

The Spirit

Volume 37, Number 12
December 2020

Dear Beloveds,

A prayer during this Advent season. *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when divisions seem unsurmountable, when hatred seems more real than love, when chaos churns, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when a mysterious and virulent disease stalks this earth, as loved ones become ill, as we see the exhaustion of caregivers, as we grieve those whose breath is now air, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when loneliness and anxiety are common, when we speak to one another behind masks or plexiglass, when we crave physical connection but are unable to touch, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when lies are disguised as truth, when leaders refuse to lead, when institutions we rely on begin to crack, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when silence is complicit in keeping others unheard, when cries for justice are treated with derision, when black and brown bodies are treated as less than sacred, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when ... we pray, O Savior, Come.

In these days when voices are raised up, peaceful protestors come together, incremental change occurs, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when truth is exposed, when the courageous stand up to injustice, when institutions give way to the Spirit's dance, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when we gather in chat rooms and zoom calls across the miles, see faces on screens that bring smiles, hold babies up to computer cameras and we clap and sing and pray and laugh together, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when scientists doggedly pursue a cure, nurses and doctors and medical staffs come day after day after day to bring expertise and healing to those who have fallen ill, when pastors and deacons bring comfort to the sick and to the bereaved, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In these days when we experience the ancient Word as the living Word, when we live into the radicalness of peace and wholeness and new life, when we join together in the Holy Community you call us into, we pray, *O Savior, Come.*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In these days when ... we pray, O Savior, Come.

Grace & Peace,
Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

From the VEEP, Kay Edgerton



“Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.”

*(“Let us Talents and Tongues
Employ” Fred Kaan)*

In the aftermath of a contentious and divisive election season, it can be tempting to throw up our hands and feel that the divisions are just too great to be overcome. However, we, as Christians, can rest assured that what may look impossible to us has already been accomplished through Christ. The words of this hymn have been speaking to me in recent weeks: “Christ is able to make us one...teaching people to live to bless, love in word and in deed express.” What we have that unites us in and through Christ is a call to love. Love our God. Love our neighbor. Love our enemies. Just love. And then we express that love in both word and deed. How might that look as we enter this Advent and Christmas season?

In word:

Proclaim Christ risen – He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Speak the Good News of God’s abundant love for all—Denounce racism, sexism, ableism, and any other belief systems that separate us from God’s love and from one another.

Give voice to the marginalized and overlooked – Advocate for justice and equality.

In deed:

Care for our neighbors –As the pandemic rages through our community, one of the best ways we can express love of neighbor is to follow public health guidelines in order to protect one another. Stay home if we can, wear a mask when we go out, keep physically distanced, wash our hands.

Feed the hungry –This year the need is likely to be especially high. Many of our congregations have or

support feeding programs in their communities. We can contribute to food banks, provide space for drive-through pick-up, volunteer (if we can do so safely), and share information with those in need.

Shelter the unhoused – As Christmas approaches, I am always struck by Mary and Joseph seeking shelter and finding no room at the inn. We can express love in deed by helping to shelter those in need.

Congregations throughout the synod engage in shelter ministries in a variety of ways. In Renton, we work with REACH to support various homelessness abatement initiatives. In fact, Lakeridge Lutheran is preparing to become the permanent home for the Center of Hope, a 24-hour shelter for families. In Seattle, a number of our congregations work with SHARE to provide shelter each night. Farther north, congregations have connected with SHARE. Some of our congregations, such as Gloria Dei in Lynnwood and Holy Spirit in Kirkland, have engaged in building tiny homes. Many of our congregations have housed tent cities. Some provide safe overnight parking for those living in their cars. As we enter Advent, recall that Jesus tells us that in the Father’s house are many dwelling places and He is preparing spaces there for us (John 14:2). Let us express our love in deed by preparing dwelling places here for our siblings in need.

Here are a few things I or the Synod Council have been up to:

- Executive Committee met on November 12, 2020.
- Synod Council held a special meeting on November 12 to approve constitutional amendment and by-law change motions to go before Synod Assembly in May.
- Synod Council met on November 21, 2020. The agenda included Synod Assembly planning and work toward justice, reconciliation, and reparations.

I would be happy to visit and worship with you—online. Please don’t hesitate to contact me: veep@lutheransnw.org.

The Spirit, a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is intended for synod congregations & organizations.

They are encouraged to reproduce these articles in their own monthly organization publications.

NW Washington Synod, ELCA | 5519 Phinney Ave North; Seattle, WA 98103 | 206-783-9292; Fax: 206-783-9833; www.lutheransnw.org