



September 2026

Grace and peace to you from Jesus!

September has always carried with it a welcome back to routine. We're often busy wondering, *What do I need to do? What do we have to buy? What must I mark in my schedule?* But what if we begin this fall with a different question?

What are we here for?

The church in Canada faces significant challenges – financial, volunteers, buildings, spiritually - we know them well. Church is no longer at the centre of community life in the way it once was, and many people have little familiarity with the Christian story. These realities are real and they matter. They demand wisdom, courage, and faithful stewardship.

God has never relied upon abundance or even expertise to accomplish God's purposes. God has always invited faithful people willing to trust, willing to take a chance, willing to foster brave imagination.

So, what are we here for, ABT Synod? I believe the “answer” is more about what we do. Backed by an amazing God, we step out in curiosity to explore where God is and what God is up to. With open hearts we listen to the needs of the poor and oppressed. With generosity of time and talents and money we strive to be persistent in supporting the church and making meaningful changes in our world.

Put “Sunday worship” back in your calendars this fall. Worship is where we are nourished by community, word and sacrament (and perhaps good coffee!) to be ready to encounter a world that needs good news. Every Sunday, Christ gathers us not simply to comfort us, but to send us back into the world as witnesses of grace.

In addition – take advantage to join in learning together at gatherings and events planned by the Synod or in your region. October 3 you are invited to come to the ABT Synod Congregational Life Event in Red Deer. We welcome internationally recognized Anna Madsen to bolster our spirits and Ben and Caitlyn Johnston-Urey to inspire with a new healing liturgy. Such events are times that spark learning, imagination and hope as we meet others just like us and know we are not alone. Watch for more details on this event.

So as September begins, whatever corner or rural route you are on, spend some time in prayer and pondering: What are we here for?

May the Holy Spirit continue to lead us, challenge us, and surprise us together!

In Christ,

Bishop Trish Schmermund
Synod of Alberta and the Territories, ELCIC