

January 6, 2009

Epiphany

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

At the beginning of another year, I think of the hymn text by Jaroslav Vajda, sung rarely because it is very time-specific. It's a text that works for me, especially at *this* time.

*Greet now the swiftly changing year
With joy and penitence sincere.
Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace
Another year of grace.*

At the beginning of this new year, I extend my greetings to you and ask for your continued prayer on behalf of the Metropolitan New York Synod and our staff. I look back over the past year and am, frankly, overwhelmed by the changes in our church, our synod, our country and our world. I look ahead to 2009 and anticipate even more changes for all of us. It is about one major area of change that I write to you today.

In November I presented a staffing proposal to our Synod Council which they accepted in principle. The Executive Committee is in the process of refining position descriptions. These will be posted on our website and on the human resources page of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as soon as they are completed. If you know of any interest in these positions, please contact me directly. In addition, there is a new position description for Conference Deans, crafted by the Conference of Deans and approved by the Synod Council; this position description is likewise in process.

Today I thank all those executive staff members whose calls and employment at the synod will conclude at the end of January. The ministry provided by David Anglada (who has already left the staff), Connie Duever, Dianne Loufman, Gary Mills, Robert Wollenburg and Lily Wu has been a great gift to us all; I encourage you to offer your personal thanks to these faithful servants. More formal recognition of their service is being planned and we will let you know as soon as those plans are finalized.

There are two newly-defined positions which have already been filled. On January 1, Sarah Goe began a new ministry as Director of Communication and Interpretation. This position will include elements of that previously held by Wendy Healy and the Mission Interpreters work which Sarah has been doing. Kathleen Schmidt, an active participant in the life of this synod, has begun in the new position of Assistant to the Bishop for Finance and Administration.

Our support staff will continue: Sandra Buratti, Branden Dicks, Jeffrey Kolbo, John Litke, Gayle Ruege, Mary Tennermann and Gloria Torres. Please remember all these servants of the church during this time of change.

Transitions bring anxiety. And that is certainly true at the synod office. In order to help in this time of change, I have invited two pastors who have deep love for this synod to serve as part of our interim staff until positions are filled. Pastor David Olson will be working with the candidacy process and Pastor James Sudbrock will be working with mobility for rostered leaders. I am also sure that both of these former bishops will be sources of information and wisdom for all of us and will bring enormous experience to assist us as we move forward together. I am delighted that they have agreed to help.

As you know, I was to travel to the Holy Land from January 5 through 18 with other leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. After conversations with my family and with the Executive

Committee of the synod, and after reviewing changes in the itinerary that would, in my opinion, prevent the kind of contact with Palestinian Christians which I had hoped to experience, I decided *not* to go on this trip. Another similar trip is being planned for the people who decided not to go at this time.

I thank you for your continuing intercession for me, Lois, our family, our staff and our entire synod and I invite you to join in the final stanza of the beautiful Vajda text:

*God, Father, Son, and Spirit, hear!
To all our pleas incline your ear;
Upon our lives rich blessing trace
In this new year of grace.*

Sincerely in Christ,

The Reverend Robert Alan Rimbo
Bishop