

**WESTERN IOWA SYNOD
VICE PRESIDENT OF SYNOD COUNCIL
2020 ASSEMBLY REPORT**

Jeremiah 29: 11

The Lord says, *“I know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, and plans to bring about the future you hope for.”*

Dear Friends in Christ;

I discovered this passage on the wall of my doctor’s office. It came to mean more to me as I faced the challenges of the past several years.

The past year has been a time of challenge for the Western Iowa Synod. Mainly a new Bishop, restructuring of the synod staff and the financial challenges. We have been and will continue to be a synod in transition. And this is reflective of being a church in transition. Western Iowa Synod and the Evangelical Church in America are in a transition that will better serve the congregations and pastors. We must change if we are to thrive and be a vibrant component of the faith community.

As your Vice President, I was able to attend the Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee this past summer. There it was evident what God’s plan is for the ELCA in the future. And the plan for the ELCA is also the plan for each of us.

This weekend we will be asked to ratify several constitutional changes that reflect the reformation of the Church. Several resolutions will give the governance of the Western Iowa Synod direction in their decision.

At Churchwide Assembly, nearly 1,000 people were fulfilling God’s plan for them as voting members and leaders in their congregations, synods and the ELCA. This weekend, you also are fulfilling God’s plan for you as leaders in your congregations and synod. I challenge you to encourage others to become active in your congregation and synod. You will notice during the election that there are a number of positions with no candidate and several with only one. These are committees and boards and councils that make decisions that implement God’s plan. It is important work and everyone has some expertise that can benefit the entire organization.

May God continue to bless you and the Holy Spirit continue to protect you.

Brian Campbell

Western Iowa Synod, Vice President

PS/ When I first wrote this, we were not in the grip of “social distancing” and “self-isolation.” Activities have been either postponed or outright canceled. Synod Assembly has been delayed for an entire year. This is permissible according to the Constitution.

This has forced all of us to face and overcome new transitions in our lives. And it has caused our lives to change forever. Not only in the way we live but the ways we worship, the ways we relate to friends and family, how we relax and how we conduct business.

The Synod Council and Executive Committee continue to meet and conduct the business of the Western Iowa Synod; however, it is now by Zoom. This is all done while carefully following the rules and guideline found in the Western Iowa Synod Constitution and the ELCA Constitution. There are directives to cover situations that may arise. We thank the original and amendment writers for their foresight. Committees and boards continue to plan and execute the mission of their groups.

Pastors are meeting the challenges of leading worship services when no one is in the pews, musicians record music of hymns that they will not hear sung and youth directors struggle to stay in contact with the youth of the church. And we as congregation members are faced with the reality of not worshipping as an assembled congregation.

All are challenges of change in our lives and we will survive these also. Our parents and grandparents faced similar challenges and transitions in their lives and were stronger for the experience. We can learn together from the past.

God will guide and protect us according to his plan. We need to continue to grow in our faith and trust. And to share the Good News with our friends and families. But, more important, we need to continue to demonstrate our faith and trust to the people that may not know or trust in Jesus Christ and a God who is faithful and forgiving.

Thank You for your continued trust, support and prayers during this time of testing for all of us.