



Oregon Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

2018 Greetings from the Bishop

“Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; the patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit.

Do not be quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

Do not say, “Why were the former days better than these?” For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.”

Ecclesiastes 7:8-10 (NRSV)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Ministry,

I wish for you a holy and hopeful 2018! As you gather for annual meetings and worship this January 2018 we are hearing once again Jesus’ invitation to follow. We see those who are leaving prior vocations to learn about the Kingdom. We find crowds in wonderment about this Jesus who speaks with “authority” – that is integrity, power and purpose. With these teachings, and our 21st century realities before us, I find the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 7 interesting. Why do we ask about the former days? It is the present and the future to which we are called!



At the invitation of our Oregon Synod Mission Table some 74 congregations participated in planned visitations this last fall, which is to say over 100 of you have conducted more than 800 personal conversations about your ministries, your congregations, and your own personal, spiritual, well-being. This is amazing! And, with congregations that have conducted Vitality Surveys or other Ministry Assessments, we can be more self-aware of what the Spirit is up to in our collective work and witness.

This April we will gather in five regional events. We are at a pivot point, and the intimacy of these Regional Gatherings are an individualized way to do work before our single-day Synod Assembly on May 19. A separate letter is being sent to your congregations with dates and details about these Gatherings. Send your best, brightest and most energetic leads to a Gathering near you. If that is every member of your congregation – GREAT. You all come! Do elect Synod Assembly Voting Members as you usually do. Know, though, that we look for you at our Gatherings as well.

Also in our near future is the ELCA Youth Gathering, held in Houston, TX this summer, June 27- July 1. I look forward to being there with our synod youth, those of you who will go as sponsors, and our children's friends for whom this may be a first exposure to the Gospel. Thank you for helping to make this possible.

We have *much* for which we are thankful this year. Within this thanksgiving is our witness to congregations all around the synod who have taken up our 2016 Assembly invitation to define ourselves as a Sanctuary Synod. In this, and so many other ways, you are making a difference for real people, in unique circumstances, in a powerful way. I look forward to hearing and sharing stories about your accompaniment with those at risk.

I also wish to thank you for your financial faithfulness this past year. We are a diverse and geographically vast Synod. Our needs, challenges and struggles - both the Synod's and those of your congregation - are unique. Capacity, options, mutual support and opportunities will be a priority focus for our Gathering conversations this April.

There is much to share, much to tell, and many stories of faithful ministry to be heard in the months to come. Please know I hold you in prayer as you go about the work of ministry in your place. I thank you for the prayers and personal support we receive as your synod staff. It is a joy to share ministry with you.

"Better is the end of a thing than its beginning." This is a strange sentiment. Some of what we know and value in life seems to be coming to an end. We are people of the cross, the tomb, and the resurrection. Endings, however, can be formidable and fearful. Honestly speaking so, too, can be beginnings. But, oh, how hopeful!

Blessing in this New Year,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dave Brauer-Rieke". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Bp. Dave Brauer-Rieke
Oregon Synod - ELCA