



**First of the Month @ CLC**

November 1, 2021

Dear Christ Lutheran Church,

When I am asked about what I do as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, I tell people that I am the thin part on an hourglass. It often seems like everything flows through my office. Which, of course, means it doesn't flow well or fast.

I suppose there are a couple of reasons for the "hourglass" analogy. One is traditional; this is the way the church (especially Lutheran churches) have always done things. The pastor is the paid employee who "runs" the church, and the one where the buck will finally stop (although technically, the Church Board has the final authority over the pastor, but seldom is the Church Board in the position to deal with all the details of daily ministry of the church). Our church constitution (which is born out of a history of Lutheran church polity) says that the pastor is the one who supervises the organizations of the congregation.

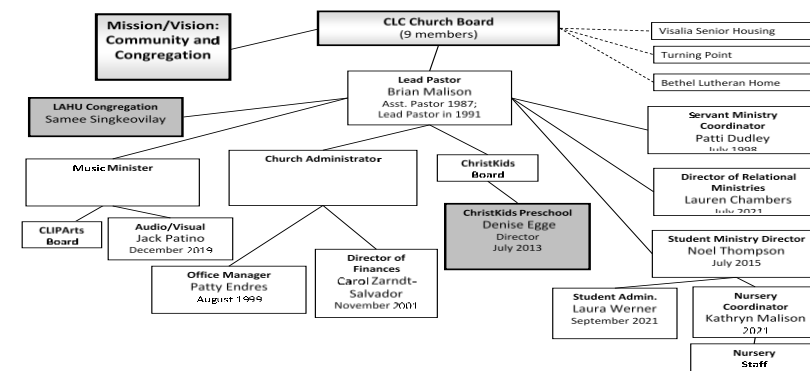
But another reason for the "hourglass" is circumstantial; we have lost key leaders who have left a void. A music minister, an intern, and a church administrator were significant contributors to the life and ministry of CLC. While many, both staff and volunteer, have stepped up to cover gaps, the pastor (me), who was the direct supervisor of the three, has had responsibilities intensified.

And the third "hourglass" reason is, admittedly, personal; I have a hard time letting go of control. Allow me to explain. I am not obsessed with controlling other people. I have great confidence in

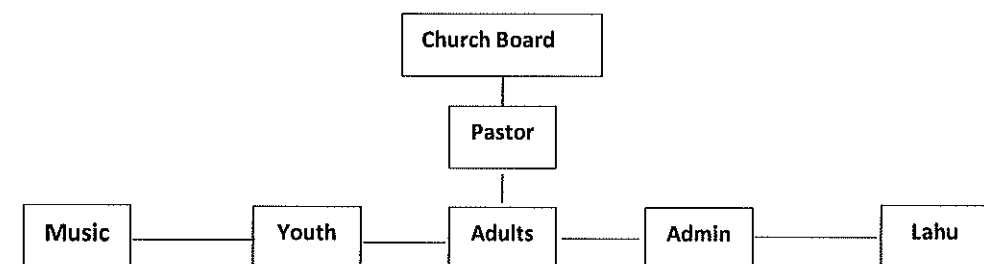
staff and volunteers and think I do a good job allowing others to do what they need to do. But I have a self-expectation to be aware of every aspect of CLC ministry, and to want to offer leadership in a variety of areas. Thus, the organizational chart and job description of the Lead Pastor places me at the center of much...too much.

A couple of weeks ago the Church Board and staff gathered for a lengthy leadership retreat. Part of the retreat was to prayerfully consider what God is leading us to be and become as we continue to emerge from COVID restrictions. Another part was a report on the general health of the church based on the latest phone surveys. The greatest part was a reflection on the current organizational chart and to imagine what we would need to do to create a better and healthier ministry structure.

Here is what our current structure looks like:



After much conversation, here is what is being proposed for our future:



What stands out in this proposal is a senior leadership level that includes the Music Minister, the Director of Student Ministries, the Director of Adult Ministries, the Director of Administration, and the Lahu Pastor. All ministries and additional staff would fall under these positions, with the Lead Pastor overseeing.

The challenge of this structure is in filling positions. We have been in a search for a Music Minister for almost 5 months now. While we have interviewed a handful of applicants, the process continues. We have a very specific idea of what our need is and we are not willing to compromise. In addition, soon we will be writing a job description for a Director of Adult Ministries and Director of Administration. We are hopeful these two part-time positions will be easier to fill than the Music Minister. Noel Thomson does, of course, fill the Director of Student Ministries, and Pastor Samee Singkeovilay will continue to lead the Lahu ministry.

The responsibilities for CLC ministry will be spread out, not only at this senior leadership level, but also throughout the rest of the lines of structure. When all is said and done, we will not add to staff greater “Full Time Equivalents,” and will build even greater upon our church’s history of membership involvement. We will have the need to raise up more leaders and fill more spots on ministry teams. We will be, when all is said and done, a very active church.

Aside from the restructuring of the church, another significant decision recently made by our Church Board is to allow singing in worship while wearing facemasks. We know we are late to the game with this decision; other churches have been doing this for a while. But our Church Board has been cautious, and I am thankful for that. We have committed to following CDC guidelines, but when it comes to worshippers singing while wearing a facemask, they are rather vague. There are currently no studies to indicate that singing while wearing a facemask will raise the risk of transmission. In taking this next step we are following the lead of multiple churches nationally who have successfully returned to congregational singing while masked. We are hopeful this decision will be safe for all and worshipful for those who have missed the chance to praise God in song.

Which leads me to say, please get vaccinated. And when the vaccination is available for kids between 5-11, please parents, consider having this done. Scientific and medical professionals point to vaccinations as the single most effective means to reduce the spread of COVID.

Some of the best times annually in the church are coming up later this month and into December. While gatherings will be different from times in the past, they will be great. Staff is working hard to make Thanksgiving Eve, Advent, and Christmas Eve worship the best! And then, making it to the end of this year, we will be motivated to make 2022 an even better year.

May God watch over us as we put away hourglasses and begin to count the days with anticipation of what God will do with us, to us, in us, and through us.

Peace,

*Pastor Brian*

