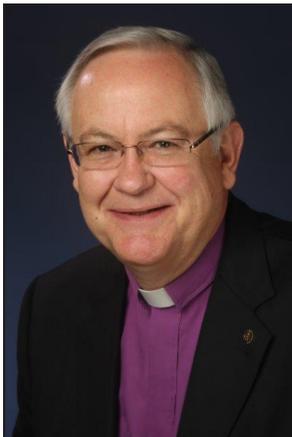


The Spirit

Discovering the Gift of Grace by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



I was not born a Lutheran, but discovered the Lutheran Church by going through the backdoor. I was in high school when a friend invited me to go to her church. I fell in love with the church because it was the first time in my life that I found the church to be a place that could embrace all of who I was without making me feel like I needed to pretend to be someone I wasn't. I didn't

know then that I was discovering what it means to be covered in grace. What I did know is I couldn't get enough of this word. I just kept coming back for more and more. The truth is I am still coming back to wine and dine on God's generosity of acceptance.

Once I was hooked I had a compelling desire to be able to share this truth with others. It was this desire that caused me to pack up everything I owned, place it into the trunk and back seat of my 1969 Toyota Corolla and head off to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, CA.

I was completely outside of my comfort zone with hardly a clue about what I was in for. The only image I had of a seminarian was that of a monk. I was still struggling with being identified as a Christian let alone forming my identity as a pastor.

Seminary did not come easily for me. I didn't have great academic chops and I struggled with my professors who seemed so cut off from my world. The one class that breathed on the coal that was

burning in my gut was Dr. Robert Goeser's class on Luther. I was in over my head but the scraps I was getting that fell from the table made for a great meal.

My classmates who grew up in the church were light years ahead of me in their knowledge of the scriptures, liturgy and theology. I would never be able to speak with the confidence many of them displayed. The pathway I chose was to quietly go about being a parish pastor hoping that my deficits in learning might go undiscovered. I had to rely upon my pastoral care skills and hope my passion for grace would carry me.

A turning point came for me when I met a guy by the name of Dan Erlander. I heard him speak at Holden Village and later would invite him to teach classes at the congregation I was serving. Dan was putting into words my deepest held beliefs about the faith. He had the academic pedigree to back up what he was saying. He too had a burning coal of grace in his gut.

It was from Dan I learned that you should always be able to spot a Lutheran because they are always mumbling under their breath grace, grace, grace. Grace, grace, grace became my mantra so much so that my oldest daughter took it upon herself to purchase a personalized license plate for my Mini Cooper - GRACEX3.

I wanted to devote this Spirit Article to Dan out of gratitude for the gift that he has been to me and to the whole church through his writings and teaching. It has meant the world to me to have a theologian of Dan's character provide me with access and understanding of what I think is the core teaching of what it means to see the world through a Lutheran lens. Thank you Dan for being my beloved Rabbi of grace, grace, grace.

Stay in touch and in the know!

Have you checked out the Synod Website Calendar? www.lutheransnw.org/calendar

Do you receive the Weekly Update eNews? www.lutheransnw.org/subscribe

Upcoming Events in our Synod

Worship Matters: This is the Feast

October 25, 9am–4pm

@ Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, Seattle

All are invited for this synod-wide day of learning, worship and inspiration. Lunch provided. **Topics:**

WORD: The people in worship

SACRAMENT: The things we do

SPACE: The place we gather

Our speakers for the day are:

the Rev. Dr. Jana Childers, the Rev. Paul Hoffman, and Dr. Stephen Marshall-Ward.

Cost is \$30 for the first participant from congregation; \$15 for each additional participant from the same congregation - You are strongly encouraged to bring your entire team!

Find more information and link to online registration on our website: www.lutheransnw.org/calendar.

Presiding Bishop Eaton in Tacoma

Saturday, November 1, 9am

at Pacific Lutheran University

The SW Washington Synod presents a morning with the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton.

All are welcome to attend!

Join others from around our synods at the new Karen Hille Phillips Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of Pacific Lutheran University.

Bishop Eaton will speak and answer questions from 10am-11:30am on "The ELCA: Who is Leading Us and Where are We Going?"

Coffee hour and fellowship begins at 9am.

Bishop's Convocation:

How Do We Understand Justice?

Wednesday, November 12, 9:30am – 3:30pm

@ Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Kirkland

Rostered Leaders are invited to join us for worship, conversation and fellowship. Our guest speaker for the day is Washington State Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu. Be sure to arrive early and join us for the 8:30am-9:30am Registration & Fellowship time.

Cost is \$40/person, includes lunch.

Scholarships are available, please contact Susan Berg at synod office by October 31. Find more information and link to online registration on our website: www.lutheransnw.org/calendar.

First Call Theological Education Event

November 17-20 @ Camp Berachah, Auburn

Rostered Leaders who are in their first three years of serving come together for fellowship, learning and support. Leaders should have received a letter of invitation with registration details.

Children & Youth Leader Retreat

November 7-8 at Camp Lutherwood, Bellingham

We will explore our calls to ministry, our faith stories and how they apply to ministry as well as take time to relax and connect. All children and youth leaders are invited to learn how to care for themselves while caring for and nurturing others.

Information & Registration Form:

www.lutheransnw.org/files/calendar_attachments/youth_leader_retreat_2014.pdf

Simplicity & Slowing Down

Saturday, November 8, 8:45am-3pm

@ Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynnwood

All across this country, Christians are hungering for a simpler, more centered life. Strikingly, a genuinely "simple life" has proven truly elusive to many followers of Christ. During this seminar with Dr. Daniel Brunner, we will explore both the biblical and social reasons for pursuing a less scattered life of discipleship and honestly discuss realistic practices for living differently. Sign up by email: david@trinitylutheranchurch.com. Pre-registration required for childcare by Nov. 5. Dr. Brunner is a professor of Christian History and Formation at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon. An ordained ELCA pastor, he has served two churches in the Portland area. www.trinitylutheranchurch.com

Advent Open Houses - Save the Dates

Your synod office staff is delighted to host TWO Advent Gatherings again this year.

All members & friends of the synod are invited to stop by for warm drinks and sweet & savory treats on the afternoons of:

Tues, December 2 - at the Synod Office

Wed, December 3 - at a northern location TBA

The Spirit is a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is intended for members of synod congregations and organizations. Congregations are encouraged to copy *The Spirit* and include it in their own newsletters.

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Information for the December issue of *The Spirit* is due to the Synod Office by November 7