

July 2009

Dear friends,

It is with mixed emotions that I announce to you my retirement as of October 31, 2009. The decision has not been easy for me to make for several reasons. One is that I feel that I have learned some of the skills needed for this calling and made the contacts that make a bishop most effective. In addition, I allowed my name to go forward in the balloting for a second term with every intention of completing it. However, as many of you are aware, my health has been a concern for the last few years. Initially I thought that my health issues would be finally and fully addressed once my foot had healed. This has not been the case, as I now face the need for knee replacement in both knees, with surgery scheduled for January 12 and 19, 2010.

The synod has been very patient and much in prayer during my past illnesses, for which I am most grateful. But after much discussion and prayer, I have come to the conclusion that the synod needs a bishop who does not have to devote so much time to self-care when there is so much synodical work to be done. It is on this basis, and this basis alone, that I have decided to retire.

From this point on, the Synod Council will determine the process to be followed during the transition to a new bishop. Having worked with this group for some time and knowing the strong leadership skills of Vice President Yolanda Tanner, I am confident that the council will act prayerfully, faithfully and decisively to guide the synod during this time. One possibility is that the council will appoint an interim bishop and call a special synod assembly early in 2010 to elect a bishop. Whatever the council decides, however, will be communicated with all members of the synod in as many ways as possible. I know you join me in offering prayers of gratitude that God has blessed us with these faithful leaders and prayers that God will continue to offer them guidance in the days ahead.

It has been a privilege to serve as your bishop, a calling that was as surprising to me as it was to many of you. Whatever I have accomplished reflects largely on the fine work of the assistants to the bishop and the synod staff. I can retire with confidence because I know how faithfully and competently they work. As my health permits, and as the new bishop and the Synod Council think appropriate, I hope to continue in retirement to try to bring into being the Lutheran Adolescent Recovery School and to help the "Sowing for the Harvest" campaign.

Again, I thank you for the privilege of serving as your bishop. God has sustained me in that calling, and for that I give thanks. Pray for me, and I will pray for you, in the days ahead.

Peace and joy,



H. Gerard Knoche  
Bishop