

TO: St. John Lutheran Church and School
FROM: Joshua Swartz

Dear St. John Lutheran Congregation/Faculty/Staff,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am humbled by the call to serve as principal of St. John Lutheran. I know searching for a principal at this time of the year is very stressful and difficult. Your faith is certainly a strength and testament as you reach to extend a call with such trust and faithfulness.

My family and I have spent much time in prayer. We also enjoyed our visit to come and worship, talk ministry, and discover more about St. John without all the distractions of day-to-day ministry. St. John has very talented faculty and lay leadership in place. Pastor Countryman is most certainly a dynamic and caring pastor who no doubt is an impact partner for Christ. I have also spent time talking with various partners in ministry, as well as spending time understanding the current role God has placed me in at this time.

Through such prayerful deliberations, the following scripture continues to come to mind:

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 "Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

This past year at Grace has been very difficult, which in all honesty is an understatement. A need arose when Pastor Clark accepted a call to Florida to serve as pastor. Under our policy-based governance, this left a very huge vacancy. To run the day-to-day operations of the church along with the school I stepped into that role out of sheer need for the congregation. I can only say it is by the grace of God and by His hand that things have run smoothly and I have been able to hold my head above water so to speak with all the various functions set before me. The ministry here has grown. The ministry teams have developed from new, starting out this past year, to a seasoned group that the next pastor at Grace will need so that the ministry does not lean so heavily on one person. I believe Grace is better positioned for team ministry going forward. While it has come at a great personal sacrifice, I would go through it all again, because I and my family have grown through such blessings from our Lord. With all of that said, Grace is not yet in position for me to leave. As much as I desire the opportunity to serve at St. John as principal starting this fall I cannot accept the call. I believe whole-heartedly in being open to where God is calling. At this point in time, He is not calling me to serve at St. John this next school, but to remain steadfast and trust in Him as my current placement is not yet complete.

I can tell you with certainty and with confidence that St. John Lutheran is not part of God's plan for me for next school year. With the same confidence, I can say He has already planted the direction for St. John, as it is written, "I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."(Jeremiah 29:11). It is with such a hope that I desire to no longer hold up the call from St. John Lutheran. Find comfort in knowing God has great things planned for St. John. Know He has shown you the skillsets you are looking for, and the heart that is needed to continue and grow what has already been accomplished. Feel His presence even now, as He directs your efforts.

In His service,
Joshua Swartz