

BISHOP'S MESSAGE FOR JULY 2007

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I write I am in Indiana, visiting with my wife's mother, Gretchen, on the occasion of her eighty-fifth birthday. There was a birthday gathering in the Lutheran Seniors' Residence where Gretchen lives and more than a hundred people were in attendance, many of whom were older than Gretchen. In fact, Gretchen as the baby of her family has four surviving siblings older than her. It was a joyous gathering, celebrated by a community of positive, supportive and caring seniors. It was both a delight and an education to be a guest at this birthday party. When all is said and done, I will have lived in this seniors' community for some ten days and I can say now that the experience is a good one.

What I have had confirmed for me is the vital importance of being part of a caring Christian community all through life, but particularly as one ages, maintaining old friendships and making new ones, practicing what Luther called the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters in Christ. Blest be the tie that binds! In my pastoral experience, I have also seen how aging seniors fare in the absence of long term caring and supportive relationships, and the outcome is not nearly as positive. Truly we have been created to be people for others and that truth does not change as we reach old age. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus wrote of the early Christians – see how they love one another! I see that being lived out in this community of the aging.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write these words from the Lord's heart to us – Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you (Is. 46).

I am reminded of the excellent Christian care and the culture of mutual support being created and sustained in the long term care and assisted living communities in our Synod. I am also reminded of the many chaplains and volunteers who are instrumental in creating and sustaining that environment. I invite you to remember them and their ministries before the Lord with thanksgiving this summer.

And once again, Gretchen – Happy Birthday to you!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada