

Pastor's Annual Report—2006

—
*“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.
When you search for me, you will find me says the Lord;
if you seek me with all your heart,
I will let you find me, says the Lord...”*
(Jeremiah 29: 11-14a)

As I compose this report we have been in a partnership of ministry for eleven months. Our Lord has been very gracious to us. I, very much, feel called here at this particular time to be your pastor here at St. Paul. God has blessed us with many opportunities to discern our mission/vision here as the gathered body of Christ located at the corners of West and Louthier Streets. The wonderful aspect of being your pastor is your willingness to look at how God is calling us to “be” and “do” as disciples named and claimed by our Lord, Jesus Christ. We have been given many gifts for ministry and through our willingness to work in partnership, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we will continue to look for the future; the future that our Lord promises is filled with His hope. Thanks be to God!

We are a growing congregation. Since I began my pastorate with you the Holy Spirit has baptized eleven new disciples who are now new members of this church. We have received into membership through Affirmation of Baptism seventeen new disciples. Through letters of transfer we have transferred eight members to other Lutheran congregations and all of them have been due to their residence no longer being in the immediate area. The Lord has received into the Church Triumphant eighteen members since our 2005 Congregational Meeting. We are currently looking to a new members group consisting of nine more disciples looking for membership within the next few weeks. I have had the opportunity to preside at eight weddings so far in my pastorate here at St. Paul. We had the joy to celebrate with three of our youth being confirmed this year through the re-affirmation of their baptisms.

We are a congregation willing to seek God's leading in discerning our call to ministry. During the time period from June the sixth through September the fifth we conducted ten cottage meetings. We had a total of one hundred and eleven congregants attend these gatherings. On November the twelfth we gathered as a congregation with over seventy-five participants and reviewed the hopes, dreams, and comments from the all-inclusive cottage meetings list. Congregational Council has approved the creation of an Ad Hoc Task Force to look at long range planning based upon the suggestions compiled over the past few months. The task force will report directly to council and we will gather, as a congregation, in a few months to review the discernment of our mission in a more concise and ordered manner.

During the year we have had several opportunities to participate with presentations by two

presenters. Mr. Roger Smith has worked with our Congregational Council and newly revitalized Stewardship Committee. Roger is a stewardship resource that comes to us through our benevolent giving through the ELCA. Rev. Dan Biles has worked with us by conducting a congregational gathering based around the program “Healthy Congregations” and by presenting at our first annual Congregational Council Retreat held at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Pastor Biles is a resource person that comes to us through our benevolent giving through the Lower Susquehanna Synod.

Two weeks of Continuing Education is part of my call to St. Paul. Every year I will be taking two weeks of some type of self-enrichment to allow myself to grow in my faith and effectiveness as your pastor. This last year I spent a week in Pittsburgh being trained as a Stephen Leader. I also attended several retreats at a monastery in Bristow, Virginia.

Our worship life continues to grow and expand. This year we began a Wednesday evening Contemporary Worship service. This service is regularly attended by forty to fifty people. This worship service is still evolving as we look for a technology team and purchase of various items to enhance this worship experience. This worship service is preceded by a time of fellowship that includes a meal. We have found this time of fellowship, eating, and worship to be an excellent outreach not only to our own church community, but also to the community outside our doors.

During the summer I led a congregational group to the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The participation from our congregation was so great that we ended up securing a bus in addition to our van for transportation. We had the opportunity to attend an organ recital, tour the cathedral, and worship during Noon Day Prayer. This was a wonderful fellowship event.

I am invigorated by visitation with parishioners. I visit those who are hospitalized, those in the midst of crisis, new member visitations, bereavement visitations, and sometimes just a regular home visitation. I have and will continue to go with Pastor Seibold, our visitation pastor, on a regular basis when time allows getting to know our homebound sisters and brothers.

During the past year I have asked all staff members to attend our weekly staff meetings. The staff meetings take place on Monday mornings beginning at 10:30 A.M. and are generally concluded between 11:30 and 12 noon. One of the primary tasks we have been conducting is the review of each staff members' job description. We have taken the most recent job description and have compared it to what the staff member is currently doing. In most cases there seems to be a rather marked difference between the job description and what is actually being done in the different staff positions. We have just finished this task and we will now be looking at the convening of our Mutual Ministry Committee. The next part of the process will be to have each staff person meet with myself and the Mutual Ministry Committee and compare what is being done and what the job description actually states. I anticipate new and accurate job descriptions to come out of this process that are reflective of what we see as our mission here at St. Paul.

