



**SYNOD OF
ALBERTA
AND THE
TERRITORIES**
Incorporated as Alberta Synod

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***Spirit -Led
Leadership***

***Hope-Filled
Discipleship***

***Innovative
Tradition***

***Collaborative
Partnerships***

January 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

May grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:2a).

I send you greetings in the Name of the One who is the light of the world, Jesus our Lord, as you gather for your Annual General Congregational Meeting.

This past year through each month's *Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders*, a reflection and study on select readings of Paul's letter, *to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (1:1b)*, I began with these familiar words: *I thank my God every time I remember you... (Philippians 1:3).*

When you gather together, know that I am filled with gratitude to God for you; that I am thankful for our partnership in the gospel; and, that you continue to be in my prayers as I know I remain in yours.

When you meet together, you will be making decisions about your priorities for ministry. You will be adopting budgets that enable ministry that joins in God's mission in the world. You will be supporting your partners in ministry – the rostered leaders of this Synod, and especially those who serve among you as they, first and foremost, seek to equip you for the work of ministry: the building up of the Body of Christ.

Joining God's mission means that your ministry is among the people with whom you live and move and have your being. Your ministry is done each day in relationships with your neighbours through your words and deeds and the living out of your baptismal identity as God's beloved children.

Ministry continues beyond the neighborhood and congregation through the many faces of the Church and many facets of its ministries: our Synod and its staff, our National Church expression, the Lutheran World Federation, *En Misión con El Salvador: In Mission with El Salvador*, and our Companion Synod – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.

Perhaps at this year's Annual General Meeting you might reflect, name and give thanks for the gifts and mission into which God has invited you and your congregation. Consider taking a few moments in small groups to listen to each other and then share with all gathered reflections on the following:

- 1) Share about a time or situation when you or your congregation experienced God's love.
- 2) What resources do you have within your community? Share three gifts God has given you.

As you meet, you might also prayerfully consider forwarding a tithe (1/10th) of your annual income as a congregation as your minimal offering for Benevolence for the ministry of the Synod and through the Synod to the wider Church. Some congregations have exceeded this mark already, but I would encourage all congregations to set this goal.

As you gather be sure to join others across the Synod as you:

- + prepare nominations for youth, lay and rostered delegates to the 2017 ELCIC National Convention (<http://albertasynod.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ABT-Nomination-and-Election-of-Delegates.National-Convention1.pdf>).
- + explore our Synod's Abiding in Right Relations (AiRR) Ministry Team through the information available on the Synod webpage (<http://albertasynod.ca/ministries/right-relations/>).
- + subscribe to our Synod's new weekly e-mail newsletter, Wednesday's Word, which begins January 6 and replaces the Synod mailings. Subscribing is easy on our Synod's homepage (www.albertasynod.ca).
- + discuss our upcoming "Participating in Hope 2.0" gatherings in 15 locations throughout our Synod. When and where have you been invited to gather with other congregational leadership in February? Uncertain? Check with the Synod office or go to the Synod's webpage to find the schedule (<http://albertasynod.ca/missional-formation/participating-in-hope/>).
- + consider the CARE (Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health) Ministry Team's invitation for up to 3, \$100 scholarships *per congregation* in our Synod, so that each of our congregations can send an individual or team (lay or rostered) to train with Mental Health First Aid Canada (<http://albertasynod.ca/ministries/c-a-r-e/upcoming-events/>).
- + determine delegate(s) to the June 16-18 Synod Convention.

And remember Paul's words to the saints in Philippi: *...sisters and brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:8).*

My prayer is that your gathering will be a recital of gratitude and praise to God for the signs of the Holy Spirit at work in, through, around, and among you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen (Philippians 4:23).

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus-
Shalom,

+The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories