

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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GATHERED. “For where two or three are *GATHERED* in my name, I am there among/with them.” (Matthew 18:10.) Covid has diminished and it has taken some time for members and friends to *GATHER* together in church building sacred spaces again. General Synod 34 and this year’s 60th NWOA Annual Meeting met in person for the first time in several years. At General Synod, in particular, it seemed like a subdued meeting, for with all the changes in delegates, the break prevented continuity of relationships. At previous Synod meetings it was reestablishing friendships of the previous Synod meetings who helped connect new folks with one another. This time it was like reaching out to strangers who were trying to navigate the Synod process and were not mentored or guided by previous Synod attendees. The unfamiliar was the anxiety as new voices sought connection gathered in Christ’s name.

In Matthew’s text, Jesus instructs His followers about how to deal with disagreements and conflicts among the faithful. If the disagreeing parties cannot solve their struggles, seek the advice of others, including seeking solution from the *GATHERED* faith community, for Jesus is among/with them with God’s Spirit. Jesus spoke that the greatest commandments are to love God with our entire being, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Struggles can be resolved when individuals and the *GATHERED* community recognizes, hears, acts, sees, and knows the living Christ in each other.

Jesus’ *GATHERED* a diverse, contentious group as His disciples. They at times questioned His authority and even wondered who He really was. Jesus taught them how to be a faith community, empowering them by giving them permission to be spokespersons for God’s Amazing Grace and love. Their lives were changed and their message changed the lives of those they met. Jesus did not abandon them, for His resurrection spirit in them had power over evil in the world. This is the Good News for us today, “for where two or three are *GATHERED* in Christ’s name, Jesus is there among/with them.” We are empowered to “turn the world upside down” to the honor and glory of God. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS*.