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

August 2021

Dear friends,

Relationships and stories.

When I was in seminary, I was honored to travel to Cuba with a group of classmates and a professor. The relationships that grew from that trip are some of the most important of my life. While the time together was short, the impact was life-changing.

At the 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering, our service day was spent at the New Orleans School of Cooking. Chef Kevin prepared food and told stories about the history of New Orleans and their foods. He tasked the youth to share the stories explaining that New Orleans is so much more than what the world sees on Bourbon Street and at Mardi Gras.

A few weeks ago, I met a friend and her two young children at a you-pick flower farm. I had only met her children once before and it was 8:00 in the morning so they were a little tentative. I asked B if he would help me find a red flower. We wandered the rows looking. I began to point out other flowers and before long, he was cutting all sorts of flowers for me. Then the four of us explored the sunflower patch and a little play area. When it was time to leave and B was buckled in his car seat, he called out. He needed to teach me the secret handshake: high 5, low 5, fist bump, elbow, elbow. He taught, I learned. Later I had a text. B wanted to invite me over to their house sometime.

As we move into a new school year and the Delta variant is spreading, we once again find ourselves looking for safe ways to build relationships. The creativity is always amazing. One of the congregations in our Synod started Baseball Church before the games begin. Standing in a truck bed with a portable microphone, they share a Jesus story and prayer with those gathered in lawn chairs and uniforms. In Metamora, Ohio, there is the Farmhouse Church where people gather for food, music, fellowship and worship in a repurposed barn.

So what are you doing to build relationships? How are you sharing the stories? What idea are brewing for your fall planning? Join the conversation by joining the group at Christian Education Network of the ELCA ([www.facebook.com/groups/LACE2011](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LACE2011)).

Coming up later this month will be the elections of the new Christian Education Network of the ELCA board. We will be electing a new president and at-large members as well as re-electing the Secretary/Historian. If you have not renewed your membership for 2021-2022, please contact Janet Renick at [cencoordinator@faithfulteaching.org](mailto:cencoordinator@faithfulteaching.org) or visit the website ([faithfulteaching.org](http://faithfulteaching.org)).

May you have a blessed rest of the summer as you look forward to the fall.

The Rev. Juli Lejman-Guy, President