

NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD

March 10, 2016

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

[2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NRSV]

Dear people of God in the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

There were once two paralyzed men in a hospital room. The one whose bed was by the window would daily describe to the other the beautiful sights that he saw each day; a sky filled with billowing clouds, a rippling pond teeming with geese, people leisurely strolling by the shore, children cavorting in the lush green grass. His words painted such gorgeous scenes that the other man became enraged with jealousy and secretly wished the man by the window would die so he could move closer and enjoy the view for himself.

One night it happened. The man by the window passed away and the bed became available. "Finally," the man in the far bed gleefully thought, "I get my wish to be moved to the window!"

So the next day he asked to be moved to the bed by the window. He begged the nurse to open the curtains as widely as possible so he could relish the view. The nurse was puzzled, but did as he man requested. When she drew back the curtain the man excitedly widened his eyes and stared through the window – at a brick wall.

We live this story each day. Some see a world filled with suffering, pain, and disappointment, but others see a world filled with possibility. When Jesus told parables of the Kingdom of God, he presented to his hearers a world that can be if we love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus did not deny the devastation that our human sinfulness had produced, but he inspired us to do and be better. Our condition was not permanent. There was a more divine way.

The apostle Paul is a perfect example of a life that was turned in the opposite direction. From a persecutor of Christians, he became, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, one of its greatest witnesses.

Yet his life after conversion was anything but trouble-free. From one who inflicted suffering, Paul himself was tormented by it. But he used those sufferings as a means to encourage others, such as the Christians in Corinth. His relationship with them, though enduring, was fraught with strife. They seemed to be in constant conflict, but Paul stressed unity throughout the disputes.

We are in the midst of a Presidential election campaign. We cannot ignore the fact that we are united as sisters and brothers through our baptism, but divided in our political views. Our human feelings and actions tend to cloud our understanding of the good news of the Gospel. Our debates become adversarial, confrontational, thus reducing our ability to live together as the body of Christ.

As a church, it is our daily calling to resist being paralyzed by external forces that fuel our frustration and fears. We have much to offer the world. Above all, we are the earthly expression of the love of God as shown in Jesus Christ. Jesus left the glory of heaven to live with you and me. To suffer. Even to die. His death, the ultimate evil, was transformed into ultimate victory, good beyond imagining, in the resurrection.

As we come to the end of the season of Lent, let us remember the one who died for us.

Let us bear in mind that our Savior did not fear death, but spoke the truth in love.

Let us live together in Christ's love, renewed day by day by God's grace, inspired by the Spirit, despite our differences, to serve one another, and give faithful witnesses to our hope in the eternal.

Wishing you all the blessings of Lent and the joys of Easter!



Bishop Abraham Allende

A few reminders to our rostered leaders:

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We welcome first call candidates Erin Burns, Scott Nellis, and Emily Seitz to Northeastern Ohio. These candidates for ordination have been assigned to our synod and will be entering the call process in the next few weeks. We ask you to remember these people and their families in prayer as they enter the call process and the vocation of serving God's people.

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Thanks to those of you who have completed your annual Rostered Leader's Report. I am still in the midst of reading them, so if you have not as yet done so, there is still plenty of time to turn them in. They are a help to me in my efforts to get to know you better and build our relationship. Parochial reports should have also been completed by this time.

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Mark your calendars for March 22 for our annual Renewal of Vows and Blessing of Oil liturgy. Once again, Pastor Doug Fidler will host us at Trinity Lutheran Church in Kent. If you are staying for lunch, please be sure to indicate how many are coming so that the good people at Trinity can adequately prepare for you.

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Also please let your congregations know of the two Bishop's Gatherings coming up in April:

April 10 at Messiah, Akron – Shared Ministries

April 17 at Prince of Peace, Westlake – Talking Together as Christians about Tough Issues.

Both gatherings are from 3 – 5 p.m.



Staff visits for the next weeks include:

Bishop Allende will be:

March 20 Advent, Cleveland
March 27 New Covenant, East Cleveland
April 10 Pleasant Valley, Lucas
Messiah, Akron, Bishop's Gathering
April 17 St Paul, Lucas
Prince of Peace, Westlake, Bishop's Gathering
May 1 Canaan, Creston
May 8 Trinity, Madison
June 5 Messiah, Akron
June 12 Christ, Willoughby

Karl Biermann will be:

March 13 Prince of Peace, Poland
April 3 Hope, Cleveland Heights
April 10 Covenant, Maple Heights
Messiah, Akron, Bishop's Gathering
April 17 Abiding Savior, Alliance
Prince of Peace, Westlake, Bishop's Gathering
May 22 St John, East Liverpool

Terrance Jacob will be:

April 10 Messiah, Akron, Bishop's Gathering
April 17 Prince of Peace, Westlake, Bishop's Gathering