

Dear Vinje Members,

Your council leaders and pastors are excited about a new opportunity for our congregation and wanted to share some information about it with you. For months our pastors have been leading worship at Saint John's Lutheran in Raymond, and leadership from both congregations would like that relationship to continue. In order to do that we will need to increase the amount of pastoral services that we are offering to Saint John's. In turn, they will increase their compensation to Vinje accordingly, but it also means that we would need an additional staff person. We would call a full-time pastor to participate with our current staff in serving St. John's, but would also have additional hours for them to enrich our ministries at Vinje, especially in our children's ministry, youth ministry, worship, and allow for brand new outreach and small group ministries.

Simultaneously, we have had conversations with Green Lake Lutheran Ministries about sharing a seminary intern in the future. At its January meeting, council approved a motion to apply for an intern for 2021-22. If a successful candidate is found, the intern would still be involved in Sunday and Wednesday ministries along with Tuesday staff planning but would spend their time engaged in ministries at GLLM as well. This would be a reduction in the hours the intern is involved with Vinje, but not in their primary interactions. Since GLLM would also be compensating Vinje for this partnership, we are able to continue the internship program and call a new pastor to join our current staff model at a minimal cost to Vinje. We believe this small cost will have a major impact on our ministries.

The recent years at Vinje have been widely successful. We have seen worship attendance increase. Wednesday faith formation programming is booming. Even amid the pandemic, the amount of people engaging in worship and worship leadership has increased, and we just finished one of the best financial years we've had in decades. Thank you for being part of this success, and thanks be to God for the great things happening at Vinje. Now is the time to build on this momentum and increase our capacity to provide more small group ministries for members of all ages, offer more to our children and youth, and make a significant investment in our outreach ministry to the community. Since the pastoral needs at Saint John's is primarily a Sunday concern, this additional pastor would increase ministry opportunities at Vinje and allow for changes to fully utilize these new staff hours (see below).

Our council has approved pastoral staff to continue gathering information and discussing what a three-year agreement with Saint John's might look like. As we do, we want to keep you informed. We have yet to finalize any agreements, but we wanted to share this exciting possibility with the congregation. More information will follow, including plans for an open forum to discuss the opportunity. As a reminder, a congregational vote will be required to call a pastor. We look forward to seeing what God has in store for us in the months and years ahead. If you have any questions or concerns, we invite you to contact your church council leaders or pastors. Thank you for being an important part of the ministry we do together at Vinje and in our community.

Kevin Hanson and Pastor Justin

**Council Members:** Christina Boike, Shelly Bormann, Jill Condon, Andrea Etterman, Deb Habbena, Kevin Hanson (President), Scott Hovland, Kathy Hund, Steve Leitch, Tim Ostby, Jaida Reiman, Meghan Reiman, Brad Schmidt.

***More information and questions you may have***

<b>Pastor</b>	<b>Preaching</b>	<b>Primary Oversight</b>	<b>Programs/Ministries</b>
<b>Pastor Justin Lead Pastor (Full Time)</b>	<u>40% at Vinje</u> 33x/year <u>15% at St John's</u> 8x/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Staff</li> <li>• Youth (Grades 6-12)</li> <li>• New Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation</li> <li>• High School Youth</li> <li>• Small Groups</li> </ul>
<b>Pastor Dane Outreach Pastor (Full Time)</b>	<u>30% at Vinje</u> 25x/year <u>20% at St John's</u> 10x/year <u>15% for Outreach</u> 8x/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewardship efforts including expanding endowment efforts.</li> <li>• New outreach ministries including preaching opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grace Notes</li> <li>• Loving Arms Chapel</li> <li>• New Outreach</li> <li>• Small Groups</li> </ul>
<b>NEW PASTOR Inreach Pastor (Full Time)</b>	<u>20% at Vinje</u> 17x/year <u>40% at St John's</u> 22x/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children (Grades K-5)</li> <li>• Worship Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunday School</li> <li>• Youth Group Involvement</li> <li>• Small Groups</li> </ul>
<b>Pastor Andres Visitation Pastor (Part Time)</b>	<u>5% at Vinje</u> 6x/year <u>10% at St John's</u> 6x/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit homebound members and those in care facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate Visitations</li> <li>• Small Groups</li> </ul>
<b>2021-22 INTERN Pastoral Intern (shared with GLLM)</b>	<u>5% at Vinje</u> 5x/year <u>15% at St John's</u> 9x/year <u>Green Lake Preaching</u> 4+/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Interns are designed not to oversee programs but to contribute in a variety of ministries.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Group</li> <li>• Small Groups</li> </ul>

