



## What does it take to be a *flourishing* congregation?

*As part of the LEAD process, this year your Church Council is doing a deep dive into our values and purpose as a congregation. At the last ELCIC South West Area Gathering, Dr. Joel Thiessen of the Flourishing Congregations Institute presented their findings on what they have discovered about thriving congregations. The article below summarizes some of their findings.*

*Pastor Phil*

The Flourishing Congregations Institute is a new institute set up at Ambrose University to explore and understand what makes congregations thrive. Where are there signs of life, and vitality, and health, and what can we learn from those signs of life and vitality? What are the catalysts — the contributors to flourishing congregations? Dr. Joel Thiessen points to five things that are emerging as starting points for entering this study of "flourishing congregations".

1. **Congregations that have a clear self-identity.** They know who they are, they know what it is they're trying to do, and where they're going.
2. **They have a committed leadership.** They equip and empower leaders, they have leaders who stick around for the long haul, and leadership is a central part of how and why congregations flourish.
3. **They have a desire to grow numerically, but they also desire to grow spiritually and organizationally.** They measure. They count. They are accountable in various ways for the kinds of things they're doing at a congregational level.
4. **They are a hospitable community.** These are places that receive people well, that are warm places that people feel connected to, that they feel loved, and embraced, and these kinds of things.
5. **They have a vibrant spiritual life** among leaders, among congregants, across a congregation.

Dr. Joel Thiessen also points to other determinants in the DNA of flourishing congregations:

- Embrace risk and try new things
- Stewardship — not just of money — of resources, land, volunteers
- Intentional discourse on "what are we leaving to the next generation"?
- Ability to navigate conflict well
- A strong outward-facing presence in the community

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*Dr. Joel Thiessen is a sociologist of religion who specializes in religion in Canada. His academic interests developed as an undergraduate student at Nazarene University College. He obtained his MA and PhD at the University of Waterloo before heading to Ambrose University (Calgary, Alberta) in 2008 where he currently serves as Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Flourishing Congregations Institute.*



This article can be found at [www.christianministryacademy.org/blog/qt4cm-episode-12](http://www.christianministryacademy.org/blog/qt4cm-episode-12)

## A glance at February Ministry Happenings....



**February 2** - Annual General Meeting - following worship

**February 3 - 6** Pastors at Clergy Study Conference

**February 3 - 8** Catherine at “*Musician in Residence*” Banff

**February** - Dianne on vacation

**February 11** - Brene Brown Workshop - 7 pm

**February 12 - 16**- Pastor Phil to Whitehorse

**February 17** - Family Day - OFFICE CLOSED

**February 18** - **MENTOR NIGHT** at Confirmation - 5 pm

**February 19** - Council Meeting - 7 pm

**February 22** - Women’s Ministry - 10 am

**February 22** - AGAPE Café - 6 pm

**February 25** - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper - 6 pm

**February 26** - Ash Wednesday worship - 7 pm

**February 29** - Cantare Workshop - 8 am - 4:30 pm



**CHURCH OF THE CROSS**

### In this Month’s Issue

*Love the Lord your God with.....*

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## Lutheran Church of the Cross

10620 Elbow Drive SW Calgary, AB

[www.churchofthecross.ca](http://www.churchofthecross.ca)

[churchofthecross@shaw.ca](mailto:churchofthecross@shaw.ca)

