

10/8/2010

To Bishop Benke, and the Atlantic District,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

I thank God for the opportunity as a seminarian, and the Atlantic District makes this possible. Maybe you think your charitable contribution to my education is only but one aspect of that and cannot be seen as making this opportunity “possible.” But the truth is, it does. And so much more than even that because I know your prayerful support that helps me get through the “tentatio,” as Luther put it, of pastoral formation, is aiding me a great deal.

I also know my being at seminary at all extends even further beyond that. As a son of the Atlantic District, born and raised, my desire to pursue the pastoral ministry begins with the Atlantic District. My parents are both committed members of an LCMS congregation in Islip, NY shepherded by Pastor David Wackenhuth. Pastor Wackenhuth has been my pastor for my entire life, and I was baptized by the now sainted Stanley Macholz. I consider Pastor Wackenhuth’s influence on my faith to be substantial and positive. He is also currently the vicarage supervisor to my Dad, Michael Staneck, who is in the Synod’s Specific Ministry Pastoral Program. My Dad will be out here October 11th-15th with his SMP cohort for a week-long intensive. I look forward to that time very much! My Mother, Tricia Staneck, who is a teacher assistant at pre-school for the developmentally disabled, has also been a force in my life for faith. Her unwavering support is treasured by me.

I have two brothers who are younger than me. Alec is a 20 year old attending Palm Beach Atlantic, a private Christian University, in West Palm Beach, FL. And Caleb is a 12 year old attending Islip Middle School, and just began his first year of confirmation. Both of them take their faith very seriously and support me in what I do.

Caleb is currently being taught by our Youth minister, Chris Boccalupo, who is also finishing up a DCE Colloquy program through St. Paul. In fact, Chris is in the same cohort as his former student, Erica Corlito, who happens to be the DCE Intern at Bishop Benke’s parish in Brooklyn. I consider both Chris and Erica good friends and have no doubt been shaped and formed in my faith by them.

The Trinity Youth Ministry, under the leadership of Chris was and is a huge influence on my life. His understanding of the Gospel in our Lutheran way is communicated wonderfully to teenagers right where they are at. Chris, as well as my Dad and Pastor, played a big role in my early reading of the Book of Concord as a teenager.

Another person from Trinity who I need to mention in my development was the now sainted John Woods. John, as the elder Deacon in our parish, was always someone who I considered to have the Wisdom of Solomon, but who could also preach and communicate the Gospel like St. Paul.

Outside of Trinity I have been influenced, in no small way, by our Reverend President Benke as well. His leadership as Bishop is a blessing to us all. But specifically, he helped coordinate an experience for me during the summer of 2009. That summer I lived in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and worked/shadowed Pastor Jonathan Priest. Pastor Priest's influence on my formation as a pastor was huge heading into my first year of seminary. Thinking and walking theology with him in its practical application is something I definitely still carry with me.

This past summer I had the wonderful opportunity to preach at four different congregations of the Atlantic District: Trinity, Islip, Our Saviour, Rego Park, St. Peter's, Brooklyn, and St. John's, Brooklyn. The saints at these places received me warmly and were kind and gracious to a beginning preacher and student.

I am also financially supported by a few individuals of the Atlantic District congregations. So, as you can see by this letter, the district is what has formed me and brought me this far. There are even more people who I can mention by name who have influenced me.

Also know the district is represented well by other students who are sons, Vicars, students from Bronxville, etc. Keep them always in your prayers as well!

Finally, I would like to be of assistance to the district in recruiting more home-grown pastors for the Atlantic District and the LCMS. Please let me know how I can help with that effort. It's the least that I can do.

Thanks again for everything you do/have done for me. God is good!

Peace in Christ,

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