



Threshold time

Living in a time of liminal space

By Bishop Greg

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We are living in a time of liminal space. This is “threshold time” — standing on the border, the threshold, between one thing and another. Those words describe where we’re at as a synod, as a church, right now.

This COVID-era has certainly been a time of liminal space. A dislocation of patterns, relationships and ministry has been thrust upon us. Yet our ministers, laypeople, congregations, and ministries have navigated these challenging times with perseverance, compassion, and hope. Across all our synods, our congregational members have worked hard to ensure that their communities would be sustained and encouraged during these times. They have found ways to stay in touch and to communicate with one another, often in new and unexpected ways.

This threshold time has brought with it new understandings and learnings, changed attitudes, and a reassessment of what we should be about, treasuring some things and perhaps setting others aside.

But even aside from COVID, for many years now, the church has been living in a liminal space, seeking to discern God’s activity among us, in our communities, out there in our neighbourhoods. We seek to follow God’s call, and to discern how God wants us to be part of God’s gracious, loving presence in this world.

The theme for our BC Synod Convention in October is “Journey. Together: Liminal Space.” As we explore this time of threshold, we cast our eyes toward the horizon, wondering, praying, discerning what the next steps of our journey might be. Joining us in that discernment will be Dr. Susan Beaumont, who will facilitate the Learning Day portion of our Synod Convention.

Our BC Synod also is in the midst of another aspect of liminal space. Earlier this fall, I announced to our synod that after much deep, prayerful consideration and discernment, I would be retiring at the end of this year and hence stepping down as their bishop. As a result, the election of our new BC Synod bishop will take place during the October BC Synod Convention. Our new bishop will take office as of January 1, 2022.

I have had the incredible privilege and honour of serving our synod these past 15 years — 11.5 years as bishop, as well as an additional 3.5 years as the Assistant to the Bishop. It has been a remarkable experience and I am so very grateful to everyone in our synod, as well as to those of you across the ELCIC whom I have met or corresponded with over these years.

I have been generously welcomed into a host of communities. I have enjoyed countless pot-luck dinners and conversations, heard inspiring stories of faith and life, and experienced the breadth of ministry being carried out by people in their congregations and ministries. I have seen parts of this province and country I might otherwise not have seen. We have spent time together in discernment, reflection, challenge, and heartache. I have journeyed with you in joys, struggles, celebration and conflict.

Over the years, I have tried to offer wise counsel, a listening ear, and advice and guidance for moving forward. I have tried to be faithful, future-oriented, and hopeful; to help us move beyond some of the things that cause us to be closed in, unsure of ourselves, or afraid to try new things.

Through it all, we have journeyed as God's people, united in mission and ministry, being strengthened in our faith, and nourished for the journey.

This decision to retire has not come easily. But I know it is time. Our BC Synod now enters a time of discernment — a liminal space — as God guides us in the election of our new bishop and as we abide in the liminal space of what this transition means for us.

As we have prayed so often during these past years, I would like to close with the prayer that we have used time and again during our missional process:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, p. 317)

Peace be with you all.