



January 8, 2020

Dear Friends and Members of the Oregon Synod,

Happy new year! I am thankful that through all the challenges of 2019, and as we begin to turn toward all the unknown challenges ahead, we dwell in a God of grace and generosity. It has been gift and grace for me personally in this last year, to be called into the role of bishop of the Oregon Synod. Thank you for the ways you have welcomed my staff and me! As we begin to meet you, we've been incredibly inspired by the work you do and the faith you embody. Depth, kindness, openness, freedom, curiosity, honesty and abundance – these are words that come to me when thinking of you. Thank you for the ways you inhabit the good news of the gospel of Christ!

Please know that my prayers are with you as you gather for your congregational meeting. The life of your congregational community is important. The work we do together as the Oregon Synod is important. And, our unity as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is important. God alone knows what we are capable of in the months and years ahead when we pray, dream and walk together toward courageous love in Christ's name!

Our annual Synod Assembly will be in Portland this year, June 5-7, 2020 at the Red Lion on the Columbia at Jantzen Beach. Today you will be electing Voting Members to attend. Knowing diversity needs to be nurtured, we encourage you to select:

- Two or more Voting Members based on congregation size
- An additional Youth or Young Adult
- An additional person of color or somebody whose primary language is other than English
- An additional individual who identifies as LGBTQIA.

This is a hard time to be church. As the gospel of Matthew tells us, though, "with God all things are possible."

With your prayers, financial support and deepening relationships, we are capable of doing more than we dare dream or imagine. That begins with knowing one another and building up our web of relationships throughout the state. Please consider inviting Juan Carlos La Puente, Pr. Melissa Reed or myself to your congregation during the year. Many of our creative and phenomenal deacons, mission developers, and ecumenical and interfaith partners would love the opportunity to be with you as well.

I look forward to sharing this work with you throughout the year. Together, let's dare to let our young leaders see visions and our elders dream dreams.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Laurie