



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

All Saints Day

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message

Oct. 30, 2020

This Sunday is All Saints Sunday. It's a time in the church we remember all of those who have gone before us in the faith, especially those who have died in the last church year. Some may find this a macabre observance, but nevertheless, it's the way that we give thanks to God for the lives of these saints, and also give thanks to God for the promise of the resurrection.

This year in the ELCA, we lost two giants, one at the beginning of the year and one just this week. In January, the Rev. Dr. Herbert W. Chilstrom, the first presiding bishop of the ELCA, died. He told this story to me once, that he was talking to a businessman on an airplane and the businessman asked him what he did and what his company was about, and Herb told him about the startup we had here—literally, phones on the floor, desks were boxes, folding chairs. And the man looked at him and said, "It's never gonna work." But 32 years later, we are still here, giving witness to the gospel.

And just this week, the Rev. Dr. Cheryl Pero died. Dr. Pero was a pioneer in this church, the second African American woman to be ordained in the ELCA. And she, with her husband, Albert "Pete" Pero, worked to bring full inclusion for all voices in this church. They founded the Conference of International Black Lutherans, which were the African-descent teaching theologians of this church. She loved this church, even though this church often caused her pain as an African American woman in the church.

I imagine this Sunday, you will be remembering those who were giants and heroes in your faith or your family, and that's good to do. And, even with tears in our eyes, we can say, "All go down to the dust, yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."