

The Church Mouse/Vashon Lutheran Church
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June 2024



The Church Mouse

From the desk of Pr. John Michael Barich

Ezekiel 37.1–14

The hand of the Yahweh came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” Ezekiel 37.1–3

The Hebrew scriptures contain some isolated instances of bodily resurrections of individuals who have recently died (cf. Elijah and Elisha in 1 & 2 Kings), but nowhere do we have a precedent for bringing to life a long-dead skeleton of dry human bones without any skin or flesh. The how of this amazing skeletal resurrection will be through the “breath/spirit/wind” of Yahweh which will enter these bones and give them life.

Ezekiel’s vision is of a communal resurrection of a people bone-dry in hopelessness, feeling totally cut off. This is a community where life and vitality are gone, completely gone, and then somehow reappear as a miracle without any visible means of support or hope.

In 1 of the 19 short, coming-of-age vignettes of Justin Torres’ *We the Animals*, is a recollection of his 7-year-old self losing life by drowning:

I sank down for a long time, disoriented and writhing, and then suddenly I was swimming – kicking my legs and spreading my arms just like Paps had shown me long before, and rising up to the light and exploding into air, and then that first breath, sucking air all the way down into my lungs, and when I looked the up the sky had never been so vaulted, so sparkling, so magnificent...and there under the stars, I was wanted. They had never been so happy to see me with such intensity and hope, they had never before spoken my name so softly. I remember how Ma burst into tears and Paps celebrated, shouting as if he was a mad scientist and I a marvel of his creation: “He’s alive!” “He’s alive!” “He’s alive!”

Can these bones live? ...and then that first breath. This story, with

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Pentecost just behind us, reminds us again that God's Spirit blows where it will. The divine Spirit is a mysterious wind, which we realize without seeing, which we honor without understanding, which we breathe in and out always. The good news is that the Spirit of God is always higher, always lower, more powerful and more pervasive, more life-giving and more binding than we have yet imagined it to be!

Living God,

breathe new life into our bones,

breathe new life into our homes,

breathe new life into our neighborhoods,

breathe new life into our relationships,

breathe new life into our churches,

breathe new life into _____. (You fill in the blank)

Rev. John Michael Barich

Synod Assembly Recap

The Synod Assembly held on May 18, 2024, was attended by a total of 337 synod members including 275 voting members, six observers, and 56 visitors/volunteers. We give thanks to our host congregation, Grace Lutheran Church in Des Moines, to all who assisted in the planning and leadership of the day, and to all the attendees.

We began our time together in worship – centered on our theme, “We Lift Our Eyes” – from Psalm 121. It was a joy-filled service with special music from Grace Lutheran Church Music Director, Amy Boers, the GLC Choir, and members of the Mariachi Club from Pacific Lutheran University. During the service, we officially installed Rev. Judy Brennan as our Director for Evangelical Mission. We are grateful that we received over \$5600 in offering that will be shared between Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW), Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), and the NW Washington Synod Bishop's Caring Fund (supports rostered leaders by providing scholarships and emergency aid). THANK YOU for your generosity!

Assembly business items included approving the recommended changes to our synod constitution that were forwarded from the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the 2025 Synod Budget. The presented budget was amended to include increased compensation for our rostered synod staff members so that they would receive synod guidelines. (A note from the bishop: while this is budget approval is an affirming sign and appreciated, it also calls for increased mission support from our congregations. Please encourage your congregation leaders to prayerfully consider increasing your congregation's mission support this year.)

Following Synod Council approval, the assembly joyfully received our newest congregation, Hope Church in Lake Stevens. Originally a Covenant Congregation, they left that denomination and began exploring what it would mean to become an ELCA congregation. They began renting from Holy Cross Lutheran in Lake

Stevens and had many conversations about what it might mean to do ministry together. Although that partnership never came to fruition, through those discussions Hope discerned a call to stay in Lake Stevens and become an ELCA congregation.

In addition to the written reports shared ahead of the assembly, we received oral reports from our Synod Officers: Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee, Vice President Kay Edgerton, Treasurer Bart Brosten, and Synod Secretary Rev. Netsie Griffith. These reports are posted on our assembly webpage: <https://www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly>

Additionally, we shared video reports and stories from Ministry Partners and Synod Committees. You will find these – and written reports received – also posted on our assembly webpage. Look for a link to view a recording of the full assembly to be posted on the synod website to be posted soon.

A handful of synod members donned fun flame headbands to share stories of how the Spirit is working in our synod in new or surprising ways. We heard about a group of youth ministry leaders are joining forces to offer opportunities for their young people; how one congregation is being transformed by the welcome and inclusion of Spanish-speaking neighbors; how another congregation challenged themselves to learn more about what it means to welcome and support a leader of color; how one cluster of congregations is collaborating to support one another in new ways; and how a passion for archery is creating a new sacred space. (Look for more of these stories next year!)

