



November 2019 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

Our Synod seeks to live out of four Mission Priorities reviewed and approved at our 2019 Synod Convention. One of these Mission Priorities is Collaborative Partnerships. Here, we say in part that, *“Listening to the Spirit’s leadership we are intentional in developing deeper relationships, sharing of resources, and partnership ministries within Areas of the Synod.”*

Together, in the Synod of Alberta and the Territories and across the ELCIC, we are experiencing several common realities: increased congregational vacancies, decreased congregational finances and participation, fewer pastoral graduates, to name a few. In the mist of these realities we continue to journey together seeking to discern God’s work in our communities and to join God in God’s mission.

With our Collaborative Partnerships Mission Priority in mind, as well as our current context, I invited 28 congregations, and lay and rostered leaders, to gather in three regions of the West and East Central Areas of our Synod in early October for a Collaborative Partnership Gathering. 23 out of 28 congregations were represented at the three regional gatherings.

October 1 – Bethel Lutheran, Camrose – over 60 participants representing 12 congregations

October 2 – Peace Lutheran, Leduc – over 30 participants representing 6 congregations

October 7 – Peace Lutheran, Innisfail – 53 participants representing 5 congregations

I am grateful for the presence of God’s Spirit among us and guiding us as we gathered. And, I am grateful for the participation of so many.

The goal of the evening was to kindle conversation and extend a call to further conversations and collaboration. The goal was to frame and reframe how we see ourselves: where are we at? what is our current reality? The goal of the evening was to engage in conversation sharing where God is at work, and where God is calling us to. The goal was to spark conversation about what journeying forward together might look like. The goal was to begin conversation and to continue these conversations at the upcoming Area Gatherings.

During each Gathering time was spent in prayer and in Dwelling in the Word considering John 21:1-14. What stands out for you in the text? a word? a phrase? What questions do you have of the text? Considering the gathering and current realities what might the Spirit of God be saying to us tonight?

Following the Collaborative Partnership Gathering at Peace Lutheran, Innisfail, Vivian Holtby, a member at Grace Lutheran, Wetaskiwin and a member of the West Central Area Leadership

Team forwarded this reflection on John 21:1-14 to me, as well as a picture. I share Vivian's reflection with her permission.



Photo Credit: Vivian Holtby
January 2018 Off-shore from Tiberius on the
Sea of Galilee. Casting the net.

Lord, I'm so tired and I'm so weary, but I must go on you say.
So much loneliness, so much toil, so little fruit (fish)(people)(believers), so little hope!
I came to fish in this night, for that is when fishing is good. The moon shines on the water on the left side of the boat so I cast there. The fish make themselves known as the light sparkles on their scales. But

tonight, there is no moon, so I/we don't see them. The light is not with us, the Light is not in us, not in me, not in Peter! It's not in the fish, the people.

You're watching us, waiting, seeing, knowing. You say, how do I bring you back to me?

So, you greet, you speak. You offer us insight, an idea, a way in, a way out, a way forward, a way to success, hope.

What is that hope- to feed and to be fed? To have strength and hope? To have friends travel the road with you? To have a purpose? To have You!

Ah, try something different today, tomorrow, tonight! Look on the untrod path, look to the least likely, look to the unknown, look inward, look outward,, look on the other side of the boat!

I looked elsewhere Lord, right close by, on the other side of the boat, fence, road, street, city, world. In my neighbour's yard!

I found 153, more or less, and I thought- what do I do now?

So, I brought them to breakfast with me! You were there waiting with your few. We sat in that place, there in the beach and we- those already there and those brought by me/us- breakfasted together.

I'm no longer tired, weary, lonely as I found a fisherman's net full of believers, just on the other side of the boat! Thank you, Lord, for leading me where I needed to go- out there in untried water, so to speak, so that I might find you and your people where you wanted me to find You and them!

Try the other side of the boat!

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)