

# From Your Pastor

Dear Friends,

In preparation for our regathering on May 30<sup>th</sup>, I spent a lot of time in the sanctuary. Preparing the technology for Livestreaming was more complex than one would think, and several of us spent an evening deep cleaning the pews and baseboards even as our custodian John has tended graciously to the space all year. Typically, when I'm leading worship, I don't look at the baseboards or think about the lighting; I think about conveying a message of Good News and hope-filled challenge.

These past couple weeks, spending extra time there, I've thought more about the physical space. It brought me back to the first conversation I had with the architect who redesigned the sanctuary in the church I previously served in Ripon, Wisconsin. I remember walking around the sanctuary looking at every nook and cranny with her. We picked it apart, criticizing the chipping and fading, the stains and dust, the broken furniture, and the lack of accessibility. As the conversation drew to an end, I felt so hyper-critical of this Holy Ground, and wanted to clarify how much I love the space. So, I said, "You have to come on a Sunday. It is so beautiful on a Sunday." She knowingly replied, "Trust me. I see the dust, but I see the glory too."

There is a beautiful intersection of the Sacred and the Structural. When we're tending to the logistics, God has a way of sneaking in to remind us of our mission. In the exact moment when I start to look at the Sanctuary as "a big ol' room," God sends that ray of golden light across the chancel and emanates Holiness throughout the space. In the exact moment when I might throw the Livestream transmitter off the balcony, Ben touches the organ keys to practice and the notes rumble with the Glory of God. As I lift the hymnals to dust between them, I think of all the hands that have touched them-- those who will gather again soon and those we have loved and lost throughout the decades. As soon as I get too business-y, too logistical, God taps me on my shoulder and says, "You're standing on Holy Ground."

The intersection of Sacred and Structural is delicate but glorious. A building does not define us as a community, but we do need to tend to it. So, when we tend to it, focus needs to be placed on the ways in which the structure is hindering or empowering our ministry. These discussions must be centered in the Gospel, giving glory to God, walking in the way of Christ inside and outside of our building, about being the Light of the World, the City on a Hill, the Salt of the Earth when we leave that space on a Sunday morning.

To that end, there are a number of things within our building that need to be taken care of.

1. You'll see that we're working with Richardson Design to redesign the W. Clifton Hallway. This will allow us to have a second space for coffee hour. If you recall, before the pandemic, the parlor was getting a bit crowded!
2. We also transformed the Sanctuary level restroom into a handicap accessible all-gender/family restroom, because there was not a handicap accessible restroom on the Sanctuary level and anyone who needed to use the restroom during worship often needed to go down the elevator to do so.
3. At the request and in support of the ministry of Trinity Lutheran Church, we are temporarily removing and professionally storing the pews in the chapel. Trinity is looking for a more accessible and flexible worship space. For now, they will set up tables and chairs to explore different ways of worship. This will also allow us to tend to long-delayed electrical needs, which we can't reach while the pews are fixed to the ground.
4. We will tend to the Memorial Garden, especially where there are visible issues with the stone walls, and other landscaping needs.

There are other changes here and there in the building, as we're always looking to make our space more usable and accessible, as we grow and thrive as a church in 2021. We stand at the intersection of Structural and Sacred, pursuing the mission and vision of our beautiful church. You are standing on Holy Ground, my friends. Remember that God is with us in the journey.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Joanna