



June 15, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

“This isn’t what we signed up for” was the theme of a recent devotion at a church council meeting. To which there was a resounding “amen” from everyone. What did we as members of St. Mark’s sign up for? To fulfill our mission for Christ, of course: reaching out so that others may know the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. We believe the mission and vision of St. Mark’s is clear and solid. What makes us as a family of Christ successful and how do we continue our work for Christ? How does the ELCA define and serve our congregation and our mission? What should St. Mark’s relationship with the ELCA be?

CONGREGATIONAL FORUM

Sunday, June 27, 2010, 2 p.m.

St. Mark’s Worship Center

Our ELCA Relationship Study, The Process and Findings so Far

We didn’t sign up to study our ELCA relationship. But last year’s ELCA church-wide assembly’s narrow passage of a resolution that gives congregations the ability to recognize same-gender monogamous relationships has caused many people and congregations to revisit what the Bible tells us. As with all matters of great importance, St. Mark’s turned to the Scripture to help understand what is faithful to our Lord. In anticipation of the church-wide assembly and with the guidance of our pastors we held congregational forums. After the assembly, we held more forums and also brought in national experts on Biblical interpretation of same-gender relationships. All these actions were taken to prepare us for our annual meeting.

At the January 2010 annual congregational meeting we had the passage by an overwhelming margin of a St. Mark’s policy to hold marriage as an institution between a man and woman. As well, welcoming statements to all and a determination to provide direct support to Lutheran and non-Lutheran outreach missions were adopted. After much discussion a motion to join the Lutheran Congregations in Mission of Christ (LCMC) was tabled. Many present at the meeting felt more information was needed to make an informed decision and that we needed a better understanding of our relationship with the ELCA before proceeding. Those comments and the tabled motion resulted in the church council’s current study. .

Some have asked why the church council brought a proposal to the congregation to join the LCMC. Council members believed if the congregation voted to join the LCMC, there was sufficient precedence for a dual affiliation with both the ELCA and LCMC. St. Mark’s could pick the parts of both organizations that would best serve our congregation and continue our

mission for Christ. However, because of the ELCA's actions since the church-wide assembly a dual affiliation seems more doubtful.

As a congregation we haven't had strong ties with the ELCA for years. Our study will hopefully help us understand what we as a congregation bring to the ELCA and what the ELCA brings to St. Mark's. St. Mark's vision and mission are locally defined and carried out by the people of St. Mark's.

Your church council members take seriously the work we have agreed to do in our roles as leaders. We also recognize, ultimately, the people of St. Mark's decide what we will do as a church and a part of the Body of Christ. In listening to your feedback, we have made church council meetings more accessible by moving the location of the meetings to the church building and changing the time to early evening. We encourage and want your help, input, suggestions, criticism and feedback. To be a healthy congregation, we need to encourage and listen to diverse views and recognize all of the talents among us.

On Sunday June 27 at 2 pm we will present the findings from the first of our five study topics on our ELCA relationship. We will describe the process we are using to facilitate the study, what has been learned so far and what our next steps will be. As partners of St. Mark's you are invited and encouraged to attend. There will be time for congregational feedback. As always, comments, questions, and suggestions are invited. Given the limits of time, we encourage you to email your comments at any time to clindell@faith-life.org.

While we didn't sign up for studying our ELCA relationship, we are encouraged by the level of dialogue and the amount of study of the Scripture going on around us to help us understand the will of our Lord. We hope to see you at the forum on June 27.

Blessings,



Christopher J. Lindell
Church Council President

Church Council Members:

- Kurt Beenen
- Dave Brauhn, Vice President
- Von Cary, Chaplain
- Pastor Perry Fruhling, Sr. Pastor
- Chris Lindell, President
- Jeff McGuire, Treasurer
- Jan Rushford, Secretary
- Emily Wellnitz