

Nov 1, 2016

Congregation,

As your Congregation Council prepared the proposed 2017 budget, we thoughtfully considered, through prayer, discussion, and discernment, the vision that we see for Hosanna -- not only for the next year but for many years to come. We believe that Hosanna exists to fulfill our mission -- to show God's love to all people, to grow in grace and favor with the Lord, to be Christ to all and serve God, and to let the world know of God's love for them.

As we work towards a strategic plan which will provide short and long term goals for the congregation, we have identified the staffing and program needs that are necessary to enable and equip this congregation to spread the love of God to all people. Throughout the recent weeks, we have further committed to the strategic decisions we have made regarding the call of a Senior Pastor and a Rostered Leader to lead our Youth and Family ministries and you will see these commitments reflected in the proposed budget.

As Paul said to the Corinthians, **"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love."** 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

The budget the council is proposing is our best attempt to step out in faith with a bold vision for Hosanna's future, while at the same time being mindful of the realities of our current financial resources. Our vision includes an Associate Pastor and an Audio Visual support staff member, but we consider these to be secondary to filling the immediate need of a Senior Pastor and Full Time Youth and Family Ministries Leader.

Through the grace of our Lord, the past two years have been a time for all of us to learn, to mature, and to grow wiser and also a time to begin to refocus our minds on the mission for this church. Throughout this time, we have been listening to God and believe that He has good things ahead for this congregation.

Recently, through the efforts of those on our Listening Team, we have learned much about ourselves and who we are as a congregation.

- We have learned that this congregation feels strongly about our vibrant youth group.
- We have affirmed that the Hosanna Preschool and VBS programs are critically important children's ministries that provide outreach to our community.
- We have watched our Small Group ministry carry our members through some difficult times, helping us to remain close and remember why we exist to serve together; we know that is an integral part of who Hosanna is.
- We have learned that we are a congregation with a tradition of serving.
- We remember our past serving through Katrina and we are channeling that need to serve to areas of need in the broad community around us.
- We have heard the need for additional communication through new channels.



Throughout all of this, we have come together as a congregation and have begun to celebrate who we are and what we are passionate about.

The Listening Team in their report has told us that we need to help this congregation connect with each other in ways outside of worship. We are sent out of worship to serve and to live the mission we repeat every week: "To proclaim the love of God to all people, so that they may know Jesus Christ, grow in faith, and follow Christ." Their report further tells us of many areas of our community that need our love and support. We on council are making plans to put into place the leadership and program support that we believe will assist all of us in the congregation to show God's love and help others in our community grow in their faith.

As your council, we have been listening, too. We have been listening to all of you and to that still small voice of God. While it has been difficult, we have been determined to provide the congregation with time to heal and to reflect—we felt this was critical. We have tightly held to the belief that God would lead us to move forward at the right time. Recently, we felt the calling that the right time was upon us to put the Call Team into place and we are thankful for the hard work the Listening Team did to produce the information the Call Team will use for our Ministry Site Profile.

For many, the process has been long and difficult. For others, the process has been a time of healing. And, for others, the process has brought clarity and input from additional voices.

Your council members see a clear future vision for Hosanna as a growing, welcoming congregation focused on youth, families, spiritual growth, and service.

To support this vision, the proposed budget includes support for an experienced Senior Pastor who, as outlined in the Listening Team report, "is a leader, a preacher, a motivator, an innovator, an administrator and more". As this Senior Pastor is going to need to be supported by a strong staff, and, given our focus on youth and families, this budget also supports the strategic decision made by council to hire a full time Youth and Family Director who is trained in the foundations provided by the ELCA and can handle additional responsibilities such as support for Small Groups which are a bedrock for this congregation. Our dedication to growing the congregation through a focus on youth and families and on helping all of us grow in our faith is represented in the budget through the support for Youth Night and other discipleship programs as well.

Over the past two years, each phase has brought with it the excitement of what is to come. While it is easy to become anxious as we wait for what is ahead, it is important for us to keep our eyes on where God is calling us to be. On council, we have learned the importance of examining our hopes and fears for the future together as a way to bring us back together to focus on our mission. Time and time again, we feel nothing but excitement at what is to come.

We are praying that all of you will feel that same excitement as we increase our involvement in achieving our mission together. As we have learned in Philippians 1:6, **"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** God has not finished the work He started at Hosanna.

In Christ,

Hosanna Congregational Council