



Gospel Seeds... Bearing Good Fruit

It is a marvel to stand back and see the Lord of the Church work through His purposeful means in ways which we might never have considered, taking us down paths we could not have foreseen. The old proverb, “man proposes, but God disposes,” rings ever true. It reminds us that our best human planning will certainly fall short, but that God’s creative mercy and love will always give more than our little plans ever dreamed.

So, here’s an update: From our 2017 congregational Strategic Ministry Plan (SMP) presented and adopted at the end of last year, St. Paul’s set forth a vision that we would be *“a sanctuary in our community where the Gospel is faithfully preached and taught, believers are strengthened and equipped through Word and Sacrament, and Christ’s love is shared by word and deed to serve and further God’s kingdom.”* This went hand in hand with the simple thrust of our mission statement of what we are to be about because of what God has given us to do: *“St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church exists to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our congregation, our community, and our world.”* Amen and amen.

You might recall that one of the (5) Major Strategies in support of our mission was Community Involvement/Outreach. The congregation endorsed the creation of an additional staff position that would assist Church and School in engaging with our community, reaching out to our neighborhood and school families, and coordinate mercy work here and beyond. We continue to plan and seek sustainable funding for this new position (*via* increased congregational sacrificial offering; a grant from The Lutheran Foundation; the brand new “Storey Fund” of our Permanent Endowment Fund; and encouragement towards large estate gifts set aside to insure an ongoing legacy for this position) – for which Pr. Cage and church leadership would welcome and encourage your conversations! And who should this additional person be? A called teacher? Deaconess? Director of Christian Education? The possibilities generate a lot of excitement.

Amid all *this* planning came a query about the possibility of St. Paul’s being host to a hopeful local Hispanic Ministry developing out of conversations with the Indiana District of the LCMS and Concordia Theological Seminary as they

track opportunities in our community where “the world” has come to our door. This is turn led to St. Paul’s invitation (in May) to the LCMS Office of National Mission to come and teach us by the “Gospel Seeds” initiative how to get out into our near East Central neighborhood and talk not only with local agencies (like FTW City Council, Fort Wayne Community Schools, Bright Point, East Central Neighborhood Association, Wayne Township Trustee, Lutheran Social Services of Indiana, and St. Mary’s Soup Kitchen), but also to go to the homes of those who live in our part of town to get to know them and see what needs they had, and what kind of collaboration might be possible that we might be a true partner in our Church/School neighborhood.

On Saturday, May 13th, St. Paul’s sent out 10 teams of two... mostly to listen, but also taking opportunity to speak to our near neighbors. What came of these conversations (and from observations) was the need for some critical home repairs at a number of residences. Arising from this, Nicole Ridley of the LCMS National Housing Support has now come alongside us to help in crafting a grant application to The Lutheran Foundation

as part of their **501+ Reformation Grant**. With Nicole’s assistance, we are coordinating a group (just as Emmanuel, Redeemer and Holy Cross Lutheran Churches have done) from our congregation and with other local agencies to lend in a “Helping Hand” project (utilizing the expertise of the LCMS group of volunteer traveling builders called “Laborers for Christ”). We’re still in the early stages of writing the grant application, but we look to get on site – just a few blocks east! – come Springtime. You will be a part of that.

So... lots of planning and meeting, and even more of “God disposing” and “doing far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (*Ephesians 8:20*) as He leads us to be “little Christs” (as Luther would say) for our neighbor in need. We’re just at the beginning of this venture. Where it leads? Truly, only God knows, but we can be certain that He works all things to His good purpose (*Romans 8:26-27*). For He has placed Church and School right here... to love and serve our literal neighbors in their need as His Church with the mission of “proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our congregation, our community and our world.”

