

September 2024



### From the Bishop:

You might have noticed that we are in the middle of another election season. The rhetoric, the tone, the attempts to vilify and amplify are all around us – coming from candidates and superPACs and social media and neighbors and family and more.

You might wonder where does faith fit into all of this?

As Lutherans, we believe that God loves and values every single person. This means all are beloved of God – even those who we might not agree with or even like. All are God’s children. This means that even those who are the farthest from our political views are humans and worthy of care. Further, as Martin Luther once said, we are called to be little Christs for one another. This means listening and wanting the best for one another.

In saying this, please know that loving one another is not the same as remaining quiet in the presence of hate speech or abusive actions. There are times to speak up and engage. As we know from the prophets and from Jesus, we are called to work and to speak out against powers and systems that have historically marginalized or silenced so many of God’s beloved people.

So I ask again, where does faith fit into all of this?

Well ... If you are full of anxiety for this coming year, if you wonder how to engage with others on issues that you care about, if you want to help foster a sense of community and love, we invite you and your congregation to join Northwest Washington Synod’s LiVE Project. This coming year LiVE is engaging faith and life with new classes, retreats, and cohorts. This year’s theme is *Faith Out Loud*. The 2024-25 offerings are chosen explicitly to address how to engage faith and life. This fall there is a multi-week class on Faith in Public Life starting on September 18. On October 19 there is a one-day retreat on Christian Nationalism. And from October 21-November 9 there will be an election prayer vigil. Further out in the year there is a retreat on land use, embracing difference, and a Lenten Journey along with other cohorts and more.

Together with what is happening in each of the individual congregations throughout the synod, LiVE is providing ways for people to share their faith stories, listen to one another, and connect with God and with one another to live their *faith out loud*. LiVE is a place where people from all over the synod and beyond engage in ways that foster growth, encourage conversation, provide mutual support, create community beyond difference, and ultimately connect one’s faith in day-to-day life. With the different offerings, all are encouraged to participate in what God is calling us to be and to do – to cultivate empathy, love, justice, and service. To live *faith out loud*.

This coming year is full of possibilities to together live our *faith out loud*. If you have been part of LiVE in the past, we urge you to invite others. If you are interested, please talk with others in your congregation and form a group together. Find the list of upcoming courses on our synod website here: <https://www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project>. If you have questions, please email [live@lutheransnw.org](mailto:live@lutheransnw.org)

As you know, we are not called to an individual “me and Jesus” faith isolated from the world. Instead, faith is a communal journey where we celebrate our uniqueness as we walk in the unity of Christ. We learn, grow, support, challenge, and travel together in Christ as we live as God’s beloved.

I am so grateful for the vision and leadership of synod staff members Rev. Dr. David Hahn and Ms. Mandy Neill, the LiVE Project Board, the professors and teachers, and all who have collaborated on the LiVE Project. Their work and the LiVE Project are truly gifts to this synod and to this church. Let us embrace God’s love and let us live our *faith out loud*.

Blessings,

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

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## From the VEEP:

*Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 16:20)*

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)*

How do we pursue justice? What does it mean to do justice? I've been thinking about justice a lot lately. As I write this, the young man who was driving the car that caused the crash that killed four members of my school community, including three children, still has not had his day in court. The trial date has been delayed several times and he remains out of custody on electronic home monitoring. The conditions of his bail include being able to attend work or school. This does not seem fair or just, at least from my human point of view. I feel like there ought to be accountability when people cause harm to others or break our social agreement about what is and is not acceptable behavior. For me, in my human worldview, justice has become equated with retribution of some sort. I think, however, that God has a broader view.

As I read what the bible says about justice, it seems to me that, for God, justice has more to do with righteousness than with retribution. To be just, to do justice, or to act justly, is not merely, or even largely, to seek retribution, nor is it to make things right after the fact, but rather to do what is righteous in the first place. It is about recognizing what God has told us is good, and striving to do that work in the world. It is about loving kindness, welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, working for peace, and caring for all creation; it is not about policing other people's behavior. Shifting my focus this way has been helpful as I continue to cope with the trauma of losing those beloved souls in March. I might not be able to repair the harm that happened to my friends and my community, but I can still pursue justice by acting as rightly as I can. And, to be clear, this doesn't mean that I think people shouldn't be held accountable for their actions or that there is no value in working to repair harm. Of course those things are important! It just means that God's view of justice is so much more expansive.

As we approach God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, let us remember that God has told us what is good. Let us strive to do justice to God's word through our good and righteous work.

*Then you will understand righteousness and justice  
and equity, every good path,  
for wisdom will come into your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Proverbs 2:8-10*

### Here's what the Synod Council and/or I have been up to over the summer:

- Retirement: I retired from my career as an educator after 37 years in public education
- Executive Committee: Met on June 12 and August 7. Among other actions, we appointed people to the PLU Corporation.
- Synod Council: Enjoyed a celebratory dinner welcoming new members and thanking outgoing members on July 20.

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