



April 2017 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Isaiah 55:1-2a*

My Lenten devotions this year have been in part focused on a set of compiled writings from Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann: *A Way other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent*.

I have always found Brueggemann's writings to be thought-provoking, insightful and challenging. Perhaps, since it is the season of Lent and I am "open" in the season, I have found this compilation to be even more thought-provoking, even more insightful and even more challenging.

Reflecting on Isaiah 55:1-2a: Lent is a question. Lent is a gift. Lent is a summons.

The questions of Lent Brueggemann suggests are:

What are we doing?
Are we working for that which does not satisfy?
Are we spending for that which is not bread?

Thought-provoking.

The gifts of Lent are free, gifts in the gospel that sustain life. Free wine and milk. Free water and bread, and "all the markings of sacrament that refuse our thin attempts at empire" (pg. 11).

Insightful.

And challenging: The summons of Lent is to bear new fruit. To do what is in sync, in harmony, with the God of the good news, the God who has another intention for our lives, who wants us out of the rat-race of "big is better", "highest salary means most valuable", "the one with the most toys wins" and so has mercy, who gives us pardon when we do not do enough by doing two things at once.

We are left, dear sisters and brothers, with "a new sense of ourselves as God's people: no longer working for that which does not satisfy; receiving good gifts that we need for life; engaging in a new productivity of that which heals and transforms" (pg. 11).

The Lenten question, gift and summons.

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

*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*