

Pastoral Transition

Frequently Asked Questions

UPDATED 03-22-17

Q. What is the position Pastor Matt has taken?

A. Pr. Matt has taken a position in the Bishop's office as the Director of Evangelical Mission. In this role, he will work with churches throughout the synod, preaching, leading Councils, and working with pastors. His job will include helping start new ministries, and assisting struggling ministries.

Q. What is the term of Pastor Matt's new position?

A. The Bishop has 5 years remaining on his 6-year term. Presumably, Pr. Matt will remain in his new position for the duration of the Bishop's term. Beyond that, it is uncertain whether Pr. Matt would continue into a second term with the Bishop (if re-elected) or be retained by the new Bishop.

Q. Will Pastor Matt be coming back to visit?

A. Not right away. It is important for the health of St. Luke, and for all future pastors, for a previous pastor not to keep showing up. It fosters a sense of nostalgia and prevents members from "falling in love with" the new pastor. It is the most difficult part of a transition, but is important for the church to move forward. However, since Pr. Matt will be a member of the Bishop's staff, after an appropriate time has passed and a new pastor is in place, we may be seeing him in his new role. Since he will still be in the area, managing this separation will be important.

Q. What are the first steps in the next couple of months?

A. For the short term, the Bishop will appoint, with council approval, an Interim Pastor to serve St. Luke until a new pastor is called. Until an Interim Pastor is appointed, the Bishop's office will work with St. Luke to ensure our pastoral needs are met. St. Luke will then go through a process of calling a new pastor to serve in the longer term, but the average time for this full process is around a year or so. It could take longer, or it could happen more quickly; but the process of finding the right fit cannot be rushed.

Q. What is the process for calling the next pastor to St. Luke?

A. St. Luke first needs to take some time for reflection and self-discernment. A Mission Exploration Team (MET) will be appointed by the Church Council to clarify our mission and vision going forward, and reflect upon the needs and desires of St. Luke. This information gathered will be provided to the Bishop’s office to focus the search for a new pastor. The Church Council will then select a Call Committee comprised of six voting members to serve until the pastoral vacancy is filled. The Call Committee will be responsible for reviewing candidates, selecting candidates for interview, and recommending a candidate for call to serve St. Luke. A summary of this process can be found at <https://milwaukee-synod.org/resources/the-call-process/> Below is also a graphical explanation of the process:



Q. How long will the process take?

A. The process will likely take at least a year. Pastor Matt was called in approximately 9 months, which is at the low end of the spectrum. On the other hand, the process could take as long as 2 years. We want to commit to find the *right* pastor for St. Luke’s future, not just the *fastest* process.

Q. Can we request a “two-year term call” pastor?

A. Yes. In some situations, there are pastors who *may* be a good fit for a congregation, and they are put in place for a two-year “term call.” This means that at any point in the two-year period, either the pastor or the congregation can decide if it isn’t a good fit. If it is a good fit, the congregation can issue a traditional open-ended call. This is the process that was undertaken with Pr. Matt, and could speed up the process a bit if the right candidates are available to interview.

Q. How soon will the call committee be up and running?

A. First the Mission Exploration Team (MET) needs to be formed. This team may evolve into the Call Committee, but that is not a given. The Council has a meeting on April 10th and the process will continue then. The Synod advised us that this process should be careful and deliberate. It is likely a Call Committee will not be formed until later in 2017, to honor the process that’s necessary. Congregations are strongly advised not to rush too quickly into this work, as it takes time to identify what the congregation is looking for in their next pastor, and time to grieve the departure of the previous pastor.

Q. Can I be on the Call Committee?

A. The members of the Call Committee will be selected by the Church Council. Selection of this Committee will be done with a process like that used to select the Building and Finance Teams of our recent Building Project. Members are asked to prayerfully consider and pass along to the Council the names of others who embody these two central characteristics: 1. They engender trust in others. 2. They do not come with a specific 'agenda,' but are there to represent all the members of St. Luke. Those names are then simply passed on to the Church Council as suggestions from the congregation, but the ultimate decision belongs to the Council, as the Call Committee is an appointed group. This process results in a team comprised of those who others recognize as leaders and trust. For this reason, self-nomination to the Call Committee is not allowed.

Q. Is the Call Committee part of the church council?

A. No. The call committee is elected by the church council. A member of the Church Council may serve on the call committee, however.

Q. Can we survey the congregation on what they want / like?

A. Yes, this is an important part of the process. The MET (Mission Exploration Team) will solicit input from the congregation.

Q. Can the Interim Pastor be called?

A. Not likely. The interim pastor has a specific role in the transition process to provide guidance and pastoral services for the congregation. In accordance with our constitution, the Interim Pastor shall refrain from exerting influence on the call process.

