



November 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our LORD and savior. As I write this, it is a cool, crisp October morning. The leaves are bright and pumpkins are everywhere. I sure love the fall, but I can't believe it's almost November already. September marked two years since my family and I arrived in Richland Center. I have gotten to know many of you well in the past two years and have made strong connections. Others of you, however, I have only met once or twice, and some of you maybe not at all. This grieves me. A pastor friend of mine, who has many years of experience, once said to me that the most important thing you can do in a new pastorate, is get to know your congregation. I admit that I have not done very well at that in the past year. I ask that you extend to me some grace, just as God's grace is extended to each and every one of us.

The pastor's life is quite full of many competing interests and obligations. Having responsibility of two congregations while being a father of two small children can be challenging at times. I have also become more involved in several community organizations, including becoming president of the RCMA. However, this is no excuse for letting visitation and pastoral care fall to the wayside in the ministry of the church. This is a key part of the role of pastor.

We have a small but dedicated group of people on our visitation ministry team. This group is led by Tricia Holley, our minister of pastoral care. This ministry is an important priority for the church leadership and for the congregation. We have a very capable and well-trained leader in Tricia Holley. She is theologically trained, more so than many pastors in our state, having a Master of Divinity degree, from Dubuque Theological seminary, with a focus in pastoral care. She works as a spiritual care provider (chaplain) with SSM Health at Home. She is a very capable, well organized, and Spirit filled woman whom God has called into ministry. But I need to stress that she has taken upon this role as a volunteer. She is not paid anything for serving in this role.

You might be thinking that having Tricia serve in this capacity is an effort to take responsibility off myself for doing visitation; Not So! As I said above, visitation is a key part of my responsibilities as pastor, and I do not intend to shirk that responsibility. Tricia will continue to assist me by helping prioritize visitation needs, recruiting folks to serve in the visitation ministry, training volunteers for this ministry and coordinating the visitation team's efforts. She and the visitation team will continue to visit folks and care for them, thereby taking some pressure off of me to see everyone so often. In this way, I can be sure to see the folks I must see in a timely manner. It is important to remember that it is the responsibility of the whole congregation, not just the pastor, to care for members of the congregation.

I want to encourage everyone to take advantage of our connect cards that are in the bulletins on Sunday mornings. Not only is it used for attendance record keeping, but is also a first line of contact with guests to our church. These cards allow us to be able to follow up with guests at worship in a timely manner, thereby increasing the likelihood that they would return. If guests see you not filling them out, then they won't either. If they don't fill it out, then I have no way of following up with them. If I don't follow up with them after one or two visits with us, they will likely decide to go to another church. So, I want to stress to you the importance of filling out your connect card completely.

We also use the connect card to share prayer concerns and joys; those to be lifted up in worship, as well as those we want the prayer ministry team to be praying for throughout the week. I also want to remind everyone that there is a place on the back side of the connect card for visitation needs and/or requests. If you know of someone who has not been seen by the pastor or visitation team in a while, let us know. If there is someone who is feeling like they have been overlooked and have not been seen in a timely manner, write their name on a connect card in the proper place, and we will see to it they are visited. It does no good to say to us that we are not seeing people like we should, but not give us names. That only causes conflict and hurt feelings.

In Exodus 18:13-26, we read of how Jethro advised Moses to appoint helpers in fulfilling his responsibilities as leader and judge of the people of Israel. By doing this he was "able to stand the strain," and all the people were satisfied. We read in Luke 10 of how Jesus sends out the 72 disciples, two by two, to do the work of the Lord. Jesus says here that "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Brothers and sisters, the work of the church is much too great for one man, therefore I am grateful that Tricia continues to serve in her capacity as minister of pastoral care. But, the need is great, and the workers are few. If you feel that God is leading you to serve in the visitation ministry, please contact Tricia or myself and let us know. God bless you all and see you soon.

Rev. Wiley Gladney