

Pastor's Report

2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The past year has been filled with joyful ministerial opportunities for me as your pastor. We continue to grow in many areas of ministry and revisit those where we sense a need for change and renewal. We are currently looking at two rather significant challenges at St. Paul—one being the calling of an associate pastor and the second the undertaking of a massive renovation project.

As we look to rather formidable challenges in our ministry together I am reminded of the passage from Luke 7: 11-17—

¹¹Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

If there is one message that comes through this scripture loudly and clearly it is this: when we run up against our failures, when we run up against our inabilities, when we're faced with our human limitations that make us finally say, "We can't do this"—then scripture rings with affirmation, "No, but God can."

The joyful discovery which the widow of Nain experienced is the same joy we carry with us as we open our lives more and more to the possibilities of Christ.

Following Christ doesn't lead us to a dead-end street; it opens up our future and makes all things new. Thanks be to God.

In the next few days I will begin my fifth year as your pastor. We have seen the Holy Spirit moving mightily with us during these past four years. I thank you for allowing me to be your pastor as a partner and leader in our ministry here at St. Paul. I would like to share with you my involvement as pastor in four major areas of ministry.

The first area of ministry is Christian education. I continue to offer a Monday afternoon Bible Study on different subjects in the Bible and various topics. I am currently teaching through the Book of Romans. One very interesting area we covered a few months ago was the subject of iconography—during this time of study we had an iconographer come and speak with us and took a “road trip” to the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg where we viewed an icon display.

I have enjoyed working with Bill Shearer in supporting and retrieving resources for the newly formed Post-Prison Bible Study. Every Tuesday evening we host this gathering of men and women who have recently been released from prison for a time of reflection and Bible study. This group is open to others who have not had a prison experience but who would like to share with those who have in an environment based on biblical study.

I led two different forums for the discussion of the book “The Shack.” We had one group meet during the day and one during the evening. Both sessions were well attended and brought to St. Paul different people who were not members of this congregation. Along the same lines I led two book discussion groups with two different books that coincided with our mission trip to the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation. The learning from these books helped us ground ourselves in servant ministry as we traveled to Montana.

During the past year I led two First Communion Classes. The new communicant, his\her parents, and I meet together for several sessions where we explore the concept of “our place at God's table.” I am currently working with another new communicant

that will receive his first communion in a few weeks. This time of learning and sharing is vital for the growth of our worshipping congregation.

Our newly devised confirmation program is now in its second full year and we currently have fourteen candidates for confirmation participating in this program. I had the opportunity to lead a confirmation trip to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. I also had the opportunity to teach during one of our confirmation retreats.

This year we revitalized our Sunday Christian Education program and the Vacation Bible School program. Our Sunday school program, Wednesday evening church school, and confirmation program are growing and are renewed under the leadership of Virginia Lopez—Christian Education leader. I continue to teach a pastor's class every Sunday morning during the Sunday school hour and enjoy this class as we continue to look at our Lutheran Christian identity. This class also serves as a resource for those joining our ranks as new disciples here at St. Paul. Another teaching opportunity I had this year was an adult study during our VBS program. This is the third year I have offered this class and again it was very well attended.

Last January we had our second annual congregation council retreat. We were privileged to have the use of the farm of Ron and Jean Adams. During this retreat we worked through our congregational story, feedback from our cottage meetings and congregational gathering, and began the process of putting together a new revised congregational profile. I had the opportunity to help lead this retreat, but most of the facilitating came through the leadership skills of Dale Cross.

The Second area of pastoral ministry I would like to highlight is my involvement with the greater church. When we are called, as ordained Lutheran Pastors, we are called not only to the local parish but also to the greater church.

I am currently serving my last elected year as a synod council member of the Lower Susquehanna Synod. In conjunction with the synod council I am the liaison to the synodical Worship committee and have been assigned to the Personnel Committee. I currently chair the review committee for a synod administered parish in the

Harrisburg area. Since our last annual meeting I have worked with two other ELCA congregations as a Mission Consultant assisting them in discerning their will for mission. I have been asked to attend several special synod council meetings in regard to the response to the actions taking at our church wide assembly.

One of the challenges of being a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been the approval of the Social Statement on Human Sexuality and the changes to our policies in conjunction with this statement. I have spent many hours talking to parishioners, other pastors, and concerned members of our community in regard to this issue. I attended a Lutheran Core meeting trying to get a handle on where the church is headed. We, at St. Paul, have members who range from very conservative to very liberal in their theological understandings. I continue to strive to be available as a pastor to those on all sides of this issue; therefore I try to keep my personal convictions to myself. I will always support the position that will NOT separate us from the Good News of Jesus Christ.

I attended our annual Synod Assembly for the Lower Susquehanna Synod. I would like to thank our voting members who attended from St. Paul for the year 2009 and they were Carol Woods and Sherman Hendrix. Attending these assemblies is an integral part of who we are as the church. I would like to encourage anyone who has not attended a synod assembly to consider this in the future.

