



Moments for Mission

Southwestern Washington Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ by empowering congregations and church leaders to grow in worship, education, outreach, stewardship and other ministries.

December 2018

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Jeremiah 31:15

by Bishop Richard Jaech



Dear Friends,

The Yale church historian, Roland Bainton, combed through the Christmas sermons of Martin Luther to pull out the highlights. On one Christmas Eve, Luther marveled at the faith and trust with which Mary opened herself to God's world-changing action. Luther said to his congregation that Christmas,

"Her name was Mary. I think she was probably an orphan. And the angel said to her, 'Dear Mary, you are more blessed than any woman that ever lived or ever shall live. For you shall bear a child, and you shall call his name Jesus. And he shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'

Mary was flesh and blood. She said, 'How can these things be?' And Gabriel said, 'You've asked too big a one for me, Mary. I don't know. But the spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and you will not know yourself how it has come to pass.'

And Mary believed.'" Then Luther said, "There are three wonders here: one, that God should become human; another, that a virgin should bear a child; and the third, that Mary believed. And this is the greatest of the three."

In this Advent of 2018, to what is God inviting us to open ourselves? Where is God entering to bring new life to people and the world and inviting us to be bearers of that new life? I pray that the third great wonder will happen to us as it did to Mary: that the Spirit will agitate you and I to trust and say 'Yes' to God, no matter how much it turns our lives upside down.

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Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

In another Christmas sermon, Martin Luther bluntly tells the people of Wittenberg that, if they are opened and set free by God's grace to new life, it must make a visible difference in their daily treatment of the people around them, especially the homeless. Luther said in that Christmas sermon.

"The inn was full. No one would release a room to this pregnant woman. She had to go to a cow stall and there bring forth the Maker of all creatures because nobody would give way. Shame on you, wretched Bethlehem! The inn ought to have been burned with brimstone, for even though Mary had been a beggar maid or unwed, anybody at such a time would have been glad to give her a hand. There are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves: 'If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the baby! I would have washed his linen! How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!' Yes you

would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve your neighbor, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself."

What would Martin Luther preach to us about the homeless in our cities? What would Luther say to us about the Honduran mothers and children needing shelter at our southern borders? More importantly, how is Christ calling us to open ourselves to God's grace and then to live that grace in concrete actions to others, whatever the cost?

As we enter the season of Advent and Christmas, may the wonder once again happen in us. May we be moved by the Spirit to say with Mary, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

In Christ,

Bishop Rick Jaech

Page Three by Rev. Kim Latterell, Synod Bishop's Associate



Perhaps you've noticed how most churches have in their bulletins, newsletters and on reader boards these three simple words: **ALL ARE WELCOME**. Three words meant to be inviting, encouraging, as an opening for both doors and hearts. But often, the words are less than truthful. Not everyone is welcome. Not really.

People who are different from us; people of differing skin-tone, social, political or economic background; people of differing marital status or family composition; people of differing sexual or gender identity; people of a differing ethnicity; our lists can grow long of those who are not welcomed and not fully embraced with acceptance (not simply tolerated) by our congregations or pastors.

Here's the irony: ALL means all. The whole sum. The totality. The whole number. The entire quantity. Everybody. Yet in practice, our welcome extended primarily is to those most like us. Those who fit in, who best fit our expectations and boundaries. To limit our welcome however, does not square with our truest Lutheran Christian identity and calling.

In a sermon he preached on Romans 2:11 (*God shows no partiality.*), Martin Luther wrote this about that verse:

Thus all is made even and no one has more than another by which to glory before God, who will suffer no person to be despised, censured, or cast out. It is said "Preach this gospel to all creatures." In this respect the greatest, wisest, holiest, noblest human being is no better than the meanest, simplest, most despised one on earth. They are all lumped together, and no one is singled out or separated for sorrow or love, or for praise and privilege. [Romans] is written plainly and without exception that those who believe, whoever they are, and no matter to what people, nation or class they belong, and however unequal they may be in the eyes of the world, are in the same situation. Therefore in this kingdom of Christ ALL is heaped together and comprised in one word, in one sentence: "The one who believes shall be saved." There you have it all in one, whether you be Jew or Gentile, master or servant, virgin or husband. "If you believe," says Christ, "you are in my kingdom, saved and redeemed from sin and death."

