

Rev. Susan Johnson
ELCIC Vice-President

It is a real privilege and pleasure for me to be here with you today. Bishop Ray Schultz was very sorry that he could not be here to bring you greetings, but I figure that his loss is my gain! And so I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, on behalf of Bishop Ray Schultz, but more importantly on behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ from Vancouver Island to Nova Scotia that make up the part of the family of God we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. And we greet you as family, as Lutheran sisters and brothers.

I want to talk about family for a moment. I don't know about you, but in my family there are some family members that I feel very close to and some that I don't particularly want to spend time with. In my family, even in my close family, we often disagree with one another. Sometimes heatedly. And as a result, sometimes we don't particularly like one another. And I don't think this just happens in my family. The Bishop of the Eastern Synod, Michael Pryse who has four teenage daughters, told me they have a rule in their family. They don't have to like each other, but loving each other is mandatory.

And I am going to take courage from your convention theme, *With Great Boldness*, and point out the obvious, namely that we have not always been very close as Lutheran family. We have differences that sometimes keep us apart. Some of us have argued with each other quite heatedly. Some of us wish we could get along better. Some of us don't understand what the problem is. But I think we need to claim the same rule that the Pryse family uses, liking each other is optional, but loving each other is mandatory.

I want to tell you that it is out of love, out of a desire for a closer relationship, that we have issued to you an invitation for the interim sharing of the eucharist. To use our family imagery again, we want to be able to meet over the dinner table, where ties are strengthened and differences overcome. But whatever your decision is to our invitation, please know that we will continue to claim you as family. We will continue to pray for you, for your church, for your ministry. And we hope that you will continue to pray for us as well.

May God bless you as you meet in convention. Thank you for your welcome today.