

A Note From the Pastor, Coming or Going?

When I was an intern, it was a surprise to hear how the members of the congregation changed their “tenses” when they talked about me. To me, it was a bit of a shock.

When I first came, introductions were, “I want you to meet our new intern”. For some it changed and became, “I’d like to introduce you to our youth pastor” (no matter how vigorously I tried to say differently). Soon - and unexpectedly, for me - it became, “he’ll be leaving soon”.

We make similar transitions in interim ministry. Depending on how you recon time, it’s been only a few months since I came here to St. John. Many were still “grieving” at the departure of beloved-by-most Pr. Nate. Many were leary of the new guy, but willing to give me the benefit of the doubt. Pr. Nate was an ELCA pastor and so is his replacement. The Bishop recommended him, so . . . okay.

Soon I became the status quo, part of the staff. What I did and said carried some weight. Even when I made changes, I was the Pastor (Interim) and the changes were generally tolerated if not accepted. Some were even appreciated!

That is about to change again. Your Call Committee will soon be receiving name(s) to interview, recommending a pastor to the Council and having a special Call meeting of the congregation. So, I will become the soon-to-be-departing pastor. Various permutations will include: “did we forget to tell you?” or “let’s wait and ask the new pastor”.

It’s normal. It’s OK. It’s part of the process. After being a parish pastor for over 30 years and an interim pastor for over 9 years, I understand the process and appreciate it. While we will soon be using words of departure here at St. John, I’ll be looking for another congregation to start the process anew.

– Interim Pastor Paul

On December 4, we celebrated the very successful conclusion of our three-year *Community in Christ : Christ in Community* Capital Campaign! During that morning of celebration, the campaign’s final installment donation to Churches United for the Homeless was presented to Pastor Sue Koesterman, Executive Director of CUH, who also delivered the sermon at both worship services. Between services, with specialty coffee and refreshments on hand, Larry Papenfuss shared a report highlighting the results of the campaign’s goals of reduced debt and increased ministry impact, including:

- Mortgage balance reduced by 39% from \$1,143,000 to \$695,000
- \$50,000 donated to Churches United for the Homeless
- Associate Pastor position expanded from ½ to ¾ time
- Sunday School/Cross+Walk Coordinator position funded
- Seminary Internship (Pastor Jeff Brown) funded
- HVAC System Replacement
- Heat Transfer Fluid Replacement & Related Boiler Maintenance Needs
- Sanctuary Wireless Mic System
- Security Camera System with Alarm
- Landscaping Work to Eliminate Water Seepage
- Fellowship Hall Projector & Screen
- Room B11 TV and DVD Player
- Storage Shed Electric Panel & Heater
- Replaced and added Phone and Internet Switches
- Security Locks for Sacristy Area

Memorials, Honorariums & Special Gifts

Good Samaritan Committee Fund:
In Memory of Margaret Miller:
Marian Prim

General Memorial Fund:
In Loving Memory of Jack Gruhl:
Bonnie Gruhl
In Memory of Margaret Miller:
Elwood & LaVon Rieke

How long does the Call Process usually take?

Before we answer that, a little information regarding the call process. There are three “expressions” of the ELCA Lutheran Church. **Churchwide, Synod, and Local.** **Churchwide** (headquartered in Chicago) maintains the overall roster of all pastoral leaders and provides an on-line portal for all forms related to the call process. One of your call committee’s responsibilities is the Ministry Site Profile (MSP), a 13 page document that needs to be uploaded to the ELCA portal. Due to an extensive update of certain ELCA forms, the portal is essentially non-functioning for an entire month. This will have some effect on our progress.

The **Eastern North Dakota Synod** is intimately involved with the call process. It is required that the bishop meet with the St. John Church Council and the Call Committee and that he is kept informed about the call process. Pastor Nate very kindly gave us lead-time regarding his departure from St. John, but the call process could not officially start until after the current pastor has left the congregation. Once Pastor Nate left, then the call committee was formed, we met with Bishop Brandt, and since then have had several meetings gathering information for the MSP and working on the Call Process.

The responsibilities of **the local church (St. John)** are to help “drive” the process and work with the synod regarding finding pastoral candidates. The MSP form has to be adopted by our Church Council and authorized by the Synod Bishop’s office before it is made available (via the ELCA Portal) to potential pastors. Pastors interested in relocating need to have an up-to-date form filled out, known as an RLP (Rostered Leader Profile) which is 15 pages in length. Some of you may know a pastor whom you think will be a good fit for St. John, and that is one way to secure names for the senior pastor position. However, while those names can be made known to the call committee, those individuals under consideration also need to have their names submitted to the Synod Bishop.

So.....how long does it take? After talking with the Synod, local pastors, and our own interim pastor, Pr. Paul Balaban, the answer is: **very often up to a year!** I understand that seems long to some, but that’s just the way it often plays out. Researching St. John’s history of calling a senior pastor reveals that the time between Pastor Ron Bock and Pastor Nate Keith was.....*almost exactly one year!* With that in mind, and knowing the intricacies of the call process, a good faith guess for welcoming a new senior pastor will be mid to late spring 2017.

