Life In Between
By Bishop Kirby Unti

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” --Luke 10:11-13

Our Synod Staff has been dwelling on Luke’s story of the 10 lepers for the last several months. It has come to our attention that the story takes place where many, many Biblical Stories take place, “in between places.” In this case Jesus encounters the lepers in between Samaria and Galilee.

There is a practical reason for this. The lepers would not have been welcomed in Samaria or Galilee. They were living in the only place they were allowed, on the margins. Given that Jesus was constantly on the move plays right into the likelihood that we will encounter him in between place.

But there is more to this than geography. The story of faith, hope and love is forged “in between.” For Abraham and Sarah it was formed in between the invitation to leave behind family and home and the promise of becoming a great nation. For the Israelites it was in the wilderness between Egypt and Promised Land. For the people of exile it was between living in a strange land and the hope of returning home. For the disciples it was in between the sea of Galilee and the cross. And then there is the most holy of time between Good Friday and Easter Morning.

I have never been good at living “in between.” The uncertainty creates anxiety for me. I want to know the outcome. I just want to get there. Forty years in the wilderness would have done me in.

It is not easy for me to live in the present. I am often seduced into wanting to go back to the way it was or jumping ahead to what is waiting for me. Little did I know how prophetic the words of those were who said to Kim and me, “Enjoy your children because they grow up way too quickly.”

It is in the space and time of “in between” that we come to know, to love and to trust. It is precisely the place we are called to live.

Northwest Washington is entering “in between” time. In between two bishops. Please welcome Rev. Shelley Bryan Wee. Bishop-elect Shelley and I both are leaning into this in between space knowing that it is sacred encountering space. I encourage you not to look back or to race ahead. Rather welcome this new time and our new Bishop and take up residency in it. It is where we encounter Jesus.

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.” --Luke 10:20-21

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THANK YOU to all who attended the 2019 Synod Assembly
SPECIAL thank you to the planners, volunteers and guests who ensured a vibrant, Spirit-led gathering!
Learn more at www.lutheransnw.org/2019-Synod-Assembly
Kay Edgerton  
*NW Washington Synod VP*

When I have a little free time, I like to read short stories in mystery anthologies. I was doing that recently when I came across a story called “The Killer Christian” by Andrew Klavan. The title character is an enforcer and hit man for the mob and yet also purportedly a devout Christian. The story asks us to consider if “it seems strange...that a man might hold his faith in one part of his mind and his deeds in another.” It strikes me that this is a question we are faced with almost daily and it is easy to cry “hypocrite” when confronted with deeds that do not match a person’s stated beliefs. However, in our culture, with its belief in the separation of church and state, I suspect many of us, to some degree, separate our faith lives from our secular ones.

As a public school teacher, I cannot talk about my faith in any way that would make it appear that I am requiring my students to believe what I believe. I am free to wear signs of my faith like the cross around my neck, but I must give everyone else that same freedom. On some level, I do hold my faith and my deeds in different parts of my mind, and yet I hope to move through life with as little conflict between the two as possible. It’s something that I think about a lot. How do we “give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17) when those duties conflict with one another? Could a person of faith serve as an executioner in a state with the death penalty? Could they be a senator and vote for a declaration of war? Could they work for the border patrol and separate children from their parents? I don’t have the answers, but I am confident that God’s grace is abundant. Before demonizing others or crying hypocrisy, I will seek to lean on that grace.

Here is an update on some things I and/or the synod council have been up to in the last month:

- In preparation for Synod Assembly: I attended the Bishop Nominee Forum at Bothell First Lutheran on Saturday, May 4 and watched the videos posted on the synod website.
- Ordination/Installation: I had the honor of presenting Linda Stockham for installation as Neighborhood Ministries Pastor at Kent Lutheran Church.
- I served on the selection committee that identified 8 rostered ministers to receive seminary debt reduction grants.
- Bishop’s Election: On May 19, 2019, the NWWA Synod, in assembly, voted to call Pr. Shelley Bryan Wee as our next bishop. The process was prayer filled and the votes were often very close. Because this process involves voting, it is tempting to say that Pr. Shelley “won” and the others “lost.” This is not the case. We all win when faithful people are willing to risk and step out in faith. My prayers are with the eight nominees to whom this call was not extended, but I give thanks for all nine leaders who participated in the process and shone light on the joys and challenges facing the synod.
- Synod Assembly: In addition to calling a new bishop, we struggled with budgetary issues and resolutions that asked us to find new ways to be church in and for the sake of the world. We also elected new council members! Welcome Pr. Hector Garfias-Toledo, Eric Peoples, Beth Lewis, and Emily Brebner. We have exciting work ahead of us! We also welcomed my fellow VP, Gail Kiyomura from the Sierra Pacific Synod who was scoping out how a bishop election unfolds.
- Planning for next year: Next year we will have a one-day business assembly. If you are interested in helping plan that event, please contact me!

That’s it for this month. I would love to hear about what is happening in your corner of the synod and would be very happy to visit and worship with you. Please don’t hesitate to contact me:  
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