Pastors Laura & Phil Holck

Minister of Music—Catherine Glaser-Climie

Office Administrator—Dianne Fortier

403-255-4792

### Mission

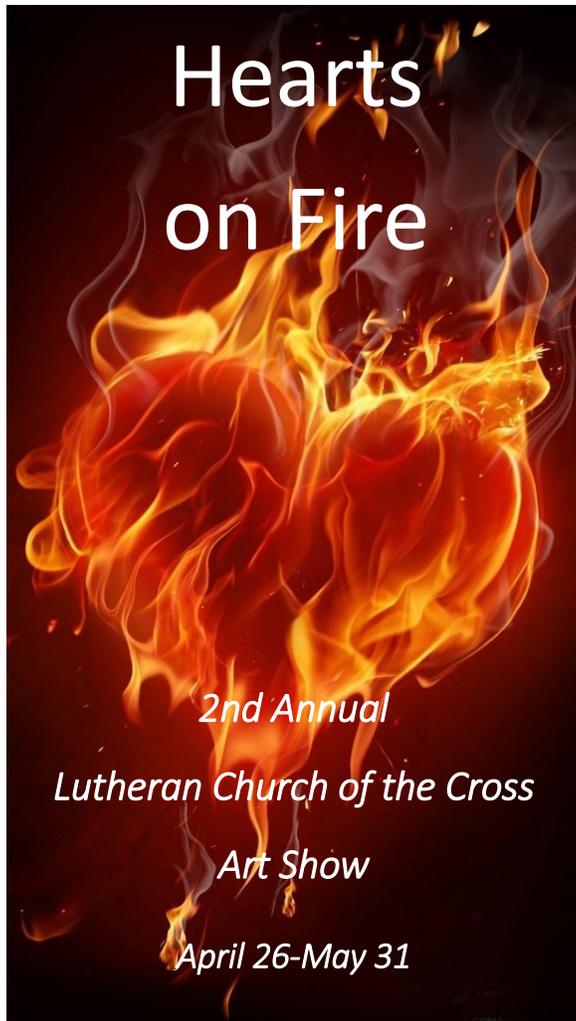
Gathered by God to worship and grow.  
Empowered by Spirit to love and care for each other  
Living Christ’s love by witnessing to all.

### Vision

To be a vibrant and growing congregation unified in sharing  
the love of Christ through words and actions.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Church of the Cross Art Show

### *Call for submissions*



On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose triumphant from the grave. He conquered sin, violence, and death, proving LOVE cannot be killed. On Saturday his friends thought they would never see him again, but on Sunday he met them on the road to Emmaus and their hearts were set on fire.

*See the full story in Luke 24:13-35.*

• As you create art for our annual show, engage these questions:

- *What do you love about your church?*
- *What do you love about your life?*
- *How has God set your heart on fire?*
- *How is love changing your world?*

Parents, help your kids think about how Jesus living in our hearts changes everything...and talk to them about what they might create for the show.

#### **Submission guidelines**

All art is due in the office by Sunday April 19

Label the back (or underside) with your name

Are you under 18? *Submit no more than 5 pieces*

Are you 18 or older? *Submit 1 piece only*

**Show opening: April 26   Show closing: May 31**

## A School for Love

*The following is the daily devotion for Friday, January 3, 2020 from the Center for Action and Contemplation . It is part of that week's theme, "An Evolving Faith." As we ponder as a congregation what it looks like to be the Church in these changing times, Brian McLaren is a voice for a new vision for congregational life called "Emerging Christianity.) Website: [cac.org/category/daily-meditations/](http://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/)*

*Today, friend and CAC faculty member Brian McLaren continues describing the three shifts Christianity needs to make in order to be true to the vision and mission of Jesus the Christ. Yesterday Brian explained the importance of becoming (1) "decentralized and diverse." Today, he describes the need to be (2) "radically collaborative" and to (3) "love as Jesus taught and embodied." Rather than a top-heavy institution concerned about in-house salvation, the Christianity of the future will place love of God, neighbor, self, and all creation at the center. Brian writes:*

The diverse and decentralized movement we need will be *radically collaborative*, working with, across, and, when necessary, outside of and in spite of existing institutions to seek the common good. It will not be *anti-institutional* because institutions are necessary for human survival, but neither will it be *institutional*, in the sense that it is preoccupied with its own survival or bringing benefits only to its members. Rather, it will be *trans-institutional*, working across institutions, both religious and non-religious, seeking the common good of those inside and outside the movement and the institutions it involves. . . .

The . . . most important aspect of this [new] form of Christianity in the future is simple, obvious, and yet radical: *it is about love, as Jesus taught and embodied* [emphasis mine—RR]. . . .

The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was about love first and foremost, in word and deed. Jesus began with love for God, but inseparably linked that love with love for neighbor [1], with the understanding that neighbor includes the other, the outsider, the outcast, the last, the least, the lost, the disgraced, the dispossessed, and the enemy. This love for neighbor was, in turn, inextricably related to an appropriate love for self. In fact, to love neighbor as oneself leads to the realization that oneself and one's neighbor are actually distinct yet inseparable realities. In today's world, we must add that, for Jesus, God's love extends to the wildflower, the meadow grass, the sparrow, and the raven. He saw all of God's creatures as part of one heavenly realm, as did dear St. Francis, and as do more and more of us.

