

The Church Mouse/Vashon Lutheran Church
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FEBRUARY 2023



The Church Mouse

From the Desk of Pr. Aitken

Dear Vashon Lutheran friends:

I hope that you know how important you have become to me, as fellow sisters and brothers in Christ! One of the joys I get to experience, is to teach and preach the “gospel” the very heart and soul of the Christian message, and our pastor’s first job description: To proclaim and teach the story of God’s love for the whole world.



Who you are is not your house, the car you drive, your ethnicity, the clothes you wear or even the country you live in. Our true life, as I hope you know, is hidden in God through Christ. We were chosen before the foundation of the world, in God’s mind and heart to live a life of love. This is the first and great gift of God to all of us: Our life was already given a framework, from the very beginning. This message is found on Jesus’ lips in his teachings and in the great “Hymns” the early church sang, especially found in the opening of both Colossians and Ephesians, two great New Testament books to read over and over again for the Christian. In that framework we find true happiness. We find our true selves.

Because this identity given to us is true, we dare to stake our very lives on it and in our Christian work in the world. We grow at peace with ourselves and others through God’s love for us “a thousand times over” as Martin Luther said. It is all grace. It is all gift. You can’t manufacture this kind of belonging and purpose, you can’t earn it, there is nothing you can do to create this identity. You are stuck with it! The only thing you can do is become aware of it and enjoy it through the experiences God brings us: Through loving and serving others, through living out lives of integrity, through singing hymns, hearing gospel sermons, bible study and everyday moments of grace.

Hold these truths deep in your hearts as you move deeper into the future of God’s love and continued ministries of this congregation.

In the peace that passes all understanding,

Rev. Thomas M. Aitken

Pronouns: he / him / his (why do I use my pronouns?)

<https://tinyurl.com/y4f3sagt>

I acknowledge the peoples – past, present, and future – of the Dkhw’Duw’Absh, the Duwamish Tribe, the Muckleshoot Tribe, and other Coast Salish peoples on whose traditional lands and waters I live on.

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From the Bishop:

When I was in sixth grade, my teacher decided that we were going to build chicken skeletons. From real chickens. So, the teacher divided us into groups. A local farmer donated the chickens. Each group had to boil and boil and boil their chicken. When all the flesh and tendons, etc. were boiled off, and the bones were clean, then we had to build the chicken back up so that it formed a complete bird.

When I think back on this project, I wonder what we were learning. Anatomy? Names of bones? I'm not sure. But what I did learn was community, relationship, and collaboration. Without the people in my group – and the different skills and gifts that they had – we would not have been able to put this chicken back together. We had to make sure that the bones were sorted into the right boxes (the feet bones, the leg bones, the wing bones, the beak, etc.) We had to make sure the bones weren't wet and that there wasn't anything left on the bones so it didn't stink. (My mom claimed it did stink. Side note, I was elected to bring home the completed chicken. My mom was not pleased and at some point, it disappeared from the living room bookcase).

Anyway, getting back to community, relationship, and collaboration ... as I think of our synod, and what God is calling us to do and to be together, I think that these three things are key. I know that many of you are already in relationship and collaboration with other ELCA congregations around you. Perhaps you share your building with other ministries. Perhaps you share a food bank or work with a school. Perhaps affordable housing is part of your collaborative work. Many of you have preschools. All of these are wonderful ways to collaborate.

I'm wondering if we can think even bigger and more relationally than that. What if people from geographically close congregations met and talked about who they are. What their hopes are. What their fears are. What they need from others. What they have to offer others. What might come out of these conversations and relationships? Perhaps a way to share staff? Perhaps a way to more impactful in the community? Perhaps new ways of using property? I'm not sure. It would be interesting and exciting to find out.

As I have mentioned before, study after study indicates that pastors today are lonely and feel isolated and anxious about the future. As my staff and I travel around the synod, we hear that many congregations also feel lonely and isolated and anxious about the future. Hearing stories and knowing some of the difficulties, doesn't it seem that it would be better to build relationship with one another and collaborate rather than every congregation trying to figure it out on their own?

Here are three ways that we are encouraging congregations to be in community, build relationships, and collaborate.

First, we continue to expand the LiVE Project (Living into Vocational Engagement). We are excited about the synod's collaboration and building relationship with the Trinity Education Foundation who is contributing funding this year and partnering with us. I encourage you to visit www.lutheransnw.org/ministries/the-live-project and learn more.

Second, in lieu of a Synod Assembly this year, we are hosting two Synod Gatherings in the spring with forums where relationships and collaboration are key. Watch for information in early February on the two Gatherings (May 13 in Mount Vernon and May 20 in Bellevue) via email and on our website here: www.lutheransnw.org/events/synod-gatherings.

Third, the Grace Grant application this year asks applicants with whom they are collaborating on the proposed project. The application process is open February 1 – May 31. Read about the focus areas and how to apply for this final year of funding here: www.lutheransnw.org/pages/grace-grants

You know, I could never have built that chicken alone. Nor would I have wanted to. Truthfully, even with my group, it was messy and hard. In my memory, we had a few bones left over that we quietly threw in the garbage. And yet, I am still in relationship with many of the people in my sixth grade group. And we are bonded from the chicken-building experience.

As the body of Christ, may we build relationship, be in community, and collaborate together. I'd love to hear what you are doing in your congregation towards this. Please email me at bishop@lutheransnw.org.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you, Deacon Jan Cherry, for leading us in worship today!

VLC annual Congregational Meeting has been postponed to Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023, right after the worship service. Hard copies of the most recent VLC Constitution/Bylaws and the minutes from the last congregational meeting are available on the information table in the fellowship hall.

Sunday Bible study class begin again today, Feb. 5., 9:15 – 10:00 AM. Roger Gebhard will lead the class today & Sunday, Feb. 12. Pastor Thomas M. Aitken will lead the class Sunday, Feb. 19 & Feb. 26. Coffee and refreshments included. All are welcome!

AARP Free Tax Preparation – will begin Thursdays, February 2 – April 7, 2023. Open between 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. By appointment: vashonaarp@gmail.com.

Giving Your Offering – If you would like to continue giving an offering to VLC, our mailing address is: Vashon Lutheran Church, P. O. Box 2930, Vashon, WA 98070.

The Care Closet, Medical Equipment/Supplies – 206-473-8715. Vashon Care Network – 206-604-3253. Email: contact@vashoncarenetwork.org; website: www.vashoncarenetwork.org

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

OUR FAITH IN ACTION**SUNDAY****1st, Food Bank Sunday****9:15 – 10:00 AM, beginning Feb. 5, 2023 Bible Study Class****10:30 AM – 12:00 PM Worship and Coffee Hour****6:30 – 8:30 PM AA Group****Feb. 19, 2023, 11:30 AM VLC Annual Congregational Meeting****MONDAY****10:00 AM Intercessory Prayer Group****Feb. 6, 6:00 PM Mission Planning Committee ZOOM meeting****TUESDAY****2nd, 9:00 – 1:00 PM Quilt Sewers Group****3rd, 10:00 – noon Vashon Quilting Group****WEDNESDAY****1st, 9:00 – noon Lutheran Quilters Group****Feb. 15, 7:00 PM Council ZOOM Meeting****THURSDAY****Feb. 9 – Apr. 7, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM AARP Free Tax Prep, by appointment****FRIDAY****7:00 - 8:30 PM AA Group for Men**

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 5



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