

# Zion Lutheran Church • Fairbanks, Alaska

Pastor's Monday • June 25, 2007

It is great to be back... The time away was wonderful. The family reunion in Northern Alabama was a celebration of God's goodness. The precious moments of being together when the family is so far flung was emphasized by the absence of oldest brother Richard who passed away just three weeks before the reunion. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of our trip was a week with the grandchildren in Pass Christian, Mississippi. And that was delightful – four little girls, full of life and joy, and yet all girls!

It was great seeing how well things had been taken care of in my absence. What a great blessing Pastor and Le Kauth are! However there is some serious business that I was made aware of shortly before returning. In the monthly Leadership Council meeting, I was instructed to prepare a response and action plan to deal with our current cash flow situation. One of those action plans was to make an announcement to each of the services this weekend. This was the announcement:

*In the past year I have had some very positive things to say about the financial condition of our congregation. Offerings last year were up by 30% over the previous year. Based on that performance, we presented a budget for the present fiscal year. However, things change, and our financial situation has changed. Our giving through the first three months of this fiscal year is down 30%. Because we cannot spend more than we receive, we are in the position of not being able to fund many aspects of our ministry. I ask your prayers and I ask you to consider your giving. As soon as the final figures are in for the quarter, I will be sending a letter to the congregation explaining in more detail our current situation and what we together can do about it.*

This past weekend was a marvelous time for the Baumgartens. They drove on Thursday from St Louis to Des Moines, IA for Joe's ordination at Shepherd of the Valley, his vicarage congregation. On behalf of all of us, I wrote the following letter that was shared with Joe, Cyndi, the children and the members of Shepherd of the Valley at the ordination.

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church  
West Des Moines, IA

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We write with regret that we cannot be with you on the occasion of Joe Baumgarten's ordination. How appropriate that he will be ordained in the place where he and his family grew in ministry. You loved them, nurtured them and released them back to the Seminary to finish his formation for ministry. And now God has called them to serve in the "Last Frontier." Thank you for welcoming them back for his ordination into the Lutheran Pastoral Ministry.

I am sure that you have mixed feelings on the occasion of his ordination. I hope not. My hope is that your feelings will be those of St. Paul as he wrestled with his deep affection for the young pastor Timothy. I know that Joe and Cyndi's feelings for you are those of St. Paul for the congregation in Philippi which supported him. Distance was a factor in those relationships, but distance enhanced those relationships because prayer became a primary means of connection. The prayer of St. Paul for his church in Philippi in 1:3-6 "*I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus,*" will continue to be the prayer of Joe and his family

for you at Shepherd of the Valley. I would ask that it would be your continuing prayer for them as they now answer God's call North! (Don't miss more Baumgarten news at the end.)

Because of distance, most of us at ZIONfairbanks will never meet you at Shepherd of the Valley, but unknowingly, our prayers for an associate pastor over the past 15 months have touched you. And we humbly ask for your "knowing" prayers for us as we welcome Joe and his family and help them make the adjustment of living so far away home and family. And you can be assured that your prayers will enhance your relationship with them. You know much better than we do the gifts for ministry that this entire family brings with them for ministry!

Finally, I know, after living up here 13 years, that there is a trip to Alaska in almost every person that lives in the lower 48. If you are one of those persons, you are hereby invited to come and visit. With Joe and family in Alaska, you now have a double reason for following that dream. I assure you that you will receive an Alaska-sized welcome when you come through the doors of ZIONfairbanks.

May your joy be in God's grace on this day of ordination.

For ZIONfairbanks, I am, for Jesus, Pastor Phil Kuehnert

And the Summer progresses – V B S, Golden Days Parade and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, our church picnic followed by the installation of Joe Baumgarten as associate pastor of our congregation.

By the way – did you know that we will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zion next year?

Phil 1:3-6 for all of you also!  
Pastor K

### **More Baumgarten news:**

#### **I WISH WE'D HAVE KNOWN ...**

The Baumgarten family will soon be on their way to Fairbanks! They've made a special request that those of us who have lived here for a while consider the phrase "I wish we'd have known..." and share our far north wisdom with them. We'll be collecting your comments in the Zion office to compile and present to the Baumgartens once they arrive. Just drop it by the Zion office, or e-mail [admin@zionfairbanks.org](mailto:admin@zionfairbanks.org) . *If your advice pertains to the drive TO Fairbanks, please send it to them directly at cyndi\_joe@hotmail.com.* Thanks! Pastor Baumgarten will be ordained this morning at Shepherd of the Valley, West Des Moines, Iowa. Please keep the Baumgartens in your prayers as they begin their trip to Alaska.

### **And even more Baumgarten news (and a Mike Steckel update):**

A Report from ZION Fairbanks Southern Outpost: (from Kip and Dawn Harmon)

This has truly been a blessed vacation in St. Louis. Not only did we get to catch up with our families, but saw some incoming and recently outgoing Zion "family" members as well.

Last Thursday, we had breakfast with Joe, Cyndi, Duncan and Madeline Baumgarten. The Baumgarten's had their car loaded and were headed out from our meeting on their way to Iowa for Joe's Ordination ceremony on Saturday night. What a wonderful family we have moving to join us at Zion. Having met Cyndi on her most recent house-hunting trip to Fairbanks....they were easy to spot. The kids were cute as can be...Madeline (Maddie) is an extremely bright youngster who is really looking forward to the big move. Duncan is going through the normal adjustments a kid his age would have to make on such a big move (very similar to the one Dawn went through 19 years ago!). All of his toys and everything is packed in boxes and nothing is accessible. At the beginning of the breakfast...he was a little shy but, by the end, we were playing peek-a-boo and had him smiling and giggling. These folks will be a welcomed addition to our Zion family and should have no problem fitting right in. They are expecting to make the drive starting tomorrow and should arrive in Fairbanks in a couple of weeks. And while he is admittedly a novice...he loves to golf!!! Do I hear the SCC Scramble calling???

Then this afternoon, Monday, 6/25, we had lunch with our most recent departee -- Mike Steckel who is in week three of his summer classes at Concordia Seminary. I'm not sure what he appreciated more...a meal out of the house or the break from all of his Greek classes...it's about a toss-up. Mike is setting up house, getting ready for Kathy, Tecumseh and Truly to make it down on August 1st. It is a very nice unit and Mike has done a great job in getting things ready. He is planning on investigating a Lutheran school for the kids tomorrow. After lunch (which was his first meal off campus), he took us on a tour of the seminary campus. What a complex!!! From the large chapel with stained glass windows and a huge pipe organ...to the towering carillon in the "Quad" to the statue of Martin Luther, its fantastic architecture is surpassed only by the quality of people on campus...a truly great environment. We stopped off at the seminary bookstore and helped support the campus with our purchases, too!

Mike is doing fine...but when asked what he missed the most about Fairbanks...he quickly replied "I miss the Fairbanks weather." Dawn & I both grew up in the St. Louis area - the Midwest can be very hot and extremely humid this time of year. It will take some adjustment, but Mike has a positive spirit and equally positive outlook for the future. It is quite a loss for Zion Fairbanks...but one day, Mike will be a fantastic pastor!

### Mark your calendars:

July 9-13: Vacation Bible School – invite friends and neighbors

July 21: Golden Days Parade (Water Distribution and Parade Float)

July 22: Church Potluck Picnic followed by Installation Service of Pastor Baumgarten @ 7pm

August 3-11 Fair Booth

August 22 Zion & Open Arms Back-to-School