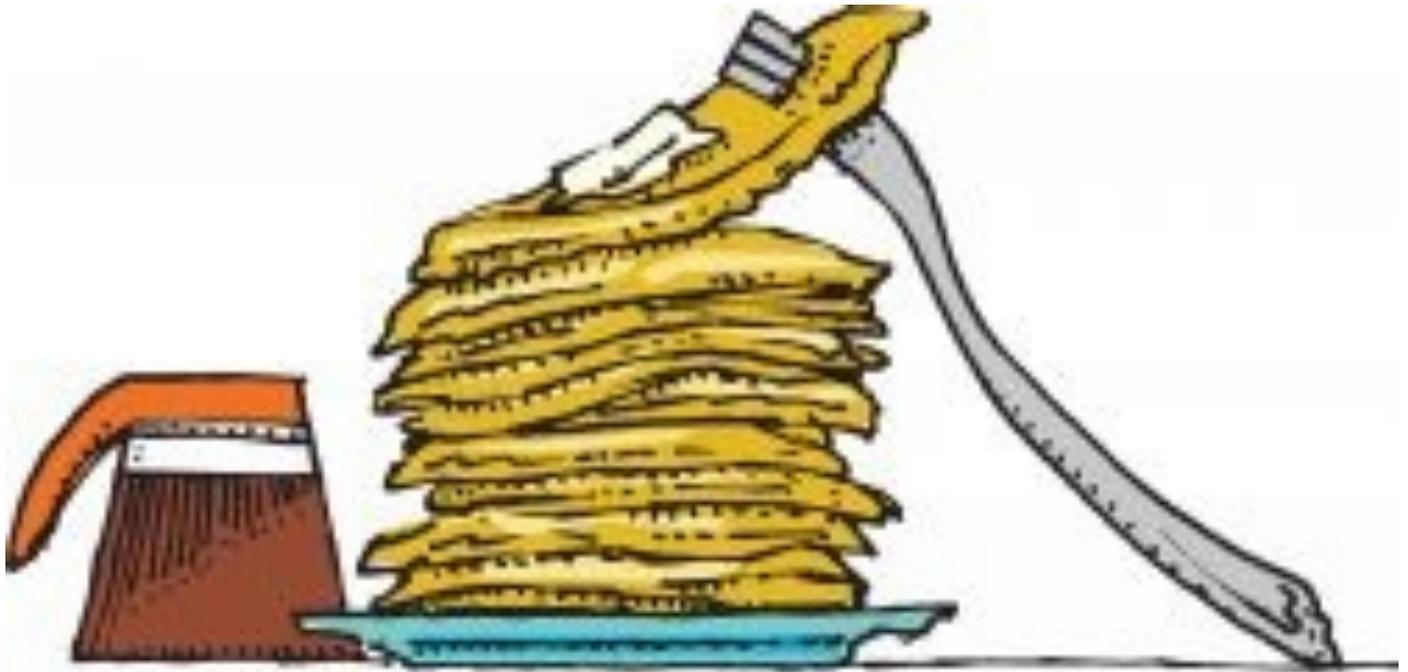
When I think of this [new] kind of Christianity of the future, then, I think of a movement of revolutionary love. I see it as distinctively Christian, but not in any exclusive way, because if we truly see love as Jesus' point and passion, then the depth of our devotion to Christ will always lead us to love our Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Indigenous, nonreligious, agnostic, atheist, and other neighbors *as ourselves*. . . .

In this desirable future, every willing Christian congregation makes every competing interest subsidiary to love, which is the fruit of all contemplation and the goal of all action. If we embody this [emergent] form of Christianity, . . . if we become the seeds of a movement of contemplative activism in the Spirit of Christ, I can imagine hundreds of thousands of congregations, . . . each a locally and globally engaged school of love, teaching future generations to discover, practice, and live in love: love for our neighbor, love for ourselves, love for all creatures and all creation—all comprising love for God, who is all in all in all.

[1] See Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:25-28.

Adapted from Brian D. McLaren, "Three Christianities," "The Future of Christianity," [Oneing, vol. 7, no. 2](#) (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2019), 73, 75-76.