One of the frequently expressed concerns here at St. Paul has been the way in which we

communicate. We have put into place several different approaches to this challenge over the past year. We have done away with the two outdated and inaccurate Web Sites that were out there on the World Wide Web and have begun developing a new site that is fantastic. Chad Enck has taken on this ministry and is doing a phenomenal job with his gifts and talents. He continues to improve and add to this site; please take some time and look to this exciting new way of communicating—Go to stpaulscarlisle.com

We have put into place a new and efficient phone system. Our hardware, or better put our phones, all look the same, however the inner workings are all brand new. If you have not had the opportunity to check out this system give it a call and go through the menu. We have included directions to the church, worship times, special events, voice mailboxes for all staff, all to enhance our way of communication.

We have added a step in our mission plan (budget) process which allows you as parishioners to have more input into the process of developing this plan. We had a congregational gathering time, before this congregational meeting, where we went through a reading of the mission plan (budget) so there could be more ownership into this process.

We have engaged an outside accounting firm by the name of Straley & Associates, LLC. One of the concerns that came to the fore during the Call process and expressed by both the Call Committee and Congregational Council was the area of finances. This firm will help us with a complete financial review and the objectives are to 1) evaluate compliance with generally accepted accounting principles, (2) assess current monthly financial reporting, (3) assess financial management policies and procedures, and (4) assess the utilization of the existing accounting software. This process has begun and will continue throughout the rest of this year and we will start seeing changes by the first quarter of 2007. This process is to help us develop a renewed climate of trust based upon “Good Practices.” From this groundwork we will be able to continue to grow in a healthy and informed manner so we can be better stewards of all the gifts God has so graciously bestowed upon us.

I have been delighted to see the turnaround in the areas of Christian Education and Stewardship.

We have put into place a new Sunday School curriculum titled “Akaloo.” This curriculum gives us many opportunities to teach in different ways including the use of the internet. We have gone from a purely rotational approach to a modified rotational approach. Our number of Sunday School participants is rising and the excitement and enthusiasm of our teachers is wonderful. We have also incorporated our Junior/Youth choir into our Sunday School program and on November the nineteenth they will be singing during worship for the first time this year. This was done to revitalize part of our ministry that needed some renewal.

We have put into place a new Confirmation curriculum titled “Here We Stand.” This curriculum is being used by all three levels. We have also changed our meeting times from Sunday afternoons to Sunday mornings during the Sunday School hour. I have the opportunity to teach the third year class and we have teachers for each of the other two levels.

The newly revitalized Stewardship Committee is moving ahead with passion and new direction. Under the leadership of Tricia West we are experiencing a growth in personal awareness

of what it means to be a good steward and what it also means to us as a congregation. Many exciting things are happening and are planned for this coming year.

I have asked the Congregational Council to look at and be open to new ways of forming our leadership structure. We are looking at how we structure the council and the relationship it has to do with our committee structure. Currently we are working a different paradigm of leadership structure with the newly revived Christian Education Committee. Instead of having a Council person placed on council not only as a participant on council but also as a committee chairperson—I have asked council to try working with a congregant that feels called to be on council but only have to relate to a certain area of our ministry. In other words, a council person would not have to chair and run a committee and be an active and dedicated council person. Currently Rachel Rhine is the new council person who is now relating to Christian Education and Joe Tomkiel is the Christian Education chairperson. This approach has been working now for the last few months and seems to be doing very well.

This new approach allows for what we call “multiplication” in our ministry. For us to continue to grow we need to always look to ways in which we can “multiply” our ministry. The model for this restructuring comes to us based upon the Great Commandment; “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, till the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 18-20)

We have been blessed with a staff willing to work with this time of transition in a very positive manner. I appreciate the opportunity to work with our staff and would like to thank all of them for their faithfulness to their specific calls in vocation:

The Rev. Dr. Robert Seibold--	Visitation Pastor
Bill Hemminger--	Director of Music & Organist
Nicholas Fox--	Coordinator of Youth and Family Ministries
Patti Schuettler--	Administrative Assistant
Don Eppley--	Building & Grounds
Brent Schaufert--	Nursery Attendant

May God continue to guide and bless us as we continue in this partnership of ministry.

In Christ's Service,

Rev. Timothy W. Sadler
Pastor