Special Report to the Congregation

A Recommendation for Staffing Realignment

January 16, 2020

Introduction

St. Luke’s congregation has spent much time and energy over the past several years to accomplish the goal of fiscal stability for St. Luke’s. In 2019, we have taken a major step toward accomplishing that goal by funding all congregation expenses through General Fund giving. We believe it is now time to address programming needs to support the strong future that is ahead of St. Luke’s.

St. Luke’s Congregation Council will be presenting this special report on recommendations for staff realignment to the congregation at the annual meeting on January 26, 2020 at noon, in the sanctuary. We will review the materials found in this report, answer questions, and allow for discussion of the proposal. We will then vote on whether to pursue this proposal by having a private ballot vote seeking direction from the congregation.

The issue

St. Luke’s is facing several imminent staffing matters that will require decisive action in 2020. This decisive action will necessitate the adjustment and relative composition of our pastoral and support staff.

The following outlines three critical areas, which are the core drivers for our needed staffing realignment:

1. Respond to the expected departure of key pastoral personnel
2. Improve the staffing resources dedicated to our youth and family ministries
3. Facilitate a smooth succession plan related to the retirement of the lead pastor
Respond to the expected departure of key pastoral personnel:

Michael Busbey, our pastoral intern, will be ending his internship at St. Luke’s this coming August 31. Michael has been asked to consider continuing to work at St. Luke’s as either a contract employee or as an ordained pastor. He has decided to pursue other options at the conclusion of his internship. Elizabeth Palmer, who has provided preaching and adult education support over the past several years, will be pursuing the writing of a new book and will need the extra time to commit to that project in 2020. Both Michael and Elizabeth have provided a wonderful balance of fresh, creative voices to the pulpit of St. Luke’s, bringing with them contemporary theological experiences and an energetic spirit. We believed these to be important elements to pastoral leadership that were lost when Pastor Alex left St. Luke’s in February of 2017.

The decision to have a Saturday night service has rendered a modest increase in average attendance in 2019. The service has also provided an alternative to the Sunday morning experience. Without the support of a pastoral intern or a regular supply pastor, it would be very difficult to maintain our Saturday evening service, or to continue to foster fresh ideas/initiatives.

Improve the staffing resources dedicated to our Youth and Family ministries:

Back in 2008, shortly before we embarked on our ambitious building project, St. Luke’s had the equivalent of about 160 pastoral hours per week with several full-time or nearly full-time people between: Stephen Larson – Lead Pastor, Kristi Weber – Associate Pastor, Pastor Mac – Pastor Emeritus and Nancy Olson – Member Care Coordinator. St. Luke’s could do this because they were not yet paying a mortgage (principal and interest) of $174,000 a year. At that time, we averaged 325 worshippers.

In 2019, and currently, we have approximately 65 pastoral hours per week between a full-time lead pastor and a part-time (20 hours a week) pastoral intern for 225 average worshippers.

The cuts in pastoral staff have had an impact across our ministries from children to youth and adult. Regular feedback has expressed a strong need for St. Luke’s to do more for our youth and family members. Because of finances, there was frustration in 2015 when it was decided not to replace the youth director position (after her resignation). That was followed by additional frustration in 2017 when it was decided because of finances not to replace Pastor Alex, the Youth and Family Pastor at the time. There has been an understanding and patience that the personnel cuts we have made over the past 10 years were necessary from a financial standpoint – but painful nonetheless.
Our financial outlook has improved and is currently stable. We have just finished a successful financial year at St. Luke’s. We have spent much time over the past several years to accomplish this goal – and it is now time to address our programming to support the strong future ahead of us with many positive and exciting possibilities before us in ministry.

**Facilitate a smooth succession plan related to the retirement of the Lead Pastor:**
As Pastor Johnson contemplates retirement in the next few years, it is important and appropriate that we try as best we can to make the pastoral leadership transition as smooth as possible. A sound succession plan will help to ensure that St. Luke’s does not experience a gap in pastoral leadership. Having continuity will be critically important to maintain programs and congregational engagement.

**Recommendation**

With this rationale before you, the council would like to propose that we pursue calling a full-time staff pastor with a target start date of August 2020.

This pastor would be called with specific responsibilities for child, youth and family ministries, and, also be responsible for some pastoral care, preaching and presiding at worship.

- This pastor would be called for this specific skill set to bring energy, oversight, and direction to children, youth and family ministries at St. Luke’s.
- This call would be independent from the lead pastor’s call, and would remain as a staff pastor at St. Luke’s after the lead pastor’s retirement. This would offer continuity and direction to the congregation during that transition.

**Financial Impact**

The yearly cost to the congregation for a staff pastor with between 0 and 12 years’ experience is approximately $100,000 to $112,000 a year with salary and benefits.

The cost of the first year would be approximately 40% of a full year’s salary with the person beginning in August, 2020. The cost would be about $40,000 to $49,000 in 2020.

To fund this new position going forward we would need to realign the current staffing configuration of the Director of Children’s Ministries, the Children’s Choir Director and the Youth Ministry Director at the conclusion of the 2020 program year, or May 31, 2020. On that date those positions would end to make room for the new configuration beginning in late summer/early fall.
This realignment would leave the following dollars available for the position of a staff pastor:

- In 2020, there would be $40,000 available—which would mean that the staff pastor in 2020 would be fully funded.
- In 2021, there would be $80,000 available—which would leave a budget increase of approximately $30,000 for 2021.

Closing

All proposed staff changes in any organization are unsettling, and especially in congregation life. However, we believe this proposal attempts to address several of the points identified in the rationale above that prepares us for the future. It will create a position that will have targeted energy and expertise with children and youth, and their families. It allows us to return to a more familiar pastoral configuration that St. Luke’s has known for most of its existence. It will balance out the hours and dollars that we are spending in the areas of ministry to offer some staff equilibrium in the area of pastoral care and worship leadership. It will provide an attempt to create a smoother transition from one lead pastor to another in the future.

Finally, it is fiscally responsible, although a bit of a challenge in 2021, while still addressing a need to continue a strong children, youth and family ministry program for St. Luke’s. This proposal has been shared with, and endorsed by, the Executive, Human Resource Committee, and Congregation Council.