



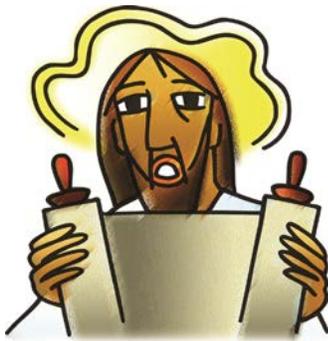
# Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

## Mission Memo #447

January 22, 2019

Third Sunday after Epiphany (January 27, 2019)



The glory of the Lord is revealed in the reading of scripture. People stand at attention. People weep. People prostrate themselves in prayer. The unity of the church is another reflection of the glory of God. Most gloriously, the promises of God are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Gather round. Listen up. Glimpse the glory of God.

### Readings

- [Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10](#) - *Ezra reads the law of Moses before the people*
- [Psalm 19](#) - *The teaching of the Lord revives the soul. (Ps. 19:7)*
- [1 Corinthians 12:12-31a](#) - *You are the body of Christ*
- [Luke 4:14-21](#) - *Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah*

### Living "Words with Friends"

Playgrounds still resound with "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But those words ring hollow. As adults, and as children, we know only too well the power of words to do harm. In contrast, the scriptures for today point us to the word that bears hope, promise, and life. Human words can hurt or fail, but now we hear this holy word of wisdom, challenge, instruction, and hope that really does form us in God's promise. Rather than words that tear down, we are invited by the prophets and Jesus into God's living words with and among friends. Jesus, in coming home and attending the synagogue, reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus announces good news to those struggling economically on the fringes of society, hope to those who are imprisoned, healing to those without sight, a lifting of the burden from those who are weighed down or oppressed, and even the in-breaking of a holy year of favor. Standing in a tradition of prophets and priests who speak, engage, and teach God's word, Jesus now offers one thing more—fulfillment. The words of those who dream and hope, who work for justice and mercy on behalf of God, are now true. Today as we look around and see

people spending time speaking, reading, and even playing games with words, this is an opportunity to ground ourselves in the one full Word that bears life. This word counters sticks and stones and all that oppresses; Jesus address announces God's liberating actions. This Word sounds promise to all who hear; it is an invitation to see God at work among God's people.

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## 2019 Metro Chicago Synod Assembly



The 2019 synod assembly will take place **Friday and Saturday, June 7 and 8, 2019**, at the Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park, IL. The theme of this year's Assembly is "We Are Called." It is based on Isaiah 6:8: Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" While there is much business to conduct and information to share, one of the major items of business will be election of the Bishop to lead the Synod. Bishop Miller has announced that he will not be candidate for re-election to the

position, so there will be a transition in leadership. Bishop Miller met this week with the Northwest Conference, as he has with other conferences, to discuss the role of the Bishop, the election process, the transition that will occur and answer questions. It is a well-defined process, but it is important for congregations to be aware of and prepared to prayerfully participate in the selection of our next Bishop. You can find the process and the responsibilities of the Bishop outlined in Chapter 8 of the [Synod Constitution](#). The [Synod Assembly](#) portion of the website also provides information about the election process and other activities.

## Living Lutheran: Fit and faithful

*Living Lutheran's* January cover story looks at how wellness programs enrich and extend congregations' ministries. By participating in these programs, parishioners can improve their health, build community and grow in their faith. From yoga to cardio activities to exercise drumming and more, this story



covers the many ways wellness programs are becoming important parts of congregational life. [Read the article](#) and participate in discussion with a corresponding [study guide](#).

## **ELCA Advocacy: Lutherans in the 116th Congress**

Earlier this month, the 116th Congress began and new lawmakers were sworn into office, among them five Lutherans. ELCA Advocacy has a blog post identifying these new members as well as the Lutheran incumbents who were re-elected. [Read the full post](#) to learn more.

As Congress begins this session, ELCA Advocacy reminds us that the current government shutdown is an impediment to vital domestic programs that ensure food, housing, health, safety and more. Global initiatives that bring sustenance and hope are also interrupted. Civil servants across our land and low wage federal contractors who strive daily to carry out the work of our government are experiencing increasing strain as the shutdown elongates.

