

April 22, 2009

Dear OSLC members and friends,

Our four-month sabbatical, funded by the Lilly Endowment's Clergy Renewal grant, is about to begin! This Sunday, April 26th, will be our last Sunday. The sabbatical officially begins on May 1st. We are looking forward to this rest and renewal and believe that Our Savior is well-prepared for our absence. Beyond being well-prepared, there are also some *wonderful* things happening from May through August that we know will renew the congregation, as well.

On May 2nd, we leave on the first leg our experience, traveling to Turkey with scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan to visit ancient Christian sites and to study "Paul and Empire," followed by a brief return to Jerusalem. During the remainder of the summer, we'll be based at our home, but taking a week or a few days here and there to focus on the art of "homing" (renovation, landscape). In August we'll be hosting a reunion of family and people we knew while serving in Jerusalem and we'll end our summer with a Maine coastal sailing trip on the Lewis B. French, a historic schooner. In between, we'll be reading, writing, and enjoying our New England home. As our theme is "Longing for Rootedness", we are very pleased to have this chance to become more rooted here.

There are two aspects of our summer of which we particularly want you to be aware:

First, in the case of the death of a member, if we are at home at the time, we do want to return for the funeral. OSLC has thankfully experienced few member deaths during our tenure. Because of this, we know that any death is likely to be a significant congregational experience and we want to be with you if we possibly can. Should there be a death, we will consult with Pastor Greg Marshall, our sabbatical supply pastor, about what form our presence would take. We're pleased that Wendy Manganiello will be assisting Pastor Marshall with many aspects of pastoral care and visitation over the summer and building for continued lay involvement in the future.

Second, Gifford Medical Center unexpectedly declined Susan's request for a four-month unpaid leave of absence from her half-time chaplaincy position (personal leaves of up to six months are theoretically possible). This was a discretionary decision on the part of management, citing the importance of the chaplain for the hospital and nursing home. This necessitated adjustment of our original sabbatical plans, in consultation with the Lilly Endowment. We want you to be aware of this change, should you happen to see Susan in her chaplaincy role and wonder why.

Since we will be in the area for much of the summer, we will doubtless run into some of you. We'll be glad to see you -- don't avoid us! Let's just agree not to talk about OSLC matters. We're on sabbatical!

Please read the accompanying materials and keep them for your reference. We ask that you insert the "Who to ask about..." document into your newly updated OSLC Directory, available this Sunday, April 26th. In general, the first line of communication during the sabbatical is Susan Ferraro in the church office, who will triage requests (and tell you if it's appropriate for you to be asking her to do something that someone else should be doing!), and Pastor Greg Marshall.

Greg's role is primarily with Sunday worship and pastoral care, with some administration thrown in as needed. He is contracted for Sundays (including sermon and worship prep) and for 8 additional hours each week.

The next line of contact is the Church Council President, Susan Bloomfield or Vice President Deb Cofell, if Susan is unavailable. Please try to keep appropriate people in the loop when an issue arises, but there may be some things you can take care of directly, using the contact list provided. When in doubt, call the church office.

Finally, besides enjoying Pastor Marshall, OSLC will be reaping the fruits of two innovations during the sabbatical period as part of its renewal: the implementation of the approved **Mini-Grant projects** and the **Sunday Sabbatical Volunteer Teams**. These six teams (*Team Baldwin, Team Beaupre, Team Cofell, Team Erickson, Team Geiling, and Team Penny*) into which the entire congregation has been creatively divided, will each be responsible for making three Sunday mornings happen (exclusive of preaching) over the course of the sabbatical. We think this experiment will enable some fun and productive cooperation and learning among congregation members. You'll be hearing from your team captains soon.

We give great thanks to you all for enabling this renewal opportunity. We are very fortunate to have Susan Ferraro in the church office, who is serving with significant skill and understanding. The Sabbatical Committee has worked joyfully and effectively since October and the Church Council has been supportive and is in good shape. Pastor Greg Marshall is known to many of you; he's looking forward to returning to Our Savior in the capacity of sabbatical supply pastor.

And so it is that we can take our leave trusting in God's grace and your good graces. May we all be blessed with renewal during these four months and reunite with joy in September!

In resurrection hope,

Pastors Michael and Susan Thomas

Enclosures:

"Who to ask about..."

Sunday Sabbatical Volunteer Teams

Mini-Grant Awards