

Dear Friends in Christ,

**Thank You** - for the most wonderful Christmas as we gathered together with record attendance at all of our worship services. Thank you for inviting, welcoming and making room for all. Thank you for coming back if you have been gone for a while. Thank you to our many preschool families in attendance who brought your little ones. Thank you to families and students home for Christmas.

Many have shared how you loved the service of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 23 and asked that we do it again next year. Yes – its a definite must for next year's playlist! It was a great kick-off for our three day celebration of Christmas. My hats off to all the musicians and our Music Director Laurie for working with me to put together a great service. Each week Laurie also produces all the slides we project for our worship. It adds so much and we are grateful! Thanks also to her fine sound and video team. They make it all happen!

**Christmas Eve** saw lots of people at all three services. My deepest thanks to our ushers, altar guild, acolytes, communion assistants, greeters, readers, musicians and you for your part in the celebration. The ushers did an amazing job and kept everything moving smoothly!

**Christmas Day** it was good to hear someone say "I love this little church". The simplicity of the morning worship, the good preaching by Pastor Butler, the delicious food being served in the fellowship hall and the feeling of people gathering together in community was a joy and a gift. Our thanks to Anne & Bob Barry, and Don, Rachel & Lily Devine for making sure the Christmas Dinner happened in wonderful organized fashion. To all the volunteers like Scott Soes who got up at the crack of dawn to start cooking the turkeys and to all who helped in so many ways – I just can't name you all – but you are so appreciated! Lots of laughter and many new faces from the community in one place serving and eating together. Over 300 people served plus 50 home deliveries. It was a joyful day.

Continued on page 2



Where is Baby Jesus? I honestly don't know. Many thought I had left the manger empty on Christmas Eve to emphasize my sermon's main point that the manger is a window to the whole Gospel. It is a window to the humble servant king born 2000 years ago who calls us to follow him. The manger is a window to the Gospel which is the good news that Jesus is the Savior of the World. I shared a story of a church whose nativity kept having their baby Jesus stolen. Finally they decided that if the manger is a place of feeding – (“mange” is french for “to eat”) instead of a baby Jesus they would hang above it a mobile of gift cards to the local grocery store.

People got the point, yet by Christmas morning there was a serious concern in the air that we did not have baby Jesus back where he belonged. I admit – I would have had him in place – but honestly – I didn't know where to find the wrapped up doll we have used in previous years. So the manger remained empty. God has ways of helping us see things in new ways. So I would suggest that there is another lesson for us in the empty manger. - The star of Bethlehem, that hangs in our sanctuary over the manger – will lead people to find the baby Jesus. We call this the “Epiphany” moment when we see Jesus alive in the world through his love, feeding and healing.

This Epiphany we will look together for the baby Jesus as we gather for worship each Sunday in January. Martin Luther is quoted as saying “The Bible is the cradle that holds the Christ.” So I invite you to bring your Bible with you to church during the month of January. Adults and kids alike. If you don't have one – please let me know and I will get you one. We also have pew Bibles to share if you forget to bring yours. This new year may we see in God's holy word – the baby Jesus, born in Bethlehem, a humble servant king, who calls us to follow him and feed others. Where is baby Jesus? He is with you always. Come to the manger and see.

Blessings in Christ ~ Pastor Debra Benson

SOMETIMES  
I JUST LOOK UP,  
SMILE AND SAY,  
“I KNOW THAT  
WAS YOU, GOD!  
THANKS!”



# Thank You FOR YOUR HELP

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your prayers and expressions of concern during my recent surgery. I am doing amazingly well and feel better than I have in months. God has answered all our prayers. A special thank you to Don Devine for his willingness to take over Christmas Dinner planning. Thank you to all who helped in any way with the Community Christmas Dinner 2018. We served over 400 meals, plus a turkey and all the trimmings for the fire department. God bless you all!

— Ann Barry & Don Devine



## USHERS

### FEBRUARY 3

9 AM: Rich Berentson & Bud Rock

10:30: Les & Carol Olsen

### FEBRUARY 10

9 AM: Paul Phelan & Scott Soes

10:30: Bill & Diane Gusa

### FEBRUARY 17

9 AM: Dan Khile & Larry Thomas

10:30: John & Kathryn Parker

### FEBRUARY 24

9 AM: Win Thompson & Boyd Veer

10:30: Paul & Julie Dusenbury

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

### **Sunday February 10th**

Budget forums during the month of January

The nominating committee is looking for people to fill leadership positions for the coming year.

