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“...that they may be
encouraged in heart
and united in love...”
Colossians 2.2 (NIV)

April 2022 President's Letter
Christian Education Network of the ELCA

An Invitation to Breathe

I've been reflecting on the importance of collaboration and how valuable it is to our faith formation efforts. We are meant to live in community, connected to the gifts of others. Being in the body of Christ gives us a unique opportunity to live out our gifts alongside many other gifted people. There are many circumstances that can prevent us from living out our gifts to their potential. Faith formation ministries are evolving at a rapid pace, and it can be hard to slow down. We often don't have time to take a breath and working at full throttle is expected. Another factor is we want to appear competent and in control, and don't admit to our vulnerabilities or that we may not be gifted in all areas and need help and support.

We are living through a time when huge numbers of people are struggling through loneliness, isolation and depression. Those in ministry have faced enormous challenges that are not going away. We drive ourselves hard because we want to support the people we are called to serve. We can reach a state of burnout and exhaustion very quickly, yet we keep pushing forward. It is in times like these that taking a breath can be life giving. Collaboration can be a part of taking a breath when we lean into our dependence on others.

The Christian Education Network exists because of collaboration. There are many other examples across our ministries where something has come into being because of a community. One person shares an idea or a dream with another person, these people connect to other people with the same vision, the vision grows, and a new creation comes into being. We were not designed to journey alone. God created us for community and interdependence, with God and with each other. Collaboration helps orientate us into the ways of community. A simple invitation can lead to new ministries.

Taking a breath can mean many different things depending on our practices and our personality. I've found two practices especially helpful. The first practice is to go for a walk. I pulled a tendon in my ankle last fall and had to wear a boot for six weeks. My mobility has returned slowly over time helped by physical therapy. I am grateful to be walking and moving around. When I walk, I pay attention to my breathing and invite God in. The second practice is to form a new relationship. I am blessed with friends and colleagues, but I am intentionally reaching out to people I want to know better or contacting someone I've not heard from in a while. Invitations can lead to community in unpredictable ways. As you take a breath, may a new invitation emerge that is life giving.

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