The Call Committee is composed of great St. John members dedicated to finding the right pastor for St. John. We welcome your input and you are encouraged to talk with any of its members: Dan Altenbernd, Carrol Gjovik, Luke Papenfuss, Nathan Olson, Jeri Ekstrom, Donna Wallgren, or Joel Kangas.

Believe it or not, that was the *short* version of the call process; there are many other details that your Call Committee, Church Council, and Synod will handle on your behalf. Have a blessed Christmas Season.

Joel T. Kangas, Chair

St. John Call Committee

jtkangas@cableone.net

St. John’s Stephen Ministry

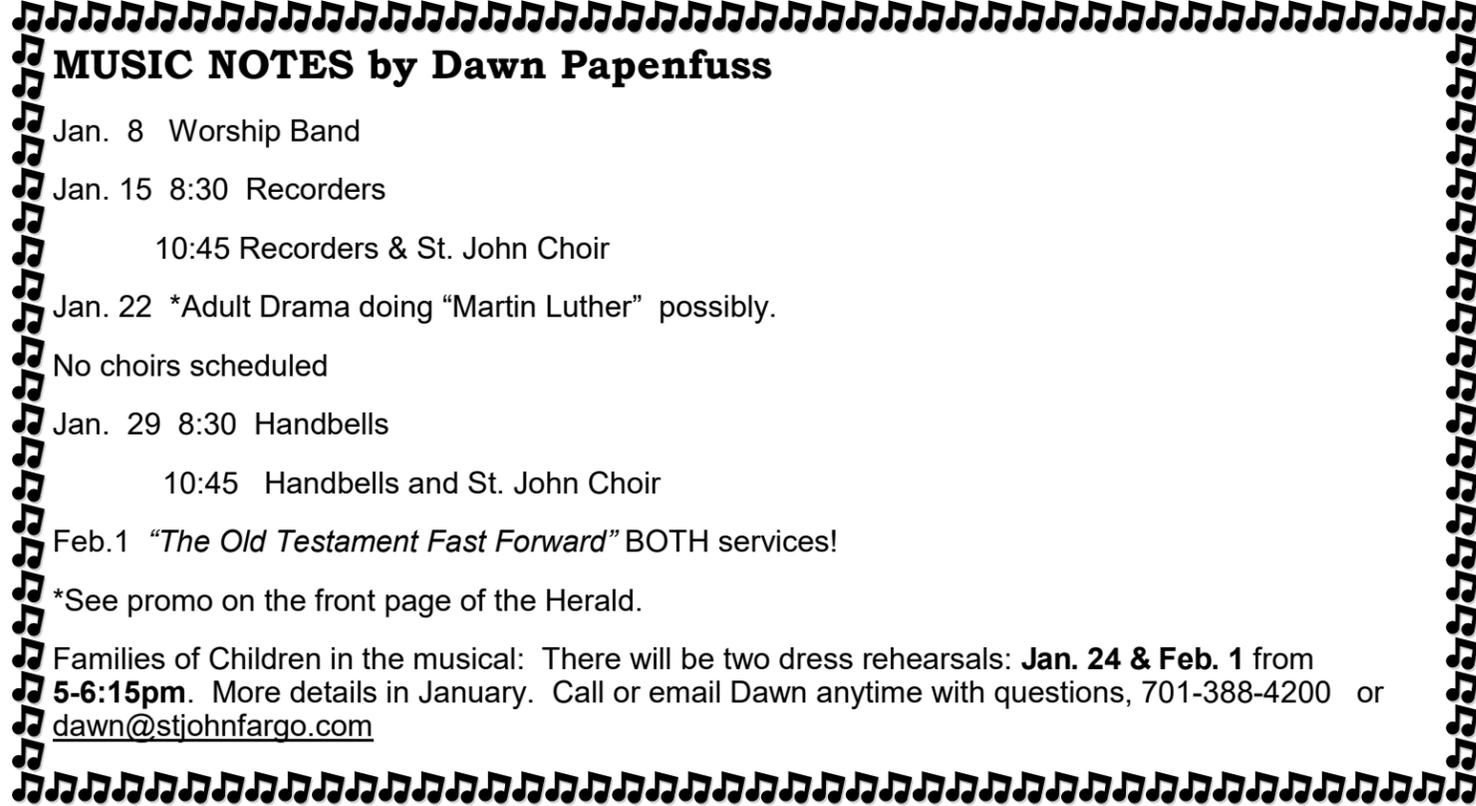
Stephen Ministry began April, 2013 with an idea from *David Duval* and encouraged by former pastors, *Pastor Leslie* and *Pastor Nate*. Nine people began training and 8 were commissioned. Currently we have 5 people bringing Christ-Care to the congregation. The care givers are: *Rachel Asleson, Allan Peterson, Jim Power and Gail Reiersen and myself, Gini Duval*. We thank *Norma Rodland* who has helped us in the past. We are having our 2nd training January 27 to February 19 over 3 weekends.

Where do you fit in this picture?

