

January 2019



Dear Beloved 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.

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 of reconciliation in the world. You will be supporting your partners in ministry – the rostered ministers 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 the living out of your baptismal identity as God's beloved children through your service in word and deed.

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, I ask you to 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:

- View the 4 Mission Priority videos and use the study guide prepared for our June 2018 Synod Convention, distributed to each congregation, and also available through Synod's website: (<http://albertasynod.ca/convention/synod-convention/2018-mission-priority-video-links-downloads-and-study-guide/>)
- View Rev. Dr. Anna Madsen's 3 Synod Convention Presentations: Faith, Hope, Love (<http://albertasynod.ca/convention/synod-convention/rev-dr-anna-madsens-2018-presentations/>)

- Review the Synod Council Meeting “Talking Points” (<http://albertasynod.ca/people/synod-council/>)
- View the Videos of Faith, Hope and Love prepared at our 2018 Synod Convention for Fall 2018 Area Gatherings (<http://albertasynod.ca/convention/synod-convention/area-gathering-videos/>)
- Subscribe to our Synod’s e-mail newsletter: *Wednesday’s Word*, Subscribing is easy on our Synod’s website.

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 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  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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