

The Spirit

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June 2021



From the Bishop:

I began my Bishop's Report for the 2021 Synod Assembly on May 15, 2021 by quoting Paul in his letter to the Romans, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world."

I am so glad to be the Northwest Washington Synod with you – as we walk, journey, travel together. We are connected as the body of Christ – as siblings in Christ – together. We are the Northwest Washington Synod in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly, and serve joyfully. As people forgiven and redeemed, beloved and welcomed, we are called to embody God's grace in speech, action, and relationships. I am reminded daily that it is Jesus Christ who loves, welcomes, and forgives. As baptized children of God, we are called to participate in this love, hospitality, and forgiveness. I am thankful for all of you for your love, your welcome, and your forgiveness.

We on the synod staff have agreed to embrace the following statement as we work together with the congregations and ministry sites of this synod: *"Trusting in the Spirit, we are journeying together with God's people so that all may discover and participate in what God is doing among us through Jesus."*

Further, there are five focus areas interwoven in the work that we are doing as we journey together in Christ:

1. Faithful Innovation
2. Youth and Young Adults
3. Leadership
4. Connection
5. Racial Justice

I'd like to lift up a few of the actions from the 2021 NW WA Synod Assembly:

- We had our first online assembly with 332 voting members in attendance on Zoom and over 200 following along on our Facebook Livestream.
- We approved the Recommended Changes to the Constitution that were forwarded from the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.
- We approved the changes to the Constitution proposed by the Synod Council (with a minor amendment to have the Nominating Committee changed to 5 persons).
- We elected persons to the following:
 - Synod Council
 - Committee on Discipline
 - Consultation Committee
 - Voting Members to the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly
- Approved budget.
- We shared videos from our ministry partners and synod committees/teams.
- Announced Grace Grants recipients.

As we do the work of this synod, I am reminded that it is not us but the Spirit that leads and guides. Trusting God's promises and participating in the Holy Spirit, we have reached places beyond what I thought possible. We have exceeded priorities and we are moving forward towards God's preferred future. I am grateful to be on this journey with you.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



From the VEEP

We've been doing renovations around my house over the past few months. One of the things we've done is pull up the carpet to reveal the hardwood floors that had been covered with up with one layer of carpeting or another for about sixty years. Whew! What a lot of work that was. The flooring looks pretty good, but it was SO dusty. Tiny, fine grit that had made its way over the years through the carpet and the padding. Grit that escaped the regular vacuuming and occasional steam cleaning. Tiny grains of sand in between the wooden slats wherever there was the slightest crack. I swept, I vacuumed, I wiped it with a damp microfiber cloth, I Swiffered. I filled the vacuum over and over. It took forever to get the floor feeling clean. As I was down on my hands and knees cleaning, it came to me that this is a metaphor for implicit bias. I have been good about cleaning up the big stuff – overt racism, sexism, ableism, etc. is easy to see and I have the tools to work on cleaning them up. From the outside, my carpets are clean. However, the events of recent months have pulled the carpets up, revealing those tiny habits of thought that have settled so deep inside of me that I didn't even know they were there. This grit needs new tools to dislodge and sweep them away.

One of those tools is the Intercultural Development Inventory. This is something that Synod Council did together, and it reveals our own personal orientation, as well as how our group, as a whole, operates. The orientation gap report showed that I am not as self-aware as I thought I was – more of those pesky dust motes to be cleaned up. The council is using the IDI to help us move forward and become more accepting and adaptive in our intercultural development. Currently we fall (as do I personally) in "Minimization," an orientation that highlights cultural commonality and universal values but can also mask deeper appreciation of cultural differences. We focus on similarities and although interested in differences, are limited in our ability to adapt to other cultural practices. Minimization is also like the concept of parallel play from the field of child development: two children playing peacefully next to each other, one building blocks and one coloring. That's not bad. It can be peaceful - at least they are not knocking down block towers or breaking crayons. As a council, we are good at playing nicely alongside other cultures, but, just like in child development, we need to move past that stage and learn from and interact and grow with others.

This work will, by necessity, be ongoing. New dust will settle and start to stick. I (and the council as a whole) will need to be vigilant about not falling back into old pathways. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

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

- Attended Synod Assembly orientations, the budget hearing, and rehearsals. Many thanks to our awesome planning team, headed up by the fabulous Sr. Liz Colver!
- Executive Committee met on May 13.
- The Grace Grant Committee met to award the 2021 Grace Grants.
- The Synod met in Assembly on May 15!
 - **Some highlights** of the assembly include electing new council and committee members, amending our synod constitution, recognizing ministry milestones, announcing Grace Grant recipients and hearing about the many amazing things we've been up to as we have journeyed together these past two years.
 - **Opportunities:** We are looking for some people who are passionate about funding ministry and mission here in NWWA. We have a couple of targeted task groups we'd like volunteers for: **Financial Policy Review** – this team will look at our financial policies and recommend any changes to make them more responsive to current needs. **Restricted Accounts Review** – we have several restricted accounts that need to be reviewed to make sure the funds are being used as designated, as well as to identify funds that are being held for purposes that no longer exist.
 - **If you are interested in serving on either of these limited task forces, please email me:**
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