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Oregon Synod – ELCA
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Dave Brauer-Rieke,
bishop

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Oregon Synod,

As you gather for your Annual Meeting your synod staff and I wish to thank you for your prayers and support. I am especially appreciative of those I know who keep me personally in their prayers and who pray regularly for both their Church and national leaders on Sunday mornings. What a privilege to be part of a community that is supportive, caring and challenging all at the same time.

You meet today with a future full of both crises and opportunity ahead. We live in a state where fewer and fewer people know the love of Jesus. Too many are confronted with a Christianity void of acceptance and peace. Our economy is at a low point. Access to food, health services and hope is all too often lacking. Those of us who are privileged are fine. Many others are not. At the same time many sense a ‘Phoenix phenomena’ knowing that the Spirit is not without a plan or power among us. Always we are called to live out this coming reality which is infinitely more hopeful and wholesome than our present. *“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.”* says Isaiah. Our ministry is forever one of radical wonder.

At our annual meetings the challenges of life are generally seen in budgets, resolutions or visioning processes. God gives you the responsibility for mission in your place – not me. Only you know the Spirit’s stirring in your community. To you are given the stewardship of all that is holy and hopeful for those around you. Do not be afraid to believe. Do not be hesitant to act.

As you meet do so prayerfully. Anticipate the Lord’s presence. Be frugal, faithful, open and honest. There is change, but no failure in Christ. Everything of this earth has its end. That is true of friends, congregations and ministries. Yet, with endings come new beginnings. Here is our test, not it whether we can prolong life, but in whether or not we will trust in the Lord’s tomorrow. In days of crises and opportunity our witness is precisely such a trust.

With you on the journey,

Dave Brauer-Rieke, bishop