It is clear. In the hand, the eye, the heart of God ALL are welcomed. Our congregations are invited to mirror that same accepting welcome of all. For those who believe, the community of faith will help strengthen faith. For those yet to believe, the community of faith's love, compassion, welcome and acceptance will water the seed of faith God has already planted within.

Failing to offer such welcome to all ought then lead us to be more truthful about our signs and our own hearts because in truth only **Some** are welcome. **Not all** are welcome here. Or most painful of all: **People like you are not welcome here. Why?** Because we have forgotten that God shows NO partiality. At all.

On The Road with the Bishop



November 3 Joining with the members of Living Stones Lutheran Church at the Men's Correctional Center in Shelton to install Rev. Chris Ode as their new pastor. Photos are not permitted within the prison. In the photo above are family and friends of Pastor Ode and members of the Synod board that support Living Stones.



November 11 Worshipping in Pt. Angeles with members of Holy Trinity Lutheran. We commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I and the origin of Veteran's Day. Holy Trinity is served by Pastors Olaf and Kristin Luana Baumann. Bishop Jaech's sermon can be seen on the church's video site at <http://go2trinity.org/sermons/100-years-end-of-world-war-1/>



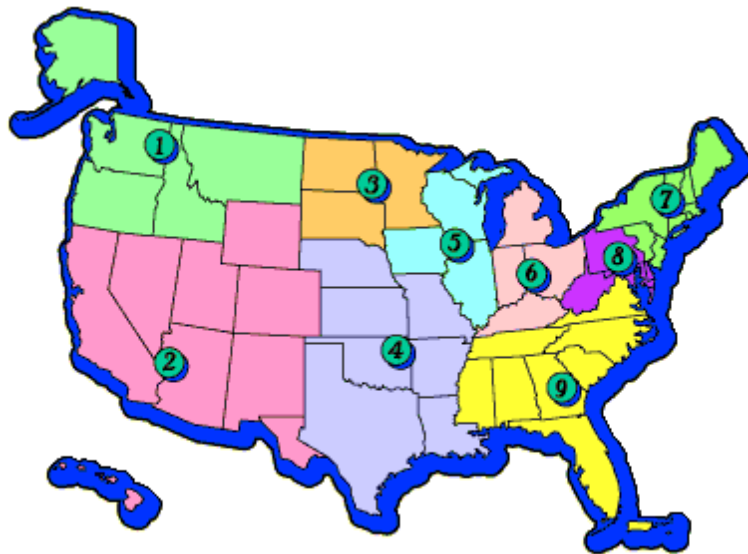
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November 12 -15 Attending the First Call Theological Event at Seabeck where all newly graduated pastors and deacons in Region I (minus Montana) gather for support and continuing education during the first three years of their first call to ministry. Attending with me from our Synod were *(from left to right)* Pastors John Kim (Gloria Dei Lutheran, Tacoma), Duane Fister (The Lutheran Church of The Good Shepherd, Olympia), Megan Filer (Bethany Lutheran, Longview) and Melissa Johnson (St Paul Lutheran, Castle Rock).



November 27 Director of Evangelical Mission Melanie Wallschlaeger and I meeting with staff at our ELCA Churchwide headquarters in Chicago, together with the bishops and DEM's of four other synods. The Southwestern Washington Synod, which is Synod 1c, is part of a new partnership experiment between synods and Churchwide staff.



Congregations in Transition – November 2018

Lord, we pray for your wisdom, insight and peace for the congregations and the leaders in our synod who are working through a time of pastoral transition. Amen.

