

April 2022



From the Bishop:

One of the things I love about living in the Pacific Northwest is the abundance of life. In January, the grass is green. In February, plants are blooming. In March, little flowers are pushing through soil. In April, color bursts out everywhere. To me, these signs of life are miracles.

And don't we need some of these signs right now? I mean, there are so many places where it feels like ongoing winter - the discord and acrimony amongst families, churches, peoples, and nations. As I write this article Russia is invading Ukraine. Perhaps when you read this article, things will be different but at this moment there is bombing and shooting and fear and death. And entrenched crises continue: houselessness, racism, ableism, unjust governments, and so much more. Individually, many are experiencing physical and mental illness, fatigue, and exclusion. I remember a quote from C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* where one of the characters says, "It is winter in Narnia, and has been for ever so long ... always winter, but never Christmas."

It has been a long winter ... perhaps even two years of winter. Pain and sorrow and death feel very close. There is grief, there is anger, there is exhaustion, and there is sadness.

And yet ... And yet ...

Gardens are full of seeds. Farmers are tilling the soil. Tulips are blooming. Rhododendrons are on their way. We see signs around us that winter is ending and the Bringer of Spring is coming.

As I travel through this synod, I see signs of new life and new hope. I see resolve and new partnerships. While there are challenges that we are all facing, while there is much work to do individually and together, I sense new possibilities.

When I meet with councils and other leaders in congregations, I am delighted that we are having good, strong, sometimes difficult conversations about things that matter. In our best moments, we are not as concerned about smaller difficulties but instead, as people of faith, we are leaning into what it means to love God and love neighbor in this time and in this place. I thank God for the opportunity for conversation, listening, and moving on the Breath of God's Spirit.

The truth is, alone - we cannot create life, alone - we cannot change systems, alone - we cannot move winter into spring. But *through Christ*, through the One who died for this world and who is raised into new life, we can.

And so, as it is written in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 16-18

We are promised that through this time, through world events, through whatever is next, Jesus is with us. And even more than that, we are promised that there is something amazing beyond all measure - more than we can know or even imagine. It is difficult to sometimes comprehend this promise - especially when we look at the destruction and pain and devastation in this world - and yet ... and yet ... we cling to the promise. As people of faith, we pray and whisper and shout it out - that through Christ's death and resurrection all things that create death will be gone. Period. Full. Stop.

And because of knowing and trusting this promise, we are then called, as beloved children of God, to see, appreciate, and tend to the small plants entrusted to us - knowing that we also are plants, also seeds, also soil, called to live into and share this new life with and for others.

May this Easter spring forth with new life for you. May you feel the hope given through Jesus. And may together we shout, "Happy Easter! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!"

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
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From the VEEP

“How many hats do you have?” My mother-in-law had been watching a show about millinery and not only had she decided to start wearing hats to church, but she also wanted me to join her. This, of course, would require that I had some church appropriate hats. It turns out that I have a LOT of hats, but almost all of them are highly utilitarian outdoor hats – rain hats, winter ski caps, broad brimmed sun hats, baseball caps. Unlike my daughter, who has a full wardrobe of cute everyday hats, I’m just not much of an indoor, fashionable hat wearer. Aside from one rain hat that works okay indoors and a fancy Easter bonnet, I just didn’t have many hats to wear.

At least not literal ones.

Metaphorical hats, on the other hand, well, those I have plenty of. I have my teacher hat, my parent hat, my spouse hat, my congregation member hat, my synod vice president hat – the list goes on and on. Sometimes I forget which hat I have on. I often tell the story of my middle school son telling me, after he came to me distraught about missing an incentive due to a misunderstanding of the late work policy, and I told him if he had turned the work in on time in the first place, he wouldn’t have had an issue, that right then he needed me to be his *mother* and not a *teacher*. Wrong hat! When you wear a lot of different hats, you have to pay attention to which one is on your head!

Sometimes, it is a good idea to do an inventory and figure out which hats, literal and metaphorical, still fit and which need to be repurposed or given away. One of the main items of business at this year’s Synod Assembly are elections for synod council members and officers. Those of us who have terms ending have had to do a little of this discernment. Many of the individuals who are eligible for a second term have decided that those hats do not suit them anymore and they are ready to pass them along to new wearers. In a bit of a mixed metaphor, I have decided to throw my VP hat back into the ring and see what happens. Maybe I will get it back or maybe someone else will claim it who will wear it better – I’m open to whatever the Spirit has in mind. These are the open positions, many of them for lay leaders:

- Vice President – a four-year term and must be filled by a layperson
- Secretary – a four-year term. May be filled by a layperson or a rostered minister
- 1 Rostered Minister – a three-year term, either roster (Word and Sacrament or Word and Service)
- 1 Lay woman – a three-year term
- 2 Lay men, one of whom shall be person of color or primary language other than English – a three-year term

We want our council to be representative of the diversity of the synod and I would like to encourage you, especially if you are a young adult or a member of the BIPOC, LGBTQ, or other underrepresented communities to check your metaphorical wardrobe and see if you have room for one of these snazzy synod leadership hats. More information about these roles and the nomination form can be found on the synod website: <https://lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly>

Oh, and I went out and bought a new indoor hat to wear to church. My mother-in-law and I are gonna be stylin’! Here are a few things I or the Synod Council have been up to:

- Executive Committee met on March 10. Among other actions, we reviewed the proposed budgets for 2022-23 and 2023-24 and approved funding for a synod coaching coordinator.
- Synod Council met on March 19. Our agenda included several items regarding Synod Assembly and continued intercultural development.

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