# LEAD ... love God with all your heart



# SHROVE TUESDAY

Tuesday, February 25 - 6 pm



# LEAD ... love God with all your heart



## Canadian Lutheran Cause of the month for February World Relief C.L.W.R.

Our annual **PANCAKE SUPPER** will be held on Shrove Tuesday, February 25th at 6:00 p.m. A free will offering will be received with proceeds going to C.L.W.R. Join us for pancakes, desserts and fun games!



SHROVE TUESDAY



SHROVE TUESDAY



SHROVE TUESDAY

### BRINGING IN THE NEW YEAR!

On Wednesday morning, January 1st, thirteen volunteers showed up to make sandwiches for the Drop-In Center. More than 1200 buns were prepared and delivered by approximately 9:00 a.m.



# LEAD ... love God with all your heart

## THANK YOU for helping change lives in 2019! Because of your support...

### 113,699

people in need received life-saving assistance following emergencies like Cyclone Idai.

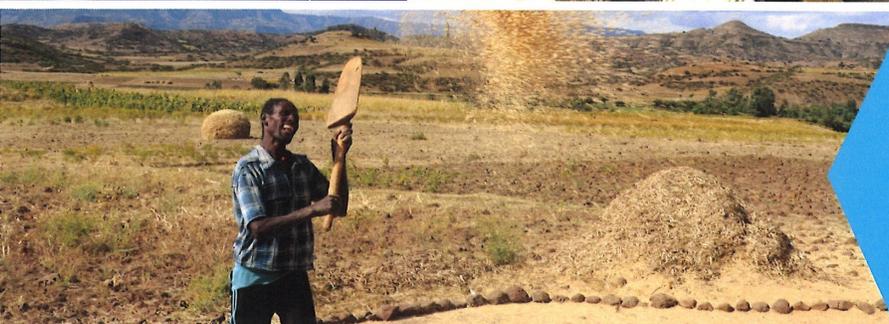


### 104

refugee families, like Wisal and her children, found new homes in Canada.

### 12,589

quilts & blankets were shipped to places like Cameroon, where they were given to Nigerian refugees.



### 2,200

farming families received agricultural training and support to combat food insecurity and feed their families.

**This wouldn't be possible without you!**  
Thank you for your partnership.



Canadian Lutheran  
World Relief

# LEAD ... love God with all your mind



Study 1 & 2 Corinthians Wednesday mornings 9:30-11:30 with Pastor Laura.

We start with coffee and conversation, then explore the text in its cultural context and its relevance to our lives.

We meet in the North Meeting Room. All are welcome!



# LEAD ... love God with all your soul

## Hospital Visitor Training Course



Are you interested in becoming a hospital or care facility visitor? Join in on Saturday, February 8, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Matthew Lutheran Church Basement 66-7th St. NE. Bring a bag lunch. Sponsored by Lutheran Hospital Ministries-Southern Alberta. There is no fee. Contact Pastor Mark Lobitz at [mclobitz@gmail.com](mailto:mclobitz@gmail.com) or 403-637-2650.

Thanks & Blessings!

Pastor Mark Lobitz

LHMSA



February 9th @ 7 pm

St. James Anglican Church

6351 Ranchview Dr. NW

# LEAD ... love God with all your soul

## FOR THE JOURNEY



REFRESHING CHRISTIAN FAITH AND SPIRITUAL  
TRADITION FOR THE WEARY AND THE WARY

RETREAT WITH  
**STEVE BELL**

FRIDAY MARCH 13 | 7:30PM - 9:00PM  
SATURDAY MARCH 14 | 9:00AM - 3:30PM



VARSIY BIBLE CHURCH | 4807 VALIANT DR. NW, CALGARY

**COST**  
\$99 EARLYBIRD  
\$129 AFTER FEB. 21

**REGISTRATION (Seating is limited)**  
ONLINE: [www.stevebell.com](http://www.stevebell.com)  
MAIL: Signpost Music | 1578 Erin St | Winnipeg, MB | R3E 2T1

Registration  
forms are  
available in  
the narthex

OR

Register  
online at

[www.  
stevebell.com](http://www.stevebell.com)

Four sessions including  
*Trinity, Worship as Journey, the Story that  
Forms Us and Psalms,  
Saints & Ancient  
Prayers.*

# LEAD ... love God with all your soul



## Women's Ministry is transforming

It's a new decade for Women's Ministry at Church of the Cross!



