



OUR MISSION: Empower, equip and encourage the people of God to make Christ known

Can we talk?

- Joan Rivers

Sometimes I wonder whether we have lost the ability to talk. I don't mean the ability to form and speak words. I mean the ability to talk – really talk – with others.



Think about all the “conversations” about race, politics, or religion that you have heard or participated in recently, on TV, at public meetings, in church, on Facebook. It appears to me that, on the whole, we are pretty good at making demands, spewing projectile perspectives, yelling, interrupting, accusing, labeling, and making sweeping assertions about whole groups of people or about how the world ought to work. But we are not very good at conversing, especially when the stakes are high. At least, I don't hear much genuine conversation going on around the very difficult issues we face together as the body of Christ and in the world, issues like racial tension, violence, politics, religious perspectives, sexual identity, even the future of the church.

In her wise and important book, **Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies**, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre reminds us that “To ‘converse’ originally meant to live among or together, or to act together, to foster community, to commune with...When we converse, we act together toward a common end, and we act upon one another...Indeed, conversation is...a way of building and sustaining community.”¹

If we are going to find a way forward through these challenging times somebody needs to create spaces in our life together for genuine, careful, caring, honest, mutually-honoring conversation, the sort of conversation that changes the participants and builds and sustains community toward a common good, rather than tearing it apart in a wrestling match over who will get their way, over whose perspective or interest or power will dominate the day.

Of all people, we who have been marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with his Spirit ought to be able to engage and create space for this sort of conversation. After all, trust in the grace of God made known in Jesus who is our forgiveness, love, and hope frees us to go deep into the sorts of paradox, ambiguity and pain that so often give rise to fear and angry imposition of hardline demands. We who rest in

amazing grace and walk in the way of the cross are able to face hard, harsh truths about the brokenness and sinfulness of life – together – and to lead the way in our human search for life-giving paths forward.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.

[2 Corinthians 5:18-20; NRSV]

This sort of conversation is neither natural nor easy. In many ways, it's quite countercultural. It involves deep listening to the other, listening at the risk of being changed, not listening in order to find a hole in an argument or a target for rebuttal. Community building conversation that moves to action calls each participant to honest sharing of their experience or perspective in a non-judgmental environment that honors each and is committed to working together for the common good. It's walking, or rather, talking in the way of the cross, trusting that there really is “one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” [Ephesians 4:6; NRSV]

How might we create space for this sort of conversation in our families, our neighborhoods, and our congregations this fall? How might your book group or Bible study or youth meetings or congregation council or committee meetings be different if genuine conversation about difficult issues were to become a high priority? What if we all looked around our congregations, communities, and workplaces for people who are different from us or who hold perspectives different from ours and invited them into genuine and sustained conversation about the very things about which we differ? Such conversation certainly won't remedy all the challenges, divisions, and injustices that we face. But I do suspect that, with McEntyre, we'd discover “conversation that discloses us to one another and brings us into relationship that reaffirms our common dependencies and our importance to each other. Like prayer, good conversation fashions words into vessels that carry living water.”²

+Bishop Bill Gafkjen

1 Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 89.

2 McEntyre, 110.

Professional Leaders Conference



Clifty Falls State Park
September 25 - 27, 2016
RECONCILIATION:
Dare We Speak of It?

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod Professional Leaders Conference is an annual event - the one time each year when the rostered leaders (clergy, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers) have an opportunity to relax and to foster their collegial relationships. It is a time for conversation about leadership, ministry, and their personal lives. The speaker this year will be the Rev Dr Allan Boesak.

Dr Allan Boesak is professor of theology at Christian Theological Seminary and the Desmond Tutu Chair of Peace, Global Justice and Reconciliation Studies. Born in South Africa, his early activism and service led to international recognition as an influential leader in the fight against apartheid. During the 1980s he worked alongside Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela to lead efforts against apartheid and promote reconciliation.. You may register for the Professional Leaders Conference by [clicking here](#) or by visiting the I-K Synod website at iksynod.org.

Hey Youth! Join Us for Bishop's Day

On October 29, 2016, all high school youth and their adult leaders from the IK Synod are invited to attend Bishop Day, a new endeavor sponsored by the Indiana Youth Coalition designed to connect today's youth with Bishop Bill Gafkjen through worship, fellowship and team building activities. The 10 am to 3 pm event will be hosted at Christ the Savior Lutheran Church in Fishers, IN, and will include lunch.

"Christ the Savior is thrilled to host this Bishop's Day with the youth of our synod," said Rev. Brian Derrer, Senior Pastor at Christ the Savior Lutheran Church. "We understand part of our mission to be faith formation for every generation, and are so excited to see Bishop Gafkjen connect with young people."

Registration will open soon. Questions can be directed to Nicole Sinderson, Director of Youth and Family Ministry at Christ the Savior Lutheran Church, at nsinders@christthesavior.org



Till All Are Fed

ELCA World Hunger stands ready to help your congregation to develop, support or expand your hunger ministries. Resources for planning a food drive, creating a community garden, involving youth and Sunday School in hunger projects - all are available at www.elca.org/hunger. Questions about resources? Contact Mary Anderson, IK Synod Hunger Ambassador, at mm.anderson3600@gmail.com.

Bread for the World, in cooperation with Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, is hosting a special event entitled "Changing the World 101: Ending Hunger." on two consecutive Saturdays, September 10th & 17th from 8:30-5:00 at Christian Theological Seminary (1000 W. 42nd St, Indianapolis) The cost is \$350 (*scholarship support is available*).

The facilitators are Dr. Matthew Boulton, CTS President & Professor of Theology, and Dr. David Miner, Board Chair Emeritus, Bread for the World.

Topics of Discussion: God's provision of abundance for all; Root Causes: prevalence & impact of hunger; Current progress toward ending hunger; Theology of Christian Advocacy; Practical approaches to advocacy; Issues related to ending hunger: economics, climate change, immigration, incarceration, and more! To Register: Contact Mike Hastings at 317-496-8028 (m484@aol.com) or Dave Miner at 317-691-7438 (dminer145@aol.com).



New ELCA Federal Credit Union

The ELCA Federal Credit Union celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony June 6 at its headquarters in the Lutheran Center in Chicago. The credit union serves ELCA members, synod employees, congregations and ELCA-related ministries. It is the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer individual consumer loans. Because credit unions are not-for-profit organizations, earnings are returned to members/owners in the form of lower rates on loans, higher rates on savings, reduced fees and enhanced services. "This is responsible stewardship," said Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton at the ribbon cutting. "It makes services available to everyone. The ELCA Credit Union is socially responsible and is a great benefit not only to members of the ELCA churchwide organization but to all our members across the church." Visit the ELCA website for more details.