



Dear Congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

Last October we moved the synod office from Rice Lake to Chetek. As anyone who has relocated knows, moving requires lots of work and significant change. Careful planning took place that involved phone and Internet service, signage, change of address notifications, assigning office space, furniture arrangements, deciding what is tossed and what is saved, securing a mail box, preparing the new space, website updates, lease negotiations, securing volunteer movers, etc.

I've sometimes thought that the office move is a metaphor of the church. Every now and then, the church needs to pick up and move, leaving some things behind and bringing along only that which is needed. It always involves change, some of which is difficult, some of which is freeing. Movement can result in feeling dislocated for a time; it can also lead to transformation and new beginnings.

The missional church is always on the move. It is ready to pick up and go wherever God leads. It is willing to leave some things behind in order to be disciples engaged in the world. It carries with it only what is needed to be faithful to Jesus and a servant to the neighbor. Such a people can feel dislocated because missional living can be risky, but it can also mean new life to the community of faith caught up in witness and service in Jesus' name.

We are in a period of time when there is great "movement" within the church. Much of the movement, unfortunately, is inward—clinging to an idealized past, declining in the midst of community growth, longing for something new but paralyzed to change. But a growing movement in an outward direction is unfolding, too—envisioning new ways forward, equipping disciples, intentionally engaging the community, eagerly discerning what God has in store now and into the future.

To be a church on the move means that we will need to move *together*—the Lord has seen to that in baptism by binding us together as the body of Christ. We are stronger together than we are apart. Partnerships matter. Community counts.

The synod is the 212 congregations and specialized ministries of Northwest Wisconsin. The mission we carry out is not doable on our own. That's why we engage in mission *together*. We are stronger together than we are apart. Partnerships matter. Community counts.

As the pastor of the synod, I urge you to be and act missionally. Be a congregation "on the move," looking for new opportunities to witness and serve such that the neighbor sees the grace of God in Jesus through you. Be in partnership with the whole church. We are stronger together than we are apart. Partnerships matter. Community counts. Thank you for your strength, partnership, and community!

Yours in Christ,

Duane C. Pederson, Bishop
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