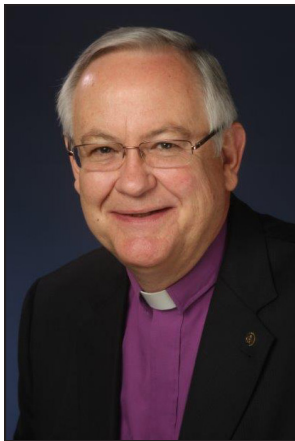


# The Spirit

## Patience Now! by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



**R**eturn to the Lord our God for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

I had on my desk for years a small wooden block with the etched saying, "God give me patience and give it to me now!"

It was a helpful corrective to me as a young pastor because I just could

hardly tolerate the slow pace by which I saw change taking place in the life of the congregation. It was only after I had been there for several years that I discovered how long it takes before trust can be established. Even then the pace has to be just on the edge of the community's discomfort level.

This is such a challenging balance for leaders to navigate. On the one hand you have to establish a sense of trust, stability and confidence. On the other hand you have to push for change, disrupt the system and modulate the level of disappointment that it creates. It was living within this tension that began to teach me the importance of patience.

I was equally challenged at home trying to learn patience with our four daughters. I was not good at it and marveled at how Kim was able to keep her cool. I was often the one acting like the two year old. It finally was through the help of a counselor

that I had a break through. She said to me, "Kirby, you need to lower your expectations and allow your children to be children." It was a painful lesson to learn but one that continues to provide me with dividends.

Two years ago during the summer boating season I was preparing to trailer our boat to the launch. It meant opening the large side gate on our property. In the process of doing so the hinge of the gate smashed my middle finger and blackened the nail. Jesus and I exchanged a few words and as the pain subsided I continued to ready the boat.

Would you believe that finger nail has not yet completely restored itself? In fact, at the rate that it is healing I would imagine it will be almost two years to the date before there is no sign of the injury. It is a reminder to me that the whole creation moves at a very different pace.

Friends I believe that the times that we are living in as a church call for patience. God is at work continuing to call, gather and sanctify but not at the rate of speed we demand. These times call for us to slow down, breathe deeply and listen carefully.

We need to allow the Season of Lent to be the gift that it is intended to be. Let Lent be a time that interrupts the pace of our lives, calls us back to God, and stills our hearts so that we can know, as the Psalmist sings, **"God is a gracious and merciful, SLOW to anger and abounding in steadfast love."**

**Stay in touch and in the know!**

**Have you checked out the Synod Website Calendar? [www.lutheransnw.org/calendar](http://www.lutheransnw.org/calendar)**

**Do you receive the Weekly Update eNews? [www.lutheransnw.org/subscribe](http://www.lutheransnw.org/subscribe)**

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## Greetings from our newest Synod Staff Member

Greetings!

I would like to introduce myself briefly to you all. My name is Sister Liz Colver, and I am an ELCA Deaconess and member of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA and ELCIC. I have been called to serve as the Community Organizing Specialist for the NWWA Synod. There are, likely, many things about those last two sentences that are new to you! I'll clarify about some of them here, but if you want to know more, you might like to know that I enjoy coffee and welcome visits with any and all of you to answer any further questions you might have!

### What is Community Organizing?

Community organizing is a process where people who live near to one another come together to engage in acts that embody their mutual self interest. Now what on earth does that mean, exactly? Well, it means that, though our neighborhoods that are full of all kinds of people, there are issues positive and negative that effect us all. And if we can come together and really understand the interests and pressures on one another, we can then learn to act together in ways to change our society. Community organizing utilizes a cycle, or methodology, that helps connect people to one another, find common issues and concerns, and then act as a unified body to create change. What makes organizing so valuable for the church is that, through these kinds of processes, we can accompany our neighbors in justice seeking action, and practice what it means to be a follower of Jesus - who himself was a community organizer!

### What is a Community Organizing Specialist?

The ELCA is committed to being a public church that engages congregations, neighbors, and leaders in ways of seeking justice and being peace makers in our world and in our church. Congregation-based Community Organizing is something that the ELCA is offering to the broader church as a way to connect our mission as followers of Christ to the needs of the world. This COS position is the first attempt at bridging the ELCA's vision for engaging organizing and synods. My work will mainly be with congregations participating in Living Local, Area Ministry Strategies, and Mission Starts, and connecting them to organizing principles as we journey together.



I am so grateful to have the chance to journey with the Northwest Washington Synod in this time of growth, visioning, and imagination.

Joyfully,  
Sister Liz Colver, ELCA Deaconess

Community Organizing Specialist for our synod &  
Community Organizer for the Catacomb Churches

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*Editor's Note: We are delighted to have Sister Liz Colver join our ministry team. She began serving on February 2; her Consecration Service is March 15, 2pm at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in Seattle.*

***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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