We are planning something new, something exciting – and we want **YOU** to be part of it!

Some highly valued qualities of our monthly Women's gatherings are:

- the spiritual aspect - studying the Bible, with discussions from a woman's perspective.
- the fellowship and trust that grows over time as we share cares and concerns with each other.

We desire to build on these qualities with the addition of a service aspect – to make home visits to some of our members who are older or unable to get out much.

We plan to invite guest speakers on issues relating to women.

Activities and outings may also take place from time to time in lieu of a regular Bible Study session.

**COMING on Saturday, February 22, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at Lutheran Church of the Cross**

(north meeting room) - **an informal study on the Fruit of the Spirit.....LOVE**

Please drop in and join us! – no preparation is required.

This promises to be a fun year – you won't want to miss it!

For further information please contact any of the following:  
Hilary Gray, Laurie Hansen, Marilyn Jonasson, or Judy Shore-Isford

# LEAD ... love God with all your soul

## "Exploring the Affirming Faith Library"

### BE MY love - by Kit Pearson

Be My love is the third book in a trilogy by one of Canada's finest YA authors.

The year is 1951 and life has started to settle after the upheaval of the war. For fourteen-year-old Maisie, though, her world is turning upside down. Her father, who was a chaplain in the Netherlands during the war has returned, but is like a stranger. One of Maisie's close male friends has stopped speaking to her, and when she leaves her home in Duncan B.C. for her annual visit to her grandparents on Kingfisher Island, the "best friend" she is looking forward to seeing again has suddenly turned into a teenager with sophisticated new clothes and a crush on a boy.

Maisie has no interest in clothes, and movie stars, and hairstyles and as the distance between her and Una grows, she tries to win back her friend and almost destroys the friendship in the process.

This is a novel about self-discovery. Maisie is bewildered by her feelings for Una that go beyond simple friendship, and finally finds peace and confidence in who she is. The story is also about trust, and honesty and truth and the danger of secrets.

Kit Pearson sets the historical context beautifully and the time period enriches the story. These were times when homosexuality was never mentioned and not open to discussion in the context of families. Maisie is a beautifully developed character, with an inner life that the author explores with tenderness.

There are hard questions answered and the complexity of the story brings a subtlety that is often hard to find in YA novels dealing with the tough subject of sexual discovery.

This is a book I recommend highly for young people around twelve years and older, but also for the adult audience.

Reviewed by Betty Jane Hegerat

### two boys kissing - by david leviathan

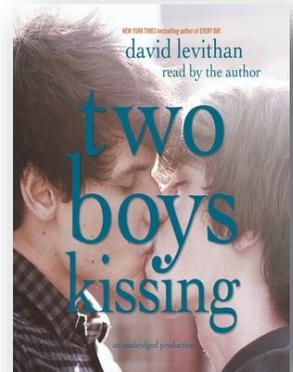
This is a story about two boys kissing, striving to set the world's record for the longest kiss. In fact, it is about seven boys and it takes place in the short space of 48 hours. There are omniscient narrators who come in and out like a Greek chorus. These are the voices of gay men from another era, men who died of AIDS

Harry and Craig want to set the world record for the longest kiss. The kiss happens on the grounds of the school they attend because they want their action to make a statement about homosexuality and homophobia. Ryan and Avery meet at a gay prom. Peter and Neil have been a couple long enough to be known, and Cooper is in a desperate struggle to make sense of his sexuality.

This book is unique in its structure and initially I found it challenging because of the nameless voices weaving in and out. The seven boys could be boys I know today. The "voices" are men I knew in the 70s and mourned.

two boys kissing was written for a young adult audience, appropriate I think for 13 years and older. It is a book I would highly recommend to both teen and adult book clubs, for the discussion it could generate. It is my hope that we will have a chance at LCOC for such a group discussion.

