

A Message from Bishop Wollersheim

What's Next After the Churchwide Assembly Decisions?

I think we need to pause and take a deep breath. We need to pray, reflect, discuss, and pray some more about the decisions that this church has made. Kneejerk reactions rarely serve anyone well. Let us be sensitive to the reality that some are disappointed, others rejoice, and still others will accept these decisions out of respect for the Assembly voting and the long and prayerful process it has taken to get to this point. St. Paul writes: "Bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

My commitments for the days ahead include: If you are in a congregation that does not see the need to change your practices in response to these decisions, no one will force you to do so. If you are in a congregation that sees aligning with these changes as an opportunity to grow your ministry, no one will prohibit you from doing so. My staff and I will respect the varieties of views represented in our Synod, whether opposed to change, in favor of change, or somewhere in between.

In the next several weeks, I will be traveling throughout our Synod. I will meet with rostered leaders at Conference Meetings, congregational leaders at the Mission Gatherings, with anyone interested at the Saturday morning Coffees with the Bishop, and with representative groups in the synod such as Synod Council and the Conference Deans. At each of these occasions, I will reflect on the process and decisions as well as receive the various views of the members of our synod.

I have said in the past, and I continue, unreservedly, to believe that we are God's Church, called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, and kept in the faith by the Holy Spirit. We are in God's hands. And soon, I pray, we will, by God's grace, be transformed for God's mission: to proclaim the Lordship of Christ in words and actions, to plant the church, to call new disciples, to renew congregations, to stand for justice, to feed the hungry, to support and raise up leaders, and to be the Body of Christ in the world. This is our calling, this is our mission, this is our life. Thanks be to God who gives us this ministry through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Faithfully,

Gary Wollersheim, bishop