



## BRITISH COLUMBIA SYNOD

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
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### Bishop's Report to Congregational Annual General Meetings 2020

We give thanks to God for our ministry together with you in our BC Synod, and for the nudges and yearnings of the Spirit that call and lead us into new ventures of which we cannot see the ending but which are filled with joy and struggle, grace and challenge.

1. The primary initiative in which we were engaged throughout 2019 was the **Synod-Wide Conversations**. In total, nine conversations were held across our synod from February through May. Well over 250 people participated in the conversations. In these day-long events we asked questions, engaged in conversation about our contexts, and thought together about how we sensed God leading us into the future as congregations and as a synod. Some of the questions we explored were:

- What is going on in our world that we, as church, need to pay attention to?
- Based on what we are naming, how might God be nudging you/us to respond?
- What is a crossroad that we [our congregation, synod, church] currently face?
- Name some of the possibilities at this crossroads
- As you imagine our collective future, what are you noticing?
- What might we do to support each other?

These questions generated a tremendous amount of conversation and comments. This information was collated and presented to Synod Council for its reflection and discernment. In June, Synod Council met in retreat and worked with our consultant, Charles Holmes, to drill down into the rich material that the conversations provided. Arising out of these reflections, Synod Council identified three primary themes that will govern our work and ministry together: **Collaboration, Connection and Communication**.

In addition, Synod Council reflected on our multi-year missional process. In order to help provide some shape and context regarding the missional mindset we are seeking to foster and cultivate across our synod, Synod Council developed some catchwords that help describe this way of being and seeing. Here is the list that Synod Council articulated. It is not an exhaustive list, but it will give you a sense of the breadth of what being a missional people looks like:

#### Missional Mindset:

- Thinking beyond ourselves - always
- Profound respect for the other
- Listening is crucial
- Curiosity and exploration
- Shared leadership
- Going not knowing
- "Together with" versus "doing for"
- Accompaniment
- Acting for the love of the world (versus love of church)
- Being vulnerable
- Shared power
- God is already at work in our neighbours and in our neighbourhoods
- To be able to receive the gifts of others
- We do not love our neighbours when we only see their needs and not their gift
- Leadership is holding space and being a catalyst for the best work of others

Many people have approached us or sent e-mails thanking us for the synod-wide conversation initiative. People are making connections, being buoyed by the conversations, finding a sense of hope, comfort and excitement as we explore new possibilities. There is already a sense that we are becoming more connected to one another and feeling less alone, knowing that many of the challenges we face are common to other congregations.

2. In the summer of 2019, our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada gathered for its **National Convention**. Our synod was represented by 17 delegates (youth, lay and rostered). As an experiment, we decided to bring all of the delegates together for a Zoom conference call prior to the convention, to ensure that those attending from our synod would have a chance for some discussion and learning together. We led people through the agenda, pointed out key sections in the Bulletin of Reports, answered questions and continued to build community and connections among our delegates who were from all regions across our synod. On the eve of convention, we also invited all those from our BC Synod to come together for an evening reception. Then, a month after convention, we hosted another Zoom meeting to help the delegates think about how they would share the story in their Regions. The delegates worked well together, resourcing one another, sharing information and reports, and continuing to network. More information, reports, and video presentations from the National Convention can be found on the ELCIC website.

3. In July of 2019, the sale of the synod-owned property on the University Endowment Lands (across from the UBC campus) was completed. Some of the yearly investment income generated from these funds will stabilize the funding required for our current ministry expenses. Benevolence funds received from BC Synod congregations, while significant and faithful, have not covered all of our current expenses for a number of years. We have been living with deficit budgets for a while now. But the investment income also enables us to explore new initiatives throughout our synod, support on-going training and coaching, and identify ways by which we might better provide leadership and assistance to congregations.

4. While the synods across the ELCIC recently established harmonized guidelines for parts of the remuneration package for rostered leaders, the main salary components (that is, the base salary guidelines and the use of a 15-year incremental timeline) have not been reviewed for many years. Synod Council has asked a couple of its members to initiate a review of the “Salary and Compensation Guidelines,” to confer with congregations and rostered leaders, and then to bring recommendations back to Synod Council. A review of the housing allowance calculations also will be considered, especially the process described in the guidelines for how to calculate a fair housing allowance. We mention this review of the “Salary and Compensation Guidelines” here in this report for congregational AGMs, so that you are aware that changes may be forthcoming for the 2021 calendar year.

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We give thanks to God for the ministry in which you are engaged in your communities and neighbourhoods. And we are incredibly grateful for your prayers and support of us as we minister among you. May God’s blessing be upon you.

Bishop Greg Mohr

Rev. Kathy Martin, Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Renewal and Congregational Support