



Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #478

May 19, 2020

Seventh Sunday of Easter (May 24, 2020)



In today's readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples were told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

Readings

- [Acts 1:1-11](#) - *Jesus sends the apostles*
- [Psalm 47](#) - *God has gone up with a shout. (Ps. 47:5)*
- [Ephesians 1:15-23](#) - *Eyes to see the risen and ascended Christ*
- [Luke 24:44-53](#) - *Christ present in all times and places*

Why Do You Stand Looking Up Toward Heaven?

We often cast our eyes upward to look for God. When we are feeling lonely or misunderstood, we raise our hands to ask why, or shake our fists in gestures of prayer, anguish, or praise. While the scriptures promise that God is king of all the earth, sitting on his holy throne (Psalm 47), we need not only look up for God's action in our lives. Our ascended Lord lives in the heavens, but Jesus does not leave his disciples—or us—to fumble while he naps in the clouds. Before he ascends, Jesus promises that we are clothed with the Holy Spirit's power, witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" the two men in white robes asked the witnesses remaining after Jesus ascended. Why do we stand still in our lives? Is it that we just saw God (Look! Up there! Did you see?), so we expect God to arrive in the same way again? Can God be that expected and predictable? This story of Jesus ascending to the heavens after his time with us on earth gives us mixed feelings: we know he's returning to where he belongs—out of this world full of brokenness and sin to holiness and glory. Still, our longing is intense: Lord, we want to see you! How will we know it is you when you come again?

Ascension Day could be explained as the cynical "I'm outta here" of a God weary of us self-centered, broken humans, but that explanation would be short-sighted because it leaves out the important stop on the cross. Instead, Jesus' departure is accompanied with the promise of the Spirit's presence remaining among us. We look up to the skies for help, then return our gaze to those among us in need of our care, to the body of Christ and the wind of the Spirit among the baptized, preparing for the time when Jesus comes again to gather us in.

Responding to Racism, anti-Semitism, White Supremacy, Sexism...

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forward many examples of heroes caring for others and helping to maintain basic functions for all of us in these difficult times. We give thanks for the health care workers, those who are deemed essential workers who keep our food supplies coming and many other functions operating. Unfortunately the ills of society also come out. The church has spoken out against these evils and reminds us to be participants working for the good of society.

[Click here](#) for Bishop Eaton's letter reminding us that "to work for racial and economic justice for all people is work for all of us. We are church together."

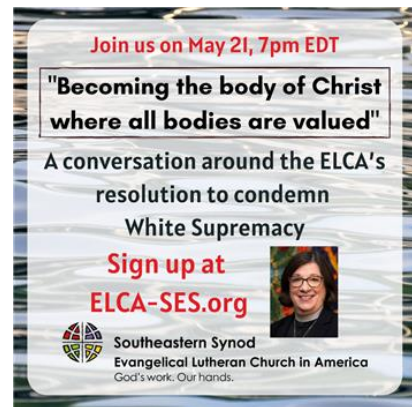
Anti-Semitism has recently reared its ugly head at rallies in Illinois. Bishop Eaton has joined The Rev. John Roth - Bishop, Central/Southern Illinois Synod, The Rev. Yehiel Curry - Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod and The Rev. Jeffrey Clements - Bishop, Northern Illinois Synod in a joint letter decrying the situation. [Click here](#) for a copy of their joint letter.

[Webinar: Becoming the Body of Christ](#)

Join Bishop Kevin Strickland of the Southeastern Synod, ELCA, on **Thursday, May 21st 7-8:30pm EDT** for a conversation around **"Becoming the body of Christ where all bodies are valued: A conversation around the ELCA's resolution to condemn White Supremacy."** Bishop Strickland will be joined by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Other speakers joining our bishops will be: Pastor Tiffany Chaney, Pastor Ron Bonner, Ms. Roxann Thompson, Ms. Judith Roberts, Pastor Matt Steinhauer, and more.

