

NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD

January 14, 2016

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

[Mark 1:16-18]

Dear People of God in the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

As I write this article, I am at the Bishops’ Academy. It is an annual continuing education gathering of our ELCA bishops. We were privileged this year to hear from the Rev. Dr. William Willimon, former professor of Christian Ministry at the Duke Divinity School and also a retired bishop in the United Methodist Church. He lectured around this year’s theme of “The Hard and Blessed Work of Leading in the Time of Change.”

Among the notes I took, these gems stood out:

- The kind of work we have to do is challenging.
- Our inheritance is to reform and rebuild the church.
- The gospel demands *metanoia* (change)
- Being bishop was God’s idea before it was ours.
- We are called because God needs us to get something done.
- The work is too difficult to be “hired” to do it.
- Jesus can be a demanding boss.
- Some of the toughest changes required are those changes within us.

I wish I had the time and space to elaborate on all of these. But that last point really struck home. As I sat and listened and wrote, my mind was drawn to the work that still needs to be done in the Northeastern Ohio Synod. There are important tasks that cannot be completed unless more than just the bishop is involved. As my colleague, Bishop Claire Burkat, of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod put it, “ALL of us can begin to realign our time and attention to the inexhaustible resource before us right now...the gifts, skill, abilities and faith of the people of God.”

So this is an invitation to you.

We are in a new year. A new year usually signals change. Might you consider how God can use you in the work of the synod? There are still positions open on synod council and other committees. Elections for council are held at the May assembly. The slates, however, are being drawn up now. Over the course of the next several weeks, I am asking you to think of names of people who may be suited to run for council positions. It could even be you. I may be calling and asking you to consider a position. I would hope you would respond positively. As I’ve mentioned elsewhere, indifference and apathy put your church at risk.

Before you begin to put together reasons for not serving, consider the scripture verses above when Jesus called fishermen to be his first disciples. They were not necessarily the most

qualified for what he was seeking. He called them anyway – and, as the reading says, “they immediately left their nets and followed him.”

Most Christians are not called to leave their jobs and become disciples. But we are called to base our identity in Christ. This challenges us to develop more of a sense of who we are as followers of Jesus. We all have a role in God’s mission.

Epiphany blessings!



Bishop Abraham Allende



Staff visits for the next weeks include:

Bishop Allende will be:

January 17	Prince of Peace, Westlake, Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration
January 19-21	Professional Leaders’ Retreat, Sawmill Creek, Huron
January 23	Divinity, Parma Heights, Ordination of Tina Heise
January 24	New Horizons, Homerville
January 31	St Jacob, Massillon
	St Peter, New Pittsburg, Installation of Tina Heise
February 7	Trinity, Girard
February 21	St Paul, Bellville
February 28	Christ the Redeemer, Brecksville

Karl Biermann will be:

January 17	Prince of Peace, Westlake, Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration
January 19-21	Professional Leaders’ Retreat, Sawmill Creek, Huron
January 23	Divinity, Parma Heights, Ordination of Tina Heise
January 24	Salem, Wooster
January 31	St Peter, New Pittsburg, Installation of Tina Heise
February 28	Martin Luther, Youngstown

Terrance Jacob will be:

January 17	Prince of Peace, Westlake, Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration
January 19-21	Professional Leaders’ Retreat, Sawmill Creek, Huron