They will also be looking for delegates to the ELCA Synod Assembly which will be held May 16-18 at the Lynnwood Convention Center. We will be electing a new Bishop and it will be an exciting assembly. The theme will be "Grace and Gratitude"

Please contact Dorothy Engom; Nominating Chair if you are interested in serving as an Assembly voting member or on our church council. We are looking for a new President and Vice President.

## FINANCIAL SECRETARY POSITION OPEN

Alice Harstad who has served so faithfully for many years has resigned her volunteer position as our church financial secretary effective February 1st. Please contact Hoagy Kerr, council president, at 360-293-7984 if you are interested in serving the church in this position. According to our constitution: "The financial recorder shall receive and keep record of all income from contributing members and other sources. The financial secretary shall be elected by the church council and shall not be an officer of the congregation." Please join in thanking Alice for her many years of faithful service. Thank you Alice!

## ALC SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY "PRIME TIMERS"

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5

### **GAME NIGHT – Bingo**

Conference Room #3 at 6:30 pm

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11

### **OUT TO LUNCH - The Farmhouse Restaurant**

Meet in Conference Room #1 at 11:00 am and carpool to the restaurant.

### NO OUTING PLANNED FOR JANUARY.

#### **\*\*NOTE\*\***

- Transportation reservations for the trip to the Nordic Museum on February 20, 2019, need to be made soon.
- Reservations for the overnight retreat to Holden Village in May start January 1.

*Please talk to Paul or Julie Dusenbury if you are interested in either event.*

*Sign-up sheets are available at the Welcome Desk.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2 - **NO MOVIE NIGHT**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

### **POT LUCK BRUNCH**

Fellowship Hall at 10:00 am

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

### **TOUR OF NORDIC MUSEUM**

Viking Exhibit plus lunch

Meet in Conference Room #1 at 8:00 am

*Please sign up at the Welcome Desk for all events*

## MEN'S MONDAY Bible Studies

MONDAY Evenings - 5 pm  
In Conference room #3  
Led by: Hoagy Kerr

## MEN'S THURSDAY Bible Studies

THURSDAY Mornings - 7 am  
In Conference Room #1  
Led by: Boyd Veer

## THURSDAY Bible Study

THURSDAY - 12 Noon (For Men & Women)  
In Conference Room #1  
Led by: Pastor Benson

## MOM'S Bible Study

The second & fourth Thursdays in the month  
January 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 am - 11:00 am  
In Conference room #3  
*Bible Study: TBD*  
*Leader: Heather Harrington*

## MOPS-Mothers of Preschoolers

On the First & Third Thursdays in the month  
January 3<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 am - 11:00 am  
In Conference room #3  
*Theme: Find Your Fire.*  
*Leaders: Erin Kohlhaas, Jenessa Eelkema  
and Challon Walker*

Childcare is provided for both MOM's bible study and MOPS group. If you feel called to help with child care, please sign up at the Welcome desk or call the church office 360-293-9586

## PRAYER Team

Tuesdays 1:00 pm in the "Library Prayer Chapel".

If you have a prayer request or an update for the "Prayer List" please call the church office.

If you wish to join the Prayer Team call;  
Goodie Lorentzen 360-293-3669 or



## Youth Overnight at Lutherwood

7th - 12 Grade Youth:  
Lock in Jan 18th-19th  
\$15/Camper

Middle School and High Schoolers come on out to camp for an old fashioned lock in from 7:00 pm – 7:00am. This is an all nighter full of fun and games. We will have many different activities from baking competitions to carpet ball/ping pong/air hockey/ amazingness. We will break for a midnight worship service then continue our fun with upstairs games and Wii competitions or slow down with movie and rest in the chapel with your sleeping bag. This is put on by the staff at Camp Lutherwood. Sign up at the Welcome Desk or call the church office. We will need Adult Advisors to go with too. Contact Pastor Deb Benson for more info.

## CHILD CARE is a ministry of our congregation.

We want to provide for both MOM's bible study and MOPS group. 9:15-11:15 am .

If you feel called to help with child care, please sign up at the Welcome desk or call the church office 360-293-9586

## Lutheran Disaster Response

Our monthly Stewardship offerings to ELCA church wide bring God's hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.



Learn more about the work of your church on-line at ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response. We are boots on the ground helping with the recent fires in CA, the Indonesian Earthquake and Tsunami, South Sudan Relief, the Middle East and European Refugee Crisis, and help for Migrant Minors.

