

We're familiar with words in Carol's reading of 2 Corinthians 13. We use it each Sunday and call it the Apostolic Greeting. It ties us to the first Christians – acknowledging God as our Creator, and us as accountability to God to overflow with grace and love.

It's a three-part blessing naming the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship the Spirit as what makes our life together possible. We say this every Sunday because it matters that we remember Christian faith isn't about what we make possible, but what God does as Creator, Redeemer, Comforter.

Hear it again: “The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.” That's II Cor. 13. We know 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13 as the “love chapter.” This is II Cor. 13. – the Apostolic Greeting – right out of scripture. I love that of our liturgy. It's scripture.

One of the things Carol, Len, Reg, me, and nearly 300 other Lutherans heard at our Synod Assembly these past days is that this repetition in our liturgy appeals to people with some disabilities.

The assembly's preacher this year was Bishop Satterlee of the Michigan Synod. He's legally blind and loves participating in a liturgy he knows by heart. Changing things around too often is hard on people who are blind.

Bishop Satterlee also noted how willing we are to welcome diversity, but don't count the lame, blind, or deaf among our intended outreach.

He acknowledged being hurt 10 years ago when standing next to our former Bishop Guy Erwin being celebrated as the first openly gay Bishop and first ELCA Bishop of Native American descent, and nothing of celebration is made of his election as our first legally blind Bishop.

Guy is a good friend, he said, and it's not about not celebrating Guy, but about how society shies away from lame, blind, and deaf – or doesn't know what to do with them.

Bishop pointed out, for instance, how it may not feel good to people in wheelchairs to keep hearing, “*Stand as you're able.*” They're not able. He knows it's an attempt to be sensitive, but...

So Bishop Brenda corrected herself and said, “Stand if you feel like it” which doesn’t quite work either. We keep trying.

Len is going to invite us to respond to our prayers differently today too. The Bible shows God as a disabled God. When Jesus appeared after the resurrection, he showed his pierced hands and side.

The risen life includes wounds. Jesus wasn’t weeping over them, but the wounds remained. Healing isn’t always curing. Healing is wholeness, sometimes with a cure.

Let’s try saying, “receive our prayer” rather than “hear our prayer” because God is present in the deaf community too. Maybe God speaks sign language rather than “hears,” but God certainly receive our prayer.

Synod Assemblies now have sign language at worship and business sessions. What about LCM considering sign language? Let’s talk about it.

We were applauded at Synod as a congregation now with accessible restrooms. Kudos to LCM! And there’s more we can do, like add railings in the restrooms, and how about a baby change-table out here? We can keep expanding inclusivity.

How wonderful we have ramps and wheelchair accessibility and we provide large print bulletins. We have mics to adjust volumes, etc. We’re off to a good start.

As I sat at the Assembly this year, I was mindful of the image of Trinity – this being Holy Trinity Sunday. The Trinity isn’t celebrated to focus us on doctrine, but on a dance. That’s what we’re called into – a 3-fold dance with God. Trinity is about a relationship we don’t create but we receive.

We’re given the gift of life without asking for it. How many asked to be born? Acknowledging God as our Creator is the first part of the Trinity.

We also don’t have to try to save ourselves. We all fall short – make mistakes. But God doesn’t see us according to our fallenness.

As Julian of Norwich saw years ago, we’re the ones who stand ready to punish ourselves and each other – not God. God sees sin, and doesn’t stop all consequences, but God doesn’t define us by sin, or hate us, or even shame us.

Our systems of shame aren't from the God we see in Jesus. God saves, frees, forgives, loves us in Christ. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Trinity. We don't save ourselves. God's love saves us.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the Trinity celebrates God as a versatile dancer – inviting us to join whatever dance we're best able to do. Some are nimble enough for hip hop, jazz, swing, or street dance. Some are better at tap, ballroom, or square dance. That's what my husband and I do best – square dance!

Somedays the best we can do may be to tap our toes or sway with a song. God doesn't need us to dance dances we can't dance. We're called to give ourselves in ways that bring life to us and grace and love to others.

Our best move may be the hand dance of picking up a phone to check on a neighbor. However we enter the dance, this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the Trinity – the Spirit's work of flowing with life's punches and helping us flow too.

May we savor this tri-fold gift of God creating, redeeming, and giving. We don't live by our own power, but by the power of God partnering with us. It's a grace dance where we can't go wrong because God meets our every turn with forgiveness.

The last verse of today's Song of the Day we'll also hear at our Sending:

*To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise,  
to you, Song Incarnate, we give all our praise,  
to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,  
be glory forever, through life and through death.* ELW 861

Amen

+Pastor Peg, LCM, LA