

Bishop's June Message

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada will be gathering in National Convention later this month on the UBC campus in Vancouver. As has seemed to become standard fare in the months preceding recent National Conventions, tensions heighten as people across the Church wonder what will happen and predict possible resolutions and results. These are not easy days for the ELCIC – they are not easy days for our life together as Church. Issues divide us. We discover that it is not 1986 any longer. Our Church has grown too small for its britches. Re-structuring is the order of the day. Finances are problematic as congregations, Synods and the National Church are trying to achieve economies of scale that maintain and expand the mission with lessening financial and personnel resources. The challenges are great. The institutional suspicion is high. Yet signs of hope abound at the grassroots level. As I visit with congregations and with rostered workers, as I preside at ordinations and consecrations, as I rub shoulders with congregational members formally and informally, I cannot escape the reality that God is mightily at work among us – whether because of us, or in spite of us. This is God's Church! And we are God's people! My vision is good enough to see that far, and that clearly. If these are not easy days for our Church, recognize that these are not easy days for our Church leaders at every level. Henri Nouwen wrote (in *Bread for the Journey*, April 10 entry) that religious leaders can be admired and revered but also hated and despised. We expect religious leaders will bring us closer to God; therefore we watch them carefully and listen to them critically. But we are easily disappointed and even feel betrayed when they prove to be just as human as we are. The switch between admiration and unrestrained anger is easily toggled. Nouwen urges us to “try to love” our religious leaders, forgive them their faults, and see them as brothers and sisters. In so doing, we will enable them to lead us closer to the heart of God. Even as I criticize Church leaders (and am criticized), I pray for them daily. Even as I wrestle with the Church (and am wrestled with), I commend the Church to the Lord daily. I dare to urge you to do the same. Let prayers rise for our Church this month. And may faith inspire this confidence in us, that this Church is the Lord's!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
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