELCA.

Norman is also an adviser to the Board of Trustees of Portico Benefit Services and to the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. She also serves as treasurer of the Endowment Fund of the ELCA.

Beyond her financial savvy, Norman is a passionate speaker and brings a deep commitment to the mission and ministry of Christ. □

Information for this article comes from Jones’ website (<http://tonyj.net>) and the ELCA’s website (www.elca.org).

ELCA WEBSITE



Linda Norman