

Council Corner

As I prepare to write each month's *Council Corner* column for publication in our *Chimes* newsletter, I have developed the habit of looking back at the previous year's column before I write. It's only a period of twelve months, but it's amazing how much information I either forget or suppress in that short time span. To illustrate, my column for January 2021 spoke of the closing of the sanctuary (again) because of the COVID pandemic, but it also pointed to the optimistic news that the United States would have at least two or three vaccines for the virus available to all by February or March. Although those vaccines arrived and were welcomed by many, we did not fully anticipate the vaccine resistance that would develop nationwide nor the Delta and Omicron variants that would continue to drive the pandemic and overcrowd our hospitals. But here we are, still debating the value of masking indoors and taking "booster" doses of vaccines. However, on the positive side, we are blessed to be able to continue worshipping in our sanctuary, and wearing a mask is certainly a small sacrifice to assure that we are protecting others around us as well as ourselves.

On an even more positive note, for the first time since January 2017 we have a permanent pastor in place to lead our congregation. As you all know by now, Pastor Rashion Santiago accepted a Call to St. Paul on November 7, 2021 and began her ministry here officially on December 8. It was especially reassuring during the Advent and Christmas/Epiphany season to know that our pastor will be with us throughout the week for our activities and meetings, not just on Sunday morning for an hour or two. As we begin our ministry together, it's a good time for us to reflect on the five mutual goals we, the people of St. Paul, established in our *Ministry Site Profile* in January 2019:

- A. Establishing mutual ministry with all the people of St. Paul
- B. Increasing the participation of young people in the congregation and Sunday School
- C. Increasing fellowship opportunities and participation by members of all ages
- D. Increasing Sunday worship attendance
- E. Establishing a sense of stewardship beyond the congregation and the local community

As a congregation and Council, we have pledged to provide support to the ministry of Pastor Santiago in the following ways:

- A. Through active discipleship/membership at St. Paul
- B. Through active participation in the groups, projects, and committees of St. Paul
- C. Through the active encouragement and welcoming of others to join us in our ministry
- D. Through the generous and committed financial support of St. Paul's programs
- E. Through the development of new programs initiated by Pastor Santiago and the Council

From conversations I have had with church leaders in other congregations over the past few years, I have learned that there is sometimes a kind of complacency that can develop after a new pastor arrives. After the Call Committee has done their work, and the congregation has elected and welcomed the new pastor, it is sometimes only natural for a congregation to take a

deep breath of relief and sit back to see what the new pastor will do. That behavior is exactly what we need to avoid. The previous ten points from our *Ministry Site Profile* provide a working plan for our transition to a new pastor and a new ministry. On our committees and Council, we have already had discussions with Pastor Santiago on how and why we do things a certain way and have defined procedures here at St. Paul. Our discussions have been mutually beneficial, and we have already identified some projects for 2022. For example, we will need to revise our St. Paul Constitution (last revised in 2010) to bring it in compliance with the ELCA's model constitution of 2019.

As we begin a new ministry together, it's important to know that we don't have to do everything at once. The programs we have in place are largely sound, and our committees are generally responsive to the needs of our church. Still, there is always room for fine tuning and improvement, and a fresh perspective from a new pastor is invaluable in the church's process of self-evaluation. Best of all, we can be assured that with Pastor "Woody," we'll work on our mutual ministry with good humor and creativity.

Finally, here's an update from recent activity from the Council:

1. Replacement of the 30-year- old flooring in the music hallway as well as the narthex/overflow area
2. Action to replace Prosser Labs for monthly water testing (until fully resolved)
3. Discussion to expand guidelines for weddings and special events at St. Paul
4. Renewal of snowplowing agreement with Ryan Johnson Landscaping
5. Contracted removal of six dead trees near the sanctuary
6. Discussion to secure the Spies Hall kitchen and rest room area from further plumbing damage (recent insurance claim, 12/21)

Best Wishes to All for a Blessed Holiday Season and a Healthy and Happy New Year!

Bill Below

Council President