

Dear Friends in Christ,

How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb?

- A.) One to change the bulb and two to talk about how much they will miss the old bulb.
- B.) Two-thirds of fifteen percent of the confirmed membership at a regularly called congregational meeting.
- C.) You can't change the bulb because it was a memorial gift.
- D.) CHANGE?!? WHAT DO YOU MEAN CHANGE??



I can confidently predict that 2021 will bring more change to our lives. Change is the one constant of our lives. We are attracted to both familiar things and also to new things.

The Bible calls us to both hold on to the past and get ready for the future. Isaiah 46:9 says, "Remember the former things, those of long ago." But Isaiah 43:18 says, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing!"

The apostle Paul calls us to learn from the past in 1 Corinthians 10, but in Philippians 3 he writes: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal."

We know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) That means that Jesus is faithful to his promises. But we are far from what God created us to be. We shouldn't be content with where we are today. The Holy Spirit is always calling us to grow into the image of Jesus. So while we learn from the past, followers of Jesus are always seeking new ways to grow in Christlikeness. They say that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, we are all broken in some way. So change is good.

God loves us just the way we are, but God loves us too much to leave us the way we are. And so life is designed to push us to change. 2021 will be a year of both blessings and challenges. May the blessings point us to faith in the goodness and grace of God. And may the challenges move us to a deeper hunger for the grace and glory of God.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*