



Moments for Mission

Southwestern Washington Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ by empowering congregations and church leaders to grow in worship, education, outreach, stewardship and other ministries.

January 2024

Staff

Bishop Richard E. Jaech

Rev. Rebecca Shjerven
bishop's associate

Joey Ager
*bishop's associate/director
for evangelical mission*

Stefanie DeZarn
synod administrator

Office Phone
(253) 535-8300

Office Hours
Tue – Fri
9 am – 4 pm

Mailing Address
420 121st St. S
Tacoma, WA 98444

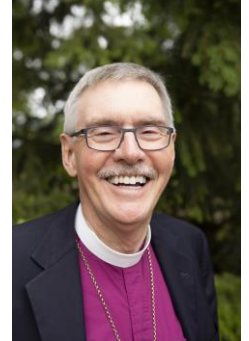
E-mail
swwasynod@plu.edu

Synod Website
www.swwasynod.org

ELCA Website
www.elca.org

Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/SWWASynod>

From the Bishop



For the people of Israel, the Jordan River was always the place of new beginnings.

When the Israelites were set free from slavery in Egypt, God promised them a new home. However, first God led them on a 40-year journey through the wilderness. On the final day of that journey, they crossed the Jordan River and stepped into their new home to make a new beginning.

About six hundred years later, God set them free again, this time from Exile in Babylon. As they travelled home from Babylon to Judah, the final steps of their journey once again took them across the Jordan River to make a new beginning in Jerusalem.

On January 7, the first Sunday after Epiphany, we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. In the Gospel lesson, St. Mark writes,

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”
(Mark 1:9-11)

This was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and also the beginning of new life for all creation as the Spirit of God came to fill Jesus and the whole world. Once again, the Jordan River was the place of new beginnings.

We continually need new beginnings. Our hearts, our relationships, and our world are regularly caught in places of pain, brokenness and violence. We struggle even to hope for something better.

Yet God continually opens up new beginnings for us. With grace and boundless love, God breathes life into us again and again, so that we might return home to ourselves and to one another.

...continued next page

From the Bishop, *continued from Page 1*

We are about to enter the New Year of 2024. Beyond being just a calendar date, entering a New Year can also be, with the help of the Spirit, a time of crossing the river. Washed by the river of God's grace and shalom, we are cleansed, refreshed and opened by God for a new beginning.

God bless you in this time of turning and transition. With all of God's people and creation itself, may you be surprised by joy as you cross into new life in the New Year.

In Christ,

Bishop Rick Jaech

From the Bishop's Associate Pastor Rebecca Shjerven

*Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go for to you I lift up my soul. (Psalm 143:8)*



One of the spiritual practices I have grown to appreciate in past years is Centering Prayer. My mind, body and spirit have a tendency to wander in different directions, responding to the needs and distractions of the day. I find the practice of gathering them around a simple word or phrase quite, well, centering. Lately this word has been TRUST.

It may be odd for a pastor to admit, but trust does not come easily to me (hello, Enneagram 6). There are so many solid reasons to practice self-protection and fear rather than trust. And yet, I find the Spirit keeps calling me. . . wooing me into the risky enterprise of trust. I am called to trust people and communities who are unfamiliar to me, trust that new ideas and partners will be provided when needed, trust that the seeds of the gospel we sow will bear fruit for God's beloved world. This is our work together as Lutheran Christians in the Southwestern Washington Synod.

We know that the ground is shifting under us. The landscape of Christianity in the US is changing and evolving. Many of our faith communities are smaller than they once were with fewer resources to employ for ministry. It is tempting to practice fear and self-protection, growing small not only in numbers but in spirit. And yet, the Spirit of God keeps calling us. . . wooing us into the risky practice of trust. We pray for wisdom, for clarity in our discernment, for courage to live out our mission. But, ultimately, our trust is not in any of our abilities. Our trust is in God's ability to honor God's promises.

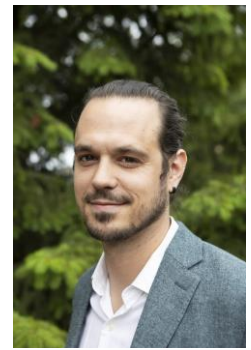
God promises to be with us and for us, to call us to repentance and heal us with divine mercy. God promises to continue to weave us into the body of Christ for the sake of the world. It is because of God's steadfast love and faithfulness that we can look to a new year. . . a new season. . . a new chapter. . . a new day, not with fear, but with hope.

I am so grateful for your partnership in this trust exercise we call the Church and for your companionship on the Way.