[Click here to register.](#)

(NOTE: THIS WEBINAR WILL BE RECORDED and posted here on this page by Saturday, May 23.)



LDR - SITUATION REPORT 5 - COVID-19 PANDEMIC

SITUATION: As of May 17, over 4.5 million people have been infected and over 307,000 people have lost their lives due to the rapid spread of COVID19. The pandemic is affecting all aspects of life for people across the globe.

RESPONSE: Lutheran Disaster Response is supporting partners around the world during this time. Since January 2020, LDR-International has contributed over \$1.1 million in 26 countries in response to the pandemic.

- In Hungary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary is providing COVID-19 antibody test kits to test parishioners and staff. Staff and residents of church-run facilities and schools will be tested as needed.
- In India, Padhar Hospital will be able to better treat their COVID-19 patients through the purchase of a ventilator and multiparameter monitors.
- In Liberia, the Lutheran Church of Liberia is collaborating with the Christian Health Association of Liberia to provide medical supplies for hospitals and health centers throughout the country. In addition, they will provide counseling and distribute food to those affected by the pandemic.
- In Mexico, LDR is contributing to Grupo de Trabajo Mexico to support Casa del Migrante de Saltillo in providing food kits for migrants. Additionally, informational brochures will be delivered to these families and a sanitation tunnel will be installed at the migrant house.
- In Malawi, the Evangelical Lutheran Development Services and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi are conducting awareness campaigns and training Community Health Change Agents. Additionally, local artisans will be trained in making masks, sanitation supplies, and handwashing stations.
- LDR is contributing to the Church World Service's "Emergency Appeal: Coronavirus Response Fund". This will support CWS global relief and development activities, including distributing food and hygiene kits and assisting education programs. Migrants and refugees are among the populations targeted with this campaign.

Be a part of the response:

Pray

Please pray for people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. May God's healing presence give them peace and hope in their time of need.

Give

Thanks to generous donations, Lutheran Disaster Response is able to respond quickly and effectively to disasters around the globe. Your [gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response](#) (General Fund) will be used where they are most needed.

Connect

To learn more about the situation and the ELCA's response:

- Sign up to receive Lutheran Disaster Response [alerts](#).
- Check the Lutheran Disaster Response [blog](#).
- Like Lutheran Disaster Response on [Facebook](#) and follow @ELCALDR on [Twitter](#).
- Download the situation report as a [PDF](#).

SITUATION REPORT - APRIL 6, 2020 TANZANIA

On January 18, 2020, heavy flooding began in the Lindi Region of Tanzania. Throughout March and April, continuous rains worsened the floods. More than 35,900 residents lost their homes and farms and 5,000 hectares of crops were destroyed. Infrastructure, such as water and sewage systems and roads, was also damaged. A state of emergency has been declared in the region as residents struggle for food and shelter.

RESPONSE: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is assisting families affected by the floods. With the support of Lutheran Disaster Response, food, mosquito nets, and tents will be distributed to participants. Communities will be provided with fruit tree seedlings as barriers for future floods. Workshops educating families on environmental conservation and protection in order to mitigate environmental destruction in the area are also being planned.

What you can do

Contribute to Lutheran Disaster Response (give where needed most) .

Pray

Let us pray for the people who have been affected by the flooding in Tanzania. May God's healing presence give them peace and hope in their time of need.

Connect:

Share our posts on your social media sites and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Coming Events: We look forward to the day we can again meet in person

	Event/Activity	Resources
Postponed to Oct.3	Mission Moments - 33rd Annual Synod Assembly of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Tinley Park Convention Center	For more information visit http://www.mcselca.org/assembly/
August 8-13, 2022.	2022 Churchwide Assembly Columbus, OH at the Greater Columbus Convention Center	For more information check www.elca.org

If you have stories of things your congregation is doing to help address our current challenges please send them to me (mic@mcselca.org) and we can share them through future issues of the Memo and on our Facebook page.