## SEWING NEWS

*Happy New Year!*

*“We are Servants of the Lord-Doing His work”*

Thank you so much for all of your support of sewing. We wouldn't be able to do all we do without your help. You are a Blessing to those in need.

We will be working on our shipment to go out in the spring. We will need your help filling our health Care kits, Baby Care kits, Sewing kits and our Quilts. Think about us when you go to garage sales or shopping.

We will need:

**Bath size bar soap**

*(Lever 2000, Dial, Dove, Irish Spring, Ivory)*

**Flannel for Receiving Blankets & Diapers**

**Bath & Hand towels** *new or slightly used for our Health Care kits.*

**Material for our Quilts**

**Baby Sleepers**

**Infant Socks**

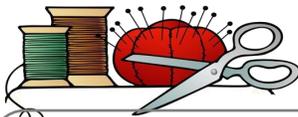
*Did you know?*

We sew **450 + Diapers** for our Baby Care kits & **200 Receiving Blankets.**

Please come & join us  
we have good fellowship & fun!

All are Welcome – We start at 8:00 am , come when you can, Bring a lunch and stay as long as you like.

~ Faith Legan



JANUARY SEWING DAYS

8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Tuesdays

15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>

## Lutheran World Relief KNITTING NEWS

Monday, January 21 from 1:00 - 3:00 pm

**\*\*\*At “The Market” Coffee Shop\*\*\***

Our SPRING shipment GOAL is:

Hats 50-75

Sweaters 50-75

Sweater/hat sets 60-100

We have COMPLETED:

0 - Hats

0 - Sweaters

21 - Sweater/hat sets.



Our church usually ships 100-150 layette sets, each 6 month period. One sweater/hat set goes in each layette. Beginners are welcome & Teaching is always available. We use a fun, one piece sweater pattern.

Knitting location change for January

I Hope to see you **JANUARY 21 at 1pm.**

**At “The Market” Coffee Shop**

~Linda Anderson, 360-588-1730

## WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY CIRCLES

**Tuesday, January 8**

Hannah & Esther Circles -10 am

*Location:* Conference room #3

*Bible Study:* Linda Walker

*Hostesses:* Carol Olsen & Ida Ford

Ruth Circle - 10 am

*Location:* Serena Partch's House

*Leader:* Helene Fink

*Hostess:* Serena Partch

Anna Circle - 6:30 pm

*Location:* Conference room #3

*Bible Study:* Nancy Loftis

*Hostess:* Nancy Loftis



## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

### Sunday School's Keen for 2019

But first, let's talk a little bit about last December. The Sunday school students, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, performed the annual Children's Christmas Program. The kids did their little skit of the Nativity, which was really fun, and sang, with the congregations help, some famous Christmas carols. A joyful sound was, indeed, raised up to the Lord. A special thanks goes out to Adrienne Eide for her piano accompaniment as she has done for the program every year. And thank you to our two prelude musicians, Regan Franulovich on the piano and Persephone Pestar on the Flute. Thank you also to Stacey Pestar and Paula Olson for helping with the costumes. Stacey Pestar, Ginny Connelly, and Heather Harrington were instrumental in directing the overall program. Those ladies are just plain terrific at keeping the children on task and focused. Thank you ladies. We would also like to thank all the people that helped with setting up and taking down the stage for the performance. Not knowing who they all were, we just say thank you. Finally, we would like to thank Jeni Richards for providing the snacks and cakes for the after program celebration. All and all, it was a good day at Anacortes Lutheran. Sure hope you enjoyed it.

#### CHRISTMAS STORE:

Kendra Kennedy has once again outdone herself. She set up downstairs in the youth room and it was amazing. What a wonderful addition to our Christmas season this store has been. Kendra keeps threatening to run off to some other part of the world, but for now, we still get to reap the benefits of her creativity. Thank you Kendra for a job **more** than well done!

### Coming Events

#### THIRD GRADE BIBLES:

Sunday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, the third graders will be receiving youth Bibles provided, in large part, by a grant from Thrivent Financial. Our teaching staff will be our Thrivent action team. They are tasked with providing the children with lessons on how to use the bibles. We are asking the children to share their bible experiences with their friends in the community. By doing so, we hope to inspire interest in our Sunday school. The Children are encouraged to bring their bibles to Sunday school every weekend. We are thankful to Thrivent Financial for their assistance in making this program possible.

