



The Spirit

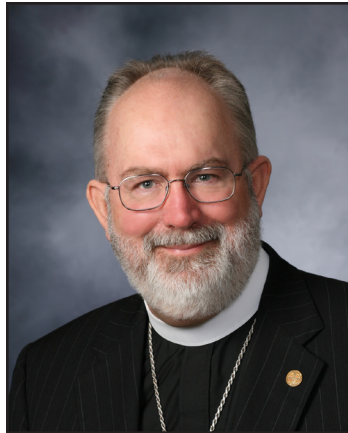
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News for the congregations of the Northwest Washington Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

January 2009

I Ask You To Pray

by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



I ask your prayers for the ELCA Bishops' Academy which will be taking place in Israel and Palestine from January 5 – 16, 2009.

As of this writing 61 of the bishops for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in Canada will be in the Holy Land at the invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land.

The agenda for the trip has us meeting with officials of the state of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority, visiting Lutheran congregations in the Holy Land, meeting with representatives of various peace groups in the area and visiting Augusta Victoria Hospital, the Lutheran World Federation hospital in Palestinian East Jerusalem. Members of the Middle East *Ready Bench* are going ahead of the main group at the invitation of the King of Jordan to meet with him and other Jordanian officials.

This visit comes at the request of our Lutheran sisters and brothers living in the Holy Land. The fact that they are still there speaks to the faithfulness of God in the face of human sin. This land is claimed by the descendants of Abraham as special territory. Christians, Muslims and Jews find common history and common pain in the history of this land. The bishops take this trip in the hope that our presence will call prayerful attention to this difficult situation.

My wife, DeDe, and I will be on this trip with a sense that we are overwhelmed with the responsibilities that come with this visit.

As in all of the things God calls us to do, we recognize that we do not bring the wisdom or skill to solve these ancient problems. We go as a sign of God's presence in the pain of the world. We pray that God will use this visit to give strength and courage to those who work for peace. We go to be a sign to all parties that this church and its members are praying and working for justice and peace in this land.

While we go, I ask you to pray for all who live in the uncertainties of the Holy Land and for God's peace to be renewed there.

Editor's Note: Each of the 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America elects a bishop to serve as the synod's chief pastor and to exercise administrative oversight of the synod's work. Bishops serve for six-year terms and may be reelected. In addition to their synodical responsibilities, the 65 synodical bishops join the Presiding Bishop and ELCA Secretary to form the Conference of Bishops [CoB]. This 67-member group gathers at least twice each year for worship and study, mutual sharing and to conduct business. While primarily advisory [with the Church Council being the ELCA's board of directors], the role of the Conference of Bishops is significant within the life of this church. For information about the ELCA's position on Palestine visit <http://www.ELCA.org/peacenotwalls>.

Sending Thanks

by Rachel Pritchett, Communications, Southwestern Washington Synod

One year after a severe storm hit southwest Washington, Southwestern Washington Synod Bishop Robert D. Hofstad and others offer gratitude for recovery funds sent by the Northwest Washington Synod.

Some \$22,000 helped with extensive repairs at two of the hardest hit congregations — Saron Lutheran Church of Hoquiam and Christ Lutheran Church of Belfair, and for long-term community help through First Lutheran Church of South Bend.

At Christ of Belfair, raging waters from nearby Mission Creek swept through an education wing and retreat center. Members worked throughout 2008 to repair the water-soaked education wing, also home to the community's largest day-care. Today, the children are back in their regular digs.

But the damage was so extensive at the retreat center that members closed it for good.

Winds up to 100 mph sent the enormous steeple tower at Saron of Hoquiam crashing into the street below. No one was hurt, but repairing the structure was a gigantic effort helped by contributions from the north.

The Rev. Linda Milks said, "We would like to thank all ... who kept us in their prayers and all who sent us offerings to help offset this cost to our congregation."

The Rev. Laurie Johnson of First of South Bend (and formerly of Oak Harbor Lutheran Church in Oak Harbor) chairs a local long-term recovery organization, the Pacific County Disaster Recovery Organization, that will be busy for some time filling unmet needs in the community where FEMA and insurance policies have dried up.

"That's how much damage we're looking at," Pastor Johnson said.

Of the help received from Northwest Washington Synod, Bishop Hofstad said, "The blow from this storm was lessened by the compassion and willingness to help from the Northwest Washington Synod, and we are deeply grateful."

One Family Created In God's Image

The ELCA has five official ethnic associations for African Americans, Native Americans and Alaskans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Latinos, and those of Arab and Middle Eastern heritage. In 2006 it was decided that one more ethnic group was needed.

This past October 40 white Lutherans of European descent approved the formation of the European American Lutheran Association (EALA) and elected officers. Kathy Long a member of Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church in Bellevue was named president of EALA. Kathy has been involved in the Synod's Anit-Racism Team for more than seven years and has been involved with White Power & Privilege Education for more than 15 years.

The EALA is a group of white Lutherans who seek to "dismantle structures within the ELCA that give privilege to white people and disadvantage people of color" and "reclaim for the ELCA our biblical heritage as one family created in God's image."

For more information visit <http://archive.ELCA.org/multicultural/EAindex.html>

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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