

May 2022



## From the Bishop:

I recently watched a documentary series that talked about bodies. In this documentary it was pointed out how in our society certain bodies are acceptable and “beautiful” (usually thin, young, female, white, etc.) and other bodies are not (usually fat, old, disabled, disfigured, etc.) One of the suggestions in this documentary to counteract society’s shaming culture about bodies is to stand in front of a mirror and look at your body. And, as you look at your body, to name, out loud, the positive things that you see in the mirror. For five minutes. Five. Minutes. This is a long time. And, to be honest, I have a much easier time naming my body’s deficits than attributes. Perhaps you can relate to this.

I think that we have the same problem when it comes to “church bodies.” Just as individual bodies are critiqued, church bodies are critiqued in this society, as well. A church body that has 800 bodies in it seems “sexier” than a church body that has 40 bodies in it. A church body that has younger bodies in it seems more attractive than a church body that has older bodies in it. A church body that has X, Y, or Z seems better than a church body that has R, P, or G (you fill in the letters). We have narrowed what it means to be beautiful and viable in the church much like we have with people in society - and if your particular context is different, it is easy to become tired and overwhelmed. It is easy to feel overlooked and shamed. It is easy, quite simply, to be discouraged.

But what if we expanded what it means to be the body of the church? What if – much like beauty standards need to do – we embraced a diversity of sizes and shapes? What if we truly incorporated what God does constantly – create and shape and grow and nurture a multitude of church bodies for the sake of the good news of Jesus?

I mean ... just as God never intended for the evergreen to be the only tree on earth (as beautiful as our state tree is), God never intended for one body to be the perfect body (as beautiful as each body is). The same goes for our church bodies. Think if we truly embraced the young and the old, the small and the large, the variety and multi-faceted ways of being church – including celebrating all that we do and are for the sake of the Gospel.

What if we listed all of the ministries that we participate in and that we partner with others outside of the church? What if we looked at the ministries that last a month or a year as important as those that last for decades? What if we said “yes” to ideas that seem different from what we’ve always done? What if we expanded church beyond worship on Sunday morning to ... what? What would you say? What do you envision? How is your imagination sparked through the Holy Spirit?

I encourage you to do the same exercise that is suggested from that documentary I mentioned above – only hold the mirror to our church body. What are you seeing and experiencing as attributes? What do you love about the church body that you participate in? What is beautiful? What formative experience is deep within you that you hold onto and would like to share with others? What do you see as a possibility beyond what you have been doing? What do you see as an obstacle that perhaps, upon closer inspection, could be a passageway? How has God gifted your community? Where is God’s Spirit nudging you now?

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, enslaved or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*



## From the VEEP

He is Risen! He is risen indeed!

During the height of the pandemic, I had an artistic neighbor who brightened our neighborhood walks by creating chalk murals on her wooden fence. Hearts and flowers in February, shamrocks and rainbows in March, and last Easter a lovely depiction of the empty tomb with the words, “He is not here, for He has risen!” emblazoned on it. I posted a picture of the mural on Facebook with the note that I prefer to think that because He is risen, He is here. Some of my friends explained that clearly, it was just noting that the reason that the tomb was empty is because Jesus had risen and was no longer there. That, however, wasn’t my point. Certainly, in the context of the mural, that makes sense, but theologically *is* risen is my preferred statement. Not to get too deeply into the grammatical implications (an occupational hazard) but, in the phrase “has risen” the word risen is acting as a past participle verb, describing an action that has happened in the past. In the phrase “is risen” the word risen is acting as an adjective, describing a state of being. Jesus didn’t just arise from the dead once in the past, or even multiple time in the past (as in, I have risen at 6am every day in the past month), Jesus is now and will forever be our risen Lord, meeting us in unexpected places, revealing Himself to us in the breaking of the bread, calling us to act justly, and love mercy. Because He *has* risen, he is no longer in the tomb, but because He *is* risen, He is with us always.



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

- Executive Committee met on April 21. Among other actions, we made final preparations for the June council meeting and Synod Assembly.
- I served as the synod representative at a congregational meeting at Our Savior Lutheran in Issaquah.

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