Reviewed by Betty Jane Hegerat



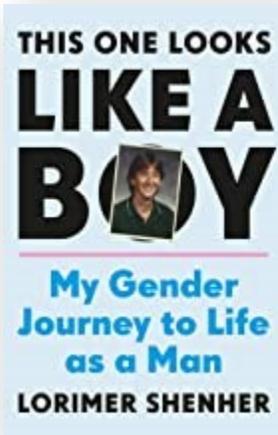
## BOOK REVIEWS

# LEAD ... love God with all your soul

## AFFIRMING MINISTRY TEAM

### THIS ONE LOOKS LIKE A BOY

**My Gender Journey to Life as a Man - Author: Lorimer Shenher**



Living in Calgary as a young child Lori once told a doctor *“I dreamed I turned into a boy. I’m supposed to be a boy, but I’m not. Not on the outside.”* Lorimer shares his story of growing up with gender dysphoria in a girl’s body. He describes his paternal grandmother looking at all her grandchildren while singling him out, saying *“Look at this one! This one looks like a boy!”* Lori wondered why only his grandmother could see this and the rest of the world could not.

Lori denied his true gender identity for much of his life, immersing himself in sports and his career. He moved to Vancouver where he became a police detective. Haunted throughout his life, he identified more as male than female but was terrified of what he might lose in life (family, career) by acknowledging he was transgender, especially once he found his life partner. Lorimer Shenher tells a compellingly open story of how he eventually finds relief and acceptance. A memoir that provides a look at the inner struggles of gender transition

and self-acceptance.

Review by Marilyn Jonasson



## SAVE THE DATE

National Affirming Day!

Celebrate PIE Day! on

**March 15, 2020**

Public, Intentional, Explicit



Affirming PIE Day!



[www.pieday.ca](http://www.pieday.ca)

**LEAD**  ... love God with all your **strength**

The **Agape Café** is a 4-course dinner and evening of stories and entertainment celebrating God's love for us and our love for God and each other. The Agape Café supports the ministry interests and needs of young people at Church of the Cross.

**Saturday February 22 at 6 pm,**  
the Agape Café will support  
our youth group as they prepare to  
attend the Canadian Lutheran Youth  
Gathering in August

**cost: free will offering**

*Please RSVP. Let us know if you have any food sensitivities.*

# LEAD ... love God with all your strength

## Lent: A Time of Reflection and Repentance

Relationship with God is every bit as demanding as relationship with a person. If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we really do not deserve the love and grace of God. After all, we gossip. Sometimes, we are mean. We forget the needs of our neighbors as we settle into the comfort of our homes and watch TV. In lots of little ways, we actually move away from God and into our own comfort zones. God desires to move us away from what we know and want into a bigger, more spiritual way of life. (Not to worry, God's way is FULL of the fruit of the spirit! See Galatians 5:22-23!)



As Lent approaches, pray and make room for God. As we hear from the Gospel of Matthew, our Sunday services will focus on acknowledging and relinquishing the things with which we have filled our own lives that are not from God. Our midweek evenings services will focus on hope and healing.

Make worship a central part of your life this Lenten season. You won't be disappointed!

<b>Sundays:</b>	<b>10:00 am</b>
<b>Ash Wednesday:</b>	<b>February 26, 7 pm</b>
<b>Thursdays in Lent:</b>	<b>Soup Supper at 6:30 pm; Service at 7 pm</b>

## Give from your heart

Have you done the spiritual work of determining your yearly offering to God and church? Believe it or not, giving money is a spiritual discipline. It teaches us to set priorities, make hard choices, focus our attention, and align our hearts with God's. Giving forms us as vessels for God's Holy Spirit to be at work in the world. God is creating a congregation of generous people in our midst, people focused on joining God in the work of re-creation. God is leading us on a journey to make all things new and using our resources to make it possible. What are you giving? What can you give? What will you give?

*Work it out with fear and trembling..... (see Philippians 2!)*

Your church community thrives on your giving!



February 2020 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

Since being called to serve as your bishop, October 2012, my prayer has often been the following: *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 forward 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.*

One of the reasons I love this prayer is because it is realistic but encouraging, honest but hopeful. It doesn't deny difficult truths, but neither does it succumb to sterile pessimism. It was written in the first part of the twentieth century by a Church of England priest named Eric Milner-White. Like many good prayers from another time and place, it sounds like it was tailor made for us here and now.

