

# The Spirit

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Dear Beloveds,

Well, I have to be honest, when I first started writing and talking about COVID-19, I did not expect that COVID-19 would still be a “thing” in September.

And yet ... here we are ...

So ... is anyone else weary?

In this time of great anxiety, worry, the unknown, and the threat of COVID for ourselves and our loved ones, I am finding that prayer is ever more important. I would like to commend to you one prayer practice that I have found helpful. This practice comes from Ignatius Loyola.

Ignatius Loyola writes in his book, *Spiritual Exercises*, about the daily prayer he practiced called *The Examen* (or The Examination in English). He also encouraged his fellow Jesuits to do the same. (You might remember that Ignatius Loyola was the founder of the Jesuits during the 16th century). I encourage you to do this practice with others – perhaps with your family at a set time each day or with your congregation sitting outside in a circle (physically distanced!) or on Zoom. Of course, you are welcome to do this by yourself, too.

The Examen is a prayer of review - a short reflection back over the day, recalling events and taking note of your feelings. The purpose is to become more aware of the ways in which God has been present to you, the times when the Holy Spirit was drawing you towards life. Before beginning the five steps, prepare yourself by breathing slowly and consciously. Continue to consciously breathe throughout this practice.

**Step One: Pray to understand and appreciate the past day.** Look back on the last 24 hours. Make a list in your head and heart of all that happened in your life. You are welcome to write these experiences down.

**Step Two: Review the day with gratitude.** What brought you joy? As you look at the work you did, the people you interacted with, what did you receive?

What did you give? Where are you thankful to God? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures.

**Step Three: Pay attention to your emotions.** When did you feel most grateful? Least grateful? When did you love? When were you loved? What drained the life from you? When did things feel out of place or off? When did you experience the fruits of the Spirit? When did it feel like a time of God’s absence?

**Step Four: Choose one of your feelings or encounters (positive or negative) and pray from here.** You might have a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. There might be something that at first seems rather insignificant. You might have great pain. Look at what you have chosen. Examine it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

**Step Five: Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God for guidance in facing tomorrow’s challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you look forward. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God’s guidance. Ask God’s Spirit for help and understanding. Ask for wisdom and protection. Pray for hope. Do all of this in the spirit of gratitude.

You are invited to pray the Lord’s Prayer as you end the Examen.

I pray for all of you, my beloveds in Christ. May you feel God’s love and grace with you in these times.

If you would like other resources or ways to pray, I also commend to you two smart phone apps: Centering Prayer and Pray As You Go.

We are in these strange and difficult times for awhile. But we are not in this alone. We are community. We are church. We are God’s beloved children. May you feel God’s Holy Spirit with you as we walk in Christ together.

In Christ’s Love,  
Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

## From the VEEP, Kay Edgerton



We are living in COVID Time. Both in the sense that we are living in an era of a global pandemic and also that time seems out of joint. The normal passing of hours, days, weeks, and months seems to have somehow gone completely sideways. We have become unmoored from the rituals and

activities that help us stay connected to our normal calendar. When commuting to work means walking from the bedroom to the study, when classwork is available to access 24/7, and when church services can be viewed at one's convenience, time takes on a whole new meaning.

In March, when schools were closed and we were sent to work from home, I kept a routine. I was up, breakfasted, dressed, and in front of my computer by 9am. I was available by email until 4pm. Theoretically, that was when my workday ended. However, it soon became clear that students and staff had urgent questions that needed answers at all hours. My workday started to creep into a never ending loop. Then, in June, school came to an end, more or less. This year there were none of the rituals that prepare one for a shift in season. No year-end celebrations, no staff check-out, no leaving the office behind. It just sort of fizzled out. This is what it is to live in COVID Time.

Because we are living in COVID Time, many other things, such as seating a new Synod Council are happening on new and sometimes confusing timelines. Typically, we would have had elections at Synod Assembly and outgoing members would have been recognized and thanked for their service and new members welcomed. All of that was lost to COVID Time. Therefore, I would like to take a moment to thank the following outgoing members for their service and commitment to the ministry and mission of this synod: Pr. Esau Cuevas, Joanne Hinkle, Pr. Elizabeth Rawlings, and Deacon Jan Cherry.

I would also like to welcome the following new

members: Elizabeth Stitt, Pr. Herb Shao, Pr. Rebecca Langholz, Deacon Amy O'Collins, and Lauren Ode-Giles. We are truly blessed in this synod with passionate and creative people with a call to leadership.

If you are feeling disoriented by COVID Time, here is a helpful reminder from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 that "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace."

Eventually, we will get to "a time to embrace" once again!

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

- + Synod Council met on August 1, 2020 and welcomed six new members.
- + Executive Committee met on August 13.
- + The Grace Grant Committee met and extended the deadline for grant recipients to complete their proposed projects due to the uncertainties of the pandemic.
- + I met with other Synod Vice Presidents on August 8 by Zoom to discuss the ELCA Future Church strategic planning process.

I would be happy to visit and worship with you—online. Please don't hesitate to contact me: [veep@lutheransnw.org](mailto:veep@lutheransnw.org).

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