

**A Ministry Vision for the New Jersey District**  
**Rev. Dr. Anthony Steinbronn**

For the past six years, you have given me the great privilege of serving as your District President; if I would be elected to a third and final term, these thoughts would guide my ministry in your midst.

**The vision of the church is given to us from Christ, who is the Head of the Church...and He has given us a Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49) **and a Great Commandment** (Matthew 25:31-45; Luke 10:25-37; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-12, 19-21).

The vision of our Lord for His people is simple and clear: "go and make disciples of all nations." Throughout His ministry, Jesus called disciples to Himself and taught them many things about being one of His disciples. Jesus summarized this life of discipleship in this way: "a wise person is someone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice" (Matthew 7:24-27); and identified two fundamental practices of a disciple when He said: "if you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples" (John 8:31-32) and "if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

In response to these words of Jesus, the first major focus of the District will be to increase the biblical literacy of His people through the teaching ministry of the District's *Leaders and Learners* program and through the leadership of the *Congregation Services' Council*. During the next three years, there will be frequent training events involving these resources: the *Divine Drama* (with notes from the *Bethel Bible Series*), *fifty stories that every Christian should know*, and *the parables of Jesus* so that we can grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures, possess a comprehensive understanding of His story, make sense of our story in light of His story and how we are to live as His people in the 21st century.

In response to these words of Jesus, the second major focus of the District will be to equip His people in how to share His story of salvation in Jesus Christ with others through the teaching ministry of the District's *Leaders and Learners* program and through the leadership of the *Outreach Council*. During the next three years, there will be frequent training events involving these resources: *the LASSIE method of witnessing the Gospel* (Rev. Mark Woods), *how did Jesus do evangelism* and *life is all about stories: helping people make sense of their story in light of His story* (Rev. Dr. Anthony Steinbronn), *joining Jesus on His mission: how to be an everyday missionary* (Rev. Greg Finke); and *the mission leadership series* -- six, one-day workshops designed to form disciples in their life as a missionary (the six workshops are outlined in strategic focus #5 of my convention report).

In response to these words of Jesus, the third major focus of the District will be for me to personally, and frequently, visit the pastors and congregations of the District so that they might be encouraged and strengthened in their ministry of Word and Sacrament -- being joined in this visitation ministry by the other members of the District's *Growth Council* (three Vice-Presidents and six Circuit Visitors) -- and, when invited to do so, to assist the pastors and congregations in addressing the pressing issues and ministry opportunities that they have through a threefold process: (1) identifying and stating the pressing issues and adaptive challenges that we are facing together; (2) thinking biblically and theologically about these issues and opportunities and discovering together what the Scriptures have to say about these things (since all theology and ministry practices are normed by God's Word); and (3) formulating a ministry plan that is congregationally owned and constructed, a ministry plan that identifies the next steps to be taken and how to go about implementing those steps so that we, along with many others, will be blessed in our future life together.

A final thought from Martin Luther -- the Christian life can be summarized in two words: faith and love whereby every believer is placed midway between God and one's neighbor, becoming God's instrument of blessing through their witnessing of the Gospel and deeds of love, compassion and mercy.