

## **President's Report to our St Mark Congregation**

*February 2019*

The latest status on our pastoral Call: Voters have issued a Call to Pastor Evan Chartrand. Pastor Chartrand currently serving at Luther Preparatory High School in Watertown, Wisconsin. Our prayers are with him as he deliberates.

Pastors continue visiting members that can't make it to church services and encouraging our more absent members to take advantage of our church. Pastor Naumann reports visits to our members to encourage baptisms of our newborns and marriage of our couples (verses living together). Pastor Naumann also reports the start of a new Bible study at UWEC at the beginning of this new semester. The goal of the study is to encourage our college students to gain confidence in speaking to others about their Christian faith. Pastors also note that Confirmation is coming upon us quickly (May 6th). Planning is beginning around organizing for this event. Also to be noted, Lenten services will begin. Our usual rotations between St Mark and Our Hope will once again take place.

Elders report that they are reviewing the website. They anticipate the updated website to be able to go live around the April timeframe - pending approval from our voters. From the samples that I've seen, the updates look extremely impressive. I'm excited to see the "new face" of St Mark come alive online.

Stewardship reports that they have completed the delivery and collection of our sealed pledges. Please also feel free to just drop your sealed pledge in the offering plate in case you missed the opportunity to do so in our church services. The team is also looking to move quickly into gathering information about our member's time and talents. As board elections are coming up (this next April 22 voter's meeting), a healthier set of candidates for our board service is being requested. If you are asked to serve on a board, please consider giving some of your time and talent in this area. Personally, I have found it a very rewarding experience!

The Board of Education reports continued work on our handbooks. The St Mark staff is currently reviewing their content and providing their feedback. The goal is to have a solid set of handbooks and policies for our voters to approve at the April 22nd voters meeting. The board also discussed the idea of supporting a called worker to organize and begin the creation of a local WELS Lutheran high school. The idea would be that our area congregations would support the called worker in this area and the creation of the high school. The council's response was positive - but much depends on the decisions of our congregation as to our future long-range vision. I'll talk more about that later in my report.

Our Principal, Peter Micheel, reports that our preschool and church/school brochures have been updated. He thanked the folks involved (Emily Mikl and Connie Anason) for their talents and contributions in this area. Some key dates to remember: VBS will be July 17-21. The church picnic will be June 19 (it's a Wednesday). Once again, we plan to have our church picnic and our grade school children will sing the national anthem (and the Canadian national anthem) at the Carson Park baseball game. Be sure to note these events for some "outside of church" socializing opportunities! Peter also notes that STEM Camp will be July 8-12. Also interesting, Peter notes that for the first time, he will speak with our members (parents) of pre-school children at Concordia. The hope is to make known

and encourage these parents to continue their child's Christian education at our Lutheran Elementary School.

Buildings and Grounds understandably talked quite a bit about snow removal. They thank all to offer help in this area. The team also has received a donation to help cover the cost of repairing our drainage issues on the corner area of our sanctuary this coming Spring. The council accepted this gift (according to policy) and will inform our voters at the next meeting.

Board of Technology reports that security cameras are now installed and operational. They also report that they are considering more efficient ways to communicate our school and church event closures. We've had a couple of cancellations this year due to weather. Improvement and/or augmentation of a "broadcast" method to inform our members is being considered.

Finance reports that they are seeing steady gifts to our debt retirement. This began some additional discussion about the support of retiring our property debt and the support of our congregation in doing so.

Our Treasurer continues to encourage our congregation to provide feedback to the Trustees regarding the support of debt retirement direction. He spoke of a couple of options: The first option was to refinance at a 5-year loan. The second option was to pay off our debt from our internal funds. He compared our financial situation from January 2015 to now, January 2019. In 4 years, we have retired more than \$360,000 of internal and property debt. In January 2015, we had more than \$550,000 in debt. Our outstanding property debt is now under \$150,000! We now have internal funds (the majority of which is for future building) that will cover our outstanding property debt. At this time, it is believed that Council will be asking the voters for direction and approval of either retiring our debt or refinancing.

As President, my report to you continues to be centered on plans of long-ranging vision. I believe we've all planned long and hard - and focused on retiring debt. The debt retirement enables our vision to advance. St Mark has so many opportunities ahead of us! Early child care programs, sanctuary expansion to reduce the amount of services we have, Lutheran high school start up, starting up a second church in the area, just to name a few! I'm looking forward to walking with you as we move on to the next step and vision execution. My ask to all of you is to continue to work together on deciding these directions - as they are all good directions! We'll need to unite on a decision. I believe that when our members unite, there is nothing we can't accomplish in terms of our mission here at St Mark! I look forward to our exciting future!

*I'll include my standard closing statement with you: If you ever need more information on any of the work the boards are performing, let me know. I'll work to find the answer or raise a suggestion for discussion. Contact information for me: Email ([fischerfull@gmail.com](mailto:fischerfull@gmail.com)), Cell (715.497.5264) - feel free to give me a call if you want to discuss anything we're working on, if you have ideas, can help, or just want to chat. Your council values your ideas and support.*

In God's service,  
Eric Fischer, President

**<http://www.stmark-wels.org>**