

Wednesday, September 1st

September 1, 2021



**Upstate New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Dear Siblings in Christ,

“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!” (Ps. 118:24)

These words from an ancient psalmist are how I’ve greeted the communities I’ve served every Lord’s Day. “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice!” It is a statement of faith and a proclamation, a witness to God’s love active in the world.

Some days these words sound foreign; as when I have used them to greet an assembly gathered to commend a beloved one into God’s eternal care; or on the day after 9/11, or in the midst of a pandemic.

But these words are no less true, even when the “earth should change, [and] the mountains shake in the heart of the sea” (Ps. 46:2).

God is with us. God has been with us all along. The Divine continues to walk with us, alongside us, feeding us (that’s what all of these “bread” Sundays have been about after all) and leading us forward, together.

I am privileged, humbled, excited, and just a bit fearful, as we begin this call together as church and servant-bishop. I look forward to learning about God’s love made present in the world from you. I look forward to growing with you, activated by the one who has created us in an image of loving-kindness, and set free to do the liberating work of the gospel.

I know that the pandemic has been exhausting in many and various ways. This can’t be overstated. I believe as God’s people, saved and transformed by the sacrificial love of Christ and his death on the cross, we are raised up to new life, to be the church for such a time as this. I also believe, that as we come through the pandemic together, we do so with heightened needs for community and connections, for relationship and real purpose in being together. Our intentions have been focused and we are collaborating in new ways for the sake of our siblings. This is an incredible time to be the church!



I look forward to connecting with you this Fall as we begin our ministry together and renew our relationships throughout our synod, which is Christ’s church, together. Join me at your local conference Fall Assembly where we’ll have some time to meet and listen to one another. Join me as well in praying for all God’s people, for our communities throughout the Upstate New York Synod, our ELCA, the Lutheran World Federation, and for all people in need everywhere.

Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel. Thanks be to God for the ways that love activates us in the world to do justice and share in the joy of Christ!

*“This is the day that the Lord has made!
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”*

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Lee Miller II
Bishop, Upstate New York Synod



SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

Daily verse and prayer from plough.com

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV



Dear Father in heaven, open our hearts to see what is good in our lives. May the light in our hearts shine clearly so that we see, recognize, and live in accordance with what comes from eternity and belongs to our true nature, brought to us through Christ. Keep us from being blinded and deafened by experiences that will pass by. Help us to rise above them even in suffering and to wait patiently for what is becoming new and perfect. Praise to your name that we too can say, "The old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Amen.

You can pray along daily [here](#).

Baking Bad: Ex-Cons Are Mentored as Bakers and Now Their Bread is in the Best Restaurants

by [Good News Network](#)

A bakery run by a Cambridge graduate is teaching ex-cons new skills, including providing bread to some of Scotland's fanciest restaurants. Freedom Bakery, in Glasgow's East End, provides well-known eateries including Ubiquitous Chip with bread rolls. The social enterprise was set up by Matt Fountain who grew up watching his stepfather struggle to establish a life after being released from jail in Kent—and who he had visited in prison, aged 12, and begged never to go again. Matt enrolled in university courses in Manchester, studied History of Art in London, spent a year in Glasgow, and attended Cambridge. He returned to Glasgow and had the chance to do a PhD at Oxford, but opted not to. Instead he decided to invest his time and energy into helping people, including convicted murderers, reintegrate into society.



In 2014, he was granted permission to use a small kitchen in HMP Low Moss, Glasgow. Matt planned to make and sell bread and at the same time put those prisoners through a recognized qualification for the baking industry, SVQ Level 2 in Craft Baking. By 2017 he was working with prisoners in notorious Barlinnie, and pairing them with qualified bakers in order to help them obtain a qualification. Trainee bakers have a broad variety of backgrounds, and Matt's employees are given training in self-defence due to working with prisoners. There are currently 16 employees and a third were recruited from jails. Matt said: "It's a mixture of long term and short term sentences including drugs-related offences, fraud, and I'm afraid to say manslaughter and murder." Matt felt out of place in Cambridge and failed to find enjoyment in it. "By the end of it I was pretty worn out and because of my background, I felt like I was living a bit of a fake life. After struggling to get a job after graduating from Cambridge, he felt at a loose end. "I thought if I had an Oxbridge degree it would help me in life," he said. "I didn't really know what to do.

"I came to the conclusion that I should be doing something useful and I set upon this idea to raise money for the charity Shelter by cycling around the UK." That led to the idea of starting Freedom Bakery. Matt said: "The only ideal was to make sure it was really good so it would leave a lasting impression on the person eating it, so they would understand where it came from and maybe think more positively about who made

that bread. "It is important our bread tastes great and for us to be really successful, our people need to be cared for and paid fairly and if those things combine it means the bread we make is really doing good." He described prisons as "a microcosm of humanity with both good and evil." Matt said: "For some, the odds have been stacked against them from the beginning, so they never had a chance. An individual contacted us who has been in institutions from childhood. "He is completely institutionalized but he wants to get out and can imagine a life he can have that will be healthy and rewarding so that is what we are about." In October the bakery will move to a larger premises. And it saw its sales increase by 12 per cent last year, despite lockdowns. Matt added: "I really feel that it is important to help people, but at the end of the day they have to want to help themselves. In terms of the help we can offer, that goes quite far with us."



September is a month of transitions, shifting gears, changing routines. It is sometimes called, 'the new January'. Who doesn't like the idea of a fresh start with no mistakes in it? Liturgically and seasonally however it is a lot closer to the end of the year than the beginning. So maybe it isn't so much a new beginning as the realization that we can always 'start again' with rededicated effort in our same-old-same-old tasks, or with the resumption of activities that were set aside in Summer's fallow time. In any case fresh notebooks, new Bible studies and crisp air are just the beginnings of September's gifts for us to help us energetically finish 2021 well, remaining present to all God is doing in this challenging time. As Bishop Lee Miller exhorts us, "we are raised up to new life, to be the church for such a time as this." We join him in prayer for our church and our world, looking forward to all we will do together to bring Jesus' light to the world, even as the days are getting shorter.



Suellen