

“Instead, I have called you friends...” - Jesus, quoted in John 15:15

Dear friends,

In September of 2008 I found myself (for the tenth time) on a Leadership Adventure in Grand Canyon of Arizona. As one friend hiked with me up the dusty trail, he asked, “So, Pete – this journey is transformational for *so* many people. But what’s *your* leadership adventure?” He said this as he observed several others trudging up the trail, pleading with God to get them back up to the rim of the canyon again. As he watched me, however, he realized that I wasn’t really struggling to make it up the steep grade. This particular part of the overall adventure, though challenging, wasn’t stretching me in the same way that it was some of the others.

His question hit home, because I had been asking the same question myself – not necessarily about hiking, but about my current ministry adventure. I had just finished my thirteenth year in St. Louis and my tenth year as an ordained pastor at St. John. I could look back and point to successes such as Warehouse and a variety of creative ministry programs. I was enjoying the journey. But in general, life had gotten pretty easy.

These realities began to hit me some months before the Canyon adventure, as I was traveling in Asia as part of a month-long Sabbatical. My eyes and my heart were opened through preaching in Hong Kong and visiting our Christian missionaries in Vietnam. I returned to St. Louis with a greater sense of urgency and a wider view of God’s mission. I started asking the question, “God, has life gotten too safe for me?”

I knew I wasn’t created to coast. So I started praying for discernment. And as soon as I began telling God of my willingness to follow, He started preparing me for my own leadership adventure. Since that time, I have written page upon page of journal entries which confirm that direction. Countless conversations have taken place through which God has also spoken. And by the time I returned from Grand Canyon it was clear: God was preparing me for the next phase of life and pastoral ministry.

I believe in my heart that my upcoming contribution will be to somehow help the Christian church move into ‘what’s next.’ I feel I have something to say to a generation and a culture that believes truth is relative and Christians are intolerant. I sense that my gifts of leadership and communication will be especially helpful, when combined with all that has been learned through launching three Warehouse services and two Outpost experiences.

I am now exploring how best to serve Christ, within the context of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. I may either take on leadership of a new church plant; or I may help an existing church ‘re-tool’ for a different kind of ministry in a quickly changing world. One excellent use of my gifts would be to equip a mission-focused church to initiate multiple new ministries from out of their strength.

There are several Districts of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod that are strategically mobilized and funded for this type of work. I have been in contact with them, and in the next couple of weeks I will explore possibilities in three different locations. These groups are moving quickly, and it is realistic that I could receive a Call to serve as a pastor in one of these regions by the end of this year, or toward the start of 2009. Although nothing is definite at this time, I feel it is important to be transparent about this emerging direction.

I am excited not only for the adventure waiting for me, but the adventure waiting for the people of St. John, as well. With Pastor Dion Garrett joining St. John's staff in January of 2009, he will add depth to the current strength of staff and Strategic Leadership that is already in place. The people of St. John are incredible. The mission of St. John is clear and will not be affected in any way by this change. The heart of Warehouse is stronger than ever and could be led by either Pastor Ryan or Pastor Dion without missing a beat.

So, as Jesus reminded his disciples, he had called them as friends in order that they would *“go and bear fruit – fruit that will last” (John 15:16)*.

Thank you, friends.

Pastor Pete Mueller
December 4, 2008