



February 2026

Dear friends in Christ.

Why do we exist?

That's a question I asked as we turned the corner to 2026. It's a missional question, an identity question, a purpose question!

Because of our theological approach, Lutherans have a unique perspective of the Gospel, and thereby an important contribution to make to peoples' lives and to society. "Justification by grace" isn't a cute slogan from our historical roots, but is a thread that has run through the history of God's people right up to this moment. In a world that measures worth by productivity, popularity, wealth, military might, gender or skin colour, Lutherans proclaim that our value is not earned but is a gift.

What this does for us is to open our hearts to the lives of others and to all creation. We learn compassion, forgiveness, justice. We learn to collaborate. We work for the common good and not just our own. We care for the earth. We respect our heritage and are active stewards for the future. We know the world isn't easily fixed nor do we imagine that faith shields us from pain. Still, we stand together to proclaim the hope and love of Christ.

This is especially important today. Our lives feel unstable with world events. There is fear and foreboding all around. But remember, as God's children we are secure in a love that knows no end. We always have a place of belonging. We are never alone. Each Sunday in our congregations we remind one another of God's love and faithfulness, and we encourage one another to lead tenacious and committed lives shaped by that love.

Today is a day to lean into our baptismal promises. Do you remember those?

To live among God's faithful people, hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

That's a recipe for a changed world and a clear answer to the question I first posed above.

May God bless you in living out or anticipating your baptism.

May you know Jesus is beside you in the journey of life.

May the Holy Spirit energize and encourage you to courageously stand firm in love.

Bishop Trish Schmermund
Synod of Alberta and the Territories, ELCIC