



## President Walton's January 2020 Message

### **The "Aha" Moment**



Happy New Year! As we look ahead to the future, it's a blank slate. However, if your calendar is like mine, it's already filled in quite a bit! In the next weeks, many will begin to cast a vision for all they desire to accomplish in the year ahead. For some it will be losing those extra pounds you put on over the holidays. For some it will be a rededication to exercising regularly or eating a healthier diet. For others it may be to be more involved in activities in the community or even at your church. For some, at least I hope, it will be to read God's Word daily—that's one I hope you can keep!

This past year has been filled with all kinds of memories. Some have been joyful. Others have brought us sorrow. Babies have been born, and loved ones have gone home to be with Jesus. People have been married, or celebrated marriage milestones, or for that matter, maybe a work related activity like retirement or a remembrance of years served! Throughout the District we have also experienced the highs and lows of life. We have had times of celebration, and times of sadness. Perhaps one of the greatest blessings was to joyfully serve as host to the 2019 Synod Convention in Tampa. Over this past year we have seen a number of new ministries started, like the Center for Peace, out of Prince of Peace in Orlando, or the Moving Hope ministry out of St. Paul, Lakeland. Ministries from Atlanta to Miami are considering what they might do in their communities to connect people to Jesus! Soon our new Mission Executive will begin his work in the District, all with a focus on reaching many in 2020 for Jesus!

In hindsight we see God's hands mightily at work among us. Reflecting on the past is good, but we cannot change the past. If we keep looking back while trying to move in a forward direction, we are bound to run into a wall! In 2020 may we have clearer vision—in fact, may we see with 2020 vision. We can determine to make an impact on the future for the sake of Jesus. God promised through the Prophet Jeremiah, *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart."* God's plans for you include a future!

Personal goals are great, but now is also a time for congregational leadership to sit down with the staff and begin praying, and dreaming what God desires to do in you and in your congregational setting in the year ahead. What are the new opportunities in front of you? Who

are the people you are being called to reach with the good news? There are people where you live, where you work, where you shop—really wherever you are, who need to see Jesus living in you. That’s why, throughout last year, we kept repeating, “Let Jesus be seen in 2019!” That hasn’t changed. We still want Jesus to be seen in you, even in 2020!

During my preparations for Christmas I had an “Aha” moment. Some might call it an epiphany! As I listened to the story of the angel’s message heralded to the shepherds I was reminded that these were the outcasts on the edge of society. It was to common, ordinary, unsuspecting people that the Incarnate Jesus was first announced. Could it be that God is calling His redeemed to move beyond the barriers of the church campus to the hurting and helpless people all around us as we go with joy to those in need?



On January 6 we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. It’s a great reminder for us how the light of God’s love radiated beyond His chosen people to those in the Gentile world. While we don’t have any details in Scripture, we know that the Magi left that place changed as they were touched by God’s grace and power. We can only speculate on the transformation that occurred in their lives. It was the light of a star that led the Magi to Jesus, but the Magi left with the Light of Life in their hearts!

Jesus came into the world to dispel the darkness caused by sin. As bright as His light is, darkness still prevails all around us. Jesus is counting on each of us to reach many in 2020 for Him while there is still time. He knows your gifts. He knows your faults and weaknesses. He can use each of us in spite of any shortcomings we might have. He’s more interested in our availability than in our abilities. So in 2020, make yourself available to our Lord, to share the joy of our salvation. You just may experience an “Aha” moment for yourself!

One of the commitments we have, as the Florida-Georgia District, is to serve, assist and encourage you as you grow in your faith in Jesus. One specific way we can do this is at the President’s Equip Conference, coming September 24-26 in Orlando. The theme is “One Body, Many Parts,” based on I Corinthians 12, where Paul makes it clear that there’s a place for each of us in the body of Christ! Not only will we gather our professional church workers, both ordained and commissioned, but we are actively inviting our laity to join us to grow and learn beside their pastor. This year the LWML in convention will also participate as we are one body with many parts, joined together to learn and grow in knowing how best to proclaim Jesus! We have a wonderful lineup of guests, including David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group; Donna Pyle, a wonderful Bible teacher, well known around the LWML; and we also have Tommy and Eddie, better known as the Skit Guys, who will entertain us. As the Proverbs remind us, *“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones”* Proverbs 17:22. There will be breakout sessions, times of worship and inspiration, and of course, fellowship with brothers and sisters in the body of Christ! I hope you’ll save the dates and join us!

The New Year is before us! What will you make of it? May we together reach many in 2020 for Jesus, whose light continues to shine on us and through us as we live in Him.

In His Peace,

*Greg*

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Region 3 Lay Leadership Summit**  
February 28 - 29. Prince of Peace  
Lutheran Church, Orlando

Disaster response for Bahama Assistance

- Veteran's of the Cross, March 2-4 for all retired workers; ordained, commissioned and lay