



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I have just returned from our synod's convocation for rostered leaders [pastors and deacons], I want to thank you for sending me for three days of worship, learning and fellowship. I value this brief Sabbath each year as it gives me an opportunity to sing my heart out. I especially look forward to the taize healing service. If that singing is a foretaste to come, I'm looking forward to life with the choirs of angels singing day and night 😊! Each year we learn from a leading theologian, usually a Lutheran, and have hours of fellowship sprinkled in the schedule. It is time for us to be still and know that God is God and God's in charge. We rostered leaders are servants of God called to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Actually, All baptized are called to be servants of God.

Our keynote speaker this year was The Rev. Dr. Anna Madsen, who helped us see the theology [theo= God, logy= study] of Christians from new perspectives. As she was talking about her studies in Germany, my mind wandered back to my first visit to Germany. I was traveling with a group of NATO troops and their families for a week of skiing in the Alps. I was excited to be in the land of Luther and kept looking for a Lutheran church. But no Lutheran church was found. A chaplain was with our group, so I asked him why there were no Lutheran congregations. He explained that we were in the heart of Roman Catholic country, so Lutheran churches were scarce, and that the Lutheran churches were identified as *Evangelische*. You see, Luther's early followers were not identified as Lutherans. That name was used by Luther's opponents as a putdown.

This brings us to politics in our nation today. When we hear someone identified as an evangelical, we usually think of the conservative right political party which talks about moral issues such as gun control, abortion, immigration etc. and not about the good news of Jesus Christ. The ELCA does have social statements on such issues. Check under social statements on the ELCA website. The root of evangelical is the Greek word for good news. Evangelical connotes the unimaginable good news that there is **nothing** we can do to earn our way into heaven. Many Christians believe that our good works gets us into heaven. **We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.** Salvation is a gift through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although we cannot earn our way into heaven, we have the 10 commands given to guide our relationship with God and with one another. Although we cannot earn our way into heaven, as a response for this gift of salvation, we can serve God and one another. The good news is free, a gift from God and is forever. That, folks, is GOOD NEWS

A spiritual explains salvation this way: So low you can't get under it, so high you can't get over out, so wide you can't get around it, you must get in through the door. The door of faith in Jesus Christ is the key to our salvation. As many of Mark's healing accounts reminds us, "Your faith has made you well, made you free, saved you." AMEN

Shalom,

Pastor Bev +