#### WINTER CARNIVAL:

We will be looking for a date in February to celebrate our Winter Carnival. This event has become popular with the children and parents alike. There is everything from Jenga, on a large scale, to cookie decorating. There is even a fishing pond for the little ones where they fish for little token trinkets. There will also be some food and beverages. Since the super bowl is in the first weekend of February, we are looking at the week-ends following. Watch the bulletins and bulletin boards for flyers.

Dave White / Children's Ministry

### BRING YOUR BIBLE TO CHURCH IN JANUARY

PASTOR BENSON WILL BE TEACHING & PREACHING DURING WORSHIP AS TOGETHER  
WE WALK THROUGH THE BIBLE

Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching* them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." *Matthew 28:19-20*

## WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP ASSISTANTS

ALL F.A.S.T. Leaders: Kristen Nations 360-873-8661 / lifeofreilly\_4@msn.com

ALTAR Setup: Karen Tavalero and Paula Olson

SOUND Team: Jim Carver, Brian Hanrahan, Kenny Holzemer, Dana McCoy, Linda Millo, Mark Tanis

POWER Point Team: Michael Hanrahan, Anita Holzemer, Pat Carrie Smith

Thank you to everyone who helped in so many ways through Advent and the Christmas Season.

With the quick turn around at Christmas many have not had a chance to volunteer to help with faith and service in January. If you would like to serve in one of the following areas please call the church office.

<b>January 6</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>
Acolytes:	Kaylee Lust & Dylan Thomas	Jacob Elling
Greeters:		Jerry Bongard
Reader:	Anita Holzemer	Jerry Bongard
Ushers:	Tim Hofferth & Chuck Landgraf	Les & Carol Olsen
Communion Assistants:	Kenny & Anita Holzemer	Jerry Bongard
Coffee Serve/Cleanup:		
Coffee Hour Treats:		
<b>January 13</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>
Acolytes:	Erin Kennedy	Ashlee Long
Greeters:		Paul & Julie Dusenbury
Reader:		Anne Barry
Ushers:	Kenny & Anita Holzemer	Wayne Olsen & Randy VanSweden
Communion Assistants:		Anne Barry
Coffee Serve/Cleanup:		
Coffee Hour Treats:		
<b>January 20</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>
Acolytes:	Reese & Breanne Morgenthaler	Persephone Pestar
Greeters:		Jerry Bongard
Reader:	Pat Carrie Smith	Jerry Bongard
Ushers:	Dan Khile & Larry Thomas	John & Kathleen Parker
Communion Assistants:		Jerry Bongard
Coffee Serve/Cleanup:		
Coffee Hour Treats:	Donuts	Donuts
<b>January 27</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>
Acolytes:	Talin Kerr & Mason Nations-Pearson	Harlan Eggleston
Greeters:		
Reader:	Anita Holzemer	Don Devine
Ushers:	Winn Thompson & Boyd Veer	Bill & Diane Gusa
Communion Assistants:	Anita & Kenny Holzemer	Anne Barry
Coffee Serve/Cleanup:		
Coffee Hour Treats:		

JANUARY  
BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS TO YOU!

1	Richard Rice	19	Alex Nibarger
2	Dora Coffelt	20	Elsa Geffe
3	Kai Frerichs	21	Muriel Burtness
3	Al Littlefield	21	Mira Knowles
3	Eric Clifton	21	Julie harstad
3	Hannah Pierce	21	Linda Walker
4	Pat Carrie Smith	22	Sarah Atterberry
5	Jerry Knutsen	22	Takara Tornga
7	Persephone Pestar	24	Diane Brosten
11	Donald Devine	26	Dave White
11	Anna Holzemer	27	Donna Anderson
11	Helen Buffum	27	Jean Rogers
11	Danielle Long	28	Jeannie Arneson
12	Renie Hofferth	28	Marilyn Pinquoch
13	Kristen Hoffbuhr-Collins	28	Madelyn Case
14	Carleen Oldham	28	Sharon Fisher
14	Kenny Holzemer	28	Caroline Spehar
16	Joseph Pestar III	28	Taylor Phelan
17	Billie Jean Melton	30	Regan Franulovich
17	Paula Olson	30	Michelle Romag

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

5	Chris & Heidi Parker
9	Les & Carol Olsen
12	Warner & Diane Berglund



Pastor Debra Benson

**BAPTISMS**

**December 12, 2018**

Isabelle Rose Thomas

**FUNERALS**

**December 6, 2018**

Gary Lee Storme

**December 28, 2018**

Ethel Gloria Nystom

DECEMBER ~ Sunday Worship Attendance

	9:00 am	Nurse- ry	10:30 am	Nursery	Total	
2	134	4	102	1	236	
9	135	2	104	2	241	
16			221	4	225	
23			186	5	191	
CHRISTMAS EVE		3 pm	142	0	142	Total 633
		5 pm	372	8	380	
		10 pm	109	2	111	
CHRISTMAS DAY			57	0	57	
30						Not available at time of printing



Thank you to Dan & Kathy Khile for ALL you did for the ADVENT Dinners.