During the past year I had the opportunity to supervise the second half of our vicar/interns time with us and the diaconical project of Dr. Holly Hoffman. The later project was the W.A.Y. program (Walking Alongside Youth) and is continuing as a ministry not only in our church but in several venues. Supervising both Vicar Terry and Dr. Holly involved meetings and several evaluations in conjunction with the field education office of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Working with Vicar Terry I had the responsibility to preview all sermons, lead weekly supervisory meetings, and attend monthly intern cluster meetings.

I attend the monthly meetings of the West Cumberland Conference. This is a gathering of rostered leaders of the ELCA from the greater Carlisle area. Last year we hosted the December monthly meeting and the Spring Assembly meeting for the West

Cumberland Conference. At both of these events, as with many others throughout our various ministries, our Fellowship Committee under the leadership of Mary Jane Keller offered a lovely and scrumptious feast for our guests.

The third area of pastoral ministry is continuing education. This is a very important facet of my personal growth as your pastor and as a claimed and named Child of God. My Call includes a two week period, separate from vacation, for this area of pastoral well-being. Over the past year I had the opportunity to participate in the following areas of continuing education: a four day personal spiritual retreat at Lake George, New York; a two day synod sponsored workshop on Racial Justice; the mission trip to the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation in Montana; the Bishop's Convocation; participation in the re-affirmation of my ordination vows during Holy Week.

The fourth area of pastoral ministry is community involvement. I am currently the president of the Carlisle Ministerium. During the past year I have been asked to contribute a bi-monthly article to the Faith in Focus section of our local paper "The Sentinel." I have enjoyed leading worship at the Manor Care community on a quarterly basis. This worship is successful through the generous offering of many of our parishioners who take time in their busy schedules to offer themselves on these Sunday afternoons—I thank you. I have begun reading on a weekly basis to the children of the ABC nursery. I taught eight young scouts in the God and Me program during a six-week period.

I had the opportunity to participate on a panel for discussion throughout the greater Carlisle area in regards to the Leadership Summit I attended last year. Some of you followed this process as it was hosted at different churches representing different denominations and some non-denominations throughout the community. We hosted one of the evenings here at St. Paul.

I continue to offer pastoral counseling and have found this to be a growing area in my ministry with St. Paul. My pastoral counseling includes non-members of this church who are primarily referred to me by members of this congregation.

I participated in the following community activities: the monthly Community Partners meetings with the community at large and Dickinson College; the Ecumenical Stations of the Cross with a walk throughout our community on Good Friday (we also hosted two of those stations); Relay for Life at Carlisle High School; Main Street at your Feet in conjunction with Dickinson College; St. Paul's annual Block Party; Harvest of the Arts Festival; a Red Cross Pandemic Flu Preparedness Workshop.

Our worship life at St. Paul continues to grow in depth and faithfulness. We now have five established worship services during the week. At this time I preside at all of these worship services: Wednesday 7:30 a.m.; Wednesday 6:00 p.m.; Saturday 5:15 p.m.; and Sunday 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. The addition of an Animal Blessing Service has shown growth as we have now had our second annual service with more humans and animals participating. Our Worship and Music committee has been revitalized under the leadership of Debra Nelson. We all can be thankful for the superb music ministry Bill Hemminger continues to share with us. The inclusion of the St. Paul's Brass in our worship on festivals continues to be a blessing.

We continue to grow in our electronic/computer ministries. Nick Fox leads us in this area with the addition of electronic message boards, the ever increasing use of our Stock Hall audio/visual booth, the anticipated recording of our worship services for the purpose of distribution to our homebound, and the revamping of our web page—just to mention a few. The development of an electronic church directory continues to move forward. I would like to thank John Brenner for his continued effort in this new area.

I would like to thank all those on staff at St. Paul for their dedication and partnership in ministry: The Rev. Dr. Robert Seibold, visitation pastor; Nick Fox, Youth and Family Ministries; Patti Schuettler, parish administrator; Bill Hemminger; Music director and organist; Don Eppley, sexton.

Our new restroom, located in the narthex, is a welcomed and much needed addition to our physical plant here at St. Paul. The addition of this restroom was so well executed that is difficult to see it as not being there from the inception of the building. A large thank you needs to be given to the family who donated this entire renovation

project. I hope and pray that our larger renovation projects will be done with as much care and faithfulness.

Since our last annual congregational meeting we have: baptized 14, married 5 couples, received 24 new disciples, 18 disciples have gone to the Church Triumphant, and 5 people have transferred. I have attached to this annual report the Trend Report which will give you a comparison and review of more statistics over the past several years.

We are in the process of calling an associate pastor. Our profile is completed and in the hands of the Bishop's Office. We are awaiting the possibility of candidates at this time. There is a possibility for Dr. Holly Hoffman to be added to our staff as a Diaconical Minister for a fifteen hour per week call. You will hear more about this in the upcoming weeks.

I opened this report with the reading from the Gospel of Luke. There are three times we encounter the raising of the dead in the ministry of Jesus: The widow's son, the daughter of Jairus, and Jesus' friend Lazarus. As we read these accounts, slowly but surely we begin to understand that God has more potential than we ever guessed. God is always more than we can know or express. Just when we think we can contain Him, He escapes from our limiting grasp and comes to us in yet another new way.

May God continue to bless our ministry together.

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Tim

The Rev. Timothy W. Sadler