



From the Bishop:

June 2026

What is the Bible? Some say the Bible is a book that dropped down from heaven completely written. Some say the Bible is nothing but a bunch of stories from long ago that don't matter. Neither of these are accurate. Instead, what we as Lutherans believe, is that the Bible is a sacred and holy book because through its 66 books – the stories, poems, history, laments, letters, and more – the Bible points us toward Jesus. Jesus, the One who reveals God's grace, mercy, justice, and love for the world.

As Lutherans, we understand that the center of the Bible is always Jesus. Martin Luther famously said that when we read scripture, we should ask, "Does it show Christ?" In other words, does this verse or passage reveal God made known in Jesus? Does it move us toward peace, wholeness, reconciliation, forgiveness, and love? Or is it being twisted to justify oppression, cruelty, and exclusion? Luther believed that faithful people do not simply quote isolated verses. We are to wrestle with scripture honestly and faithfully always through the lens of Jesus.

Luther also insisted that scripture must interpret scripture. No single verse stands alone. Every verse and passage and book is meant to be in conversation with the broader arc of scripture – with the prophets, the gospels, the letters, and, especially, with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This means we read the Bible seriously, but not literally. We pay attention to context, history, genre, and the larger witness of God's love. When a verse seems to pull us toward harm or violence, we are called to read the passage again, asking whether the interpretation is consistent with God as revealed in Jesus.

I chose to write on how to read the Bible because, quite frankly, what the bible is and biblical interpretation matters deeply right now. I see scripture being selectively quoted by people in power to dehumanize and scapegoat vulnerable communities, glorify wealth and power, and distort sacred texts into slogans. Verses are being lifted out of context while the broader witness of Jesus' life is ignored.

Earlier this year, I watched a recruitment video for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that opened with helicopters flying overhead and the words from Matthew 5:9 on the screen: *Blessed are the peacemakers*. What followed were images of heavily armed men in tactical gear carrying weapons, breaking down doors, and carrying out violent raids against immigrants. I could not help but notice how far this imagery stands from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the very place from which that verse is taken.

On the eve of the 250th anniversary of this country, I pray that we would reject the misuse of scripture and instead read scripture faithfully so that we might follow Jesus more closely. I pray that we would acknowledge our own complicity, resist the temptation towards power or fear, care for those who are vulnerable, and stand up and speak out truthfully and prophetically.

Let us return to the prophets who call for justice and care for the poor. Let us return to the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus blesses the meek, the merciful, and the peacemakers. Let us return to the cross, where God rejected violence and domination as the final word. Let us rejoice in the resurrection, where hope, mercy, and love rise again even in the midst of fear and despair. Let us read scripture faithfully and let us follow Jesus.

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From the VEEP:

We've had an election!
Our May 16, 2026 special meeting of the NW Washington Synod Assembly has concluded. Here is a quick recap:

The Rev. Netsie Griffith (retired) was re-elected as our synod secretary. Netsie is a member at Faith Lutheran Church in Bellingham. Netsie's re-election brings continuity to our leadership team, of which she has been an invaluable member. Her knowledge and experience are much appreciated. We're so glad she let her name go forward for re-election. Congratulations, Netsie!

Elizabeth Tanis was elected to serve a two-year term as our youth representative. Elizabeth is a member at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle, has already been active in church leadership at the congregational and churchwide levels and brings a much-needed perspective to the council. Thanks to Elizabeth for being willing to step up and participate in synod governance!

Cindy Shultz was elected to a four-year term as vice president. Cindy is a member at Emmaus Table @7400 Woodlawn in Seattle. Cindy has been an active member of both the synod council and executive committee. She has also served as a LiVE Project board member and on the leadership team at Emmaus Table. The synod vice president is responsible for chairing the synod council and partnering with the bishop in synod leadership. It is the highest elected lay leadership position in the synod. Welcome, vice president-elect Cindy!

We passed our budget plan for 2027. Thanks to the Finance Committee and treasurer Dan Clements for the hard and faithful work in assuring we are good stewards of our financial resources.

It has been a joy to serve as vice president for the last eight years. I will share some reflections in my final Spirit article next month.

Here is what else the council or I have been up to in May:

- Synod Equity Team cohorts continued to meet.
- Synod Council met on May 16. Among other business items, we reviewed a resolution regarding climate justice and welcomed our new VP-elect.
- I attended the synod gathering on May 30.

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