

MANAGING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

GOD'S CREATION - OUR CARE - EVERY DAY

August - Learning

Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

Romans 12:2

What a joy it is to be part of a religion that encourages questions, thinking, trying things out and learning!

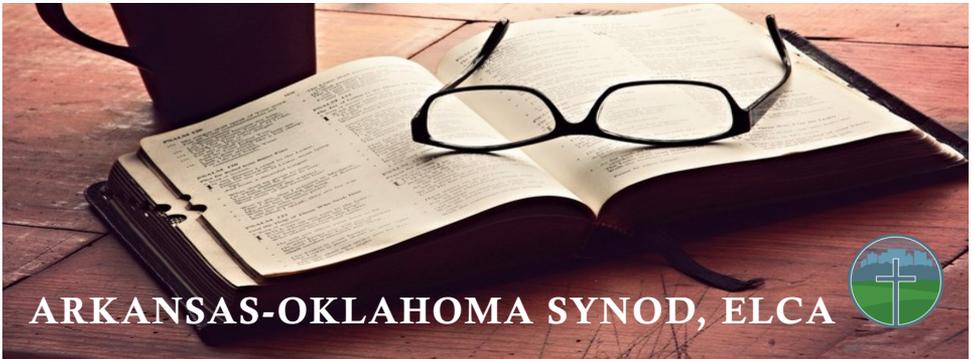
Jesus didn't spoon feed data to be consumed, but gave us stories we must wrestle with to discover meaning. The people of God are named "Israel" which means "*ones who wrestle with God.*" Active learning is in our spiritual DNA.

Learning is worship. With discovery comes wonder from which awe and praise spring forth:

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place . . . LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Psalm 8

Learning makes you a better servant. You are **you** with all your interests and talents. God entrusts you with the development of yourself for the sake of the world. You have been given the ability to learn, to hone skills, and further your expertise and knowledge to serve God and others.

How are you developing yourself? What skills or areas of knowledge are you working on? Where is God inviting you to focus?



ARKANSAS-OKLAHOMA SYNOD, ELCA



MANAGING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

GOD'S CREATION - OUR CARE - EVERY DAY

July - Curiosity

How much better to get wisdom than gold!

To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Proverbs 16:16

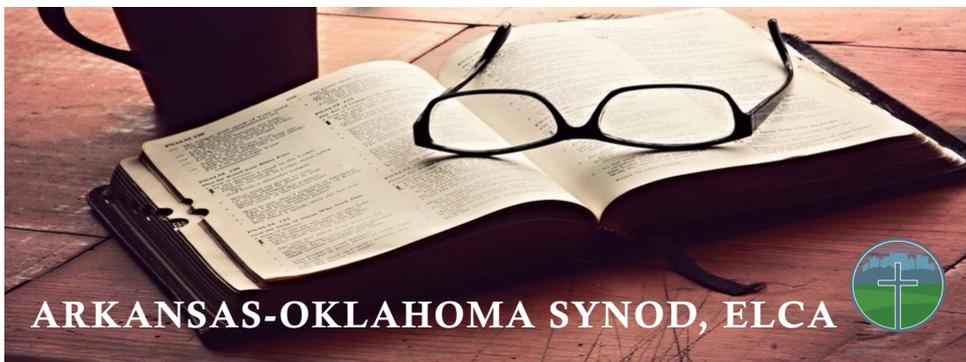
"Ohhh!" the child exclaimed with wonder as she clasped her hands over her face with glee. Her first time petting a rabbit.

When was the last time you experienced the joy of discovery? Can you remember seeing the delighted face of a child tasting something delicious for the first time or hearing the impact of new insight for one who has been searching for a long time?

Curiosity is a delight and wonder, but it is also an adventure with dangerous twists and turns. Wisdom often comes at a cost. Yet, all throughout the Bible, and in the book of Proverbs particularly, wisdom is something to be sought out and treasured.

God has made a cosmos full of extravagant beauty full of truths to be discovered and explored. All these are gifts to unwrap and enjoy. Allowing curiosity space in our lives opens us to understanding and wisdom which so often leads to awe, worship, and gratitude.

How might you open yourself up to discovering something new, to wondering at an old, old question, or to letting curiosity guide your day?



ARKANSAS-OKLAHOMA SYNOD, ELCA



MANAGING GOD'S ABUNDANCE

GOD'S CREATION - OUR CARE - EVERY DAY

September - Empathy

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15

Jesus sums up the Godly way of life as loving God with all that we are, loving one another and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Loving others as ourselves is the heart of empathy. Seeing the suffering of someone and making that suffering our own – *weeping with those who weep* – that is empathy. Seeing someone transformed by joy, and joining them in that joy – *rejoicing with those who rejoice* – that too is empathy.

Empathy breaks through our dividing differences. It allows us to see others as “one of us.” No longer does the label “stranger” apply.

It takes work to expand beyond our “natural” empathy circles – groups close to us like family, friends, and our own ethnic communities. Developing and expanding our empathy doesn’t just happen. It takes courage and effort to grow in understanding by showing up in places with people we do not know and learning from and with them.

It can be uncomfortable and awkward, but it also can be delightful and surprising. Either way, be warned – you might see the world in new ways. It is in expanding and deepening empathy that we are better able to follow God’s command to “love our neighbors as ourselves.”

How might you grow in empathy this month? How might you engage with a neighbor who has a different perspective?

