

April 2, 2021

Dear St. Jacob Lutheran Church members, family, and friends,

As you are probably aware, Pastor Williamson's last service with us will be Sunday April 11. His official retirement date is May 1, 2021. We are inviting all to please join us on April 11th for a thank you reception in Pastor Williamson's honor to be held in the fellowship hall immediately after service. With attention to Covid protocols, we will be wearing masks and serving bottled water with prepackaged cookies to munch on.

The primary purpose of this communication is Church Council's desire to inform you of the plan for calling our next pastor.

- At our last council meeting on March 16th, a video conference was held with the Northeast Ohio Synod (NEOS) Bishop, the Rev. Dr. Laura Barbins. She provided a rough outline of the process involved which will include the formation of a call committee and certain actions by church council. We were given the name of Pastor Karl Biermann who is an assistant to the Bishop with whom we will work directly through this process.
- Bishop Barbins explained that the NEOS will provide us with an interim pastor until we are able to call and have a call accepted by a new pastor. In the meantime, Pastor Williamson and LaShell are expected by the NEOS through a "Departing Ministry Covenant" to no longer be involved with St. Jacob after April 11th as this allows the best chance for a smooth and straightforward transition to a new pastor. It will undoubtedly be difficult to say goodbye but we wish them the best for their future and ask God to walk with them and bless them always.
- Pastor Biermann was contacted shortly after the March meeting and he indicated that the start date for an interim pastor will be June 1st. We will be using supply pastors for the Sunday worship until the interim is in place. Supply pastors have already been secured for the dates needed so there should be no interruption of the normal 9:00 am Sunday service; however, there will be no Thursday evening or Zoom services.
- A call committee of 6 or 8 St. Jacob's members will be formed to facilitate the search for the new pastor. Greg Liebau has agreed to chair this committee. We would like to have a diverse group of men and women from youth through elders to fill out the committee so we can have as much input from various points of view as possible. This committee will put a synopsis about St. Jacob together, review resumes, conduct interviews, and make a recommendation to church council on a person to call. Please consider serving on this committee. If you are interested, please let a council member or Greg Liebau know.
- Once Church Council has received the recommendation from the call committee, they will then vote to accept or reject the recommendation. If rejected, the call committee will continue the search. If accepted, council will prepare a compensation package and set up a

“meet and greet” time for the congregation to meet the candidate. Shortly thereafter, at a duly called congregational meeting, the congregation will vote on whether to call the candidate (2/3’s yes needed) and also to vote on a compensation package (simple majority needed). If the candidate is turned down, the process will go back to the call committee. If approved, the candidate will be given the offer for their approval. Obviously, if the candidate turns down the call, the process reverts back to the call committee.

The Bishop stated that on average the call process takes about 12-18 months so it could be shorter but it could be substantially longer. She also mentioned that the average tenure of a pastor with a NEOS congregation is seven years. Pastor Williamson has given 32 years in service to this congregation which speaks volumes to his talent, dedication, leadership, and faith. As Bishop Barbins indicated, we are not looking for a replacement for Pastor Williamson but we are calling a new pastor to lead us in the future while Pastor Williamson and LaShell savor the joys of retirement.

With God’s blessings to all,

St. Jacob Church Council