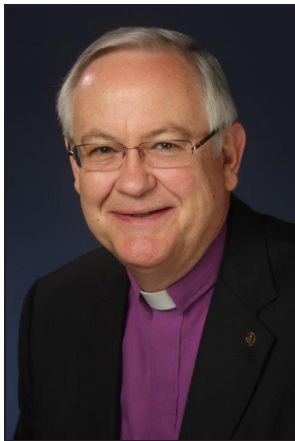


The Spirit

The Way of Kindness by the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop



“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

Growing up I had a hard time relating to my older brother. He was bright, a good athlete and an extremely high achiever. He also loved to tease his little brother. I was tormented by him and often felt very angry.

On one occasion I threw a barbecue fork at him as he was running out of the house. Fortunately I missed but my intentions were clear, “I wanted to hurt him.”

I had forgotten the worst of these childhood memories until a few days ago when I was reflecting upon why is it that I have such a strong opposition to people being mean to one another? My daughters will tell you how upset I would be with them if I thought they were being mean. The answer to my question was obvious. It was about the how miserable I felt as a child.

When I entered into middle school I got into an emotional grudge match with one of my peers. I found myself employing the very acts of meanness that my brother had used on me. In fact I invited as many of my friends as possible to join me in piling insults upon my friend. Later in life she would take her own life. We renewed

our friendship in high school but it has always bothered me that I was so mean to her.

I honestly believe we could change the world if we were committed to honoring the 8th Commandment in the way Luther explained it when he said, “We should explain our neighbor’s actions in the kindest way.” Kindness is the opposite of meanness. Meanness robs and destroys life. Kindness is filled with grace and can be so life-giving.

Over the years my brother and I have been able to make amends. We became very close in caring for our parents when they were dying. I saw in my brother a deep kindness. He was so tender with our mom and dad. He would anoint their bodies with lotion trying to massage away their pain. He was there to comfort both of them when they took their last breaths.

This is my prayer for each of us and for all of our ministry sites. I pray that we would seek to be people who lean in the direction of kindness. I pray that we would be people who withhold being mean-spirited which often expresses itself in being so critical of one another. I pray that we would strive to explain our neighbor’s actions in the kindest way.

Take it upon yourself to seriously reflect upon how you treat others. Honoring the 8th Commandment not only has the power to transform the church it has the power to restore us in relationship with God and our neighbor.

Rostered Leaders - Bishop’s Convocation

Semiahmoo Resort & Spa ... March 9-11

Online Registration Open ... Deadline is February 9

www.lutheransnw.org/convo

Connected

Your Synod Office Staffers have been busy researching, listening to your ideas and implementing new ways of keeping us better connected within the synod. Our hope is that you all have the information you need & want at your fingertips. This is an overview of our Communications Strategy:

Website Changes

We have re-shaped the site to help you find what you need more easily. The tabs have changed, pages shuffled, and more resources have been added. Take time to explore the site: www.lutheransnw.org. **Your help is needed:** What additional resources or links would you like to see? Would you share some photos to better enhance the look of the site? We look forward to hearing from you. You may be aware that the new ELCA website has been launched. It is quite different from its previous format. There are also a number of resources that have yet to be updated or transferred to the new site. If you need help navigating it, or have some concerns, give us a call at the synod office.

Facebook

Get the latest news, connect with other local (and not so local!) Lutherans, and share photos & quotes at www.facebook.com/pages/Northwest-Washington-Synod-ELCA. Another page that is fun to follow is one dedicated to what our Bishop is up to: www.facebook.com/BishopUnti.

The Spirit

This is a monthly e-publication that includes an article written by Bishop Unti on one side and news & information on the flip side. It is sent out electronically mid-month for placing in congregational newsletters, mailings, etc. It is also posted on the website for your perusal. If you would like to receive it directly in your inbox, let us know!

E-mailings:

The **Weekly Update** is sent electronically every Monday. It includes announcements and the latest additions to the Synod Calendar. If you have something to share or an event to include, please contact Susan Berg at the Synod Office.

We keep three weeks' worth of Weekly Updates on the synod website under the News & Info tab for your reference.

We invite our community to hold one another in prayer. The **Prayer Weekly** email includes petitions for specific needs of our leaders, congregations, those in transition, the wider church and our sisters & brothers around the world. These are also posted on the Spiritual Center page under the News & Info tab on the synod website. Additional Prayer Concern emails are sent for immediate requests.

The **Month at a Glance** email lists all of the events posted on the Synod Calendar. It is distributed during the third week of the prior month. There are two ways for you to share events that are open to the synod: submit them directly to the calendar on the synod web page or email the information to Susan.

The Lutheran Insert

The Lutheran magazine designates three pages to our synod four times a year. These pages are dedicated to ministry happenings in our synod. If you have an idea for a story, resource, photo to share, please let us know – we would welcome your ideas and submissions.

Let us know how we are doing. Share your ideas & suggestions. We are listening!

-Susan Berg, Communications & Administration
susan@lutheransnw.org

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.

Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

5519 Phinney Ave North

Seattle, WA 98103-5829

Telephone: 206-783-9292

Toll Free: 1-800-244-6997

Fax: 206-783-9833

Email: office@lutheransnw.org

Website: www.lutheransnw.org

Information for the March issue of *The Spirit* is due to the Synod Office by February 7