

Eastern Mission

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

August 2025

Dear Friends,

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ² It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; ³ As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

Psalm 133

Earlier this summer, we were richly blessed at the ALCA convention by the hearing of God's Word and by the fellowship that we have in Christ. The Hancock congregation along with the other congregations in Upper Michigan did an exceptional job of hosting this year's services. The theme for the convention this year was on God's blessing of unity based on Psalm 133.

Unity amongst God's people is a fitting theme, especially as we see increasing division in the church today. Fundamentally, we see divisions arise in one of two ways. First, we see infighting resulting from the pursuit of truth at the expense of love. Likewise, we also witness strife arise from the call to love without regard for the truth. As Christians, we are not given the choice between the pursuit of truth or the call to love. As difficult as it might seem to be, God's Word commands that we do both. In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes this clear ***“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye My disciples indeed; ³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*** John 8:31-32 ***“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*** John 13:34-35 This is why the Apostle Paul speaks about the importance of ***“speaking the truth in love.”*** Ephesians 4:15

The good news is that there already is a unity in the Body of Christ that transcends our physical senses. The Psalmist says that ***“the Lord commanded this blessing”*** which is now fulfilled in Christ. Through the death and resurrection of God's Son, we have the forgiveness of sins, Life and salvation. ***“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*** Galatians 3:27-29 The great German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer echoes the Apostles Paul in his book *Life Together* ***“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Jesus Christ alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and hope for it.”***

May God continue to encourage and strengthen us in our pursuit of the truth and in our calling to love one another ***“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*** Ephesians 4:3 As always, thank you for your ongoing support for the ministry of the Eastern Mission.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Chuck Bylkas