



The Spirit

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

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God Is Among Us Through Jesus by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



I am sitting in the airport after attending the fall meeting of the Church Council in Chicago. I am now serving as the *Liaison Bishop* from Region One to the council.

At this meeting Mark Johnson, member of Magnolia Lutheran in Seattle and a member

of the Churchwide Council, was elected chair of the Constitution and Legal Review Committee of the council and by that office to the Executive Committee. This committee is responsible for reviewing the Churchwide constitution and the model constitutions for synods and congregations. It is also responsible for the *standing rules* for the Churchwide Assembly.

I am writing about this not because of the business of the council, but because of two *Dwelling in the Word* presentations that two members of the council presented. Four times during the council meeting members were invited to share their reflections on a favorite Bible verse or story. In these two presentations Ephesians 2: 8-10 was the basis of the reflection.

I have pointed out before that Ephesians 2:8-9 was the verse assigned to me at my confirmation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God--not the result of works, so that no one may boast."

This verse challenges us to remember that we live by the grace of God. As much as we would like to put conditions on God or on our relationship with God, it is by grace that we live in

this relationship. I did nothing and neither did you. God is always the actor in the question of salvation. The Lutheran note in the Christian symphony is always grace.

Too often we forget verse 10. "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

We live by grace so that we might live as God has created us. We are to be good stewards of creation because we have been saved by grace. We are to care for the widow, orphan and immigrant because we have been saved by grace. We carry one another's burdens because we have been saved by grace.

God is among us through Jesus. This Jesus calls his followers to pick up the cross and follow him. Follow him into the messy places in our world where he is already doing his work of grace.

Too often our debates are not about how we have been living in God's grace so that we might serve. We like the grace, but we shy away from the service. We have been saved for a purpose. In Jesus God is reconciling the world to God. That is now our work too.

ELCA Good Gifts is a creative way for you to support the work we are called to do in the world. You can choose from more than 50 gifts that will change at least three lives: the life of the person helped by your gift, the life of your friend or loved one, and your own. Visit www.elca.org/goodgifts to learn more.

The Coat Rack Is Empty

The coat rack at Mary's Place is empty! Women and children need warm coats and rain jackets (all sizes, but larger coats are especially helpful for layering).

Perhaps you already have cleaned your closets and have no coat to spare. Would you be able to volunteer an hour or two at Mary's Place? Share coffee and stories with the women, or volunteer to help with a mailing.

Mary's Place Day Center is a weekday program that provides a welcoming and accepting environment where homeless women and their children can build community, enrich their days and find resources to restore their lives.

Donations can be made between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mary's Place is located at 314 Bell Street, Seattle, WA 98121; phone 206-621-8474; email office@marysplaceseattle.org.

Editor's Note: Luther Memorial in Seattle will host their first week as an overnight shelter for guests from Mary's Place (Nov. 29 to Dec. 6). The congregation will provide a safe place for 14 women and children to share an evening meal, do homework, relax, play games, read, sleep and have breakfast each day.

Soul Cafe: An On-line Networking Site

Members, congregations, synods and organizations of the ELCA's Region 1 (Alaska, Northwest Washington, Southwestern Washington, Eastern Washington/Idaho, Montana and Oregon) are coming together in a unique way.

A new social networking site called *Soul Café* is in its infancy and you are invited to help it grow. Communication across and within the six synods of Region 1 is the primary focus of *Soul Café*. This social networking site will allow us to

share ideas and have on-line discussions within our region.

As the site moves from a couple of hundred members to the first thousand, we will see the power of this online community start to take a more defined shape. The hope is that you will see the potential of this on-line community and that you will contribute as *Soul Café* grows in numbers and scope.

To see what *Soul Café* is all about visit www.soulcafe.org.

Can You Sponsor A Meal?

Every Thursday evening the Lutheran campus ministry building (Covenant House) at the UW is buzzing with life and language. More than 40 scholars and students from mainland China gather together, talking in their native Mandarin but also growing in their use of English. Topics in the English classes are often related to the Bible and the Christian faith.

Would your women's group, men's group or youth group be willing to sponsor one Thursday meal? The groceries to feed between 40 and 50 people cost \$80. If you can, please send a check, payable to the Ministry to Chinese Students and Scholars, to: The Covenant House, 4525 19th Ave NE, Seattle WA 98105. You may call Pastor Zhenchuan Liu for more information at 206-524-7900.

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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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