BISHOP’S REPORT
SYNOD ASSEMBLY
MAY 17-19, 2019

It is with a deep sense of gratitude to God and to the people who make up that Northwest Washington Synod that I write this last report as bishop. The last six years have blessed Kim and me in ways we could not have known. We have been received with grace and we have had the opportunity to experience the church in all of its expressions.

Thank you, people of God!

I am going to list a fraction of the highlights and emphasis of these past years.

ANTI-RACISM TRAINING
The sin of racism has been brought before the church and the culture and rightfully pressed us to look at how racism has been baked into the system that we all participate in. We have been offering anti-racism training to our Staff, Synod Council, Roster and at our Synod Gatherings. We have been blessed with an Authentic Diversity Task Force that is providing the necessary leadership both in our Synod and through our Churchwide expression. It is never easy for us to face our sinfulness but when we do we discover a new-found freedom in Christ.

BUDAPEST
One of the great gifts of the Office of Bishop is entering into a deeper relationship with the global church. Assistant to the Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee and I traveled to Budapest to participate in the ordination of one of our NWWS candidates Zach Courter. Zach has been serving with his wife Rachel in Hungry to coordinate the efforts our Young Adults in Global Mission Program. The Lutheran Church of Hungry received us with a deep sense of appreciation and provided us with gracious hospitality. We have so much to learn and share with the Global Church.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
We knew $3 Million dollars was an audacious goal to set but we have been blessed with the generosity of our congregations and members. It is too early to count our chickens but when we take into consideration major gifts from the sale of the properties of Light of the Cross and Grace Bellevue, we will top the 2-Million-dollar mark. The proceeds of the Campaign will allow us to continue to both launch and renew ministries, reach out more boldly to our neighborhoods and address the educational costs of our roster.
DIRECTOR OF EVANGELICAL MISSION
Deacon Dianne Johnson joined our Staff as the Director of Evangelical Mission. Dianne’s life experiences of facing cancer, heading up the Malaria Campaign, leading mission trips to Tanzania and her work as a Deacon all have formed Dianne for this work. Our incredible Mission Developers are our domestic missionaries. NWWS continues to be a leader in the ELCA of trying to break new ground in understanding what it means to be the church in this time. It is the equivalent of a Research & Development Department in which we risked failing for the sake of innovation, learning and discerning the Holy Spirit.

FAITH ACTION NETWORK
Nothing may be more misunderstood in our times than the tension between being political and being partisan. Jesus was crucified for being political. The Lutheran Church in North American was formed out of the politics of Europe as people fled for greater freedoms. The church can not fulfill the gospel and not be political. This is quite different than being partisan.

FAN is organized to help the church advocate for those who are most vulnerable in our society. FAN is a highly respected body in Olympia, and it matters when we show up to address issues like hunger, housing, human trafficking, and the rights of minority groups. I have learned that the voice of the church is valued by those who are trying to create legislation that benefits the whole community.

FAN has also been my primary introduction to our Native American sisters and brothers and Ecumenical and Interfaith relationships. These relationships have given me great life and hope. I want to thank Co-Directors Paul Benz and Elise DeGooyer.

LIVING LOCAL
You are never a prophet in your own country. The Rev. Dr. David Hahn has served a part time position on our staff to encourage the Living Local Movement. David is recognized across the church for his work with this movement. It is a movement deeply grounded in listening to God’s word and listening to our neighbors. It is a movement the calls us to be present out in the community to discern what God is up to and to join in. It moves the classroom from the synagogue out into the villages. This movement was first met with resistance but is now gaining good traction.

MINISTRY TO SEAFARERS
Thousands of seafarers from around the world arrive in Seattle. They are the labor force on board the ships that transport cargo and passengers. This is a joint ministry that we share with the Episcopalians and Catholics. It can be argued it is the largest community of faith in Seattle. The ministry provides chaplains, calling cards, ditty bags and transportation from the ships to shopping. This ministry is expanding to Everett and Bellingham and the need for Lutherans to participate is always present. You could become a ship visitor, a van driver, or a provider of ditty bags.
NEIGHBORS IN FAITH
NIF is a joint ministry between the NWWS and the Olympia Diocese of the Episcopal Church. It was formed in response to the growing hate industry targeted at Muslims. NIF is under the leadership of Pr. Terry Kyllo. Terry has done a marvelous job of connecting with Muslim leaders to build strong friendships and to offer education. Over 8,000 people have attended some 60 public events. Through the leadership and support of NIF over 3,000 people of faith gathered at the Redmond Mosque to demonstrate our solidarity with the Muslim community following the New Zealand tragedy. And in turn, the Muslim community showed up at St. James Cathedral to stand in solidarity with the Christian Community following the Easter tragedy in Sri Lanka. NIF has been invited to be a leader at the national level.

RIEKE RETIREMENT
Paul Rieke served for many years as our Synod Attorney. He did volumes of pro bono work for NWWS, out of his love for the church. I want to personally thank Paul and to call to the attention of the Synod our need to identify a new Synod Attorney. Additional professional contacts that are highly valuable to the Synod are CPAs, HR specialists, and real estate experts.

SYNOD GATHERINGS
The spirit of trying new things led us to conduct a one-day business only Assembly in 2017 and to host two Synod Gatherings in 2018. Both experiments were met with great acceptance and appreciation. This new approach is more responsive to cost, time and a deep desire for God’s people to gather and grow in our faith. It also met our goal of involving more lay people. We continue to work out the challenge of elections, terms and budgeting under the new format.

TALK ON THE DOCK
Kim and I were delighted to cruise on board our boat Gratitude to seven different locations in the Synod where we gathered with our rostered families to enjoy one another’s fellowship. It is an experience unique to the Northwest and our location near the water. We will count the friendships that we forged on the dock as one of the great gifts we received.

RUSSIA (EUROPEAN LUTHERAN CHURCH OF RUSSIA)
Team Russia graciously introduced me to our Global Companion Church as I traveled to St Petersburg, Moscow and Togliatti. I fell in love with our Russian sisters and brothers and learned of their deep appreciation for their connection to the NWWS. Their witness to the gospel is remarkable given the challenges that they face as a protestant denomination. A high light of the trip was to visit a ministry in Togliatti to families who have special needs children. The children put on a musical that I will never forget. It was filled with grace and joy. Team Russia is committed to raising resources to support this ministry and as a sign of our solidarity with the European Lutheran Church of Russia.
YOUTH GATHERINGS
I had the privilege of gathering with our youth both in Detroit and Houston. It is a wonderful experience of what it means to be church when you gather 30,000 strong. I am so proud of our young people for their love of this church and their hunger for justice. We are also blessed in our Synod with strong Youth and Family leaders who gather on a regular basis. I deeply appreciate them along with the many adults who give of themselves to make youth ministry happen at every level of the church. We need to continue to invite the voices of our young people to shape the church of today.

ZOOM
Zoom is a video and voice platform that allows for teleconferencing. The Synod Office has made excellent use of this technology to conduct meetings of all kinds. It works extremely well when you know the people you are communicating with. It clearly cuts down on our carbon footprint by eliminating the need to travel. I hope more congregations and ministry sites will discover the advantages of this communication tool.