Congregations	Position	Status	Pastoral Care
Agnus Dei, Gig Harbor	AP	TR	Pr. Seth Novak
Beautiful Savior, Vancouver	P	NV	Pr. Scott Dunfee
Celebration, Puyallup	P	NV	Pr. Kyle Merkle
Creator, Bonney Lake	P	NV	Pr. Nina Body
Emanuel, Yelm	P	TR	Pr Linda Milks
Galilean, Ocean Shores	P	TR	Pr. Alvina Olstead & Pr. Bob Hoem
Gloria Dei, Kelso	P	I	Pr. Elten Zerby
Key Peninsula, Lakebay	P	NV	Pr. Dan Wilson & Jesse McKenzie
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Olympia	P	TR	Pr. Duane Fister & Pr. Michael Greenwalt
Spirit of Life, Port Orchard	P	NV	Bradley Hayward
St. Andrew, Vancouver	AP	I	Pr. Jim Stender
St. Paul, Vancouver	P	TR	Pr. Joe Aalbue

Mobility position key
P – Pastor
AP – Associate Pastor
D- Deacon

Mobility status key:
NV – New Vacancy
TR – Transition
I – Interviewing
C – Calling

In the Wilderness

By ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton



In the Hebrew Bible the book of Numbers is called “In the Wilderness.” It starts with great hope. God delivered God’s people from Egypt, from bitter slavery, grinding toil and infanticide. What a delivery! The entire people—ancients, infants and everyone in between—escaped from one of the world’s superpowers, walked dry-shod through the sea and went on a 40-day journey to the land the Lord had promised them.

Beginnings are filled with expectation. There is excitement and a sense that everything is possible. Think about the first day of school, a vacation, new job, one’s honeymoon or the first day of a child’s life. It was no different for the Israelites. The first chapters recount the enumeration of the tribes of Israel—hence the title, Numbers. This description is of the mustering of the people as they strode into the future. This was the beginning of an adventure! This part ends with God commanding Moses to make two silver trumpets. The entire journey would be heralded by the clear ringing of silver trumpets.

In the beginning it was possible to disregard the fact that they were setting off into the wilderness. But it caught up to them. We know how that goes—halfway through the road trip, the school year, the job, the marriage or life with a baby and the traits that were at first

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endearingly quirky just become annoying. On epic family cross-country vacations, the landscape becomes monotonous. The food is no longer novel but noxious. Life before, at least in memories that have become trip-jaded, was bliss.

It was no different for the pilgrims in the wilderness. By Chapter 11 things have started to go downhill. In band camp we called this “Whiney Wednesday.” The people were sick of manna. In their defense, there are probably a limited number of manna recipes. They remembered the “cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic” (Numbers 11:5). They remembered the fish they used to eat in Egypt “for nothing.” *For nothing?* Bondage and oppression were nothing? The people began to protest. They clamored for meat. They stood at the doors of their tents and wailed.

Moses had enough. “Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ... Where am I to get meat for all this people? ... I am not able to carry this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once” (Numbers 11:11-15). Wow, and I thought I had bad days at work.

To all this God answers: “Is the Lord’s power limited? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not” (Numbers 11:23).

Sometimes, when things are the most difficult, or the way forward is thwarted, or hearing someone blithely remind us that God is faithful, it seems like the equivalent of offering “thoughts and prayers” to those living through a devastating tragedy. But for those who live because this promise is not trite but true, for whom it is water in a dry land, a rock in sinking sand, this is the solid promise of life in God.

From being people of the promise until that promise is realized is hard work. In the moment, or the day, or the decade, it is difficult to see that God is moving us. Some give up. Remarkably, some who are most ground down by the journey hang on.

This year we elected six new bishops—all of them women, one Latina and the first two African Americans. Guided by the Spirit, the people of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod elected Patricia Davenport and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin elected Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld. It took 31 years—not quite 40. What didn’t seem possible a generation ago is reality in our church. We are becoming a generation not quite arrived at the promised land but seeing God declaring, “Now you will see if my word will come true for you or not.”

This article originally appeared in Living Lutheran’s November 2018 issue. Reprinted with permission.

