



May 31, 2026

~ *Matthew 28:16-20* ~

National Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Welcome to the 7th sermon series that our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is providing for congregations. It is great to be with you this Sunday. I am Larry Kochendorfer, the National Bishop. My preferred pronouns are he/him. I currently live, work, and play in the city of Winnipeg, the historic gathering place of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dakota Peoples and the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

I invite you to hold a moment of reflection for the ground under your feet where you are today, giving thanks for the peoples who have come before us and in a spirit of care for this land on behalf of future generations.

~

Dear church, grace and peace to you in the name of the Triune God, Three-in-One and One-in-Three.

This day, Trinity Sunday, has been called the great hinge. Trinity Sunday stands between the two halves of the church year. The first half – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter focus on the life of Christ – and the second half, the life of the church.

While some call this day a great hinge – others call it a great pain! So much so, that deacons and pastors will go to great lengths to invite a guest preacher – even the National Bishop – to proclaim the Word on Trinity Sunday.

We all know the presenting problem: It's the only Sunday in the church year that focuses exclusively on a doctrine of the church and, if we're going to be perfectly honest, it's a pretty complicated doctrine.

I've said for years that: 1) I don't fully understand the Trinity, 2) I don't expect to this side of Jesus' return, and 3) I tend not to trust those who say they do.

And just in case we feel uneasy that we don't really understand the Trinity let's keep in mind that the church fought over it for a century or more.

The Rev. Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero, Grace Professor of Leadership and Director of Contextual Formation at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, preaching on today's text proclaimed: "The Trinity is not three separate persons or three different modes of God. The familiar language that Jesus uses at the end of Matthew's Gospel highlights that the Trinity is relational and active, not a collection of static persons.... Generations of theologians – including St. Augustine, who attempted to describe the Trinity as 'love, the loved object, and the lover's love for that object' – have attempted to explain the very nature of God in terms of what and how. Yet a doctrine, especially one that can be as technical and complicated as the Trinity, has no role in our faith unless it describes the *why*." ¹

It's not the what and the how...but the why.

The early church Elders described the why – the relational and active Trinity – the Three-in-One, One-in-Three – with the word *perichoresis*, which means "dancing around." Three distinct persons moving as one in a shared, joyful dance – a dance of celebrating difference while existing as one joy-filled community – a community of love.

This is the why of the Trinity that our world longs to have revealed. This is the good news. All are invited to join this community of love – to join the dance – where gifts are honored and brokenness transformed, where unity and diversity exist together. This beloved community – this community of love – is our true home, our true calling, for we were created to join the beauty-making work of the triune God – we were made to dance.

Schiefelbein-Guerrero, goes on to say: "The community of love that is the Trinity mirrors the community of love that is the Church – or at least, that is how it is supposed to work. It

¹ Schiefelbein-Guerrero, Kyle (2025) "The Triune God Spills into Creation, Calling Us to Love One Another," Consensus: Vol. 46: Iss. 2, Article 8. DOI: 10.51644/ZRJN4443

is no accident that Jesus' last words recorded in Matthew's Gospel are words of the Trinity, calling his followers to baptize, teach, obey, and remember.

These are central actions of the Christian community:

- baptize and break down the barriers we put up to the beloved community;
- teach about Christ's costly grace and the free gift of salvation;
- obey Jesus' command to love one another as he has loved us, modeled through the humble act of foot washing;
- and remember—remember through partaking of Christ's body and blood, remember the call of the Holy Spirit in our lives...remember the oppressed and the outcast, those who need both spiritual and physical nourishment."²

This final word from Jesus to "remember" is more than just fondly remembering – more than nostalgia. The verb means to "take hold" of something. Jesus calls those who seek to follow him – calls us – calls the ELCIC – to take hold of what he has done and taught and to go into the world.

This is what we are seeking to do together today as the ELCIC, on this Day of Action. This year marks 40 years in the life of our church! This milestone not only invites us to remember our story, but also to reflect on who we are today and how God is calling us forward as a church.

Today's ELCIC Day of Action is an opportunity to live out that calling together – to dance – *living out God's grace and unconditional love* - to step beyond our church walls and into our neighbourhoods, joining with others across our church in acts of – in a dance of – service, compassion, and care in Christ's name, where all are invited into the dance.

Whether our efforts are simple or ambitious, each is a faithful expression of who we are as the body of Christ. Today this dance includes:

Holy Trinity in Edson, Alberta who are making birthday party bags for their local food bank.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, in Halifax, Nova Scotia who are hosting a 'Sidewalk Fiesta' following worship which includes food, activities, and a peace flag.

Nazareth Lutheran in Standard, Alberta is partnering with a local group for a 'work bee' to care for trees in a nearby park.

Zion Lutheran in Weyburn, Saskatchewan is hosting a BBQ picnic, a classic car parade, delivering care cards and collecting items for the food bank.

² Ibid.

Thirdspace at Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, Ontario is hosting teams at the food justice garden and student food distribution project – planting, sorting and cleaning.

Ascension Lutheran in Nelson, BC is hosting an open house offering mental health first aid and Naloxone training in response to the local drug crisis.

Trinity Lutheran in New Hamburg, Ontario is working to support homeless youth with education, laptops, and job opportunities.

St. Stephen's and St. Bede in Winnipeg, Manitoba is participating in a spring cleanup and sharing an ELCIC 40th Birthday cake.

Grace Lutheran in Wetaskiwin, Alberta is painting rocks with inspirational messages to give out in the area and plant along walking paths.

The National Staff and our families are gathering this afternoon at a care centre in Winnipeg to be present with residents through conversation, games, and music.

And I could go on and on.

As we *live out God's grace and unconditional love* our actions hope to touch and bless others as we journey together to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.

Thank you, dear church, for the many ways you already serve. I look forward to the witness we will share together today through the ELCIC Day of Action.

So, dear church, dear sisters and brothers, siblings in Christ,
living out God's grace and unconditional love,

Go –

go to your homes,
go to your places of work,
go to your neighbourhoods;
go there to begin anew,
go caring for all of creation,
go and be God's people for the love of the world.

And as you go – you go with Jesus' promise – take hold of it:

Remember. I am with you.

And dance, dear church, dance.

Prayer: (adapted from The Rev. Susan R. Briehl. Day 1, April 30, 2000.)

Holy God, come among us, in the good news proclaimed, in water and Word, present in loaf and cup, and in the company of others who seek to follow Jesus.

Send us, filled with the breath of your Holy Spirit,

To breathe peace into fearful lives,

To love one another as we have been loved,

*To welcome the stranger and make friends of enemies,
To forgive the sins that bind others to the past,
To serve, on bended knee, all in need of care,
To be your wounded and risen Body in the world
And to enter with joy your in-breaking, startling future. Amen*