

MISSION MOMENT

For the Sake of Hospitality:

Burke Lutheran Church Breaks Ground for a New Holy Space to Serve God's People

By Deacon Vicki Hanrahan



On Sunday, July 7, 2019, Burke Lutheran Church in Madison broke ground on their 37+ acres of land to build their new church. On this day, members and visitors first gathered for worship where their Pastor, Rev. Robert Neubert emphasized, "It is not about the building, but how we are reaching out to the community as we enter into this new phase of serving in and with this community."

As members gathered around a circle to participate in a beautiful ground-breaking ceremony, I was able to visit with them about their hopes for the new space. Enhanced Hospitality became the theme of these conversations. Kay Gritzmacker, member of 50 years served on the committee for a while as she wanted to be sure that the plans were thoughtful about handicap accessibility. Council president, Linda Hughes, was very enthusiastic when talking about making the space more accessible with zero grade entrances

and a ramp up to the altar. Rev. Neubert described the expanded Narthex space and more serviceable Sunday school rooms. He feels the improvements will help their church become more welcoming and especially to people who don't know the building. Their hopes are that the space will be more inviting to community organizations such as the Red Cross for blood drives, holding community meals, and survivor groups to name a few. He is hopeful that their proximity to the Hospital and American Family Center will yield fruitful relationships.

The 1.5 million-dollar project will take approximately 60 days to complete if all goes well. The work started on July 8. The committee's research led them to a decision that would allow them to honor the past, bring it into the present and prepare them for the future by moving their existing sanctuary, originally built in 1899 to a new foundation and from there adding on additional space for a fellowship hall, education space, offices and kitchen. Bob & Jeannette Gehrke are hoping the new space creates more interest in younger members too.

Council President, Linda Hughes, shared, "I don't think this would have happened if we weren't moving the existing sanctuary. It allows us to honor the past. We hope to keep ourselves open to rearranging the sanctuary for better usability and space for the organ and sacristy. According to Linda, good stewardship is at the heart of their plans. "While we know we could dream about having top of the line appliances in the kitchen for example, we also must ask ourselves if we really need it because we don't want to overspend. We must be good stewards."

Burke Lutheran was able to fund the project first with significant donations from key older members of the congregation who wanted to leave a legacy. Later, \$300,000 from an established trust, voted by the congregation to use toward the building and \$250,000 from another member who had passed away leaving a large portion of her estate to the church brought them significantly closer to their goal.

Let's all hold them in prayer that they can meet their goal, that their building project goes smoothly and that their new space helps them to continue to be a thriving, vital community of faith, bringing that faith and love of Jesus into their community!