In Christ,

Pastor Rebecca Shjerven

From the Bishop's Associate and DEM Joey Ager



Dear friends,

A very Happy New Year to you!

I'm beginning this New Year with a mixture of trepidation and hope.

The hope I feel is coming from the countless creative and energetic ways that people and communities are engaging the profound challenges we are facing in our region and across the world. I find hope in bearing witness to all those who are practicing the timeless discipline of loving our neighbors. Across this region, in many of your neighborhoods, your fellowship halls and kitchens and throughout your towns and cities, you are loving your neighbors and cultivating hope.

The trepidation I feel is in anticipation of all that this year holds, and some of the bigger challenges that may lie ahead of us collectively. We are now in an election year, in perhaps the most politically polarized moment in a generation. We are in a critical year in our global work to reverse the devastation of climate change. We continue to wrestle with seismic shifts in our context around technology, culture and other fundamental aspects of our daily experience. We grieve and mourn the sin of structural racism and the loss of God's beloveds, like Manuel Ellis here in Tacoma. We prayerfully witness multiple volatile global conflicts that are truly not far from home.

In the midst of this, I find myself asking, where do we fit into this moment as a communion gathered in this corner of the world? What is being asked of us?

This New Year, I feel three invitations.

First, I feel the invitation for us to living deeply into our identity as stewards. We are not owners, or monarchs or rulers, we are stewards. The tradition of Romero reminds us we are 'prophets of a future not our own...we plant seeds that one day will grow.' This way of being requires great faith and a clear identity that we must constantly remind one another. This year, let us steward our gifts of community, place, land, buildings, financial power, political power, and presence, knowing that when we do so wisely, we only return these gifts to their origin.

Second, I feel the invitation to courage. For anyone whose eyes and ears are open, these are challenging times we are in together. The word courage - from the French word *coeur*, meaning heart - remind us that we will need more than our wits and our intellect this year, but our whole selves: our emotions, our spirit, our body, the communion of beloved others who live with us in our hearts. This year, let us take up our courage and use it to say the truth out loud, to take the steps we know we have to take, to walk courageously into the world God invites us to.

Finally, I feel the invitation to connect. As synod, we are named for this act: walking together. Who will you connect with this year? Who do you feel invited to encounter, to listen to, to attend to, or to befriend? Who is missing from the table, the council meeting, the planning conversation? Whose voice is waiting to be heard? This is sacred work that I trust deeply in to bring us faithfully through this year.

Peace to you all this New Year, and may we live into God's dream of Shalom. May we be stewards, courageous and connecting, walking together in the name of peace.



On the Road with the Bishop



December 5

Advent Eucharist with pastors and deacons of the Mt. Rainier, Evergreen, Tacoma Narrows, and Tacoma SW conferences. We met at Hope Lutheran, Enumclaw, where Pastor Keith Marshall serves.

December 7

Advent Eucharist with pastors and deacons of the Coastal and South Sound conferences. We met at St. Mark Lutheran, Lacey, where Pastors Beth and Eric Utto-Galarneau serve.



...continued next page



December 10

Preaching at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Olympia, where Pastors Carol Tomer, Melissa Anderson Trust, and Bergen Eickhoff serve.



December 10

Visiting the marvelous enactment of the Tales of Narnia that Christ Lutheran, Lakewood, stages for their neighbors, with special outreach to the JBLM military community at Christmas time. Christ Lutheran is served by Pastor Ralf Kalms

December 13

Advent Eucharist with pastors and deacons of the Lower Columbia and Ft. Vancouver conferences. We met at Bethany Lutheran, Longview, where Pastor Susan Dollinger serves.



...continued next page



December 14

Advent Eucharist with pastors and deacons of the Peninsula and Olympic conferences. We met at First Lutheran, Poulsbo, where Pastors Alison and Kent Shane serve.



December 17

Preaching at Bethlehem and United Lutheran churches, both served by Pastor Mary Sanders.



Congregations in Transition – January 2024

Lord, we pray for your wisdom, insight, and peace for these congregations, agencies and rostered and appointed leaders in our synod who are working through a time of pastoral transition. We give you thanks for each and every one of the rostered leaders, congregations and congregation leaders. Amen.

