



## President Walton's February 2020 Message

### **Change**



One of my favorite movies from another century was *Groundhog Day* with Bill Murray. It is really a silly story about a cynical weatherman, Phil Connors, who is sent cover a story, for the fourth year in a row, about a weather predicting groundhog. Spending time in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania on February 2 to see if Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow is not his idea of fun. The twist is that Phil and his crew are unable to leave the town due to a severe blizzard. Forced to spend the night, when Phil wakes up the next morning, he is reliving the same day—repeatedly. At first, he resists this, but eventually uses this time to learn new things, like playing the piano and ice carving. He eventually finds value in becoming a kinder person, helping others, and learning about relationships. It is really a funny movie, which may contain a deeper, unintended, message for us.

So many of us go through life, day after day, perhaps even a bit cynical. We often fail to see the opportunities all around us. How many parents see their grown children and lament that they did not spend more time with them? How many people have reflected on their past and wished that they could have done things differently? I have been at funeral services in which the bereaved stated that they wished they had told the deceased how much they loved them or they wished they could take back some things that had been said in anger. There are many broken relationships which may have been restored with a little bit of effort, humility and forgiveness. Jesus said, *“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians, *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Someone has defined “insanity” as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Many Christians practice this form of “insanity” when it comes to the church. We do the same things over and over and are often surprised when we see the same results. Certainly, there is a positive side to this. For instance, gathering regularly around the Word and Sacrament can have powerful and transformative results. On the other hand, painting the church door red and trusting, as a result, the community will simply show up like they did in the 1950’s, is, well, for the lack of a better word, insane! Back then the thought really applied: If we build it they will come! This is no longer true in our day.

During this New Year the focus is on reaching many in 2020



Reaching Many in 2020  
for Jesus!

for Jesus. God is providing opportunities all around us. However, as we reflect on the radical changes that have taken place in our world, just in the last ten years, not to mention the changes in the last 50, the church has often failed to keep pace with the changes all around us. Thinking that we can keep doing the same thing, day after day, lulls us into a false sense of security about our role as disciples of Jesus. Just as our relationship with our children changes over time, so as children of God, our relationship with Him continues to change. The occasions for learning and growth fill Christian walk daily. How we proclaim Jesus also changes over time. When my children were young, the things I bragged on are very different than the things that make me so proud of them today. My love has not changed, but because they have grown and changed, I also have changed in how I speak of them.

Unlike Groundhog Day, we are living in a new day, and while the message we proclaim is the same old, old story of Jesus and His love, how we proclaim it today must meet the needs of the day if we want to reach many in 2020 and connect them to Jesus! Jesus *IS* the same yesterday, today and forever, but how we share Him with the world has certainly changed through the centuries. We can do the same thing each day, expecting different results and be disappointed and disillusioned or we can observe, grow and learn to meet the changing needs all around us. This is not a call to compromise our faith and beliefs, but rather a call to adapt the unchangeable truth of our faith in Jesus to a world that is constantly changing.

My children cannot really remember a time when there were no mobile phones. Many of us can remember when we were tethered to the wall by a phone cord and maybe even share a party line with others. I still remember how amazed I was when mobile phones began appearing. My first cell phone flipped open and was basic. Before long we had texting. Now the iPhone that I carry with me has more power than the first computer I had in seminary, and they keep making improvements. What has not changed is that cell phones still make phone calls. Of course, today they do so much more. The delivery system is vastly different but phones still enable us to communicate with others in different places. The point is, while much about telephones have changed, the basic purpose for a phone has not. So for our faith. The core of our faith is unchangeable, but how we deliver it must change for the sake of the Gospel.

Seeing with 2020 vision can mean that we realize the opportunities all around us to share the love of Jesus and reach many with the transforming power of His grace and forgiveness. It means recognizing the delivery systems that once served well, need to be renewed in this new generation to reach those in our world without compromising God's Word. Some things will not change. Sin will always assail us. The devil will continually attack us. People will let us down and frustrate us. Our calling in this world is to reach many with the good news of Jesus. Our need for Him, and the world's needs for Him, never changes!

Later this month the world will celebrate Valentine's Day, which focuses on love. May we learn and grow each day as disciples of Jesus, who has called us, loved us, and empowered us to reach many in His name! He promises to equip, empower, and engages us so we can connect people to Him in new ways. Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another.*" In a month when we often hear a lot about love, do not keep repeating the past, but step into a new future with Jesus, and help others experience His love. Each day provides new possibilities to learn and grow as disciples of Jesus, as we build His Kingdom and share His love.

Blessings as you prepare for a season of Lent in a few weeks. May it be a season of reflection and love as you draw closer to the Cross of Jesus!

In His Peace,

*Greg*

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***Looking for how you can reach many in 2020 for Jesus as you continue to learn, grow and expand your vision as His disciple. Here are two:***

1. **The Region 3 Lay Leadership Summit** is coming to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Orlando, FL on February 28-29, 2020. There are over 20 workshops to choose from, fellowship and worship opportunities, and all at no cost. You can follow this link for more information: <https://flgadistrict.org/layleadershipsummit/>

2. **The President's Equip Conference** for all church workers AND laity, offering practical, strategic resources for congregations to learn and grow, will be held September 24-26, 2020 at the Hilton Buena Vista Palace in Orlando (across from Disney Springs). The theme is "One Body, Many Parts," from 1 Corinthians 12, and we desire to bring together the whole family of God in the Florida-Georgia District. In addition to useful workshops, we will have [David Kinnaman](#), CEO of the Barna Research Group, [Donna Pyle](#), and for entertainment, [The Skit Guys](#). More information will be available soon.

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[Florida-Georgia District, LCMS](#)

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Devotions in your inbox - Lent begins  
February 12th*

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

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