



November 2017 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

The season of Area Gatherings (formerly Conference Conventions) is upon us.

As I write the Northern Area Gathering and the East/West Central Area Gathering have taken place and I am anticipating the South/SW Area Gathering on Saturday (October 21). I value these times when we have the opportunity to gather together as God's people for worship, learning, business, conversation and feasting; and I appreciate those who serve as host congregations (Ascension, Edmonton; Peace, Innisfail; and All Saints, Calgary) and those who planned and coordinated each Area Gathering.

This year we gathered under the theme: “Celebrate the Promise: Celebrate the Hope” which is a phrase from a hymn I first heard at the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Namibia earlier this year.

The text of the hymn is from Bolivia and expresses the reality for those living in the midst of war and misery, violent oppression, doubt and darkness, where every turn seems fraught with new betrayal.

The melody of the verses, in its staccato-like sixteenth notes, creates the image of rapid gun fire piercing all around.

And the melody of the refrain, a complete contrast to the melody of the verses, raises in pitch to a concluding high note emphasizing the text: *the promise of the Lord...where all are free.* (Refrain: *All together we will celebrate the promise of the Lord. All together we will build a world where all are free.*)

I wondered as this theme and hymn were chosen if we could sing it in partnership with those in Bolivia, we who do not know nor live such realities...and then the police officer was stabbed in Edmonton and the shooting took place in Las Vegas and the explosion happened in Mogadishu...and we sang...*though death is everywhere; we can't escape it. We will celebrate the promise. We will celebrate the promise found in Jesus Christ.*

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

The hymn: *En Medio de la Guerra: When War and Misery* can be found within the Lutheran World Federation 12th Assembly's “Worship, Bible Studies, Hymns”:
<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-lwf-twelfth-assembly-worship-bible-studies-and-hymns>