



January 12, 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the British Columbia Synod and the Synod of Alberta and the Territories,

Grace to you and peace in the light of the one who was, who is and who is to come!

Epiphany is a time of revelation, of 'aha' moments that reveal the incarnate nature of God in Christ. Who is this Jesus? What is he about? The stories of the magi, Jesus' baptism, the turning of water into wine reveal moments when the people of the day stopped and glimpsed and experienced God doing something new in this person named Jesus of Nazareth. In these weeks called 'Time after the Epiphany', all who follow Jesus are invited to see and experience the 'new thing' he invites us into again and again through his teaching and healing ministry in the name of God's revelatory love.

We who follow the way of Christ in the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada are also about 'a new thing' that God is doing in our midst, with us and through us. In convention this past summer, our church approved in principle the recommendations of the Structural Renewal Taskforce. No doubt you are aware that one recommendation is to move from a five Synod to a three Synod wider church expression. This means that we of the British Columbia and Alberta and the Territories Synods have the opportunity to merge our two Synods into one. Representatives from each Synod have been exploring and developing the rationale, logistics and implementation of what this endeavour could look like. What follows is a glimpse of our joint committee's work to date, which we ask you to prayerfully study in readiness for discussion, debate and vote at our upcoming Synod conventions this spring.

### **British Columbia and Alberta & the Territories: One Western Synod**

Other than the fact that we have discerned an affectionate nickname for our new Synod (Surf 'N' Turf) it is not known as yet what this one Synod will be called. However, we do anticipate a re-structured Synod that would be better equipped to be *In Mission for Others* by being more flexible, affordable and sustainable as a church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to be.

Structural renewal, by itself, is not a particularly exciting prospect. Some would liken it to re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. The structural renewal proposals seek to take into account the changing demographic realities of our church, as well as to be financially responsible. By working together we can be pro-active with respect to this shift in worship and community patterns.

Further, structural renewal needs to be coupled with and driven by something else. That "something else" is the ELCIC's commitment – confirmed at the Convention in July 2011 – to seek Spiritual renewal. We need to get back to the basics and immerse ourselves in Worship, Prayer, Study, Service, Reading, Giving and Telling. The focus needs to shift from membership to discipleship. We need to create among ourselves an evangelizing culture. With that kind of Spiritual renewal as the driving force, structural renewal that supports a revitalized and revitalizing discipleship is necessary.

The structure of the proposed one western Synod would be the geographical size of our current two Synods. The whole Synod would be divided into three regional areas. Each regional area would contain one large urban centre. Thus we would have the "North Region" including Edmonton; the 'East Region' including Calgary; and the 'West Region' including Vancouver. Within each Region, congregations would be grouped into Areas (for want of a better term) which may be determined by locale or purpose. Areas would be comprised of no less than 8 congregations and no more than 25. These Areas would replace the current Conference configuration.