*Les and Carol Olsen  
Celebrate 20 years of Marriage*

*on Saturday, January 5, 2019 at 2:00 pm in the ALC Sanctuary*

**PLEASE COME JOIN THEM!**

They will be Renewing their Vows made January 9, 1999 at Arnold and Fern's Lake Campbell home.  
There will be a Reception following the Renewal in the Fellowship Hall.  
No Gifts Please!! Your presence will be your Gift!

## **ALC COUNCIL MINUTES** – December 13, 2018

**Attended:** Hoagy Kerr, Pastor Debra Benson, Lane Phelan, Melanie Sahnaw, Faith Legan, Marcus Knowles, Earl Gibbons, Stacy Pestar, Les Olsen, Jo Rockwood, Karen Tavalero, Kathy Khile, Steve Richards via phone.

Hoagy called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and Pastor started with Prayer

**Presidents Report:** Reviewed minutes from last month's meeting notes, Amendment to change the date for shipping WELCA Quilts from November 14th to November 4th. Approved motion seconded and passed. Hoagy has had a couple inquiries for the position of Financial Secretary. Thank you to Les and John for getting that motorhome removed from our parking lot.

**Pastors Report:** We had zero baptisms in 2017. Through our emphasis and outreach we have had numerous baptisms. This year's focus will be on Scripture, both Storytelling and Chapter verse. Thank you to the Committee members for your work for setting a vision of the ministry you want to accomplish and putting together budgets that meet that mission.

**Treasurers Report:** We are currently about \$2,000 below our estimated offerings for 2018, but we are paying the bills from the money in reserve. Our Thanks to Alice Harstad for her many years as Financial Secretary. She will be finished with position January 31, 2019.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Old Business:** The budget is in for review with much discussion. The Council made a motion, seconded and passed that we will present two pieces for approval to the congregation. 1) The budget, 2) the budget with a supplemental challenge.

**Personnel Report:** We have hired a Custodian for 16 hours a week, 4 days at 4 hours a day. The supplemental challenge budget is aggressive for 2019 because we would like the congregation to consider calling an Ordained Pastor for Youth and Family with a salary of 54k for 8 months.

**WELCA Report:** Deliveries were shipped on the 4th of November. Big thank you to Kathy & Dan Khile for all you do. Brunch was great with Moka Joe's coming to share about coffee their beans.

**Education Report:** The Children's Sunday School Program was December 16th. January is when the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders get Bibles. We will have a Winter Carnival and Scout Sunday in February.

**Outreach Report:** We are still in need of a Church member to be a Delegate for Josephine Caring Community Pastor Butler fell and hurt herself, we wish her a speedy recovery.

**Property Report:** Working on handrail for the Preschool. Need to do Moss Control and fix thermostat in the Fellowship Hall. We have permit now for the chair lift but is still unusable until we have it repaired. It is very costly to repair, inspect and annually permit.

**Fellowship Report:** Directory information has been sent in, it will take a few weeks to get the proof back and late January for the completed directory. Advent dinners have gone great with about 70 people the first two nights. The next three weeks will have only one 10:30 am service. Working on "Guess Who is Coming to Dinner?". Signups in January for Hosting or Guests with the event being in February. Thank you Kathy, for all your work putting this together.

**Youth Report:** Nothing to add.

**Preschool Report:** Need licensing for the STEM program. Should be in place next year. The City permits were not signed on the work done in the Preschool. They waived fees and did the inspection. Need to complete minor handrail changes.

**Stewardship Report:** The Insurance carrier we have hired is Brotherhood Mutual as of November 30, 2018. We looked at 5 carriers and after comparison, Brotherhood was the best fit for us at this time. We have a retro policy that goes back 10 years. We have added Earthquake Insurance to our policy.

