

Report of the Dean To the West Central Area

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:1-3, 17-20

Can you picture it? As the 70 or so disciples are sent not alone *in pairs*, leaving behind all their *Linus* security blankets and everything they have learned to rely on, sent instead and only in the power and authority of Jesus. There is something unsettling in the lack of preparedness—no team building, no intense advance training, no manual or diagrams of what this might look like, no goal setting with clearly documented outcomes; as the disciples are sent, they cannot even imagine what might come of these strange new partnerships, of this mission and ministry of God, as they are sent only in the power and authority of Jesus.

Only?? Only in the power to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to preach the good news, to bind the power of sin, to set loose the power of grace and forgiveness and life; the power of God who raises the dead to new life; whose breath breathes life and new possibility into every region and place. Well, that's **ALL** they had.

So picture it now as they return. When they come back, their imaginations are full—fist pumps, belly bumps, high fives all around, laughter, celebration of what God has been up to. And they begin to tell their stories. Stories of life and grace. Stories of God working among them. And so it is to **your** stories that I turn to begin this report. For what better way to begin; to come back together after another year and to share the stories of God in our midst?

Here are just a few:

From Rev. Scott Brown and St. Matthew's in Thorsby:

Just some stuff we have done lately. Two things: In June, we held a joint cemetery service with Our Lady of Victory parish. The service of remembrance was held in our church and then we proceeded to the local town cemetery to pray with those who had lost loved ones. I did the Roman Catholic portion of the cemetery first and then the Lutheran one. We then went to the hall at Our Lady of Victory RC church for a wonderful supper. In July, we continued to have our Campfire Sing-a-Long on the grounds beside St. Matthew's. Anyone is invited to come and join. It is an ecumenical gathering. What is different is that we did the sacrament, passing the flat bread (and gluten free) around first. We then had

the wine and grape juice which were both in chalices. All partook, including, Anglican, Pentecostal and some other denominations.

From Carol Bell and Grace in Bentley:

On April 8th 2017 Grace Lutheran, Bentley with the help and input of Town of Bentley Community Services, County of Lacombe Lifelong Learning Assoc. and Bentley Seniors partnered in presentations and conversations on what can, could and should be in place to help us when we are unable to make decisions for ourselves and to make things easier for our loved ones should we become ill or when we die. Those important things we too often put off or are hard to talk about. It was advertised as Final Things. The venue was the local Senior's Drop In Centre and the presenters were a Lawyer, a Pastor and a Funeral Director. In between each presentation there was time allotted for questions and refreshments so that those who didn't want to ask questions in front of the group were able to approach the presenters one on one. This turned out to be a good format and was suggested by Rev. Art Weiss, Camp Kuriakos. *Church partnering in the local community. A good thing!*

From Peace in Innisfail:

It was over six years ago now we were a congregation in crisis; members of our church family walking out, a budget we couldn't meet, a credit limit at max, bills that needed to be paid. And so our annual "fun" raiser began. It began out of necessity; for survival. But God was working. And God *is* working. We are heading into our sixth annual event that brings together over 250 people. Fashions from our local clothing stores are modeled by 2yr olds and 85 year olds and everything in between. There are coffee and sweets, conversation and smiles and laughter. Budgets are met. Not only ours, but local volunteer organizations like the Youth Side Door, the Food Bank, the Hospital Auxiliary, our Refugee Sponsorship Group, Big Brothers & Sisters; and this year, the Christmas Bureau, as we tithe back from what God has first given us. But the biggest thing we are beginning to understand? That when we come together in community; *there God is*. When we come together in community, we begin to see that we belong to each other; we begin to care for one another. And *there God is*. When old friends who haven't seen each other in a while can come together over coffee; *there God is*. When new friendships are forged over a plate of brownies and a new fall sweater; *there God is*. When local business are supported, when beauty is encouraged of all shapes and sizes and ages; *there God is. And where God is, there is life!*

From Rev. Dennis Aicken and St. Paul's in Rolly View:

"The little church with the big heart" well defines us here at St. Paul's Lutheran, Rolly View as we experience our Lord's blessing with growing momentum. Our congregation's Mother's Day gifts to the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre touched one woman so deeply she decided that although she didn't know Jesus she should "check him out". That night she accepted Jesus into her heart. On September 9th we host our annual Glory Daze antique car show and garage sale with beef on a bun and homemade pies. Proceeds will be given in support of CLBI, Camrose. On October 20th we invite the entire community for our annual turkey dinner to raise support for Lutheran Institutional Ministry

Edmonton (LIME), its largest annual fundraiser. We have eighteen keen students participating at our weekly The Story Bible Study and a dozen more in a thriving women's monthly Bible study. Enthusiasm is palpable as we anticipate ground breaking early next spring for a large addition with full basement on the east side of our church. *Glory to God alone!*

News from West Central Conference Council: I give thanks specifically for those who have served on our West Central Area Council this past year: **Vivian Holtby, Carol Bell, Pearl Fee, Diaconal Minister Virginia Burke, Rev. Art Weiss, and Rev. Chris Nojonen.**

So what has our Area Council been up to this year? What are our stories of hope and life?

