

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

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Pastor John R. Klatt
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Dear Members of St. John's

2/21/09

Just a month ago, the decision was made by the church council to no longer allow gatherings of people in our church building due to structural problems. That was a decision that has had an impact in terms of where we worship. It has also produced a variety of reactions, among them some anxiety and concern about the future.

What needs to be affirmed now and into the weeks and months ahead leading up to a vote at our congregational meeting on May 17 is that we are not alone. God has been and is part of what is happening now and into our future together. Our greatest challenge is to pray, study the scriptures and be patient with each other as we acknowledge differences without being disagreeable. Speaking personally, I try to be open to the Holy Spirit. This means that if God wants to change my mind about how I think our future ought to be I hope to be open to God so that God's will is done. I ask your prayers for me and for our community of faith. A question for us at this time is: "How does our building(s) support our mission with mission being the most important function of our congregation?"

I am appreciative of how actively people at St. John's have gotten involved in supporting the necessary changes so that transitions to worship in the parish hall has been smooth. Thank you.

Understandably, we have encountered some bumps on this road together. One of our greatest challenges is to be sure that accurate information is available. Thanks go to the communications team who are attempting to keep our website up-to-date and giving temple talks and other forms of communication.

Three basic themes have emerged as rumor and misinformation. One is about Rick Lipka, another is about money spent to date on changes and another on money that may be spent on building changes or projects.

First of all, Rick Lipka is not in the real estate business and stands to make absolutely no personal monetary gain as we agree on any of the four options being considered.

Secondly, the connections that Rick and I have with peers have allowed us to call in favors so that only one of the professional bids and evaluations about our building have incurred a bill. The work that was done to provide the architects evaluation in the letter that went out to the congregation in December had a fee of \$1,024. That expense was paid for out of the R&R or Building Fund. Other expenses paid from that fund have been the sound equipment for the band (\$275.), a chair to be evaluated for new seating (\$39.), book cases for the hymnals (\$81.) and the moving company to move the altar to

the parish hall (\$637.) Gratis work was done for us by the Rev. Dr. Dan Hoffman (worship space evaluation) the estimate of cost for repairing the church walls (to be received soon), and the evaluation done by Siracuse Engineering on the status of the building (copies available in the narthex). The carpet rectangles for children's sermons are from our preschool. The sound panels installed on the walls of the parish hall are the work of our volunteers and donations from the Parkinson Group. See the attached document for a total accounting.

Finally, the concern has been heard that all our endowment funds either have been or will be committed to a capital funds campaign to accomplish whatever option we choose. The reality is that the Cornerstone Endowment funds are protected by very specific rules for their use, especially for the principal of the funds. A vote of the congregation is the only way the principal can be used. The dividends are used according to the founding documents of the fund with 20% reinvested into the principal each year.

At a meeting on January 20, Jeff Spann, who is the building consultant for ELCA congregations in our region, outlined the process for a capital funds campaign that we may need to consider in order to accomplish the option we choose. His presentation will be available in a document from him at church next Sunday. Here is a review of his main points:

1. A capital funds campaign draws from the assets of a congregation, not income. In other words, we will still be supporting the mission of our congregation through our weekly giving. The assets of our congregation will come from four sources.
2. The first source is any cash available or savings that St. John's has that we may choose to dedicate to the project.
3. Secondly, we can expect one-time gifts from friends and members. A one-time gift from a friend of the congregation may be financial contribution. A one-time gift may be the sale of some stock or other asset.
4. The third source for the campaign will be pledges given over a three-year period of time. Such pledges will normally come from members and will be giving over and above regular giving to the current operating expenses. In our case, that could be the designated giving to what we call the R&R or Building Fund.
5. The last source for the capital campaign might be any asset the congregation holds which we may choose to liquidate for the project. Such an asset may be (not necessarily in our case but as a hypothetical example) land or other funds that the congregation may hold. Notice that the operative word here is what we CHOOSE to do. Any decision about liquidating any such assets would be put before the congregation for a vote.

In other words, Pastor John is not bankrupting the church; he is not making unilateral decisions that affect huge sums of money.

I hope this is helpful. Peace be with you as we begin our Lenten Journey in our unique wilderness experience this year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor John". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Pastor John Klatt