

The Spirit

The Season Of Advent by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



In my years in ministry I have watched the season of Advent become increasingly at odds with our culture and with the desire for the church to be an inviting place. Most of my “hymn battles” were focused on the Advent Hymns. “Can’t we sing at least one Christmas

Hymn starting after Thanksgiving?” What was intended to be a season of reflection and repentance has become an unappreciated relic of a slower moving society.

I will also confess that I gave up on the Advent wars in my later years in the parish. The Sunday School program, Choir Festival and Christmas Hymn festival were not hills on which to continue my plea for a reflective Advent. So while I have given up the fight for a traditional Advent I do want to argue that there is still a need for the work of the Advent season.

Knowing that families are deluged with extra activities starting at Halloween (aka Reformation Day), I once suggested that we cancel all extra meetings during Advent. No council meetings, no worship committee meetings were scheduled in December. This did require advance planning for the November meeting, but there were no issues that could not take a month longer to address. In theory this allowed members more time with their families during the Advent season.

The reflection on the work of God becoming incarnate also leads to a need for repentance. This is about how our lives are changed by the

grace of God. This is probably the biggest loss in this culture of Christmas joy and spending. The season of Christmas is not about us, it is about God. How we reflect on what God is doing is important to our daily lives. If we are not able to find time for this reflection and repentance during the weeks prior to Christmas, then I suggest we look at when we will do this essential work.

I know that this is daily work and that our individual devotional practices should include this work. It is also important maybe even essential for the community to do this work together. How else will we be able to encourage or challenge each other if our repentance is private? When left to our own scheduling we might just ignore reflecting on this work of Christ in our lives.

I do not have an answer to these questions. I offer them as an observation of what we have lost as we have moved from a season of meditation and repentance to a season of hyper preparation. I would encourage practices that let go of our work and remember what God is doing in and through each of us in Christ’s church. Blessed Advent.

Nominations For Bishop

Nominations for the Bishop Election opens on Friday, November 16, and will close on Saturday, February 16, 2013.

Information and guidelines are available on the synod website at www.lutheransnw.org/bishopselection.

Lutheran Disaster Response: Hurricane Sandy

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we remain in prayer, responding generously and working tirelessly to rebuild lives, congregations and communities. We are not doing this work alone.

Through ELCA Disaster Response, we are joining with our congregations, affiliates and other partners in our shared commitment to restore communities. As we have shown in past disasters, we stay until the work is done. That is the ELCA's commitment.

Please donate to help those affected by Hurricane Sandy visit www.elca.org/disaster.

Your designated gift will be used entirely (100 percent) to help those whose lives and livelihoods have been impacted by this disaster. This is possible because the infrastructure is already in place in ELCA Churchwide ministries through mission support given through the generosity of every ELCA congregation

In Christ...In The City At Gethsemane Lutheran Church



After many years of planning and construction, members of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Seattle celebrated the dedication and completion of its new building on Sunday, November 4. Along with the church, the building houses Dekko Place apartments (Compass Housing Alliance provided 50 units of permanent affordable housing) and the Hope Center (a center for Gethsemane Community Services, Soup and Movies, and Mary's Place). Learn more about the project at www.urbanfaith.org. An article with photos was in the Seattle Times on Monday, November 5.

A New Shelter, A Better Tomorrow

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Bellevue on November 1 for the opening of Sophia's Place located at St. Luke's. This permanent women's shelter was constructed in the unused undercroft of the sanctuary. St. Luke's will now house 20 women who are part of The Sophia Way program, and will be the host to Angeline's House, the YWCA's daytime drop in program for women.

The women will sleep on raised beds (previously they slept on floor mats), have private cubicles with a storage area for personal belongings, a meeting area, a computer area and a kitchen.

The decision to partner with The Sophia Way, was a decision made in part by this congregation more than 20 years ago, when they helped to found *Congregations for the Homeless*. The congregation then went onto support and host *Tent City 4* and the *Interfaith Task Force to end Homelessness*. It is woven into the DNA of this congregation to be part of the community. St. Luke's mission is to be a place of refuge, renewal and reach.

Learn more about Sophia's Place at www.Sophiaway.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.

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