**Worship Report:** No Report

**The next Council meeting is January 10th at 6:30pm**

Pastor led the Lord's Prayer and closed the meeting at 8:25pm

Blessings,

Melanie Sahnaw

## Christmas Thanksgiving

By Chaplain Andy Yee, Director of Spiritual Care

*And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."* Luke 3:10-11

Dear Partner Churches,

I'd like to offer you a quick but heartfelt word of "thanks" for your wonderful generosity towards our Christmas Gift-Giving Tree Project. Through your gift of love, we were able to gather more than 200 gifts give a gift to every single resident that we have here at Josephine Caring Community. Your impact was also personal since we had the opportunity to give them something that they actually wanted. So, thanks so much for both your patience and that extra gift of love and care. During a time in their lives when their children are often making many decisions for them, when their medications and meal times are directed by others, and when their mobility issues have limited the freedoms they used to enjoy, it can be incredibly meaningful to be heard in a loving way.

Will your gifts fix all the things that our Josephine residents are struggling with? No, there is no reason we need to fool ourselves by saying that. Could your gifts help remind our residents that God has not forgotten them? Might they feel comfort that people of God carry them in their thoughts and prayers? Might that offer them a little bit of healing and peace? Yes, sure it can!

I love John the Baptist's reply, a few weeks ago, when different groups of people around him were asking about how they might live as baptized children of God. With each and every reply, John offered something within their capacity. To those in the crowd who had two coats, give one to someone who has none. To those who have plenty to eat, give food to those who don't have enough to eat. To the tax collector, collect no more money than to collect. To the soldiers, don't extort money from anyone. John didn't direct folks to solve the world hunger issue, or to figure out the issues of world poverty, or to protest the government, or to become a pacifist. John did encourage folks, though, to act with kindness, love, and honesty—at least in their own corner of the world.

So, thank you for being a part of the healing journey of the folks here (physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually) by living out your baptized call. It is truly meaningful and it is more meaningful that it is coming from you. A shout out also to my assistant, Jill, for her good work coordinating. Blessings in this Christmas season!

Warmly,

Chaplain Andy



---

**STEWARDSHIP within the SYNOD:** Many years ago, the Lutheran Church in the Skagit Valley saw the need to help families care for their elderly family members. Our local Lutheran churches worked together to establish a nursing home located in Stanwood Washington. Every year we continue to send benevolence dollars to do the mission work of our local Lutheran nursing home and retirement center. As Medicare & Medicaid dollars shrink, we help ensure care when people are in need. Thank you for your offerings which help support our local ministries like our Josephine Caring Community which is a ministry of the Lutheran Church.

# BISHOPS MESSAGE For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you

By the Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop, NWWA Synod

Our Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Shelley Bryan Wee, and I had the joy of attending the Faith Action Network Annual Dinner at the Renton Pavilion. We were among the nearly 500 guests who joined the feast. There were Christians of many denominations, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Native Americans, and members representing labor, earth ministries, and immigrant rights groups. Add to this a robust representation of ethnic, racial and LGBTQ members and you start to get the picture. The spirit was overflowing with celebration and a genuine sense of hope during what are some challenging times in our world. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and TV Host Rick Steves keynoted the event, inspiring those in attendance to reach the \$50,000 goal - matched by Rick Steves.



Pastor Shelley and I looked at each other and we both had the same thought on our minds, “This is what the Kingdom of God looks and feels like. All of God’s children, from all around the world, feasting together.”

“Yes, yes,” we said. “This is a foretaste of the feast to come;”

The Synod Staff has been dwelling in God’s word from the 17<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Luke, verses 11-21. It is the story of the Ten Lepers who have spent their lives distanced from the community. They cry out to Jesus for mercy. Jesus tells them to overcome the distance that has long separated them from the community by going and showing themselves to the priests. “And as they went they were cleansed.” Healing always restores people back into the community from which they have been ostracized. What has captured my heart in this dwelling is Jesus’ comment in verse 21,



*“For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”*

The Kingdom of God is in the midst, in the middle, between us, and amongst us. I know in my life I have experienced the Kingdom of God when I have experienced the distance between me and my neighbor lessened - when we eliminate that which is between us and come together to break bread at the same table.



This was the joy Pastor Shelley and I were drinking in the night we joined in the feast. And like the one leper, we have returned to Jesus to give him thanks for allowing us to experience the closeness of God. The kingdom of God in the middle of God’s children.



*Pictures from the Christmas Dinner*