Nonprofit Seeking Shelter for Immigrants

AIDNW – Advocates for Immigrants in Detention is a nonprofit which meets immigrants as they are released from the Detention Center on the Tacoma Tide Flats, and offers them many services, including clothing, backpacks, and cell phone contact with loved ones.

AIDNW *also maintains* two apartments for those who have won asylum and for those whose travel plans are postponed a day or two.

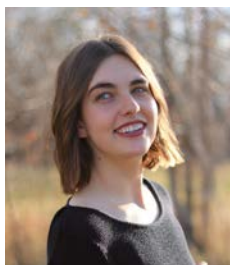
Currently we are renting two apartments to shelter women and men. However, our lease on those apartments is up in February and we are looking for new space. Our requirements are simple: a place with four bedrooms and an office space. It could be a house or two apartments. We would like to be in Central Tacoma, on or near a bus line and within two miles of the Detention Center.

Please contact Deborah Cruz @ dcruz@aidnw or call 253 572 9659 if you have a property to rent or know someone who does.

Congregation news

News and Events from our Synod Congregations

St Andrew, Vancouver welcomes Ashley Ryll, shown left, to their staff as their new Director of Children, Youth and Family. Ashley is from the Rocky Mountain Synod in Colorado. She has lots of experience working with youth in camp, church and social service settings.

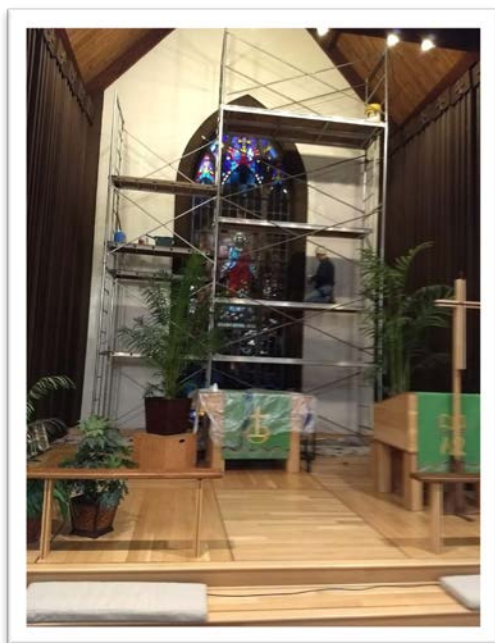


Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Bremerton celebrated their Quascentennial- that's 125 years as a church serving the Bremerton area! Our Saviour's has Sycamore Tree Preschool, which was founded in 1980 in their parsonage building. In November 1998 the Sycamore Tree Preschool, *shown right*, was selected as an exemplary program in a national search conducted by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. In a project endorsed by NAEYC, High/Scope has tried to identify quality programs, which also provide good compensation for staff and affordable care for parents. Now the preschool alumni are bringing their own children back to this school



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Twenty some people from different churches, AA, and WHO showed up to help paint the sanctuary at St. Paul Lutheran, downtown Vancouver, WA, shown left. In addition, five people helped prep the place, and another five prepared lunch. The goal was to have the sanctuary painted by noon. Instead the crew finished early and painted the balcony, and hallways!

What a miracle for this struggling congregation that is giving so much to the community. St. Paul is critical to the community, especially to the 60 children in daycare and preschool, the 30 men who find shelter and love at WHO, the AA groups, the other civic groups who use the space and of course, the congregation who worship and find hope for a better tomorrow in this community of believers. This miracle is an example of the best part of all of us when we work together for the good of all.

CALENDAR

Bishop's Convocation for Synod Rostered Ministers, January 22-23, 2019 at Seabeck.

[Registration link](#)

Ministers Under 45 Gathering, January 20-22, 2018 at Seabeck preceding the Bishop's Convo .

[Register here](#)

2019 Synod Assembly- June 7-8. 2019 at Vancouver Hilton. Registration begins online in January. Resolutions due to Synod Office swwsynod@plu.edu by March 2nd. //