

**From Jenn Warnock, Lay Minister**

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish" Proverbs 29:18*

**Happy New Year beloved people of God!**

As we greet the New Year, we often look forward with resolution(s), with vision. We renew commitments and we make goals and we envision successes. As Christians, and as Church, what is our vision for 2026 and beyond? Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 6:21, "where your treasure is, your heart will be also". Is Jesus our treasure? And, do we have a commitment to serving and following God? Do we follow our hearts to worship and to prayer and to community?

Now, everyone in Southwest Minnesota knows that the Minneota Vikings are an amazing and successful high school sports program across all teams! But, would the Minneota Vikings be as exceptional and successful as they are without **vision**, and without **commitment**? Imagine, if you will, that the athletes of Minneota only showed up for practice when they felt like it, or when there was nothing else to do? What if the parents never brought the athletes to practice or attended any of their games? Suppose the coaches would rather read the sports page or play games on their phones than care and coach? What if there was not adequate or consistent funding sources to support the program? I think there would be a very different Minneota athletic world.

Where is our treasure, our hearts, our priorities as church? A church who values **God over All** will prioritize God's will and His way, His people and His house, His gospel and His mission over everything. In the manner that we support our sports, this includes consistent church attendance, consistent monetary support, and consistent community building within and without the church family. All my life, both as a pastor's daughter and pastor's wife, I have heard people make this statement: *our church needs to grow, how do we make our church grow*". Just like anything else, a garden, a family, a sports team, we nurture **what is important to us**! So many times, those same churches asking those questions are looking for something or someone to come in from outside and magically make everything the way that they want it. (Usually financially) Basically, if everyone is following the vision, and is committed, the church will be and will remain healthy. If we only attend worship when we feel like it, what if eventually nobody feels like it? Are we waiting for everyone else to contribute financially? Do we want the church to be there for our families for baptisms and confirmations and weddings, but we make no commitment to the church and are surprised when we show up one day and the church is no longer there? I live in a former church building and am reminded of this often. We drive by former church buildings that now function as community centers or daycare centers.

The church is more than our buildings, however, as beautiful as they are. The church is the body of believers, the Family of God. It is a spiritual bond. As we nurture our biological families, so should we care for and nurture our church family. It is important, it is worth commitment, it is worth following and sustaining the vision. We know God's plan for us as outlined by the prophet Jeremiah: "plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." What are our plans? What is our vision for 2026 (and beyond)?

May God bless us everyone, and lead us in His way in this New Year!

In Christ Alone,

Jenn