

PARENTHOOD

Dear Friends in Christ,

First, a word of thanks...

I want to thank the Congregation Council for approving a Paternity Leave Plan on your behalf, and I encourage you to make it a permanent part of my compensation package and that of future pastors. It costs the congregation very little, yet it shows a high level of support for your pastor. The Synod strongly encourages it for two main reasons:

First, it models what we believe, that the presence of parents is important in the life of children, and that God's call as a parent is a greater calling than the call to any job or vocation, even that of ministry within the church.

Second, it is to the benefit of the pastor and the congregation, because it conserves vacation days for their proper use as days of renewal for a congregation's leadership. This is also why the Synod requires a minimum of four weeks of vacation per year, and encourages five or six weeks.

Without this time away, a pastor is unable to effectively serve his or her congregation. He or she risks a loss of vision - an inability to see the bigger picture. It becomes an example of the law of diminishing returns. In the process, pastoral care, preaching, and the Gospel itself are compromised. So, thank you to the Council and to all of you for your leadership.

Logistically, the paternity leave plan means that I will be away for two weeks sometime in the month of June. An on-call pastor will be designated, and supply pastors will be procured for Sunday mornings. I am excited to announce that The Rev. Chip Gunsten, Asst. to the Bishop, will serve as supply pastor on either June 3 or June 17, depending upon which is needed. He will do this as an extension of the Office of the Bishop, and will lead a Sunday school discussion that day on the life of the Virginia Synod. You won't want to miss it!

Second, a reminder...

We confirmed three young adults in May. I told them they were ready to be parents! This came as quite a shock to them and their parents too! I wasn't talking about being physically ready, or about being ready for being in a committed relationship, but instead about being spiritually ready. You see, Christian parents must be able to confess their faith to their children. I have heard our confirmands confess their faith. It is still hard for them, they need practice and more encouragement from the rest of us as they continue to grow up, but they can do it.

As we sit between Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, it seems a good time to ask that question of ourselves.

Do you remember how to confess your faith to your children?

Do you do it?

Can it be said that they have caught you in the act of confessing your faith?

Or have they caught you in the act of other things?

When they were baptized, you made promises to bring them to the Lord's house, to put in their hands the Holy Scripture, to teach them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. This is the beginning of confessing your faith. Refer back to Martin Luther's Small Catechism if you want to see how he confessed his faith to his little Hans and Magdalena. If you need another copy, come get one **free** from me.

Please take a moment now to pray for all parents as they seek to bring their children up in the faith.

In order to help parents and others in their ability to confess their faith, we will be launching an exciting program near the end of June. This will involve every man, woman, and child in the congregation, so be on the look out for it.

Oh, and Dad's...Happy Fathers' Day

Peace be with you all,

Pastor Chris