



The Spirit

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Disciples Follow Jesus by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



In the January synod supplement in *The Lutheran* magazine I focused on the fact that God calls us to be disciples, not members. This is not a new idea nor is it unique to me.

There are a number of pastors and non-ordained

leaders in this synod who are out in front on this understanding in ways that I am trying to learn and understand. One of these pastors commented that I did miss one important aspect of discipleship in my Lutheran article.

Disciples follow Jesus in word and deed, and they also are called to call new disciples.

In this age of individualized faith and faith practices, we need to hear we are responsible to and for the neighbor. Disciples of Jesus invite, provoke, encourage, and call others to be disciples. One of my favorite texts in John's gospel is the call of Nathaniel. His call came from his friend who did not answer all of his questions but merely invited him to come and see.

We make the process far too complicated. In doing so, we take the path of least resistance and the avoidance of calling new disciples. We are on a walk of faith in a community of other walkers who know that our destination and our journey is a blessing to us and to the world around us.

I have objected to calling other disciples volunteers. When we use the volunteerism

model, we remain in charge. It is my time, my skill and my interests. Do I want to use my life in support of this or that institution?

The underlying mechanisms may be similar, but disciples know that Jesus is Lord of the church and we have to follow where we are called to go in service. Yes, we have individual gifts, but they are for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ.

In addition, God is using us to call new disciples into relationship with Jesus and in service with their gifts, which the whole church needs. Disciples are learning from our Lord. Disciples are serving as Jesus did. Disciples are calling their friends, neighbors and total strangers to come and see so that they might also serve as disciples of Jesus.

It is clear that the membership model is an institutional model that is not the future of Christ's church. We will continue to ask the institutional questions about membership, but the real need for the church is the discipleship of the followers of Jesus. Disciples are always learning, serving and seeking to call others to follow Jesus. Fellow disciples, we have work to do.

Editor's Note: The January supplement to the Lutheran magazine can be found on the synod's website at www.lutheransnw.org/publications. To subscribe to *The Lutheran* magazine please visit www.thelutheran.org or call 1-800-328-4648.

Earthquake in Haiti

We have all heard about the 7.0 earthquake in Haiti that occurred on January 12 that devastated the small country. More than 30 aftershocks have occurred, with one at 6.1 magnitude. We have seen the devastation in video and photos. We have heard about the large number of deaths and injured, and how aid is slowly beginning to get to the people in need.

Thankfully the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) were all ready on the island and were spared. They were able to focus their immediate efforts on issues of water safety and sanitation, assisting with medical triage, and providing emergency shelter for the many who are now homeless. (The ELCA has long-standing relationships in Haiti through several organizations and the Lutheran Church in Haiti.)

The ELCA is working closely with other organizations that include: ACT International, Church World Service, Lutheran World Federation - World Service, and Lutheran World Relief.

On January 19 Lutheran World Relief (LWR) announced that it was shipping health kits and layettes to be distributed to Haitian earthquake survivors.

LWR partner Church World Service will distribute the shipment of 650 health kits and 1500 layettes, the first of multiple planned shipments to Haiti. LWR has committed material resources valued at nearly \$500,000 and plans to send more health kits and layettes, along with quilts and school kits, in the near future.

Your help is needed today to bring immediate relief and continued hope for our brothers and sisters in Haiti. About 3 million people, one-third of Haiti's population, were affected by this earthquake.

There are many ways to give:

- † **ELCA International Disaster Response**—You may give to ELCA Disaster Response by: Check or money orders sent to ELCA Disaster Response, 39330 Treasury Center, Chicago, IL 60694-9300 (write "Haiti Earthquake Relief" on your check's memo line; Credit card by phone: 800-638-3522 (Credit card contributions may also be made

via mail.) Or, you can easily visit www.elca.org/haitiearthquake and make your donation on-line. One hundred percent of your gifts designated to Haiti will be used in this vital response effort.

- † **Lutheran World Relief Launched Text-to-Give**—To support LWR from your cell phone, just text the keyword "LWR" to 40579 to donate \$10. Remember to reply YES to the confirmation. (Standard messaging and data rates may apply.) You may also visit www.lwr.org to give directly through their website.
- † **Thrivent Financial for Lutherans**—Thrivent will match members' gifts to LWR for Haiti, giving \$1 for every \$2 donated, up to \$1 million. Members can make their donation online at www.thrivent.com/helpinghaiti or at 1-800-236-3736.

On January 19 the ELCA reported that individuals and congregations of the ELCA had contributed more than \$1.2 million to fund relief efforts of ELCA partner organizations working on the ground in Haiti.

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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