

GOODBYE TO ST PAUL AND ST JOHN'S

We have been partners in children, youth and family ministries for 9 years together. And I've been with St Paul since the Spring of 2011. I am humbled and honored to have served alongside the young people and adults of both congregations and with Tri Church confirmation and worship.

In January of this year, I was notified that St John's would no longer be able to financially support the position of Joint Children, Youth and Family Ministries Director. St. Paul is unable to support this position fulltime and is visioning a new direction for children, youth and family ministries. Therefore, my last day with St Paul and St John's will be June 30th.

It is with both sadness and hope that we part ways. I am sad that I'll no longer be able to continue worshipping with, learning with, serving with, praying with and celebrating with the youth and families of St Paul, St John's and Tri Church. I appreciate the memories we've built together, especially growing in faith and God's love together through event ministries like the Detroit and Houston youth gatherings, Chicago and Wisconsin Dells Youth Quakes, confirmation camp and youth retreats at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center, UNITE Service Camp and CommUNITY Vacation Bible School. I particularly treasure the opportunities we've had to be the hands and feet of Christ through serving in our communities by Christmas shopping for LSSI Nachusa home kids, having fellowship with folks from Self Help, painting homes in Sterling and Rock Falls, participating in multiple service projects through God's Work, Our Hands days; outreach events like movie nights, water play days and building a neighborhood picnic table.

It's hard to say goodbye when some of us have shared tears and difficult conversations and challenging life moments. And we've shared God's kingdom moments; little glimpses of God's glory in unique places and times together – Most memorably when the Tri Church confirmation class walked the labyrinth in the fellowship hall at St John's. What a privilege it was to witness the deep connectedness our students had with the Holy Spirit through that experience.

To the children and youth, I am hopeful that God does and will provide for, guide and direct you and your families. God loves you in all places and at all times. Nothing ever changes that. During the past 11 years I have had a blast spending time with you and watching you grow in your faith. You have taught me what it means to truly BE the church. Please know that pastors and youth leaders come and go – and sometimes that is hard. Also, know that God is always with you and loves you, and pastors and other adult leaders are here to support you and your parents or guardians to continue to grow in God's love by being present with you, listening to you, through worship, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, youth events and activities, praying for you, and so much more.



Finally, thank you for allowing me to express my faith through music leadership in children and youth ministry, through worship in both congregations, and through our Tri Church online worship services. It is a joy for me to lead worship. I agree wholeheartedly with the words of Martin Luther, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise." I have enjoyed working with so much talent in our congregations.

So, goodbye and God bless all. Please know it is my hope and prayer that God will continue to sustain, guide, and direct you on the journey. And, as people of the resurrection, we know this is really only goodbye, for now.

God's blessings,
Gerad