

Pentecost 2008

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we are all baptized into one body...”*

*1 Corinthians 12:12-13a*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for the call you have extended to me to serve as the fourth bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod. I ask for your continuing prayers as I prepare to work with you in this new call beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, and for your prayers for Bishop David Mullen as he finishes his term of office and begins his retirement that same week.

Here’s an update on what will be happening immediately before and after I begin serving as your bishop:

- + Bishop Mullen and I have already begun the process of working together to provide for a smooth transition and to ensure continuity in providing for the needs of the congregations, called leaders, and agencies of our synod.
- + I will be traveling to Chicago the third week of June for “baby bishop’s school” where at least eight other newly elected bishops will be joining me in learning more about this call to serve in the wider church.
- + Bishop Dean Nelson from the Southern California West Synod will consult with me to offer advice and counsel, serving in the role of a “mentor bishop.” In mid-May, I will attend the So. Cal. West Synod Assembly to observe his leadership and to learn about other models for synod assemblies. After Bishop Nelson begins his sabbatical in June, bishops Murray Finck, Steve Talmage and Allan Bjornberg will be available for consultation as needed.
- + I understand that my election is hardly a “mandate” -- there is a wide array of sensibilities in the Sierra Pacific Synod on issues of sexuality, ecclesiology, social issues and the priorities of our shared mission. I ask for your prayers and your patience as I work my way into this calling; for your grace when I make an inevitable misstep, for your honest, direct feedback where we disagree, and for your prayers that God’s Spirit will empower and enable me in this calling to serve as bishop for all the people of this synod.

During my first few months of service as bishop, I will:

- + begin moving about in northern Nevada and northern California to meet with called leaders and with congregational leaders and continue the dialogue that was begun through the Synod Profile, Synod Audit and Listening Post processes.

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- + visit the congregations and agencies that are living out the calling of Jesus to minister to “the least of these” – places where the call of Matthew 25 is being lived out with all the energy and creativity and passion called for in these times, and communicate the stories of these ministries to the synod at large.
- + visit with congregations and called leaders whose financial support for the synod has waned over the years, as well as those whose financial support for the synod has increased. I will communicate with called leaders and congregations as they begin planning for their 2009 allocations for mission and ministry (budgets), and encourage a synod-wide conversation about the importance of called and congregational leaders who tithe, and congregational tithing to the larger church.
- + address the question of the location, structure and organization of the synod office, along with the staffing questions which are before us, including the question of locating staff in satellite offices placed around the synod, in consultation with the Synod Council.
- + begin working with Lutheran Social Services of Northern California, Lutheran Domestic Disaster Response of the E.L.C.A., the California and Nevada Offices of Emergency Services and other agencies to create a synod-wide disaster preparedness plan, so that the synod office, congregations and agencies within our synod can provide emergency assistance to people in the communities they serve, even if their facilities have been damaged or are unusable in the wake of an earthquake, fire, flood or other natural or human initiated disaster.
- + shamelessly borrow ideas from other bishops, synods, congregations, and agencies to accomplish any or all of the above goals for our ministry.

Your presence and/or your prayers are requested for the Service of Installation that has been set for Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m. at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sacramento. Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson will serve as Presider and Preacher for this service. More information about this service will be sent to you in the coming weeks. Finally, I leave you with three things that have been helpful “moments of grace” for me in this time of transition:

- + finding a kitchen with ants and a lawn in need of mowing on our return home from the synod gathering (realizing that life goes on)
- + e-mails and phone calls and letters from many of you and from the bishops of other synods, including greetings from those who were recently elected, assuring me that the “buzz” in my head will eventually go away (the blessing of collegiality)
- + a four-year-old from my congregation, who, having been told I was elected bishop and would be leaving soon, greeted me the next week with the words, “What are *you* still doing here?” (the gift of direct, unfettered dialogue)

May God’s grace be with us as we move forward in ministry together.

Peace,



Pr. Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop-elect  
Sierra Pacific Synod, E.L.C.A.