

January 26, 2012

Dear Members of St. Andrew,

At the Annual Meeting this past Sunday, January 22, the congregation approved by a vote of 168 – 78 a resolution to accept an offer of \$1,000,000 from the Jonathan Montessori School to purchase our property and facilities at St. Andrew West. The resolution is enclosed for your reference.

This difficult decision generated considerable debate and strong opposition from members for whom this ministry site has been their church home for many years. In the end, the decision to accept the offer reflects a belief that this action will strengthen St. Andrew Lutheran Church. We realize there is a deep sense of loss for many West worshippers and a measure of uncertainty for all of us about what lies ahead.

Anticipating these realities, we committed in the resolution to “set immediately into motion a process to determine the future course of St. Andrew’s ministry in eastern Carver County and the disposition of the proceeds from the sale,” and that “no proceeds of the sale be committed or spent prior to the conclusion of this discernment process, as determined by action of the Council.”

We all have felt uneasy about the short timeline we faced with this offer – a decision one way or the other was needed by the end of January. Now we have a window of time to make important decisions about how to proceed, starting with an examination of worship options for West attendees once the facility changes hands. We are assured by the Montessori School that we will have full use of our facilities through the end of May.

What are the next steps? Part of the process will be to engage the congregation in helping craft the vision. There will be a schedule of “listening posts” and other opportunities to provide input to the process. In addition, we will move quickly to form a Mission Outreach Team that will develop a set of recommendations for the Council to consider as it formulates plans.

While the exact make-up of this Team has yet to be determined, we want to begin learning now who may be interested in serving on the Team. We will form a Team that reflects the diversity of the congregation as a whole. That means representation from members who regularly worship at West and at Eden Prairie as well a good mix of longer term/shorter term members, young people/seniors, residents across the breadth of our congregation’s current/potential reach, etc. The pastors as well as other staff, will be intimately involved in various ways throughout the process.

The process itself will begin with an internal examination: What is the capacity, commitment, viability of St. Andrew's future mission in the area? It will also include a thorough review of external factors: Consultation with Minneapolis Area Synod staff and ELCA Mission Development personnel, careful review of area demographics, other existing or planned church expansions in the area, and growth projections. The objectives to be accomplished by the Team, with timelines, will be determined by the Council over the next few weeks, with definitive steps firmed up at the next meeting of the Council on February 21. But it is important to get started immediately, so we are requesting that members who wish to be part of the process let us know. There will be a check-off in the bulletin; or you can speak to one of the pastors or to Andrea Spears, Council President.

In conclusion, we want to restate what we have felt throughout this challenging process. We are prayerfully and deeply committed to leading St. Andrew in directions that will strengthen our ability to pursue our mission as a congregation. We are excited about discovering where that mission will take us with the leadership of our new Senior Pastor. And, we are sincerely and personally determined to do all we can to reach out to those from our community who are feeling hurt by the congregation's decision to sell the St. Andrew West property.

We live, daily, totally dependent upon God's grace. Let us ask God to continue to be with us in this time of transition and to guide us to a future God desires for us.

In Christ's Service,

St. Andrew Congregation Council

Amy Burk

Ross Eichelberger

Carole McMonigal

Ruth Reding

Julie Samuelson

Brian Shimley

Andrea Spears

Kathy Thomsen

Doug Wiesner