Finally, we held elections for Synod Council, the Committee on Discipline, the Consultation Committee, and for 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. THANK YOU to all the nominees for allowing their names to go forward for consideration. We are so grateful to have such talented and gifted people open to serving! Below you will find the roles and names of those who were elected at this assembly:

Synod Council

David Kinner (Youth from Pointe of Grace, Mukilteo)

Sam Martinez (Young Adult from Christ the Servant, Bellingham)

Sherianne Caldwell (Layperson from Immanuel, Seattle)

Dan Squires (Layperson from Our Savior's, Everett)

Elly Stitt (Layperson from Prince of Peace, Shoreline)

Deacon Luke Allgeyer (Columbia City Church of Hope, Seattle)

Rev. Andy Arnold (Shepherd of the Valley, Maple Valley)

Rev Paul Eldred (Central, Seattle)

Rev. Sam Sseba (Prince of Peace, SeaTac)

Committee on Discipline

Rev. Glen Aaberg (Hospice Chaplain)

David Foster-Koth (Faith, Seattle)

Rev. Jory Mickelson (Faith, Bellingham)

Deacon Marie Preftes-Arenz (Faith of N. Lakewood, Marysville)

Bob Spencer (Our Savior's, Everett)

Consultation Committee

John Fairbairn (Faith, Bellingham)

Rev. Katherine GrayBuck (Church of the Apostles, Seattle)

Rev. Kari Lipke (Gethsemane, Seattle)

Eric Peoples (First, Bothell)

Voting Members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly include 3 rostered ministers and 6 laypersons. Of those in the delegation, 1 is a youth, 2 are young adults, 1 person identifies as non-binary, and 3 are persons of color:

Dante Austin (Immanuel, Seattle)

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee (Faith, Everett)

Vice President Kay Edgerton (Nativity, Renton)

Rev. Ivar Hillesland (Church of the Apostles, Seattle)

Rev. Kristi Lambing (Fir-Conway, Mount Vernon)

Seth Lambing (Pointe of Grace, Mukilteo)

Rachel Pritchett (Bethany, Bainbridge Island)

Kasey Shultz (Columbia City Church of Hope, Seattle)

Nisar Stephen (Grace, Des Moines)

Our next synod assembly will be held next year at the Edward D. Hansen Conference Center in downtown Everett. This will be a two-day assembly on May 16-17, 2025. In addition to reports, approving a budget, electing persons to various roles, we will be holding an election for bishop. Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee announced to those gathered that she is willing to serve another term if nominated and elected. (Look for more information soon from the Synod Council about the Bishop Election Process.)

We are so grateful for each of you. And together, in thankfulness, we lift our eyes to God, to each other, and to our neighbor, trusting that our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you, Rev. John Michael Barich for your participation in worship today at VLC!

Sunday AM Bible Study, 9:45 – 10:15 AM, is led by Rev. John Michael Barich. All are welcome.

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting – right after worship, Sunday, June 23. Members are encouraged to attend this meeting to hear Council President's & Care Pastor's reports, the current financial situation, the Hanusa Fund report, the VLC Nominating Committee's report & election of Council Officers & Members & to hear the VLC attendees' report from NW WA Synod Assembly. Light refreshments will be served.

Contact Gail Larson (206/567-4779) with your prayer requests.

IFCH Dinner Program - VLC provides hand out meals at Vashon Presbyterian Church at 5:00 PM the fourth Thurs. of the month. Contact Chery Weise: cheryl.weise@gmail.com to help.

The Care Closet, Medical Equipment/Supplies – 206-473-8715. Vashon Care Network – 206-473-8715.

Email: contact@vashoncarenetwork.org; website: www.vashoncarenetwork.org

VCN FAMILY CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP - Vashon Care Network invites you to join other family caregivers in a safe, supportive space to share the experience of caregiving. Thursdays, 6:30–7:30 PM at VLC. ?? Call Kathy Shafel, kshafel@comcast.net, cell: 206.718-1458 or Tory Hayes, 206.304-4544, victoriansmith@comcast.net.



"For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies."

2 Corinthians 4

OUR FAITH IN ACTION

SUNDAY

1st, Food Bank Sunday

9:45 – 10:15 AM Bible Study w/ Rev. John Michael Barich

10:30 AM Worship

6:30 – 8:30 PM AA Group

June 23, after worship svc. Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

June 30, 10:00 AM Worship at Church of the Holy Spirit

MONDAY

10:00 AM Intercessory Prayer Group

4th, 6:00 – 8:00 PM VCN Board Meeting

TUESDAY

2nd, 9:00 – 1:00 PM Quilt Sewers Group

3rd, 10:00 – noon Vashon Quilting Group

WEDNESDAY

1st, 9:00 AM – noon Lutheran Quilters Group

June 19, 7:00 PM, VLC ZOOM Council Meeting

THURSDAY

6:30-7:30 PM VCN Family Caregivers Support Group at VLC

June 27, 5:00 pm IFCH Dinner prepared by VLC, served at VPC

FRIDAY

7:00 - 8:30 PM AA Group for Men



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