*O God, you have called your servants....* I have seen so many signs of hope in these few years of serving as your bishop, not just in projects and initiatives and ideas, but in our people:

- in the faithful and dedicated rostered ministers, who are a gift to us all;
- in the diligent and committed staff and officers of the Synod, who it is a joy to work with on a daily and weekly basis, who love the Synod and serving it;
- in the lay leaders of this Synod, serving in various and multitude capacities;
- in the faithful people who hold no particular office or position, but who form the faithful backbone, week after week, that is the body of Christ in the ABT Synod.

You are all not only living, breathing signs of hope, but you also have my profound thanks for all that you do, and it is my privilege to serve with and among you.

A complete two-page report for Congregational Annual General Meetings, together with our Synod's 2020 Narrative Budget is available at: <https://albertasynod.ca/2019/12/2020-abt-synod-agm-letter-and-narrative-budget/>

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

*"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)*

# February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <b>Cause of the Month</b>  <b>CLWR</b> </div>						<b>1</b> Men's Breakfast - 8 am SWCG - 4 pm
<b>2</b> Bible Study - 9 am Worship - 10 am BLAST <b>AGM - following worship</b> SWCG - 1 - 3 pm	<b>3</b> Kodaly - 9:15 am Office Open Kodaly - 4 pm Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9	<b>4</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> Coffee @ Tim Hortons - 10 am <b>NO CONFIRMATION</b>	<b>5</b> Sandwich Making - 7:30 am <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> AHS Caregivers - 1:30 Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9	<b>6</b> Quilting - 9 am Kodaly - 10 am - 2:45 pm <b>NO CHOIR</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Office Closed</b> SWCG—7 pm	<b>8</b> <b>Choir - 1 - 3 pm</b> SWCG - 4 pm
<b>9</b> Bible Study - 9 am Worship - 10 am BLAST SWCG - 1 - 3 pm	<b>10</b> Kodaly - 9:15 am Staff Mtg. - 10:15 am Kodaly - 4 pm Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9	<b>11</b> Coffee @ Tim Hortons - 10 am Confirmation - 5 pm Brene Brown Workshop - 7 pm	<b>12</b> Bible Study - 9:30 am Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9 SWCG—7 pm	<b>13</b> Quilting - 9 am Kodaly - 10 am - 2:45 pm Choir - 7:15 pm	<b>14</b> <b>Office Closed</b> SWCG—7 pm 	<b>15</b> SWCG - 4 pm
<b>16</b> Bible Study - 9 am Worship - 10 am BLAST SWCG - 1 - 3 pm	<b>17</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> <b>FAMILY DAY</b>	<b>18</b> Coffee @ Tim Hortons - 10 am Confirmation - 5 pm - <b>MENTOR NIGHT</b>	<b>19</b> Bible Study - 9:30 am Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9 SWCG—7 pm Council Mtg. - 7 pm	<b>20</b> Quilting - 9 am Kodaly - 10 am - 2:45 pm Choir - 7:15 pm	<b>21</b> <b>Office Closed</b> <b>Set up for AGAPE Cafe</b> SWCG—7 pm	<b>22</b> Women's Ministry - 10 am SWCG - 4 pm AGAPE Café - 6 pm
<b>23</b> Bible Study - 9 am Worship - 10 am BLAST Showcase SWCG - 1 - 4 pm AA District Mtg. - 5 - 9	<b>24</b> Kodaly - 9:15 am Staff Mtg. - 10:15 am Kodaly - 4 pm Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9	<b>25</b> Coffee @ Tim Hortons - 10 am <b>Shrove Tuesday Pancake supper - 6 pm</b>	<b>26</b> Bible Study - 9:30 am Cantare Children's Choir - 6-9 SWCG—7 pm Ash Wed. worship - 7	<b>27</b> Quilting - 9 am Kodaly - 10 am - 2:45 pm Choir - 7:15 pm	<b>28</b> <b>Office Closed</b> SWCG—7 pm	<b>29</b> Cantare Workshop 8 am - 5 pm SWCG - 5 PM <b>Cooking with Turkish women</b>
<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px;">           Dianne is on vacation for the <b>entire month of Feb.</b> Thank you to Jean Dacko for working in the church office.         </div>			<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px;">           Pastor Phil &amp; Pastor Laura will be attending the Annual Pastors Study Conference in Canmore from <b>Feb. 3 - 6.</b> Catherine is away that week also, attending a "Musician in Residence" in Banff.         </div>			