Messiah Lutheran, Vancouver

Interviewing; Dave Brauer-Rieke and Tom Tweed, Interim Team

Mount Cross, University Place

Call Committee active; Jeff Gaustad, Interim

St Mark's by the Narrows, Tacoma

Interviewing; Audrey Lukasak and Mark Gravrock, Interim Team

Spanaway Lutheran, Spanaway

Transition Team active; Ron Kempe and Traci Vatne, Interim Team

Agnus Dei, Gig Harbor

Call Committee active; Latterell and Tom Aitken, Interim Team

Dungeness Valley, Sequim

Transition Team active; Pamela Griffith-Pond, Interim

Amazing Grace, Aberdeen

Transition Team active; Doug Knutson-Keller, Interim

Gloria Dei, Tacoma

John Schier-Hanson, Bridge Pastor

Pastors Olaf and Kristin Luana Baumann have accepted a call to Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Issaquah, WA. They will complete their service at Holy Trinity in Port Angeles in mid-January and will transfer their roster status to the NWWA Synod.

Pastor Jim Odden completed his service at St. John's Lutheran Church in Chehalis on December 31st when will go on leave from call.

Synod Calendar

Jan. 14 – 16

Prayer Retreat for Rostered Leaders, Seabeck Conference Center

Jan. 16 – 17

Bishop's Convocation for Rostered Leaders, Seabeck Conference Center

Jan. 22 – 24

Byberg Preaching Workshop, Seaside, OR

Upcoming Conferences and Events

2024 Bishop's Convocation for Rostered Clergy and Deacons

Tuesday, January 16 through
Wednesday, January 17, 2023
at Seabeck Conference Center

Creative Partnership: The Necessity and Joy of Collaboration



A number of congregations, pastors and deacons in our Synod have entered into creative partnerships with other Lutheran congregations, ecumenical partners, neighborhood groups and government agencies. Walking the road alone can be exhausting and isolating. Walking the road together is crucial and Spirit-filled. At the convocation, you will have opportunity to hear from your colleagues about these partnerships and think together about your own possibilities for creative collaboration.

Visit <https://cvent.me/axM3wD> to register.

2024 Prayer Retreat for Rostered Leaders

Sunday, January 14th through
Tuesday, January 16th, 2023
at Seabeck Conference Center

Beloved: A Day of Rest and Reconnection for Active Ministers



Working with the Prayer of the Beloved taught by Henri Nowen, held in song and silence, we'll pause to reconnect with experiences of God that drew us into Faith and ministry, moments that give us hope, barriers that give us grief, and the love of Christ that leads us on. A time to grow closer to God, your own heart, and colleagues who care. Time to be yourself. Be loved.

Retreat leader Brenda Satrum has served congregations in Washington and Montana. She's spouse to Doug Peterson (lead pastor at Faith, Shelton), mom to their two grown kids, a spiritual director with Soul Tender Spiritual Direction and Formation, and pastor of Spiritual Formation at Faith.

Visit <https://cvent.me/axM3wD> to register.

Byberg Preaching Workshop

January 22-24, 2024

Seaside, Oregon

Presenter: Dr. Shauna Hannan, Professor of Homiletics Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Chaplain: Rev. Liv Larson Andrews, DEM, Northwest Intermountain Synod

Hosted at: Best Western Seaside

Calling on all preaching colleagues of the Pacific Northwest to join in the annual Byberg Preaching Workshop in beautiful Seaside, Oregon. We have invited Dr. Shauna Hannan back to lead us in conversations focused on preaching and communicating in our changed environment. We have also solicited the wonderful worship talents of Rev. Liv Larson Andrews to be our chaplain for the week. Cost for the event is \$195 (\$100/interns) and hotel rooms range from \$87-\$197. Registration will be open from September 1 – December 15, 2023. Cancellation requests need to be made by December 15, 2023.

Please visit www.bybergpreachingworkshop.com for registration links and more information. This is a twostep registration process. One step is to register for the program and the second step is to register for housing with the hotel.

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Sunday: January Book Study

RIC Sunday is the last Sunday in January. In anticipation of that celebration, the people of Peace, Puyallup, will enter into four conversations about Jamie Bruesehoff's *Raising Kids Beyond the Binary: Celebrating God's Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children* (2023).

Whether or not you are a parent of children, this is an excellent occasion to become acquainted with a Lutheran trans child and her family, and to hear her mother's story of parenting her and relating to their community.

We all benefit from this story as we seek to expand our welcome, to include, and to celebrate people of all gender identities and expressions.

Read along with us!

Schedule

January 7th: Intro and chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

January 14th: chapters 5, 6, 7, 8

January 21st: chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

January 28th: celebration/conversation



Congregation Job Openings

You can find a list of opportunities within our synod on the synod's website at <https://swwsynod.org/congregational-resources/job-opportunities/>

If you have a job opportunity and would like us to post it within our publicity channels, please email a job description to swwsynod@plu.edu. Your posts will remain active for three weeks, unless otherwise agreed upon.