When you take our course, you will discover God-given gifts and you will feel empowered to use your gifts for this ministry of care giving. Talk to God about this.

Gini Duval

We have accomplished much together! **Thank you** for your generosity for the sake of Christ’s ministry² in and through us. You make St. John the vibrant community of faith that we are.



MUSIC NOTES by Dawn Papenfuss

- Jan. 8 Worship Band
- Jan. 15 8:30 Recorders
10:45 Recorders & St. John Choir
- Jan. 22 *Adult Drama doing “Martin Luther” possibly.
No choirs scheduled
- Jan. 29 8:30 Handbells
10:45 Handbells and St. John Choir
- Feb.1 “*The Old Testament Fast Forward*” BOTH services!
- *See promo on the front page of the Herald.

Families of Children in the musical: There will be two dress rehearsals: **Jan. 24 & Feb. 1** from **5-6:15pm**. More details in January. Call or email Dawn anytime with questions, 701-388-4200 or dawn@stjohnfargo.com

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Please Share: We’re Seeking a Youth Education Director

The Education Committee recently opened a search for a Youth Education Director. This person will lead the education programming for the youth and families at St. John.

We are seeking someone with a passion for kids who has a desire to help them learn the Bible and grow their faith. A background in youth ministry, child development, education or related field is preferred, but not required.

Some of this individual’s key responsibilities will include:

- Working with the Education Committee to review the vision and goals of the education program.
- Recommending the format of education offerings, options for curriculum and yearly schedule.
- Developing a plan for Milestone Ministries.
- Being the visible leader of our education program through weekly involvement.
- Working with pastors to define the Confirmation program.
- Recommending a plan for Vacation Bible School.

Recruiting volunteers to assist.

The position is for approximately 15 hours a week for 10-12 months.

If you know somebody who would be a good fit for this job, please encourage him or her to apply. A full job description can be found at our church website: stjohnfargo.com or obtained at the church office (office@stjohnfargo.com).

We hope to start interviewing shortly after the new year.

Reconciling in Christ - Questions I have, another point of view

Allow me to begin this letter with a quick note of thanks to the congregation for the fellowship of St. John Lutheran Church. My faith has grown stronger and deeper by being an active member within St. John, and I must express my humble gratitude to this congregation.

With an open heart, I write today to express a difference of opinion regarding the article in the December issue of *The Herald* published by the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) committee. Please hear me when I say I deeply appreciate what the RIC committee is trying to accomplish and acknowledge that having a committee similar to RIC within St. John will always be necessary, but I ask: Is RIC a label necessary for St. John, or should we focus on simply becoming a more “welcoming church”?

The key statement in December’s Newsletter that pushed me to voice my opinion is around the goal of having our congregation “affirm” the labeling of St. John as an RIC church. By using the word “affirm,” the RIC committee is in effect claiming the congregation already agrees with the RIC positioning, which I believe may not be a completely accurate assumption.

The primary motivation presented in the newsletter article for becoming an RIC church is to become more explicitly welcoming to Christians who have been marginalized. Similar to the use of the word “affirm,” I feel using the word “explicitly” is an over-reach in how RIC represents the current view of the congregation.

You may be thinking this is just an inconsequential matter of semantics, but I argue words matter. Specifically, labels matter and can lead to unintended side effects. No one, myself included, will argue the fact that St. John should always seek to become more welcoming. We have welcomed “the marginalized” by our actions many times over.

The questions I have are whether or not this label will be a helpful designation in any real tangible way? Will labeling ourselves as an RIC congregation make us more welcoming? Will this designation bring with it the implication that if you are uncomfortable with this label you are unwelcome here? Is this label an attempt at a quick (or easy) solution to a very complex issue?

Could we be putting ourselves in a position of perceived judgment of other churches and followers of Christ that may not be embracing the RIC movement? Judging is singularly God’s job, and he will do it not by judging external matters, but by judging what is unseen—the heart (1 Sam 16:7).

Ultimately, I believe labels have very little worth because we each define them differently. The same label will tell two different stories to two different people. But both stories will share one unifying trait—both will be based on judgments those unique individuals make in reaction to the label. It’s human nature.

Should St. John become an RIC church? If we are to take this question to the congregation soon, it should not be presented as a simple yes or no vote. I believe we need a discussion on whether we as a congregation need to focus our energies on being a better, more welcoming church, or be explicit by labeling St. John an RIC church. I feel we can continue to successfully prove to this community and God who we are by our hearts without relying on labels.

Prayerfully,

Dan Altenbernd

Sheltering the Homeless

We will be providing a warm place to stay here at St. John for the homeless January 15th-January 21st.

There are many ways to be Christ in our Community while representing our Community in Christ. There will be two shifts, each six hours: 8:00pm-2:00am; and 2:00am-8:00am. We are in need of two men and two women for each shift. Please sign up on the sheets located on the Tower of Service in the main church entrance area. We are also in **EXTREME NEED** of food items,

ESPECIALLY PREPARED HOMEMADE SOUPS. Questions? Contact Elwood Rieke 701-293-0717

Thank you in Advance!