

Jeff's Jottings

Happy New Year

September 7, 2018

By Jeff Japinga
Executive Presbyter

Whatever the calendar or the lectionary might say, this Sunday is, for many of our congregations, the beginning of a new church year.

At Oak Grove and House of Hope and Associated in Owatonna, this Sunday is Rally Sunday. At St. Luke, it's Come Together Sunday. At First, South Saint Paul, it's Coming Home Sunday. It's Kickoff Sunday at First in Rochester (and for the Vikings and Packers, but that's a whole different kind of church).

By whatever name we give it, this first Sunday after Labor Day traditionally marks a new beginning: a return to "regular" worship hours and Christian education classes and choir practices and all manner of ministries that take a hiatus for the summer.

But it's also a different kind of new beginning. We can no longer — if indeed we ever could — simply be the same church for the same people in the same community, year after year. We know and have experienced this common reality: that the church, in all its parts — whether as a local congregation, a Presbytery, or at the General Assembly — faces new contexts for ministry and a new opportunities for mission each and every year; and that the church must reform its future practices of ministry both within its own places and outward to the world.

As a presbytery, we'll begin our new year on Tuesday with the September stated meeting in Buffalo (<https://bit.ly/2M7TfYY>). As part of our commitment to our missional calling, we will welcome the Revs. Jessica Tate, executive director of Next Church, and Shavon Starling-Louis, co-chair of the Next Church Strategy Team, to our meeting. They'll speak after dinner on Tuesday, and lead a morning workshop on Wednesday

(<https://bit.ly/2P3FKvt>). You all are welcome to join us. The full Presbytery packet (<https://bit.ly/2Me928U>) is linked here and is also on our website.

The Presbytery's mission commitment — to support congregations and to equip leaders — is reflective of and responding to this new missional reality. But mission statements don't reflect mission unless they are enacted intentionally and specifically in hope and common commitments — for presbyteries or congregations. And so as we together enter this “new year,” may we also together challenge and encourage each other in the missional callings God has put before us.