



The Spirit

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Go!

by The Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, Bishop



“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV)

This is one of the Bible verses that those of my generation got to memorize in confirmation.

The Great Commission is still one of the marching orders texts for the church. As I look at this text again I find the verbs to be powerful challenges to our understanding and work. The first verb, *go*, is the one I want to pay attention to in this reflection.

The disciples who in this story are both worshipping and doubting are commanded to go. Jesus is not saying if you build it they will come. Jesus says go. Get up and move on this command. There is a sense of urgency about this command. Jesus is ascending and the followers of Jesus are to get to work. That same message is coming to us today with renewed urgency.

The statistics are impossible to ignore. In the last eight years we have closed or consolidated seven congregations. Seventy-five percent of our congregations have reported a drop in their

average worship attendance. The average age of our members is on the rise. The symptoms are alarming and yet the future is open to numerous possibilities.

First, the call of God still remains. We are about God's work. It is true that recent surveys suggest that our reputation as the *None Zone* may be changing. The fact remains that the majority of our friends and neighbors still do not participate in the work of Christ's church. We have a theology that knows the power of God in the reality of daily life. We bring the message of grace in a world bound in sin and self centeredness.

Second, the message of the gospel is a message to be shared. You do not hide a lamp under a basket. We say to every baptized child of God, “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” God is still calling others to faith through the word and the witness of each of us. This is God's urgency, not our institutional angst.

Jesus word to the disciples was and is **go**. Be witnesses, teachers, baptizers, carriers of the message and know that I am with you always. The age has not come to an end.

We live in one of the most obvious mission fields in the world. Now is not the time to study, now is the time to go into our homes, workplaces, playgrounds, markets, or schools and share the truth that is in us. In Jesus Christ God is at work in the world bringing life, hope and the reason for being. **Go!**

Journeys To Joy A Success

Over 200 joy-filled Lutherans from congregations all over North Puget Sound filled the Grand Ballroom of the Bellevue Hilton in October to attend *Journeys to Joy*, the fundraising brunch in support of the programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest.

After a delicious brunch buffet, entertainment was brought to us by David Barela, Director of Music at Gethsemane in Seattle, on piano, and Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox, one of Seattle's finest classical singers. They delighted the audience with songs from musicals and operas.

The keynote speaker was LCS Refugee Services Director, Salah Ansary who shared his journey from Afghanistan to the Pacific Northwest. We also heard from Paula Medina, through an interpreter, of her gratefulness for help she received through her involvement with the Cascade People's Center, the LCS family center in the Denny triangle.

Through the generosity of our supporters \$95,000 was raised to help us help those who are touched by our programs. LCS truly appreciates all the congregations represented at *Journeys to Joy* who gave of their time, talents, and treasures.

Studying The Book Of Acts with Bishop Chris Boerger

Have you had an opportunity to participate in *Studying The Book Of Acts* with Bishop Boerger. Last month Bishop Boerger invited you to read and study along with him, to look over his shoulder as he re-engaged with this part of the Bible.

Daily postings of his thoughts and reflections of his reading are easily accessible by going to the synod's website at www.lutheransnw.org and clicking on the box labeled Bible Study.

Study along with it can be in family groups, as an individual, as a small group or in some form of congregational gathering. "The format is not as important to me as the fact that we together will be looking at the same portion of scripture for these two months. I intend to bring this to conclusion by the first Sunday in Advent, November 29," said Bishop Boerger.

Global Formation Event

Mission takes place everywhere in the world — including North America, where it influences our ministry every day. In the last two decades immigration has brought us new neighbors from all over the globe. How do we reach out to them?

With experts and resources all under one roof at the ELCA Global Formation Event attendees will learn skills to help be an effective part of God's mission.

The event will take place on Friday, Nov. 13 and Saturday, Nov. 14, at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 1601 North Street SE, Olympia, Wash., 98501. (Even though the word "global" is in the title, this event is primarily focused on domestic mission, not global mission.)

This event will gather congregational leaders for a day and a half of worship, extended workshops, and sharing around global and domestic mission.

Cost is \$35 and includes three meals.

For more information visit the calendar event on the synod's website at www.lutheransnw.org. On the calendar event is a link to registration, to a pdf publication and a link to the Global Formation Event on the ELCA website.

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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

Editor: Margit Peiffle

Email: margit@lutheransnw.org
Telephone: 425-299-6667
Website: www.lutheransnw.org

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