**How does this help our children and youth ministries?**

Vinje has had a successful confirmation ministry to middle school youth in recent years. Prior to the pandemic, we were attempting to start a high school youth gathering on Wednesday nights.

Both middle and high school youth have requested a group that would be focused on relationships and fellowship and not primarily educational like confirmation. We believe that this suggested staffing model can give these programs the dedicated leadership that is necessary to make them impactful and continue our meaningful confirmation ministry. We want to provide what our youth are asking for and have the best trained and passionate staff working with them.

### **Can we just hire a youth director?**

Currently ELCA youth directors stay with a congregation for an average of 18 months. That means from kindergarten to graduation our children and youth would experience eight different youth directors. That is not the kind of stability we would like to give this important ministry. Furthermore, a youth director would not provide the opportunity for Vinje to expand our outreach ministries or bring the important training and experience of a pastor. We believe this is the best opportunity to invest in our children and youth, as well as serve our community.

### **Will Pastor Justin and Pastor Dane still be working with our kids?**

Absolutely! They both find that one of the best parts of their jobs, and they both will continue to work with all members and groups of the congregation. Pastor Justin will still be the primary staff person working with youth grades 6-12 and will retain oversight of those programs. He will work with other pastors and staff to enhance his ability to work with both middle and high school youth on Wednesday nights while he is currently only able to work with middle school youth. Meanwhile, Pastor Dane will continue to spend time with children 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger, but our new pastor would take over the oversight of this program to ensure that Pastor Dane has time to dedicate to Vinje's outreach ministry.

### **How does this increase our outreach ministry?**

In recent years there has been an increased need in our community for Vinje's outreach ministries. There is a need to enhance relationships and develop partnerships with existing organizations and people to more faithfully care for our neighbors. This model allows for staff to focus more hours each week on enhancing our outreach efforts. This will not be done by staff alone, but requires additional staff hours to lead the congregation in this effort. There will certainly be new outreach opportunities and new Vinje ministries resulting from this change.

### **How much staff do we need?**

Keep in mind that the additional pastor is largely connected to the staff sharing agreement with Saint John's in Raymond. Obviously it has benefits to Vinje as well, but without this partnership we would not be looking to make this change. Also, it is important to note that the intern would only be half-time at Vinje and that interns, while valuable, are not pastors and are here primarily to learn. They are not meant to oversee or develop ministries, but rather to learn through participation and experience. Lastly, this change is not a significant difference compared to Vinje's recent past. Here is how many employee hours Vinje has staffed per week (this does not include the 30 hours/week that Saint John's was getting from their recently retired pastor):

<b>2016</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>New</b>
275	254	274

**What Does This Cost?**

Due to the important partnerships and opportunities for collaboration with Saint John’s and Green Lake Lutheran Ministries, this would only result in an increased cost to Vinje’s proposed 2021 budget of \$20,700. This budget and the projected income are supported by the data given by fellow Vinje members in their pledged giving. This increase would only raise the budget by 2.75%.

**How Could We Pay for This?**

We believe it is reasonably optimistic that with this staffing change we are investing in future growth and that in the short-term future we will be able to support this staffing model with congregational giving. However, for the immediate future of 2021 we could draw on a variety of dollars that Vinje has in either general fund surplus, the endowment fund, or appropriate dedicated accounts. Again, it is reasonable with current trends that we could support this staff model entirely from our budget as early as 2022 or 2023.