



For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12: 12

Over the past couple of years that I have had the tremendous honor to serve as pastor of St. Timothy, I have heard from a lot of people about how welcoming our congregation is. Visitors have commented on it when choosing to become members. New visitors have talked about how great the community is and keep coming back. They are praying and considering making this their church home. We can be really proud of this, because not all churches are as friendly and welcoming.

The challenge that confronts us, though, is taking the next step that comes after *welcoming*. That is *belonging*. Belonging means being a part of this congregation. Belonging goes beyond showing up on Sunday mornings for worship to investing in the church with both time and money. It means giving one's opinions – even without being sure that others agree. Essentially, it means having a stake in the ministry of the congregation. This is something we can work on.

Many of you already know this. It has been a prominent subject in conversations that the Strategic Planning group has had with many individuals and groups over the past 6 months. Every single ministry and committee at this church has spoken about the need to have more people power to get their work accomplished. We have also heard from people about their desire to be more involved, but they cannot contribute as they would like due to time conflicts and/or capacity.

The Strategic Planning group saw this as an opportunity to set some goals toward updating how ministry is done in our church. We have started out modestly with goals that should only take about one year to accomplish. You will have the opportunity to vote on these goals at the annual meeting on June 25. The full list is found in this edition of the TIPS. It also will be included in the annual report provided by the committee for you to review in advance. We encourage you to take the time to read over it and ask questions of the committee members before the day of the meeting.

The one goal that may stand out as a very new idea for some is “engage in the RIC process.” RIC is an acronym for Reconciling In Christ. This is a program designed by an ELCA organization called Reconciling Works. It is a program to learn and grow in understanding of people that are different from us – to reconcile with

people that may **not** have been welcomed in churches in the past. This will be an opportunity for us to learn about BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and members of the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual) communities.

Often those of us that are surrounded by people similar to ourselves may not know what feels welcoming or unwelcoming to people that are different. Everyone I have met here at St. Timothy has told me that they work hard to be welcoming. No one is intentionally rejecting anyone, but there are words and actions that can be hurtful to someone unsure of their place here. This program provides an opportunity for all of us to learn how to do better *without shame*. We can learn how to do better ensuring everyone knows that they are beyond welcome to attend worship – that this is, in fact, a place that they can belong.

I encourage you to look over the Reconciling Works website (<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>) and bring questions to me. I want us all to be sensitive in our conversations with the broader community, because we are already blessed with members of the above communities and those who love members of these communities. Honest questions are always welcome, but hateful commentary is never constructive. Growth is not always a comfortable process, but it is often well worth the effort. I am so very grateful to be working in mission with you all.



Shaping Our Future

Strategic Planning Committee Goals:

Pastoral Care: identify and train eucharistic lay visitors to supplement the care provided by clergy.

Faith Formation: 1. Assign kids to work in worship;
2. Plan one youth activity/month

Community Building: 1. Engage in the RIC process (more information can be found at this link <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/becomeric/>); 2. Develop Outreach Committee that aligns congregational work and mission and coordinates and communicates with congregation.

Worship: Variety of preachers and Special music to provide diverse worship experiences that will expand our understanding of the Church.

Stewardship: 1. Identify new leadership for property committee in order to reshape how we care for our building and grounds; 2. Expand the purview of the stewardship committee to increase engagement of the congregation.