



## From the Bishop:

September 2025

*For the Life of the World* was the theme of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, held July 28-August 2 in Phoenix, AZ. This theme is rooted in the Nicene Creed (this year celebrating its 1,700th anniversary) and in Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reminder that, "*The church is the church only when it exists for others.*" The theme felt especially timely in today's environment where hateful words and actions continue to demean neighbors, sow division, and target the most vulnerable. While it was not done perfectly, and while there is always more work to do, I left Phoenix trusting that we have a shared commitment to walk in the way of Jesus: speaking truth

in love, protecting the dignity of every person, and bearing public witness to God whose way is marked by justice, mercy, and peace for all people. In short: to live and move and act *for the life of the world*.

Here are a few highlights of what occurred during the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Please click on the links or go to [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) if you would like more information. (Note: several links below are preliminary copies and have not been not copyedited or finalized. We will share them as they become available.)

### Actions

- We elected Bishop Yehiel Curry as the new Presiding Bishop. ([read more](#))
- We elected Pastor CeCee Mills as the new ELCA Secretary. ([read more](#))
- We adopted our newest Social Statement: Faith and Civic Life. ([read more](#))
- We approved updates to the Human Sexuality Social Statement. ([read more](#))
- We heard the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church's final report along with the ELCA Church Council's response to the report ([read more](#))
- We adopted the Churchwide Memorial *Toward Ending the Occupation of Palestine*. (This memorial came about in part due to the Memorial we passed during the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly – [read more](#))
- We adopted a Memorial on Indian Boarding School Remembrance ([read more](#))
- We received the Common Statement on the Filioque (this is regarding the Nicene Creed – [read more](#))
- We made Constitution revisions that I encourage you all to read as they become available. I am especially grateful for the new revisions concerning on-leave-from-call for Rostered Ministers.
- We thanked Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Secretary Sue Rothmeyer for their ministry and service.

### Worship, Education, and Social Opportunities

- We worshiped every day in a variety of ways, we prayed before every significant vote, and we had a chaplain available. It is always a highlight to join in singing with over 1000 Lutherans!
- We participated in a Powwow that was moving and educational. Bishop Eaton received a blanket representing thanksgiving for her advocacy with the indigenous peoples of this country.
- AMMPARO held a Candlelight Prayer Vigil to pray and advocate for refugees and immigrants. It was heartening to see elected officials and interfaith leaders present at this as well as ELCA voting members.
- Our synod joined voting members and guests from the Southwestern Texas Synod (our domestic companion synod) for a wonderful dinner and conversation.
- Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer, Rector and Dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University, led a beautiful reflection on the Nicene Creed for today.

I am thankful for the nine voting members from the NWWA Synod who attended and gave of their time and attention at the Churchwide Assembly. Additionally, many others from our synod went as observers, resource people, advisors, volunteers, and more.

In my reflection of this assembly, I continue to hear Martin Luther's words (as quoted by Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer in his keynote). As Dr. Rimmer stated:

Luther knew justification as a process of becoming. ... Luther writes, "This life, therefore, is not righteousness but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming...we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam with glory, but all is being purified." *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*

May it be so. For the Life of the World.

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee | [bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org)

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### From the VEEP:

*He thought he kept the universe alone;  
For all the voice in answer he could wake  
Was but the mocking echo of his own  
From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.  
Some morning from the boulder-broken beach  
He would cry out on life, that what it wants  
Is not its own love back in copy speech,  
But counter-love, original response.*

- From Robert Frost's "The Most of It."

I first encountered this poem in a graduate level English course. We were given the first half of the poem and asked to consider how we thought it might end. Would the subject ever get an original response, or would he only ever get echoes rebounding from the cliff? Was there anyone else out there or was he truly alone? It was an interesting exercise. (Spoiler alert: "Nothing ever came of what he cried," at least nothing human and "someone additional to him.")

After that introduction, I taught the poem several times over the years but hadn't thought about it for some time until I was preparing for Churchwide Assembly by watching the bible study videos and I heard Deacon Claire Josef-Maier say that God invites creative response, not just an echo. Suddenly, Frost's words leapt into my brain. What if it is God, who did indeed, at least in the beginning, keep the universe alone, who is crying out on life and seeking counter love?

Deacon Josef-Maier was leading the gender justice focused bible study when she spoke these words, and she was reflecting on Proverbs 8:22-31 and how Wisdom was created by God in the beginning. Wisdom is with God, as the first of God's creations - co-creating and playing with God. She was there before the beginning of the earth, before the mountains had been shaped, and before the heavens had been established. It is as if in the very beginning God seeks companionship in the universe as it is created. God does not want to keep creation to God's self - it is meant to be shared!

If I imagine God as the subject of the poem, I see a God longing for connection and communication with creation. God is crying out that what life needs is true communion, not just copy speech. God doesn't want to cry out only to have that cry ricochet off our distant and rocky hearts - God seeks our original love and response. God wants us to talk back! Scripture is full of folks conversing with, arguing with, even wrestling with God. What might that look like for us? How might we, created in God's image, but each uniquely ourselves, answer that cry? It is easy to just parrot back what we hear in church or read in the scriptures, but harder to listen more deeply and look more carefully and formulate an original response. When Jesus asks Peter three times, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter has trouble understanding what his response should be besides the simple, "yes." How can we demonstrate our counter love?

As I write this, I am just back from Churchwide Assembly. This was a week where we worked hard to discern our original responses to God's call to us to be church for the life of the world. We pressed one another to be creative and not to just echo those who have come before us. We were pushed outside our own comfort zones and asked to consider how we can truly show God's love active in the world. I commend to you our newly adopted social statement on Faith and Civic Life as one example of guidance for discerning our unique responses to God's call to justice and peace. God is crying out on life, that what it needs is counter-love, original response. Let's commit ourselves to answering that call, to talking back, maybe even being a little sassy!

**Here's what I and/or the council have been up to this summer:**

- Synod Council met on July 19 for fellowship and to act on the sale of a synod owned property, as well as authorize the bishop to enter the synod into a lawsuit defending churches as safe spaces.
- The bishop and I led a group of nine voting members to Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix from July 27-August 2nd.
- Synod Executive Committee met on August 14. Among other items, we met with the nominees for Synod Treasurer to make an appointment. The new treasurer will be announced soon.
- The Synod Policy Review Team and Synod Equity Teams both met to review progress.

Kay Edgerton | Vice President of the NW Washington Synod | [veep@lutheransnw.org](mailto:veep@lutheransnw.org)