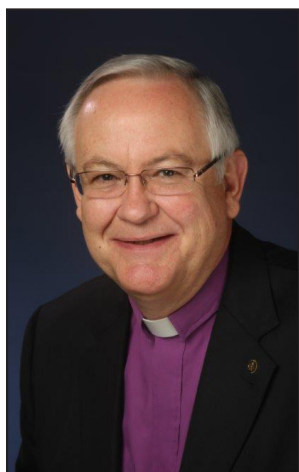


# The Spirit

Volume 32, Number 5  
May 2015

## Not a Meeting Guy

by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



I am an ENFP on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality inventory. This is code language for “you will find such characters roaming the halls at Synod Convention and rarely present in the assembly itself.”

Truth be known, the first Synod Assembly that I was present for from start to finish was last year’s. You may remember the year I was elected all the

nominees were cloistered so I can’t even count 2013. In fact there is very little of the 2013 Assembly that I remember.

Needless to say, now that I serve in the Office of Bishop I am expected to not only attend the Synod Assembly but to be present in the Plenary Hall when the sessions are in order. This has caused me more than a little heartburn. It is right up there with being asked to go out on the dance floor knowing I have no sense of rhythm whatsoever.

Not only am I expected to be present, I am expected to “chair” the meeting which means I am supposed to have some understanding of Robert’s Rules of Order. Bless Robert’s heart but his rules have never been my thing. And bless former ELCA Secretary David Swartling’s heart because he took me on last year as his “parliamentarian project.” Little did he know how inept his student was!

The last guy to serve in this office is so in love with Robert’s Rules that he now is the Secretary of the

ELCA. He prides himself in being one of the first to purchase the latest edition and can hardly wait to read it from cover to cover. You can see the bar is set really high in this Synod.

So this year when we gather at the Lynnwood Convention Center under the theme “Can We Talk,” I will do what I have done all my life: I will ask of God the Moses question, “Who am I that I should go?” I will take comfort in knowing that the Bible is full of reluctant leaders from Moses, to David, to Paul. Some might even argue Jesus. And, I will stand before the Assembly trusting that the Spirit will provide all that I need for that which the Spirit has called me to do.

And I will pray that those who gather will be as gracious as those who gathered last year and together we will experience the joy of what it means to be the church together. I trust we will worship well, laugh often, enter into deeply respectful conversation and conduct the work of this Synod - to dish up God’s grace for a hungry world.

You will delight in journeying with our very own theologian and Biblical Guide Cynthia Moe-Lobeda who will offer us a Lutheran lens on what it means to value the other. Presenter Mark Lau Branson will help us see how the use of Appreciative Inquiry can set the table to engage our neighbors in the pressing conversations of our times. This year breakout sessions and an Open Space setting will provide you with the opportunity to learn critical listening skills while exploring challenging conversations into which we are called. See you at Assembly!

I will be the guy up front with the wooden hammer!

**Synod Assembly - May 15 & 16 - Lynnwood Convention Center**  
**Online Registration Open through May 4**

Check out the details at:

[www.lutheransnw.org/2015-Synod-Assembly](http://www.lutheransnw.org/2015-Synod-Assembly)

# Meet Our Synod Assembly Presenters

## Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda has lectured or consulted in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and many parts of North America in theology; ethics; and matters of climate justice and environmental racism, globalization, moral agency, public church, and eco-feminist theology. She is author of *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Fortress, 2002), *Public Church: For the Life of the World* (Fortress, 2004), *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Fortress, 2013), and numerous articles and chapters. She is co-author of *Saint Francis and the Foolishness of God* (Orbis, 1993) and *Say to this Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship* (Orbis, 1996). Dr. Moe-Lobeda was appointed theological consultant to the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and has served as a health worker/church worker in Honduras and as Director of the Washington, D.C. office of Augsburg College's Center for Global Education. She is on the faculty of Seattle University in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Environmental Studies Program, and graduate School of Theology and Ministry. Moe-Lobeda holds a doctoral degree in Christian Ethics from Union Theological Seminary, affiliated with Columbia University. A resident of Seattle, she loves hiking in the Cascade Mountains and relishing the beauty of Western Washington.

## Mark Lau Branson

Rev. Mark Lau Branson, Ed.D., is the Homer L. Goddard Professor of the Ministry of the Laity at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he teaches courses in congregational leadership and community engagement. Dr. Branson was ordained at San Francisco Christian Center, an African American Pentecostal church, and has served on the pastoral teams in United Methodist and Presbyterian churches, and has worked with several Christian agencies active in education, campus ministry, consulting, community development, and community organizing. He is a founder and vice-president of the Institute for Urban Initiatives, which works on homelessness, job training, and other faith-based initiatives. He has graduate degrees from Claremont School of Theology and the University of San Francisco. His most recent books include *Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the Neighborhood* (co-edited with Nicholas Warnes; InterVarsity, 2014) and *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (coauthored with Juan Martinez; InterVarsity, 2011). Previous publications include *Memories,*

*Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Alban, 2004) and chapters in *The Missional Church in Context* (Craig Van Gelder, ed.), *Leadership in Congregations* (Richard Bass, ed.), and *The Three Tasks of Leadership* (Eric Jacobsen, ed.).

Mark and his wife, Nina, have two adult sons, Noah and Nathan, and are part of the leadership team for a new Free Methodist church in Altadena, California.

## Christina Jackson-Skelton

Christina Jackson-Skelton serves as the Executive Director of the Mission Advancement unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Mission Advancement unit is responsible for coordinating communications, marketing, public relations, mission funding, major gifts, planned gifts, constituent data management and Always Being Made New: the Campaign for the ELCA. Prior to this, Jackson-Skelton served as the President of the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA and Treasurer of the ELCA from 2002 – August 2011. Prior to her election as ELCA Treasurer and MIF President, Jackson-Skelton was the Director for Finance in the Global Mission unit of the ELCA. She currently serves on the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and is a member of the LWF Council's Meeting of Officers. She is chair of the LWF Finance Committee and serves on the LWF Standing Committee for Communications. Jackson-Skelton is President of the Endowment Fund of the ELCA. Jackson-Skelton earned a Master's in Business Administration in 1988 from Thunderbird Graduate School of Global Management, Glendale, Arizona and Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Spanish in 1987 from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. She has certification in Nonprofit Management from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She and her husband Tim and children Benjamin, Anna and Ella are members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Libertyville, Illinois.

***The Spirit***, a publication of the NW Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is intended for synod congregations & organizations.

### Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

5519 Phinney Ave North  
Seattle, WA 98103

Phone: 206-783-9292; Fax: 206-783-9833

Toll Free: 844-597-0452

Email: [office@lutheransnw.org](mailto:office@lutheransnw.org)

Website: [www.lutheransnw.org](http://www.lutheransnw.org)

Info for the June issue is due to the Synod Office by May 6.