

February 16, 2010

Greetings From President Walton....



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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Epiphany! It's a brand new year and what great blessings God has in store for us as we seek Jesus again in 2010! Having just celebrated again the majesty and mystery of God's greatest gift to us in Jesus, what a joy to know that even though we don't know what the future holds, we *know*, beyond a shadow of a doubt, Who holds the future.

That's what makes entering into a New Year so exciting. It's an opportunity to redefine ourselves and begin afresh. It's a time to allow the sins of the past to die in the waters of baptism so that the new person in Christ can come forth, shining His light for the world to see. The New Year is another opportunity to live in the grace and love of Jesus, and share that with the world around us. The New Year is a time to look at a quickly filling calendar, that still may have some blank spots, and schedule time for things that are important—things like family and friends.

One of the messages of the Epiphany that I have learned is that we invest time in what we value. Those Magi set aside their lives, their positions, they left their homes and their typical schedule to find something of great value. Having seen the Star, it led them to Jesus. In the midst of so many competing voices, they followed their hearts, stood on their convictions, and sought to find, in a world full of valuable treasures, the greatest Treasure of them all, Jesus. Will you seek Him again in 2010? Will you experience His love, grace and forgiveness? Will you then share that with the world around you?

Have you ever noticed how, when working in the church or around the church, we become so concerned with doing things right that we fail to do the right things? I heard a story a few years back about a couple who was celebrating their first Christmas as parents. They had a three month old, and were a bit new at it all. When Christmas came, they were rushing off to be with family. But you know that when you have a baby, you have to prepare. And as new parents, they over-prepared. They had the portable crib and high chair, they had the stroller, and the bag filled with disposable diapers,

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ointments, everything necessary to give the baby a bath. They had several changes of clothes, pajamas for the baby, they had bibs and shoes and assorted toys and anything else you could imagine. They were exhausted by the time they got the car loaded. And as they pulled out of the driveway, all of the sudden it occurred to them that in the rush and stress of getting ready, they forgot the baby! How like us! It's easy enough to do this at Christmas time, but it's also easy to forget Him at other times, too. When life gets so busy, even busy working for the Lord, it's easy to forget God's gift to you in Jesus. This Jesus we serve came also to serve us, to love us, to forgive us and strengthen our faith.

Whether you are a professional church worker, a lay leader, or even just a believer, let me encourage you to invest your time in Jesus again and again in 2010. Let His agenda become your agenda, and let the light of Jesus be your guide, not just in these early days of January, but throughout the whole year.

Let me share some ways that Jesus can shine through you again in 2010:

- Make a commitment to worship and financially support your congregation regularly!
- Make a commitment to a daily devotional/prayer time.
- Be involved in your community—and do it on behalf of your congregational ministry! (in other words, be outwardly focused!)
- Pray for the District and Synod and her leaders, that we represent Jesus well in all we do.

A few other notes to think about and keep in prayer:

- Praise God for the many congregations that have so generously responded to the financial crisis in the District. There have been several large gifts, for which we are grateful—to God and to the donors. However, the District will likely end the year with a \$337,000 deficit. This impacts our giving to Synod, our mission grants, and all the other programs and services of the District. In the midst of the financial crisis, what might God be calling you to do to lessen



this impact?


- As part of ***Lutheran Church Extension Fund's agreement with MissionInsite***, congregations now have free, unlimited access to **MissionInsite's Demographic data** www.missioninsite.com. All the information is available through our website www.flga-lcms.org. In addition, congregations can purchase the Congregant Plot and Analysis Package which allows congregations to upload congregant data then plot and analyze how congregants distribute geographically. For additional information contact Kathy Keene at the District Office, 877 457-5556 ext 4 or kkeene@flga-lcms.org.
- ***Richard and Carol Neubauer*** will be retiring at the end of January after 25 years and 23 years, respectively, in the ministry of the Florida-Georgia District. Their legacy with our District will continue and the way they have touched our hearts and lives. We give thanks to God for them, and pray God's blessings on them in the future as they look to the Great Smoky's of Tennessee!
- We extend a welcome to ***Mr. Daniel Reichard***, who was selected to take the place of Richard Neubauer in serving as LCEF Regional Vice President and Director of Administration and Finance, pending approval by the Board of Directors. Daniel will begin working with the District in late January, and come on full time in February. We pray that God will bless this transition all the way around!
- The Synod will be in Convention in July in Houston, Texas—begin to pray for this now, and for all the leaders and servants who will be part of this process.

I appreciate your partnership and patience as I continue to settle into this office. May God fill our days with His presence, with His grace, with His love and with His joy in 2010!

Peace in Jesus,

Greg

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"The love of Christ urges us on." 2 Corinthians 5:14

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