

February 2023



## From the Bishop:

When I was in sixth grade, my teacher decided that we were going to build chicken skeletons. From real chickens. So, the teacher divided us into groups. A local farmer donated the chickens. Each group had to boil and boil and boil their chicken. When all the flesh and tendons, etc. were boiled off, and the bones were clean, then we had to build the chicken back up so that it formed a complete bird.

When I think back on this project, I wonder what we were learning. Anatomy? Names of bones? I'm not sure. But what I did learn was community, relationship, and collaboration. Without the people in my group – and the different skills and gifts that they had – we would not have been able to put this chicken back together. We had to make sure that the bones were sorted into the right boxes (the feet bones, the leg bones, the wing bones, the beak, etc.) We had to make sure the bones weren't wet and that there wasn't anything left on the bones so it didn't stink. (My mom claimed it did stink. Side note, I was elected to bring home the completed chicken. My mom was not pleased and at some point, it disappeared from the living room bookcase).

Anyway, getting back to community, relationship, and collaboration ... as I think of our synod, and what God is calling us to do and to be together, I think that these three things are key. I know that many of you are already in relationship and collaboration with other ELCA congregations around you. Perhaps you share your building with other ministries. Perhaps you share a food bank or work with a school. Perhaps affordable housing is part of your collaborative work. Many of you have preschools. All of these are wonderful ways to collaborate.

I'm wondering if we can think even bigger and more relationally than that. What if people from geographically close congregations met and talked about who they are. What their hopes are. What their fears are. What they need from others. What they have to offer others. What might come out of these conversations and relationships? Perhaps a way to share staff? Perhaps a way to more impactful in the community? Perhaps new ways of using property? I'm not sure. It would be interesting and exciting to find out.

As I have mentioned before, study after study indicates that pastors today are lonely and feel isolated and anxious about the future. As my staff and I travel around the synod, we hear that many congregations also feel lonely and isolated and anxious about the future. Hearing stories and knowing some of the difficulties, doesn't it seem that it would be better to build relationship with one another and collaborate rather than every congregation trying to figure it out on their own?

Here are three ways that we are encouraging congregations to be in community, build relationships, and collaborate.

First, we continue to expand the LiVE Project (Living into Vocational Engagement). We are excited about the synod's collaboration and building relationship with the Trinity Education Foundation who is contributing funding this year and partnering with us. I encourage you to visit [www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project](http://www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project) and learn more.

Second, in lieu of a Synod Assembly this year, we are hosting two Synod Gatherings in the spring with forums where relationships and collaboration are key. Watch for information in early February on the two Gatherings (May 13 in Mount Vernon and May 20 in Bellevue) via email and on our website here: [www.lutheransnw.org/events/synod-gatherings](http://www.lutheransnw.org/events/synod-gatherings).

Third, the Grace Grant application this year asks applicants with whom they are collaborating on the proposed project. The application process is open February 1 – May 31. Read about the focus areas and how to apply for this final year of funding here: [www.lutheransnw.org/pages/grace-grants](http://www.lutheransnw.org/pages/grace-grants)

You know, I could never have built that chicken alone. Nor would I have wanted to. Truthfully, even with my group, it was messy and hard. In my memory, we had a few bones left over that we quietly threw in the garbage. And yet, I am still in relationship with many of the people in my sixth grade group. And we are bonded from the chicken-building experience.

As the body of Christ, may we build relationship, be in community, and collaborate together. I'd love to hear what you are doing in your congregation towards this. Please email me at [bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org).

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



## From the VEEP

*“So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

In 1988, a merger of three Lutheran churches (the American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America) resulted in the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Since that time, the ELCA has continued to be committed to always being made new, and now, thirty-five years after its inception, the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA has directed the Church Council to establish a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church. The purpose of this commission is to reconsider the statements of purpose for each expression of the church, as well as the organizational structure, with an eye to our shared commitment to dismantle systemic racism. The findings of this commission and its recommendations will be presented to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in preparation for a possible reconstituting convention.

The commission will be made up of up to 35 voting members - three voting members from each region of the church, and up to eight at-large members. The selection process will give attention to diversity in gender, race, language, geography, lay or rostered status and other factors. Individuals will be sought who are thoughtful, passionate, energetic, and collaborative. The role of each member will be to represent the interests of this whole church, while also bringing their personal perspectives to the table.

Generally speaking, individuals chosen to work on this commission should plan on two in-person meetings per year at the Lutheran Center in Chicago and at least bimonthly (every two months) online meetings. The first in-person meetings will be held June 22-24, 2023. Travel expenses are covered by the churchwide organization. I realize this is a significant time commitment, but this work of being made new is important to our communities in all expressions of the church.

I believe that those of us in the NWWA Synod have unique perspectives on these issues and encourage participation in the commission and in any listening events the commission holds once its work is underway. There are two ways to be nominated for this commission:

- Interested individuals may self-nominate by submitting an open nomination form [HERE](#) (due March 9)
- The Synod Council will also be making two nominations

If you would like to participate in this work, you may read more about the requirements [HERE](#).

### Here's what I or the Synod Council have been up to in December:

- I continue to attend the Synod-wide Acts Bible Study (learn more and join any time [HERE](#))
- Synod Council met on January 21. Among other agenda items, we discussed plans for the Synod-wide Gatherings coming in May and the nominations process for the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.

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