

C - H - A - N - G - E

By Rev. Dan Gilbert, Northern Illinois District President
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I'm writing this on Friday morning, January 20. In a little while, God willing, the presidency of the United States will change in a peaceful transition of power. Thanks be to God for the freedom we have in this country—something we certainly don't deserve.

I'm old enough now to remember U. S. Presidents all the way back to President Eisenhower. I had high hopes for some of them when I was younger; each one broke my heart in one way or another—or several ways.

Others I found extremely difficult to respect. By reflecting on that, I came to better take to heart the Fourth Commandment regarding respect for those in authority, praying daily (as Jan and I do) for "kings and all who are in high position." (1 Timothy 2:2)

For years now, this has been my response when people ask me about my politics: "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation." (Psalm 146:3)

Speaking of change, this is the March/April edition of *The Northern Light*. Nominations for the next Northern Illinois District president will open this April. God willing, in March 2018 a new Northern Illinois District president will be elected, and he will take office the following June 1. Change.

Jan and I have been praying daily for those not-yet-known nominees and especially for the one who will be elected. And if you haven't started those prayers yet, I hope you do.

And what will the changes be for the district? I don't know. More congregations closing? Probably.

More congregations doing new things to reach out to their neighbors in their communities with the love of Jesus shown in action and expressed in words? I hope so very deeply.

Pastors, deaconesses, church musicians, educators and all the members of our congregations remaining completely faithful to God's Word and the true confession of the faith? Grant it please, Lord.

So, big changes in the country; big changes in the Northern Illinois District coming next year. And changes good and bad coming to all our lives.

How about your congregation? Many of our congregations have done at least one new thing to serve their communities in Jesus' name in the last few years. I hope yours is one of them. If not, may the Lord give you grace, wisdom and courage to do so, now. It might not work, but it definitely won't work if we don't do something.

It's not too late. Our three excellent district mission facilitators remain ready to help congregations find a way. And while our mission facilitators are a gift from the Lord to the church and the world, far better is the gift of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace in congregations, bringing girls and boys and men and women out of darkness into the light of Jesus by the power of the Gospel.

We convert no one; we have the honor and privilege of witnessing to the true Light, praying that the Holy Spirit brings many to faith in him.

My hope and prayer is that our doctrine and confession will not change in any way at all, and that our congregations will see huge and ongoing changes in what and how we take the Good News to our neighbors and to the nations.

As an aging Boomer, I'm a fan of Bob Dylan. (He's expressed faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior several times. Pray for him; I do.) Fifty-three years ago he wrote "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Yep, that's for sure.

Even better lyrics are these: "Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me." He will. The Lord of lords and King of kings became the servant of all. He met our deepest need by suffering the world's deepest pain and sorrow on the cross to pay for our sins. He defeated death by his resurrection. He's coming back to raise us to life forever in the new and perfect creation.

Through all the changes in church, world, and family, the Lord who changes not does and always will abide with us. Thanks be to God.

