



From the Bishop:

July / August 2026

On July 18, 1976 Pastor Nancy Winder was ordained into Word and Sacrament ministry. She was the first woman ordained in what was then the North Pacific District and the fourteenth woman ordained in the American Lutheran Church.

But Nancy and those thirteen women were not the first. We remember all the women who came before them. In scripture we remember Mary, the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, Phoebe, Priscilla, Junea, Lydia, and all the unnamed women including the Samaritan woman at the well who ran to proclaim what she had seen and heard, becoming the first to declare Jesus as Lord.

Along with these women in scripture, we also remember the countless women in these last 2000 years – Hildegard, Katie Luther, Argula von Grumbach, Maria Stewart, Phoebe Palmer, Catherine Booth, Margaret Wold, and so many others who were called by the Holy Spirit to preach, teach, proclaim, lead, and serve. We give thanks for the myriad of gifts that God has poured out through women for the sake of the church and the life of the world.

I am so thankful for the many women in our lives who passed on their faith to us. The women who taught Sunday School, prepared the altar, made meals, visited those who were sick, and marched against injustice. The women theologians, mystics, and writers. The women who, in countless ways, proclaimed through word and deed the good news of Jesus.

Thank you to our sisters in Christ. Thank you for the ways you have lived out your faith in every vocation. Thank you to the women who have gone before us, to the women serving today, and to the women who continue to say yes to God's call – including those called into ordained ministry.

I wonder, do you remember the first time you heard a woman preach? The first time you heard an alto or soprano voice chanting the liturgy or saying the words of institution? I remember. I was twenty years old. Seeing and hearing someone who looked like me, who had a body like mine, made the gospel come alive in a way I hadn't experienced before. Truly, it changed my life.

This is why I grieve what is happening to some of our sisters in other denominations. In recent weeks, the Southern Baptist Convention voted at its annual assembly to further restrict women from teaching, preaching, and pastoral leadership. This means women ordained ten or twenty or fifty years ago may now find their callings denied by the very churches they have faithfully served. So many women – chosen, loved, called, sent – women with fire in their bellies to preach the gospel may no longer do so. Not by God, but by their denomination. Their silencing is not only a tragedy for them; it is a tragedy for the whole Church.

So today there is an urgency to remember, celebrate, and publicly proclaim, that women are called by God. Just as the Spirit came to Mary, who sang of the mighty brought down from their thrones, just as the Spirit sent Mary Magdalene to proclaim resurrection to the apostles, just as Lydia helped birth a community of believers, the Spirit has called and continues to call women in every age.

So, in joy, thankfulness, and celebration, let us give thanks for the women of the past, present, and future who continue to proclaim, teach, lead, and serve. For, as we read in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, *"Since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart ... For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord."*



FINAL Word from VEEP Kay:

MANY THANKS to Kay for sharing her insights and stories these last 8 years – she & her words have been a wonderful gift!

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word. (Isaiah 50:4)

I am a word person. I have always had an appreciation for the power of prose, the beauty of poetry, and the wisdom of *the Word*. Both of my degrees are in English and I spent thirty-seven years as a Language Arts teacher. God gave me the tongue of a teacher so I could sustain the weary with a word. So, early in my first term as synod vice president, when I was asked if I wanted to write a monthly article for “The Spirit,” I happily agreed.

At first, my hope was to use the space to share more information about the role of the synod council. I knew from personal experience that the average “person in the pew” didn’t really know much about the other two expressions of the church. Therefore, the first few submissions were heavy in language from our governing documents about the responsibilities of the vice president and the rest of the council. I shared about our meetings and what I and the other council members had been up to in the month. These were informational, but not exactly “sustaining the weary” words.

As time went on, circumstances changed. We entered into an unprecedented global pandemic that upended so much of what we believed about what community and church were. We learned new ways of being neighbors at appropriately social distance and new ways of doing and being church. As synod leadership scrambled to support and assist our congregations, it became apparent that weariness was a definite challenge. My articles began to focus on scripture and a layperson’s understanding of what God was doing in the world. Every day when I took my “I just need to get out of this darn house” walk, I prayed for the words to sustain the weary. I hope those articles were uplifting and strengthening in very troubling times.

Eventually, we emerged from the pandemic shutdown, but I continued to use the space to reflect on scripture. I’m not a deacon nor a pastor. I’m not a trained theologian. My ponderings are those of a layperson. I hoped that the things I was curious about or the little epiphanies I had would also resonate with others. Interestingly, although the bishop and I never discussed what we would be writing about, our articles almost always seemed like we’d coordinated them. It seems that “The Spirit” is truly Spirit-inspired.

In this final article, I want to share what an honor it has been to serve as your synod vice president over the past eight years. As tough as leading during the pandemic and the current political turmoil has been, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with so many wonderful people, not only throughout the synod, but the entire ELCA. I have had the joy of representing the synod at call meetings and of attending ordinations and installations of rostered ministers. I have been an active participant and leader in the Association of Synod Vice Presidents and I have represented the synod at three Churchwide Assemblies. Mostly, though, I have worked with the bishop, our amazing synod staff, and all the faithful and wise members of synod council to act on behalf of all the individuals, congregations, worshipping communities, and outreach ministries striving to be God’s presence here in the NWWA Synod.

Thank you to all who have supported me these past eight years. I commend to you our new Vice President, Cindy Shultz, whose term begins August 1. I know she will be a great partner in this work. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as vice president.

Blessings and peace to you all!

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