

## **A Message from the Council President**

The May 22, Town Hall meeting provided an important opportunity to learn about the need for renewal at Living Saviour and, even more importantly, to learn about the exciting step we are taking to enhance that renewal through a unique partnership with the NC Synod and a dynamic mission developer, Pastor Matt Simpkins. We learned about Christ Lutheran's plans to create a second Worship site, which made for an interesting meeting and it may be helpful at this point to share some observations and thoughts from my perspective, as your council president.

Over the past couple of months I have struggled with a number of congregational "opportunities;" which is sometimes a way of labeling problems with no immediate obvious solution. As I have searched for some direction I have been led to one of the Bible stories we talk about during our preschool chapel. It seems there was a blind man, Bartimaeus, who was sitting by the road begging. He hears people talking and understands that Jesus is coming down this very road. He shouts out, "Jesus have mercy on me!" Jesus heals him and, according to Mark 10:52, "Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road." Bartimaeus was not expecting Jesus that day, but God gave him an unexpected opportunity that offered him a fresh start. Importantly, there was only one way to follow Jesus on that road—Bartimaeus had to take one step after another.

There are things happening around us regularly over which we have little or no control. We can find ourselves frustrated and angry, at least I do. We lament things or conditions with our friends, sharing our frustrations and finding solace in the camaraderie of complaint. We are often paralyzed and frozen in place by our own frustration and fear. We move forward when we open our eyes to the opportunity afforded us through the unexpected. Just as with Bartimaeus, God in Christ Jesus has walked by and offered us an unexpected opportunity to follow Him on that road.

The road before us has to do with what we know will be a Christ Lutheran established satellite campus in a temporary location about five miles from LSLC. My initial reaction as your council president was anger, that extreme type you feel when something seems patently unfair. How could the Synod allow such an infringement upon "our" area? We are working to live into our vision of becoming a community of disciples in service to the Living Savior and we have a strategic plan which incorporates growth elements. So, what gives? Both Pastor Angela and I expressed our concerns formally to all involved in this decision, including Bishop Tim Smith. We explained our position, and our concerns that the satellite of Christ Lutheran could potentially adversely impact our Forward Together project plans, which were well under way.

We suggested there are many churches like LSLC in the NC Synod and beyond which are at a critical point in their evolution and could make use of the skills and expertise of a trained and experienced mission developer like Pastor Matt Simpkins. While we have a strategic plan for LSLC, we could benefit from the insight of experience as we plan for the introduction of an alternative-style, regularly scheduled, worship service. We will be working to create an expectation that we will invite others to share and experience God's love--who better to coach us in this effort than a dynamic mission developer? We will be working to create additional outreach opportunities and Pastor Matt could provide a new perspective. Just like Bartimaeus, God is surprising us with an unexpected opportunity, but it is up to us to follow on that road.

In fairness, I should acknowledge that Christ Lutheran is seeking its own renewal and is very much committed to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with as many as possible. Yet, the Synod listened to our suggestions and responded with an alteration to the original plans for Christ Lutheran. This is to be a two phase approach.

Phase One will intentionally involve the developer, Pastor Matt Simpkins, in building missional capacity in three area ELCA congregations for the next 6-7 months. Phase Two, the actual new worshipping community, will begin in late winter perhaps January 2017.

The church council is encouraged by the Synod's response to our needs for help with renewal. We look forward to working with Pastor Matt as our Forward Together Coach and we give thanks for his willingness to work with us.

Matt's first order of business was to meet with the Executive Committee of our council on Sunday, May 22, to set up a plan to coach the Forward Together teams of Worship, Education, Service, and Facility. He will meet with Pastor Angela to help her grow in her understanding of mission and how that might be lived out as Pastor of LSLC. We give thanks to God for this unexpected opportunity to try new things, and to walk with new vision.

Peace in all things,  
CD Hathcock