Spring 2014

So we, who are many, are one body in Christ,
and individually we are members one of another.
– Romans 12:5

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of my deep joys as I begin my term as the fourth presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is meeting with you and witnessing how we are church together. It is wonderful to see how people’s lives are changed because of the commitment of our congregations to share God’s love with one another. Thank you for your faithful witness to the gospel. Because of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we are church together for the sake of the world.

At the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, we affirmed the Book of Faith initiative as a continuing emphasis and priority in this church. It is my hope that our deep biblical engagement with the written word of God may help us become a community of deep spiritual discernment. Together, let us recommit to those spiritual practices of prayer, silence, worship, giving and Scripture study so that together we can prepare ourselves and be quiet long enough to hear how God is speaking to us through the Holy Spirit.

We need to first listen to God and then listen to one another. In your congregations, you are already listening and engaging in this communal discernment as you continue to work on your missional covenants. This work, begun by the encouragement of the Living Into the Future Together task force, is not done in isolation from or in competition with one another. It is shaped by our mutual conversations concerning our vision and mission and discerning where the greatest needs are within our congregations and communities.

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly recognized a number of those greatest needs when it approved the Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. The Campaign for the ELCA seeks to raise funds for existing local and global churchwide ministries and for new ministries. As church together, we can start or renew a congregation; save a child’s life; develop leaders in our church and in our global companion churches; and feed people who are hungry, equipping them to break out of the cycle of hunger and poverty.

This past fall, thousands of congregations participated in the “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday. We plan to do this again Sept. 7, 2014. I hope you will join us. This day of service in Jesus’ name is a wonderful way to share God’s love.

As you pray, worship and discern together to seek and listen for God’s will, know that throughout the ELCA, your brothers and sisters are praying for you.

God’s peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America