God calls us to care and to act. Opportunities to be heard are limited during this shutdown period. Currently the White House call center is closed. Tips to leave a voice message with Senators and Representatives urging them to reopen government can be found in the [Action Alert: "End the government shutdown."](#) Hopefully this can help move our nation beyond the current impasse.

## **News From Luther Seminary**

Luther Seminary is **entering a historic period of strength, sustainability, and vibrancy**—and it's begun with listening deeply to the church. In 2018 we embarked on an adventure: We sent teams of faculty and staff, two by two, across the country to listen to synods and congregations about their challenges, successes, hopes, and fears.

Since September, we've visited 12 synods and more than 50 congregations to see first-hand what they're doing and ask them about the Holy Spirit's movement in their midst. We've discovered the core challenge facing the church in this moment is the need for deep formation of Christian faith and identity among youth, church members, lay leaders, and even pastors. So we're asking ourselves: *How is Luther Seminary uniquely equipped to respond to this core challenge?*

One step is to make spiritual and community formation a hallmark of a Luther Seminary education. Our new accelerated Master of Divinity program, **MDivX**, integrates formation in every aspect of the seminary journey through real-world ministry experiences, prayer, and dwelling in Scripture. More broadly, we're in our second year of **Spirit Lab**, an experimental program operating out of the office of the seminary pastor, which seeks to identify meaningful spiritual practices our students, faculty, and staff can participate in together.

What about outside the walls of the seminary? We've convened several learning communities of pastors, synod leaders, and lay leaders to gather with Luther

Seminary coaches to explore breakthrough practices for ministry in the 21st century. Just this month, we're launching a new website called **Faith+Lead** that will put leaders in touch with the resources, experiments, and communities adapting to the challenge of forming Christian faith in a pluralistic age.

**We're designing the campus of the future to allow us to be nimble, flexible, and connected.** We continue to make progress on our plan to focus the seminary's footprint on the upper campus, and, ultimately, vacate the lower campus. You can see some of the conceptual images in the latest issue of Story magazine; find it, along with information on the other programs, at [luthersem.edu/story](http://luthersem.edu/story).

**Our financial position is stronger than ever.** In Fiscal Year 2018, our endowment topped \$100 million for the first time. We're projecting budget surpluses for the next five years. Most importantly, we have made the adjustments to our stewardship practices to ensure our sustainability long-term. After several years of financial setbacks, the future looks bright.

Joyous blessings in the New Year, The Rev. Dr. Robin J. Steinke, President

### **Applications for 2019-20 Young Adults in Global Mission now open**

Do you or someone you know have an interest in being a servant leader, living and serving alongside one of the ELCA's global companions? ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) is a one-year international service-learning and faith-formation opportunity for young adults, ages 21 to 29. Young adults serve alongside Lutheran companion church bodies and organizations in one of 11 country programs, being shaped by the witness of our global neighbors in a cross-cultural journey of faith. Service opportunities currently exist in Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, Serbia, Cambodia, Jerusalem/West Bank, Madagascar, Mexico, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania. Areas of service include, but are not limited to, health and development, congregational ministry, human rights, education, homelessness, addiction recovery, women's issues, and children and youth. All site placements provide opportunities for young adults to confront issues of wealth and poverty, racial privilege, economic disparity and globalization through the lens of faith. **Applications are open through Feb. 15, 2019; [learn more, apply today](#).**

#### **Coming Events:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event/Activity</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>June 7 and 8, 2019</b>	<b>2019 MC Synod Assembly, Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park, IL</b>	For more information visit <a href="http://www.mcelca.org/assembly/">http://www.mcelca.org/assembly/</a>
<b>Aug 5-10, 2019</b>	<b>ELCA Churchwide Assembly, at the Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee, Wisc.</b>	For more information visit <a href="https://www.elca.org/churchwideassembly">https://www.elca.org/churchwideassembly</a>