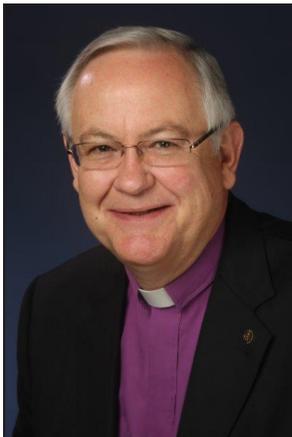


# The Spirit

## Blame Game

by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



**“W**hy do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but fail to see the beam of wood in your own?” (*Matthew 7:3*)

One of the great challenges of living in my own skin is avoiding the blame game. Being right is so easy. Owning my own brokenness and cutting a little slack for my neighbor is so much harder.

I remember talking to a parole officer about his work. I asked him how good he thought he was at predicting who would make it on the outside and who would end up going back to the big house. His response came quickly. “It is really quite easy to predict. If a guy is still blaming the institution or somebody else for his woes, I can be sure he is headed back. It is the guy who takes responsibility for what has happened in his life who has a future.”

I have become more keenly aware of how rare it is, in conflicted situations, for individuals to own their part of the conflict. I have made it a practice to ask the question, “Do you feel like you contributed to the conflict in any way?” It usually takes the person by surprise. Typically it is a perspective they haven’t given much attention to. When asked, they often rush right back into a litany of the other person’s wrongs.

I know this to be true in my own life. I can be so focused on how wrong the other person is that I am blind to the part I play.

One of the consultants I worked with when I was in the congregation offered me another way of understanding how important it is to see the bigger picture when in a conflicted situation. His wisdom was not to avoid the resistance which is my natural pattern. He taught me to engage the resistance. Engage the resistance because within it you can discover some very helpful truths about the organization.

Often there is so much noise in the resistance, we fail to hear the truth. It takes disciplined listening to get past the noise. This is not easy to do when I am anxious, defensive, and my heart is pounding inside my chest.

Think of what this means for us as a country as we are wrestling with police shootings and increasing racial tensions. Depending upon your perspective it is very easy to assess blame. What is far more challenging is to discover the truths that all sides need to discover.

I know I am receiving good counsel when I vent my frustrations about how I feel someone has offended me when my counselor says to me, “What is it that you need to hear in this person’s criticism of you?” I hate the question even though I know the advice is very sound.

We as Lutherans know by our very confession that we begin each day with a large beam in our own eye. We know that we have to daily flood our eyes with the waters of baptism in order to see at all.

If we want to avoid the big house, we must listen to what the parole officer has learned. It is the truth that sets us free.

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

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

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# New Ministry Starts - Encouraging One Another

By Deaconess Marlys Waldo

I have been asked to establish a Mission Partners program in the Northwest Washington Synod. Mission Partners are congregations committed to mutually supportive relationships. They encourage and support one another so that both are stronger and motivated to participate in God's mission where they are. Typically, connections are made between existing congregations and the new mission starts.

That word support can rankle: "They just want money." Well, yes, money is needed. New missions, initially starting out with no pastor, no members, no building, no office, and no supplies and equipment, require funds. It takes time to develop a community large enough and with strong enough stewardship habits to not only be self-supporting but to also care for their neighbors. And, in this area of the country where a significant number of residents indicate their church affiliation as "none," it takes even longer.

But, support is much broader than just sending a check. Partners pray for each other, lifting up the joys and concerns of the other, on a regular basis. Partners share their presence, providing volunteers and accompanying each other on their faith journeys. Partners offer presents, tangible new and used items as well as dollars that can help their partners be missional. Mission Partners share what they have: Prayer, Presence, and Presents.

Ideally, these relationships are mutually supportive. New missions soon learn that they, too, have gifts that can benefit others. Both congregations are givers; both are receivers.

While our primary concern is that the 20 new mission starts in this synod have the support they need to thrive, existing congregations that participate usually find that they gain more than they give. That's how generosity works!

Existing congregations may also wish to explore ways in which they might share their gifts with and accompany each other. (These relationships need not only involve new mission starts.)

Do you have a strong program involving teens and a neighboring congregation has thriving senior activities? How might you work together to build each other up?

Perhaps you have a member with expertise in stewardship; perhaps a neighboring congregation has someone with expertise in evangelism. How might sharing human resources strengthen both congregations?

YOU are encouraged share your partnership ideas with Marlys: [missionpartners425@gmail.com](mailto:missionpartners425@gmail.com).

## Our New Ministry Starts:

(Ministry information and contact information may be found on our synod website:

[www.lutheransnw.org/new-mission-starts](http://www.lutheransnw.org/new-mission-starts))

Bethel Ethiopian Church of Seattle  
Catacomb Churches  
Church of Steadfast Love  
Church of the Apostles  
Church of the Beloved  
Columbia City Church of Hope  
Echoes  
El Camino de Emaus  
The Garden  
Grace Chinese of Sammamish  
Grace Chinese of South King County  
Indonesian Lutheran Fellowship  
Living Truth Chinese Lutheran Church  
Roots of the Table  
Ministry to Chinese Students & Scholars  
New Fruit  
Pointe of Grace  
Salt House  
Seattle Taiwanese Lutheran Church

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