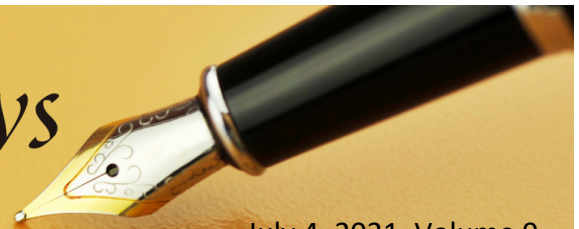


Sharing the Good News

from the pen of the Mission Interpreter



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Where are Lutherans?

After attending the assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Windhoek, Namibia, in May, 2017, Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, wrote about playing with Google Earth and locating Lutherans around the world. Following is some of what she observed.

In the United States you will find that there is a “Fertile Crescent” of Lutheranism—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas—where there are more Lutheran churches per square mile than there are gas stations. In other places, there aren’t quite so many, but we certainly can find Synod offices all over the U.S. and the Caribbean. Then there’s the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada on this continent as well. When we zoom farther out, we find there are Lutheran churches on every continent except Antarctica—145 Lutheran bodies in 98 countries numbering 75 million members.

In northern Europe several countries, particularly the Scandinavian countries and Germany, recognize Lutheran as the state church. Consequently, by default, there are large concentrations of Lutherans in those nations. But Lutherans are elsewhere in Europe as well. Africa probably boasts the next largest number of Lutherans, certainly in countries like Tanzania, Ethiopia and Namibia.

What are these other Lutherans like? Our contexts are very different. Climate, cuisine and cultures vary, and challenges are different. In many parts of the world, Lutherans are a minority population facing persecution, and many must contend with war, forced migration, and the devastating effects of climate change. Many, like ourselves, must deal with an increasingly secularized culture. But there is something we all have in common—our life in Christ in which we celebrate the grace bestowed upon us at baptism making us God’s own children. We are free in Christ to walk in newness of life to love and serve our neighbor.

A story about Lutherans that was told during the LWF assembly is worth repeating. In St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia, a wooden church building was erected in the mid 1700’s to serve Lutheran immigrants arriving there. It was carefully preserved over the years and provided a place of worship and hope. However, during the siege of Leningrad during World War II, people were freezing and starving. There was no wood for heating or cooking. So the Lutherans dismantled their building piece by piece and gave it away for the life of their community. That is what being free in Christ looks like. It is part of our Lutheran story.

All over the world we are **sharing the Good News!**

[*Living Lutheran, July, 2017*](#)