



## 2011 Stewardship Note — Parish Life & Pastoral Care



August 14th marked the one year anniversary of my ordination to the Priesthood. It is because of the support and affirmation that I have gotten from this congregation that I finally made the decision - 15 years after graduating from seminary – to become ordained a Priest. I thank you for the confidence you have had in me and the affirmation you continue to give me each and every day. I feel I am finally doing the work I am called to do.

Four and a half years ago, I was hired at St. John's to focus entirely on **Pastoral Care**, and my heart has always been in this ministry and it will always be a place where I feel particularly blessed and rewarded. But as I reflect over this past years and open myself to the possibilities in my future, I realize that I am called to more than Pastoral Care – and you need more than that from me. This year I began a two-year training program to become a Spiritual Director. This came at exactly the right time because it has opened me to new ways of thinking about my ministry. I believe my real calling is to walk with people through their own faith journeys and help each of them – of you – discover and discern what you are called to be, as you did for me.

There is a movement in the church to recover what is known as the Baptismal Ministry - the priesthood of all believers - a ministry in which all the baptized share in Christ's mission. Through baptism each person receives gifts for ministry through the Holy Spirit—gifts to be embraced and lived out in the church and in the world. Baptismal Ministry maintains that the calling of each person is of equal worth and is essential for the fullness of mission—lay or clergy, we are each called to Christ's mission of helping to restore all people to unity with God.

In this context, it is not enough that I provide Pastoral Care, many of you also bring these gifts to bear. So we established Stephen Ministry several years ago to provide the training and the context in which those of you who are called to Pastoral Care can minister. Likewise with the Prayer and Healing Team, Daughters of the King, Caring Cooks – and all of the various caring ministries in which our members participate. These are all opportunities for you to fulfill your own sense of mission and calling.

So if I think of my ministry as a call to help facilitate your ministry, where does that take us? The programs that are in place today will continue to grow and thrive as we invest more time and energy in them, and we will

be initiating new programs and discovering new places for ministry. To that end, here are some of the things I am looking forward to in the next few months and the year ahead:

- Continuing to train new **Stephen Ministers** and expanding the program with the training of two additional Stephen Leaders.
- Continuing Fellowship opportunities through our monthly **Church Dinners**, special events like a Christmas Dinner, a new monthly gathering for parents called **Theology Uncorked**, and special events for women.
- Continuing to expand the role of our **Prayer and Healing Team** beyond Sunday mornings. This year the group is sponsoring a lecture series on Healing and Reconciliation in the fall, possibly offering a day of prayer during Advent, and offering our Annual Blue Christmas Service in December. Our **Centering Prayer Group** is offering a workshop on Contemplative Prayer in September. We look to doing more of these sorts of educational and experiential programs in the year ahead to share the power of prayer more fully with the congregation.
- As a part of my continued training in Spiritual Direction, I will offer one-on-one **Spiritual Direction** sessions with a handful of people interested in exploring new disciplines and practices that may help deepen their relationship with God.
- Offering a small group course on discernment, based in part on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.
- Offering a course on small group leadership to equip lay people with the tools to successfully lead group studies, support groups, training and educational groups.
- Offering additional courses and mentoring programs for new members to help them connect with the church more fully.
- Recruiting and training volunteers across ministries within the church.

All of these offerings are intended to help each of us find our true calling and ensure that we have the resources and training to be successful, and most importantly, to explore our relationship with God and with one another. I am very excited about the year ahead and look forward to continuing to grow in my faith with each of you and to see where God is leading me, and this congregation.

God's Peace,  
Mother Mary Erickson