

# **PLUM Pastoral Message**

## **June 2023**

### ***SOMETHING BIG IS COMING TO PLUM – GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING WITH US!***

***“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”***  
**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

A few months ago, I was asked by the leadership of the Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) to coordinate and facilitate the new “WHAT’S NEXT COMMITTEE” – a committee that functions like a vision committee. To begin this new task, the committee was given an initial task to analyze the PLUM 2022 annual survey of activities to develop innovative ideas for our ongoing ministries.

On April 19 the committee held its first meeting and began discussing, revisioning, reimaging and rethinking ways for PLUM to rebrand itself for the revival God is calling and leading us to. I am very hopeful and strongly believe that God is up to something marvelous with us, and that God is raising members, leaders, and strangers who will thrust us into a new and hopeful future. The challenge for all of us is to be open to the unfamiliarity of some of the new territories that God might be calling us to venture.

Change will not come easily. In fact, change requires praying, dreaming, faith, leaping to the unknown, planning, resources, energy, willing bodies, or vessels to make things happen. I am thankful for the willing hearts that attended our first meeting and for the outstanding deliberations we had and the great suggestions we got. God is up to something here. Do you see it?

Dreaming, planning and faith play very essential roles in developing and sustaining any institution. Faith helps one become the kind of person God made you to be. There is an important connection between dreaming and believing, between your imagination and your growth. Without a dream, you get stuck. But with God-inspired dreams, you have almost limitless possibilities. PLUM has everything it takes to do ministry in ways that are best for our communities today. In fact, PLUM is doing some of the best ministries any church would endeavor to do today. Our churches are blessings to their communities by the unique ministries each is rendering to their siblings in those communities. Thank you!

As we chat about fresh territories for ministry in PLUM, let us look at what right dreaming will do for us individually as well as corporately for PLUM.

One's dreams profoundly shape one's identity, one's happiness, one's achievements, and one's fulfillment. But God-inspired dreaming offers far more than just these benefits. Dreaming has eternal implications too.

Dreaming is always the first step in the process God uses to change your life for the better. Everything starts as a dream!

In many ways, a great dream is a statement of faith. You are saying, "I believe that things can change and can be different, and I believe that God will enable me to accomplish it." When you trust God, it always makes God happy.

The Bible says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

Dreaming is the step that gets the ball rolling. It is a catalyst for personal change as well as institutional change. And it is those internal changes that God is most concerned about; they prepare you for life with God in eternity.

So first, God gives you a **dream** for your life or for the ministry of your church. Then, you must make a **decision** about it. The third stage of **delay may come**, where you must wait for God to work in his time. The next stage is **difficulty**, where God evaluates your faith in the dream and your trust in God. Then, you might reach a **dead end**, which will make you want to give up. But in the end, God always brings you to **deliverance at God's own timing**. Faith or Trust in God is the foundation.

God uses the dreaming process to grow one's faith and to develop one's character. This faith-building process is illustrated over and over in the lives of people in the Bible. And it will be repeated over and over in our lives and that of our churches as God moves us toward spiritual maturity and growth.

You will find no greater fulfillment than when you are doing what God created you to do—pursuing God's dream for your life and for communities or churches God has entrusted to us. This will not be easy, and it will not be quick—but it will be worth it.

God gave Moses the dream of leading the children of Israel out of 400 years of slavery—but Moses had to make the decision to confront Pharaoh.

God gave Noah the dream of saving the world from the flood—but Noah had to make the decision to build the ark.

God gave Abraham the dream of building a new nation—but Abraham had to make the decision to leave everything and go out into the unknown.

Just like these people in the Bible, we will never realize God's dream for PLUM or for our own lives until we come to the stage of decision-making and choose to step out in faith and do what no one else is willing to do. We must face our fear **boldly** with faith knowing that there is nothing that God cannot do. God can use PLUM to impact Pittsburgh and its environs in a marvelous way. Are we open and willing to do what the Lord will tell us to do?

I invite all of you to the “WHAT’S NEXT COMMITTEE” to discern what God is up to with PLUM in this era and season. Please join us every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7pm via zoom for our discernment meetings.

Blessings!

Pastor Alexander Y. Sumo, on behalf of the PLUM pastoral team.