

FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Happy New Year!

First, I want to express my gratitude to God for faithful guidance during this past year and to our St. Andrew family for continued support as we forged a path toward a new way to do church and ministry during a global pandemic. I need to look no further than these past few weeks to see so many examples of how our congregation has continued to fulfil our mission - *In Christ, We Worship, Love, Grow, Serve, and Send*. On December 19, our congregation came together to serve our community through Christmas baskets, fuel bags and Angel Tree gifts. And many contributed, albeit from afar, to worship God and celebrate our Lord’s birth with a beautiful and moving Christmas Eve service. There are many more examples from 2020 that exemplify the heart and soul of this congregation.

I would be remiss if I didn’t also take a moment to acknowledge that there are many reasons we long to put 2020 behind us. We have had beloved pastors and staff resign. We have not been able to gather to worship, to sing, to commune, and to share fellowship. We are weary of being isolated in our homes and separated from those we care about. Although we are ready to move forward, we know the challenges of 2020 won’t just melt away on January 1. And yet there is something hopeful about a new year, a new beginning, and a new perspective.

As a council and a church, we have big ministry goals to tackle in 2021, not the least of which are the lofty plans to meet safely in the midst of a global pandemic, to support our Call Committee(s) through the call process(es) for two new pastors, and to continue to adapt our ministries to the current context. As Martin Luther taught us, even in times of trial the Holy Spirit uses us to “create, strengthen and sustain faith in Jesus Christ and the life we have in him.”

To continue this life-giving work, there are many people working tirelessly around the church to help us reach our ministry goals.

1. As you are probably already aware, the Council has asked a small group, including the COVID-19 Advisory Team, a few council leaders, and key staff members, to decide on a weekly basis whether or not we can offer in-person worship services. We hope this will give us the most flexibility to worship in person safely as soon as we can.
2. The Call Committee, under the leadership of Ron Hartman, put in many hours of work over the last 9 months gathering information for our Ministry Site Profile, identifying gifts and skills St. Andrew needs. Last month, Ron Hartman resigned as the chair of the Call Committee, and the committee appointed Karl Klug as the new chair. Jeff Hill, one of the Council approved alternates, agreed to fill the vacant position. The Call Committee is beginning to interview prospective candidates for our senior pastor position, and after prayer and discernment will recommend a candidate(s) to the congregational Council.

3. Our staff, pastors, Council, committees and members throughout St Andrew continue to adapt our ministries to the context of the current world we live in. We will continue to seek new ways to proclaim the gospel while being flexible and innovative. Whether it be how we conduct worship, how we nurture our congregation, how we engage our members in faith formation and fellowship, how we reach our neighbors looking for a church home, or how we minister to our community through outreach, we will continue to move forward and do God's good work in hope and faith.

As Pastor Museus Dabay reminded us in her sermon a few weeks ago, "St. Andrew's history has been filled with small, everyday miracles that have led [us] to where [we] are today." I am so thankful for the faithfulness of our congregation as we move forward in hope into a new year and toward God's new plan for St. Andrew.

In Christ,

Jen Fisher