



December 2020

A Word from the NWC Superintendent Mark R. Stromberg

Dear Friends in Christ,

This past year can either be considered one to remember or one to forget!

In a recent edition of Christianity Today, the introductory article stated the following:

There's a moment in the first book of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy when Frodo laments that a great evil has erupted in his time. "I wish it need not have happened in my time," he says. Gandalf responds with compassion and wisdom in equal measure. "So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Such appropriate sentiments expressed by both the ring-bearer and the older and wiser mentor as we consider the times in which we live! After all, this past year has taught us many things, not the least of which is that circumstances can change very quickly and in ways that are often beyond our control.

But beyond personal and communal vulnerabilities, we have also had to come to terms with the reality that some things will not return back to exactly the way they were. Both work and worship patterns have been disrupted and have required adaptation and innovation. New ways of connecting and serving have risen to the surface and will remain even when things seem to find new levels of stability and predictability. In short, individually we have all had to grow, grieve, reflect, and change. For some, this has been more difficult than for others, but all have experienced it in some form or fashion.

And the same can be said of our churches. Whether due to the pandemic or racial hostilities, some have embraced the challenges and moved ministry forward in fresh and exciting ways. Yet, it has also been extremely challenging for many, if not most, faith communities.

But this we know ... Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. He has assured us of the presence of the Holy Spirit both in our midst and within us. God has reminded us through His Word that whatever we suffer in this lifetime cannot be compared to what will await us when this life is past. Further, that we can count it all joy when we suffer hardship because of the ways it moves us toward greater Christian maturity and a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, enabling us to thrive even when times are tough ... particularly when times are tough.

Please hold on to these truths!

And know that those of us who serve on the Northwest Conference staff have been humbled and inspired by the resilience and sincere faith displayed by our churches, pastors, and leaders during these difficult days. We are honored to stand with you and thank you for your continued faithfulness and resolve. And now, as your congregation meets for its Annual Meeting, please receive our sincerest thanks for your witness and continued support of our shared ministry in this particularly challenging season ... one that is worth remembering for Christ is still our Redeemer and continues to work in all things for the good of those who love Him. *Please love Him!*

Sincerely in His Name,

Mark R. Stromberg
Superintendent