

## Pastoral Report to Council/Congregation (March 12-April 15, 2023)

### The months of March and April, thus far

Getting through everything—Lent, Congregation Council Planning Retreat, Holy Week and Easter—was huge.

### Pastoral goals for Joan and John Beck (March/early April)

1. *Be responsive and on-site for Wed/Sun schedule, plus meetings, emergencies and care visits*
2. *Continue to encourage trust-building processes*
3. *Facilitate small group gatherings*
4. *Plan with Council next steps for healing based on goals identified at retreat with Bishop's Associate Melissa Reed*
5. *Plan with Council next steps administratively*
6. *Lead education ministry*
7. *Lead congregation learning events*

### Our activity viewed through goals:

#### 1. GOAL: Be on site for Wed/Sun schedule, meetings, worship planning, plus care visits

Pastor Joan's gift for developing rich and creative liturgy continued throughout Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Mid-week soup suppers with Lenten Learning were well subscribed. Lenten Learning focused on forgiveness through the lens of the Stanford Forgiveness Project. This also was the focus for Sunday morning adult education. This month, Pastor Joan visited with Wynn Reader, Kim Mathisen, and Emma Riley and her daughter.

#### 2. GOAL: Introduce trust-building processes

Trust is sometimes painfully slow to rebuild. We continue to reinforce communication norms at meetings. We also continue check in with people who have been injured or were alienated during things that led to Pastor Dew's abrupt departure. Part of our pastoral role in this complicated situation is to help a new narrative emerge where people begin to explore new ways of understanding their own behavior and have a greater curiosity about the behavior of others. We seek to help people move from blaming to a greater awareness and curiosity, not just in connection with pastors' behavior but in general with each other.

#### 3. GOAL: Facilitate small group gatherings

After Easter we may begin a series of conversations about a conflict covenant. This should be in coordination with the Council members who agree to work on this priority identified at the Planning Retreat.

#### 4. GOAL: Plan with council the next steps for healing based on goals identified with Pastor Melissa

The Congregation Council Retreat for old and new members was a sort of small group gathering and was important for next steps, administratively. We identified and began planning in four specific areas that the group identified as the highest priority.

#### 5. GOAL: Plan with council next necessary administrative steps

Pastors Joan and John are committed to walking with First Lutheran Church and in partnership with the Oregon Synod. We again lift these recommendations to the First Lutheran Church Congregation Council for your discernment and wisdom.

**The foundation is to keep our attention on cultivating policies and procedures that help to form guard-rails around our life together.** Such policies and procedures bring into sharper focus how we:

- Keep God at the center as we claim and engage with our mission (Purpose)
- Develop a clear plan for our course forward (Goals)
- Regularly evaluate and make course corrections (Ministry review)
- Develop review processes for our ministry and staff (Staff reviews)
- Implement communication protocols and expectations (Communication guidelines)
- Practice speaking directly to one another, and when there is conflict (Relationship covenants)

- Manage conflict in biblical ways, discovering God’s shalom amid difficulties (Congregation education)

**Please note how these areas have been picked up by the Congregation Council at its Planning Retreat!**

- *Work with the congregation to strengthen our ability to remain in relationship and continue conversation when we have strong emotions and differing opinions.* Office staff has been learning the basics of the “Crucial Conversations” model for dialog around difficult issues. The congregation will be invited to come on board with this goal as the Council adopts a process or covenant (see next item).
- *Consider the use of a congregational covenant(s) to help us talk directly with each other, avoiding gossip or other indirect and unhealthy ways of talking.* The Congregation Council set in motion a commitment to strengthening a specific covenant for disagreement. We’ll resource and help as needed.
- *Officially approve, appoint, and implement a Personnel Committee that will be trained and supported as they begin their regular work.* The Congregation Council set a goal of accomplishing this. We’ll resource and help as needed.
- *Officially approve, appoint, and implement a Pastor/Parish Relations Committee that will be trained and supported as they begin their regular work.* The Congregation Council set a goal of accomplishing this. We’ll resource and help as needed.
- *Work with both formal and informal leaders to develop a strategy to implement an annual focus on four basic constitutional tasks of the Congregation Council: mission clarity, long-range planning, setting goals and priorities, and evaluation of its activities in light of its mission and goals.* We hope this becomes the driver or dynamic of the Congregation Council’s work from here on out.

**Transition Team:** The Transition Team has nearly finished its work, having met several times, having revised all narrative sections of the MSP, and having begun a conversation about other aspects of our life together that may need some adjustment before a new pastor arrives.

**Call Committee:** We have made nomination forms available, emphasizing that involvement in the Call Committee is not an “insiders” job. We hope the Congregation Council will appoint the Call Committee on April 16 or soon after.

#### **6. GOAL: Plan and help lead education ministry**

Pastor John will begin a short course on “The Cycle of Blessings,” a Kaleidoscope initiative to support ministries in their outreach and mission. Pastor Joan continues to work with Caleb Sundeen and mentor Mike McCoy, moving towards his confirmation, yet to be scheduled.

#### **7. GOAL: Lead congregation learning events**

We may invite the congregation to another event after later in the Spring.

**OUR OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES:** During the months of April and May Pastor John and Joan will be leading a six-week Thursday evening class for the Oregon Synod titled: ***ENGAGING CONFLICT FOR GROWTH: In Ourselves, Relationships, and Communities.*** <http://oregonsynod.org/index.php/calendar/engaging-conflict-for-growth/>. All are welcome to engage in this class. We also will be leading a 5-session course for the Kaleidoscope Institute for the Oregon Synod on facilitation skill training. This is specifically aimed at Transitional Pastors in the Synod.



***Blessings as we walk together into the blessed days of the Easter Season where life comes out of death, due to the grace of God in Christ and not our own strength.***

*Pastors John and Joan Beck*