

## CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

April 2013

This year we were honored to meet in the home of Jeff and Carla Stoudt for our annual Council Retreat. We opened with a brief worship, shared communion and convened to engage in a discussion that was organized into three sessions, throughout the morning.

- In Session 1, entitled End of an Era, we discussed the traditional congregational ministerial model. That overall, congregations are reducing in size and are not replenishing their numbers from within, as was traditionally the case. Congregations are experiencing “Loss of Community” and there is an increasing number of “Nones”, or people who represent their religious affiliation as “None”. Also, that today, technology favors the young and not necessarily the experienced, resulting in lower incomes of those in mid life, which were formerly the prime earning years. Considering these issues, in light of climbing church expenses; the way we function as a congregation is likely to change.
- Our discussion in Session 2, the Vine and the Branches, centered about our examining the conventional pyramid shaped, corporate-like organizational structure versus a more horizontal structure that is centered about, and draws from, the Word and Sacrament; similar to a root of a vine, with branches, or as lily pads on a pond. We examined our organizational chart through this lens and developed a model with four main congregational functions; those that Nurture, Invite, Support and Serve members of our congregation and our community. (In rereading this paragraph, at first, it sounds a little far-fetched or overly analytic, but in reality this “new model” is actually closer to how we currently function best as a congregation, and has already replaced the traditional hierarchal corporate structure in many cases.)
- Session 3, Staffing and Ministry, focused our discussion around the future ministerial and staffing needs that we anticipate here at St. John. We have enjoyed hosting two seminary students in recent years. In the process of doing so, we’ve come to learn that we are quite good at nurturing these young pastors towards parish ministry. Unfortunately though, there are too few attending seminary these days to assure that we will be selected to host a first year student every year. Council examined the potential of hiring a third year student, either in a part time or full time capacity, as a vicar.

Next, we broke bread at noon, or actually it was pizza from Paesanos, and concluded with a brief worship; Reflection, Prayer, Song & Sending.

All things considered, time well spent among good friends.

Yours in Christ,

Paul K. Francis,  
Council President