- Reformation 500 Area Gatherings:** Your West Central Area council planned and hosted two Reformation 500 Area Gatherings on May 20th @ Mulhurst and May 27th at Camp Kuriakos. The events included a wiener roast/potluck and tree planting at both camps. Attendance was small, but for those who came it was an opportunity to get to know one another, join in good food and conversation, and participate in the hopeful act of planting a tree. ***What might God be growing among us?*** And, on that note, **TREE PLANTING GRANTS STILL AVAILABLE! Be an Innovator! A Trend-Setter! YES! You can be the first congregation to participate in this grant that is quickly expiring.** Fall is upon us and it is an ideal time to plant trees before the snow falls and before the reformation challenge expires. Plant your trees and submit your receipt to WC Area Treasurer, Pearl Fee gordfee36@gmail.com. WC Area will match dollar for dollar up to a maximum of \$200 per congregation. And make sure to record all the trees you plant on the ELCIC website by clicking "Get Involved in the ELCIC Reformation Challenge!" in the blue tab on the ELCIC's homepage. **It's never too late to plant a tree.**
- Medical Assistance in Dying:** A Discussion of Faith and Life.
Saturday, September 30th, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Red Deer
Saturday, October 28th, Peace Lutheran Church, Leduc
Free Registration by email, krcalkins@shaw.ca

Two gatherings in our area have been planned for us to come together in a discussion facilitated by Rev. Marty Tuer about the recently released FOD study on Medically Assisted Dying. The study can be found on the ELCIC website.

- Synod Area Roll-Out:** You say potato, I say potahto...let's call the whole thing off. For some the distinction of language between conference and area seems semantic, especially because the geography of our areas will, for the time-being, remain unchanged. And yet, there is something to this language as for years we have referred to conference **boundaries**, and congregations who fall **within these boundaries**. The change in language signals a leaving behind of the language of boundaries and encourages us to look and act in terms of possibilities and partnerships, to work together in new and creative ways. **Do you wonder what will happen as we are sent in pairs, as we go two by two ONLY in the power and authority of God, sent with promise into intentional regions of possibility of God's life and grace at work in the world?**

- **Area Leadership Teams:** Watch for the roll-out of our new Area Leadership Teams at our fall Area Gathering in October. In consultation with Area Council, Bishop Larry and the Synod will appoint an area leadership team of 4 people: Two rostered (one will be the dean), and two lay leaders. **We are also seeking out a youth-ish person (age 18-35?) to challenge old assumptions and to bring fresh perspectives to our area leadership. If you know of someone who fits this description, please contact Dean Kathy Calkins, krcalkins@shaw.ca.** In addition our treasurer Pearl Fee will continue to serve as an integral part of our Area Leadership.
- **Youth Education Bursaries Available:** Our West Central Area has bursaries for youth in the areas of Christian education and learning. Four grants of \$300 are available each year, so if you know of a youth in your area traveling on Christian mission, taking Christian education or other formational learning events, have them talk to me or someone else on WCA Leadership Team to fill out the application. We await your application 😊!
- **Conference Fees:** With the changes as we come together in convention, National convention delegate fees are paid directly by the Synod. The Synod sets the amount to collect for the National portion based on estimated Convention Costs. The fee has been set at \$2 per member for both 2018 and 2019. West Central Area fees remain unchanged at \$1 per reported confirmed member; and \$.50 for the Youth Education Grant. Total fees per reported confirmed member are \$3.50. Thanks to all congregations who have already remitted their 2017 fees. **If you have not remitted, your fees are now due.** If you need a copy of your notice, please contact our treasurer Pearl Fee gordfee36@gmail.com.
- We give thanks for the many and creative ways the Spirit is working in our conference to provide leadership for ministry in our area.
 - For regular opportunities to meet as rostered leaders in our regular monthly gatherings on the second Tuesday of each month. Thanks to **Good Shepherd, Red Deer** and **Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry** for their hospitality in hosting most of these gatherings over the past year, and to the leaders who lead us in time of devotion, communion and worship. Our gatherings have been small—**what ideas do you have for how we can best stay connected, gather for support, conversation, and prayer?** Let me know.
 - Thanks also to **Peace, Leduc** and **Rev. Matt Lyseng** for their hospitality in hosting monthly ministerial gatherings in the Leduc area.
- As we give thanks for our leadership, we remember ministries and leaders in transition; we pray for the Spirit's leading, peace and discernment:
 - For **Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry** on leave of absence, for **Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Red Deer** and interim pastor **Rev. Marty Tuer**.
 - For the recent shared ministry agreement between **Grace Lutheran, Bentley** and **Peace Lutheran, Innisfail**.

- We hold in our prayers and give thanks for our outdoor camp ministries winding down busy summer programs, particularly those camps in our area: ***Mulhurst Lutheran Camp and Camp Kuriakos***, for the leadership, counsellors, program directors, cooks, and other volunteers. May God bless this vital ministry that is often one of the most formative and faith building times in the lives of our young people.
- We give thanks for our ***area chaplains*** and their good work in compassion and care for those whose journey is nearing life's end; for those who struggle with issues of health, memory loss, and loneliness. A word of hope, a hand held, a tear wiped away, a smile given, a smile returned, ***the presence of Christ, the Good News of the Gospel!***

We have told our stories - just a few of them - there are so many more. Stories of life and grace. Stories of God working among us. And what a better way to begin and begin again. With full imaginations, with fist pumps, belly bumps, high fives all around, laughter, and celebration of what God has been up to. That's the joy. But it's also the caution. The caution Jesus gives his disciples as they celebrate. "Don't celebrate what you have done. Only celebrate what I am doing among you. Celebrate the life I bring."

May this be our joy. May this be our hope. May Christ be our life as we go out and as we return. As we are sent in pairs, together into regions of possibility **only** in the power and authority of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Rev. Kathy Calkins
Dean, West Central Area