Q. How will the Church Council support the church Staff when Pr. Matt leaves?

A. During Pr. Matt's sabbatical, we learned a lot about the support that Pr. Matt provides to the staff, and gaps that will exist in his absence. Many subtle changes have taken place to alleviate some of those gaps. (One small example is finding others to unlock the church on Sunday mornings). Additionally, unlike Pastor Matt's sabbatical, we will have an Interim Pastor who will fill in many of the gaps. Rest assured that the Church Council is committed to providing any additional support that is needed. Any questions can be directed to any Council member or e-mailed to the entire Council using council@stluke-slinger.org

Q. What about the sabbatical agreement? Isn't Pr. Matt required to stay for at least a year?

A. Our Sabbatical Leave Policy states that the pastor is expected to remain at St. Luke for at least one year following a sabbatical. The expectation was put in place to prevent abuse of the Sabbatical Policy (example: a pastor seeking another job while on sabbatical, and announcing they are leaving upon returning from sabbatical). It is very clear that Pr. Matt has in no way abused the Sabbatical Policy. He did not seek to leave St. Luke, but was guided by the Holy Spirit into something he did not see coming. St. Luke has been blessed by the policy in the spiritual growth and reflection that followed the sabbatical and in Pr. Matt's service and leadership since his return. Since he did not seek this new position, and it reflects the call of the Spirit to serve our Bishop's office and the wider church, we believe his departure under these circumstances is within the spirit and intent of the Sabbatical Agreement.

Q.; I've heard St. Luke is a desirable church, and that we will have many good candidates. What is it about St. Luke that makes us desirable to other pastors and how do they know?

A. Word of mouth is primarily how others know about St. Luke. We are a healthy church. At a time when many churches are in decline, St. Luke is celebrating being a church that...

- ...is on an upward growth trend
- ...has strong staff and lay leadership
- ...has the ability to laugh and portray a bright spirit of joy
- ...doesn't take itself too seriously
- ...is in a great location, and will continue to attract many visitors
- ...has an updated and welcoming building
- ...feels like a modern church, and is welcoming to people of all ages

Q. Who should we contact in a pastoral emergency?

A. In case of pastoral emergency, please call one of the pastors on call:

Pr. Marcia Carrier - Redeemer Lutheran, Hartford - 262-673-2550

Pr. Paul Mittermeier - St. John Lutheran, Jackson - 262-677-3176

Pr. Dave Schoob - Trinity Lutheran, West Bend - 262-334-2125

Q. How will Discipleship Academy finish this year?

A. Marie will play a strong role as Director of Youth & Family Ministries. One Discipleship Academy class remains, which will be run by Marie and the Small Group Leaders. Confirmation for those currently in 8th grade will take place in the Fall as planned.

Q. How will Pr. Matt's departure affect DA's future?

A. The Youth and Family Ministry Council, the team currently being formed, will support Marie through the process of determining what will DA will look like this fall. Pastor and Marie were working on plans to change up DA this fall anyway, giving it a new look and feel. However, nothing was finalized and those plans can be changed.

In addition to this new council, we will need teams to help with DA and Sunday School. They would operate under Marie's direction. We urgently need people to step up and support the ministries in these areas, so it does not all fall on Marie, keeping her from attending to other aspects of her job as well.

Q. What is the timeline for Pr. Matt's departure?

A. Pr. Matt will leave at the end of April. His last Sunday leading worship will be the Sunday after Easter (April 23rd). His new position will begin on May 1.

Q. Is there any observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation planned?

A. Not at this time. The pastor serving this fall would most likely be responsible for that.

Q. Will Pr. Matt take time to meet with the Sunday School kids, DA kids and HS youth before he leaves?

A. Yes! He will find time in his schedule to do this. He has already met with the High School group, and plans are in place for April 2nd to make time to be with the Sunday School and Middle School students and parents. Watch your inbox for more information about this as it comes together.

Q. Will Pr. Matt continue to live in the area?

A. Yes, he will not be moving and will continue to live in Menomonee Falls.

Q. Is there any chance Pr. Matt will be a substitute pastor for St. Luke?

A. Not in the near future. After we have a new pastor that is well established at St. Luke, there may be times when Pr. Matt returns in his new role with the Bishop's office.

Q. Will Pr. Matt continue to provide daily devotions?

A. Pr. Matt will continue to write them, but he will no longer publish them to the St. Luke Facebook page. He will be deleting his "Pastor Matthew" Facebook account and is seeking guidance from the Bishop and others on how to handle his social media accounts and activity in a way that doesn't hinder members of St. Luke from connecting to the new pastor that will come.

Q. Can Pr. Matt recommend a new pastor for us?

A. He will see a lot of the process since he will be in the Bishop's office and that's where the work of matching pastors to congregations is done. He will be shielded from getting overly involved in the details of the process, as it is never healthy for a pastor to choose their own replacement. However, rest assured he will speak up in our favor if he can help in the process. The Bishop has promised us the A-team, and both Pr. Matt and the Council have full trust that the Synod Office will send us qualified and talented candidates to interview.

Q. How do pastors get considered for positions? Do they put in an application for specific jobs?

A. Pastors interested in moving into a certain geographical area or who are looking for a change make their interests known to the Bishop's office. News of St. Luke's openness to call will travel, and other pastors can ask to be considered. The Call Committee also has input in the process. But mostly it is the will and power of the Holy Spirit that does the most work in this process, and we must put our trust in God. God provided the right pastor at the right time nine years ago, and God will do so again.