



Northwest Washington Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

January 2021

Dear Beloveds in Christ,

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

As I look back on the year 2020, I cannot express my gratitude enough for the ministry that you all have done in this last year. The adaptive changes you lived into as you moved worship online, as you cared for those sick and grieving, as you continued to hold Confirmation classes, as you reached out to those in the community - feeding those who were hungry, housing those without permanent homes, lifting up your prayers, your voices, and moving towards change for those marginalized by society and so much more have been incredible. Thank you!

At the same time, I know that many of you are tired, many are frustrated, and many of you are just plain ready to get back to "normalcy." Me too. Me. Too. I miss my children. I miss my parents. I miss my office. I miss driving in traffic (OK, that one is NOT true). But I truly miss you. In person. And I know that you miss one another.

As we enter into 2021, I have hope that we will be able to connect again, see one another again, gather again in-person. I have hope that in this new year many of us will be able to travel again, eat inside restaurants, have our children receive education in school buildings and that we will be able to have in-person worship again. I trust that in this new year while we will probably continue to wear masks, we will also receive vaccinations. And I pray that those who have been suffering due to job loss, homelessness, financial difficulties, anxiety, loneliness, depression, illness, injustice, and grief for loved ones will find new hope. I truly believe that soon (in the next several months) we will be able to look back at 2020, take a deep breath, and start looking forward to the rest of our lives.

So, as you gather for this annual meeting – I assume for most of you at your kitchen tables and living room couches – know that we are still the body of Christ together and, because of you living into the Spirit of God, we are being Church in the world.

And, as Church in the world, we continue to ask these questions:

- What is God up to?
- What is God calling us into?
- Where do we see God working?
- What is keeping us from seeing God in this world? In this person? In this community?
- What do we want to keep from this last year?
- What is a necessary conversation we need to have as a congregation as we live into the love and grace of God?
- Who are the people we need to listen to?
- Who are the people not present?

There might be other questions to ask and answers might vary from congregation to congregation, but the conversation is important and vital, even more so as we continue to live in Holy Community with God, with one another, and with the world.

As you gather for this annual meeting, I am grateful that we continue to be the synod and church together, that we continue to walk together, and, especially, I thank God for Jesus –whose life, death, and resurrection we place all of our trust as we live in God's Spirit of hope, justice, forgiveness and radical welcome.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus,

Shelley Bryan Wee

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee