



I am reflecting today on how very proud I am of the work of the Mutual Ministry committee, the Evangelism committee, and the Church Council in our effort to update the membership roles. Some people might view this as a purely administrative function. In fact, some pastor's view it that way and never bother to get around to it. But it is really a spiritual issue. **The pastor and the congregation have the responsibility to hold each member accountable for their individual walk of faith.**

Wow, now that is a big deal. We ordained Pastor Kim Triplett at Synod Assembly, and I was struck again by that responsibility when I heard the words that the minister uses to question the ordinand, "Before almighty God, to whom you must give account..."

So what is it that the church and its pastors will be held accountable for? Its members and their faith journey, that is what!

That is why I am so pleased with the work going on. 25 people have been involved in sending over 30 letters that have gone out to folks that were once members but have become inactive – some near and some far. Others have received phone calls. The purpose of all this kingdom work is to reconnect folks with either our congregation or some congregation of believers, where they can give and receive spiritual gifts. I'm so pleased with their work that I've included copies of the letters for you to read.

- In some cases this results in finding that they've already joined another church – praise God!
- In some cases this results in us helping them find another church – praise God!

- In some cases this results in them becoming members again at Salem Church – praise God!
- In a few cases it results in someone being a member elsewhere but retaining an "associate member" status at Salem Church – praise God!
- In rare cases this even results in us keeping someone on the rolls who lives far away and securing another pastor who lives nearby them to be their surrogate pastor – praise God! (This is for special cases like shut-ins and college students. It certainly highlights the importance of campus ministry).

That is the church at work at its best, brothers and sisters. It is not easy work, and it is sometimes thankless work, but it is incredibly important work. If we took it as seriously as we should then we would all be holding each other much more accountable for our actions and our inactions, and everyone would remain connected to some community of faith.

Listen again to the words we recently heard in worship from John 20. "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Let us pray that God would always help us to discern when the church should forgive sins and when the church should retain sins. What an awesome responsibility!

Peace,
Pastor Chris

Letter sent to those far away:

June 24, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are in the process of updating our membership roles, for a number of reasons.

You are receiving this letter because we have missed you from worship recently and are concerned about your walk of faith. It is our desire for everyone to be an active and connected member of our church, or of some church.

According to Salem Church's constitution, a member must be **confirmed**. He or she also needs to receive Holy **Communion** at worship at least once a year, and make a **contribution** of record at least once a year. In shorthand, this is called the 3 C's.

Of course, this is a minimum level of activity that is outlined for recordkeeping purposes. Members are expected and encouraged to attend worship and contribute on a regular and frequent basis to God's mission in and through this congregation.

We recognize that you live too far away for Salem Church to be effective as your faith community.

If you have found another church home, we rejoice with you and we encourage you to be regular in your worship attendance and your giving and serving in that congregation. Please let us know the name and location of the church so that we can mark you as "Transferred" in our rolls.

If you need help finding a church in your area, let us know and we will help you get connected to another community of faith. We recognize that it is very important for you to know a local faith community where you can give and serve, and to be known by a local faith community where you can find Christian care-giving, prayer, and support.

We invite you to contact us by telephone at 540-234-8161 (you can leave a message), by email at membership@salemlutheranva.org, or by regular mail at the address on this letterhead. We will be administratively removing names from our rolls on July 15, 2008.

If you find yourself moving back to the Mount Sidney area, we invite you to join us, once again. Exciting things are happening at Salem

Church. But we wish you all the best wherever your faith journey is taking you. Please know that you remain in our prayers. Thanks for your time.

Blessings to you,

The Rev. Christopher D. Carr
Pastor

Mr. Keith Robertson
Council President

Mr. Leon Sheets
Financial Secretary

Ms. Barbara Smallwood
Council Vice President

P.S. The following are the ELCA Lutheran Churches that are closest to your zip code. We compiled this information from www.elca.org.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Letter sent to those who are local:

June 24, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are in the process of updating our membership roles, for a number of reasons.

You are receiving this letter because we have missed you from worship recently and are concerned about your walk of faith. It is our desire for everyone to be an active and connected member of our church, or of some church.

According to Salem Church's constitution, a member must be **confirmed**. He or she also needs to receive Holy **Communion** at worship at least once a year, and make a **contribution** of record at least once a year. In shorthand, this is called the 3 C's.

Of course, this is a minimum level of activity that is outlined for recordkeeping purposes. Members are expected and encouraged to attend worship and contribute on a regular and frequent basis to God's mission in and through this congregation.

We would like to apologize that you have "fallen through the cracks."

If you have simply stopped coming to worship, we invite you to come back and join us. We are also considering adding an additional Sunday

worship service. We would welcome your input concerning possible convenient service times.

If you left because of a disagreement or conflict with the church or other members, we invite you to be reconciled with us. We recognize that it takes two to have a disagreement and therefore part of the fault would be ours. We invite you to come back and join us.

If you found another church home, we rejoice with you and we encourage you to be regular in your worship attendance and your giving and serving in that congregation. Please let us know the name and location of the church so that we can mark you as "Transferred" in our rolls.

If Salem Church is not a good fit for you and you need help finding another church in the area, let us know and we will help you get connected to another faith community.

We invite you to contact us by telephone at 234-8161 (you can leave a message), by email at membership@salemlutheranva.org, or by regular mail at the address on this letterhead. We will be administratively removing names from our rolls on July 15, 2008.

We invite you to join us. Exciting things are happening at Salem Church. But we wish you all the best wherever your faith journey is taking you. Please know that you remain in our prayers. Thanks for your time.

Blessings to you,

The Rev. Christopher D. Carr
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