



December 2019

A Word from the NWC Superintendent Mark R. Stromberg

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

In the Name of Jesus Christ, I bring you greetings from the Northwest Conference Executive Board and staff as you gather for your congregational Annual Meeting. I want to thank most of our churches for their support of our shared ministry. We do important work and it cannot be done without you.

However, the work you do is equally as important. The ministries in which you are involved matter. The manner in which you conduct yourselves also counts, as it is noticed by others and either reflects well on your work or calls into question the very things you are doing. Ministry is not always easy. Nor is it necessarily “fun.” Sometimes our commitments are costly, both personally and within our spheres of influence. Sometimes we will pay a price for our obedience to God’s Word. This should not surprise us.

Recently, I heard someone describe the ways that different people determine the way to make decisions. Some ask the question, “Is it ours?” Others ask, “Is it helpful?” Still others ask, “Is it fair?” or even, “Is it nice?” And certainly, there are those who will always first ask, “Is it loving?”

I wonder how our churches ... your church ... would answer this question if your people weighed in? I suspect that the responses may be all over the map. And certainly, these questions are not mutually exclusive. There can be significant overlap between some of them.

However, let me suggest that a vital question for our time is, *“Is it true?”* I say this because if something is not true, many of the other questions become irrelevant or, at least, built upon something other than a firm foundation of reality. They can be based merely upon what we are *feeling* or what we have *personally experienced*, but not necessarily on the Word of God. As expressed by Lysa Teurkeurst,

*“When we care more about what feels right than what is right,
we open ourselves up to the destruction of sin.”*

Yet, some would suggest that we are unable to know what is true. This is heard, even within some churches that profess that they *“value mystery over certainty.”* However, Scripture tells us that we can know what is true and right and real; that we can discern the spirits. This does not mean that our knowledge or understanding is complete. We know that it is not. However, we *do* believe that what has been revealed to us in God’s Word *is* true and that we are called to obedience. And this obedience is to take precedence, even when it does not line up with our personal wishes or inclinations, as Jesus said in the garden, “Not my will, but yours be done”

My prayer for you as you gather is that you will seek to make right decisions at the right time for the right reasons ... rightly heeding the Word of God. I pray that your church would serve with integrity and live in alignment with what has been revealed to us through Holy Scripture. And may God continue to provide the strength and courage needed to follow Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, even when it is costly. Thanks again for your partnership in the Gospel!

Sincerely,

Mark R. Stromberg
Superintendent