

Welcome to the 2024 Synod Assembly!

I know – we’re not there yet! But I’m looking forward to introducing the focus for the assembly over the next 6 weeks.

When the Assembly Planning Team started thinking and dreaming and praying about the next Assembly, we recognized how much the past few years have taken a toll on relationships everywhere:

- physical distancing during the pandemic,
- the loss of those we love and never got the chance to say good-bye to,
- conflicts over pandemic practices,
- families divided over COVID or politics or you name it,
- divisiveness fomented by social media, and
- now-ramping-up political campaigns.



“One body in Christ”

Some have said we’ve forgotten how to talk with each other.

Many of us miss being with people we used to be connected to. All of us note how in some way, relationships are just hard these days. And this is no less a reality in the church.

Of course, we’re not the first Jesus followers to experience disconnect, debate, or division. Relationships were a challenge for the earliest followers, too. St. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that God’s very self was given for them in a way they would never expect: in the death of the crucified Christ upon a cross. He wrote, *“Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3-4).

Those who are baptized into Christ are ushered into new life in community. And when we gather at the Holy Meal, Jesus gathers us together with all the other precious children of God.

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

This means that followers of Jesus, and participants in our own faith communities, are freed from those expressions of being bound in our sin - holding grudges, speaking ill of another, judging others, ignoring our neighbors, hoarding salvation as my personal possession. We have been made members of one body. There is a unity amid our diversity, and that unity is forever and only in Christ.

Thought questions:

- How does living out our baptism as disciples of Jesus Christ free us from divisiveness in our communities of faith?
- How does unity amid our diversity move us to care for our neighbors?

+ grace and peace,
Bishop Dee Pederson

2024 Synod Assembly Theme Series - Reflection #1



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

www.swmnelca.org/synod-assembly