

May 2023



From the Bishop:

Some synonyms for GATHERING that I found on the internet include: *association, caucus, collection, conclave, conference, congregation, convention, crowd, function, group, mass, meeting, party, throng, acquisition, affair, aggregate, aggregation, band, body, bunch, clambake, company, concentration, concourse, congress, convocation, crush, drove, flock, gain, heap, herd, horde, huddle, junction, knot, levy, meet, muster, parley, pile, rally, roundup, society, stock, stockpile, swarm, turnout, union, get-together, social function.*

Some of these GATHERING words sound positive to my ears (group, party, social function), some sound political or corporate (caucus, acquisition, convention, meeting), some sound a little scary (crush, drove, horde, swarm) and one just makes me smile (clambake). How is a clambake like a GATHERING? I'd love to hear your answer!

We are excited that this year we are having two GATHERINGS. As a congregation, you are welcome to choose either May 13 or May 20 to GATHER with people throughout the synod. While there is no limit on the number of people who may attend from your congregation, we do have to cap registration at 300 each Saturday, so we hope that you are coming and that you are already registered as you read this! Here is the link for more information <https://www.lutheransnw.org/events/synod-gatherings/2023-05-13>.

At these two GATHERINGS we will have ample opportunity to learn together, laugh together, share information together, collaborate together, sing and play together, eat together, engage in possibility and vision-thinking together, pray together, plan together, and, especially to GATHER together in the Spirit of Christ.

For too long we have tried to do things alone. For too long we have tried to figure things out on our own. For too long we have not looked to others for collaboration and community. But Ecclesiastes 4:9 reminds us, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help."

These last few years have shown us that there is nothing better than GATHERING with the body of Christ, especially in-person. We are excited for all of us in our synod to come together as we share our God-given gifts and wisdom. We are excited for the knowledge that will be shared and, even more, the Spirit of hope, generosity, and anticipation for what is next.

We are excited to see you and your congregation at one of the GATHERINGS this year. We can't wait to GATHER together with you on May 13 or May 20 and into the future!

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
bishop@lutheransnw.org



From the VEEP

Once a month I join the other synod vice presidents on a Zoom call. It is an opportunity for us to gather, albeit virtually, to share our experiences and get feedback and help from others who serve in this unique position in the church. The role of vice president is the only one at the synod or churchwide expression that must be filled by a layperson. Therefore, a topic near and dear to our hearts is the role of lay leadership in all three expressions of the church. What do laypeople bring to the table that rostered leaders may not? What unique perspectives do we have and how can we lift up and equip other lay

leaders? Most of us have been asked at some point in our leadership journey when we are going to go to seminary, as if the only legitimate leader is a rostered leader. We want to change that perception! After all, the ELCA is made up mostly of laypeople and we believe in the priesthood of ALL believers. It seems our perspectives and input and leadership would be vital to a thriving church.

Here in the Northwest Washington Synod, we are doing many things to lift up lay leaders. You may be getting tired of me mentioning the LiVE (Living into Vocational Engagement) project, but it is one of our most ambitious attempts to engage and equip lay leaders. The classes, retreats, and online resources are intended to center laypeople, not rostered leaders. The work that Pr. David Hahn and his team are doing is truly transformative. I encourage you to learn more and participate as you are able. <https://www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project>

In addition to LiVE, the synod has partnered with the Trinity Education Foundation to launch a ministry initiative to develop a pathway to lay ministry in the synod. Synod Authorized Lay Ministers (SALMs) fill identified needs in congregations where pastoral leadership is not available for an extended period. SALMs undergo a program of instruction to prepare them to serve in this capacity, building on their own leadership gifts to provide for the needs of a particular congregational setting.

We have also been intentional about rotating our synod assemblies to allow a non-assembly year once in every three-year cycle. This gives us the opportunity to hold synod-wide gatherings where we can engage in leadership and faith formation with a wider representation of lay and rostered members throughout the synod. This year our theme is "Equip the Saints," and our goal is to provide a wide range of workshops and presentations designed to give you tools for ministry and mission. We hope that each congregation will send several members to one of [these gatherings](#) and bring back and share what they learn with others in their communities. If you are not able to attend, I encourage you to seek out members of your congregation who do and find out what they learned!

Finally, if you are a layperson already serving in congregational, synod or churchwide leadership, THANK YOU! We appreciate the time and energy you put into ministry and mission.

Here's what the Synod Council and/or I have been up to in April:

- I continue to attend the Synod-wide Acts Bible Study (though recently by watching the recordings) and I began the 5-week LiVE class: "The Kin-Dom of God & Environmental Justice."
- Synod Council Executive Committee met on April 12. Among other agenda items we lifted up our synod coaching network and reviewed plans for our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion audit.
- Synod VP Zoom on April 22: I serve on the planning committee for this group. If you have anything you think the VPs should be working on, please let me know!

Kay Edgerton

Vice President of the NW Washington Synod

veep@lutheransnw.org