



The Call Committee and the Church Council, would like to introduce

**Rev. Matthew Jon
Smith-Laubenstein**

our candidate for Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. On Sunday, June 12, we will vote on a recommendation to extend a call to Rev. Smith-Laubenstein to serve as Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. The following pages include information on this candidate for your approval.

Reasons for the Call Committee to recommend Rev. Matthew Jon Smith-Laubenstein as Grace Lutheran's next pastor:

- Humbleness in that he knows his role and what his job is, which is to serve the Lord and his people. He appears to have an excellent knowledge of the scripture and how it can be applied in our world today.
- Family oriented, which will benefit Grace's pre-school through high-school age members.
- Previous pastoral experience with a congregation that did not want to see him leave.
- References provided extremely positive feedback to call committee members that visited his church.
- Will live in the Libertyville community, allowing Matthew to develop strong ties that will benefit our congregation.
- Lifelong Lutheran
- Grace Lutheran will be enriched by Matthew's variety of church leadership experiences, including youth director and confirmation leader. Also has teaching experience with a science perspective.
- Fantastic opportunity for Grace Lutheran to grow alongside a Pastor with fresh ideas and energy!
- Thoughtful way of communicating with a great perspective on the activities going on in the world.
- Seeks out ways to constantly improve as a Pastor by getting feedback from members and contacting other church leaders to see what is working for them.
- Has built a fabulous network of peers and instructors within and outside the church that he can lean on to help us as a church community.
- Outgoing personality and a good listener.
- Gets involved, both in his church and within the community. Will get Grace Lutheran on the map.
- Has introduced methods to help develop leaders.
- Leads adult study classes.
- Will get Grace Lutheran more connected with the ELCA and the services that we have been missing.
- Appears to have a great memory. Remembers names, vocations, family history, you name it.
- Appears to lean on the Lord in a joyful way!
- Involved in small group bible studies.
- Gets dirty by getting to know congregants out in the world and not just at the church.
- Seems to love his work and always has a smile

Rev. Matthew has the following interests:

Traveling with his wife	Hunting
Reading to my two daughters	Canoeing
Fishing	Fostering relationships
Hiking	

Causes Rev. Matthew cares about:

Arts and Culture	Children
Civil Rights and Social Action	Education
Environment	Human Rights
Politics	Poverty Alleviation
Science and Technology	

Matthew grew up in a northern suburb of Buffalo, New York; 10 miles north of Buffalo and 10 miles south of Niagara Falls. He has two siblings, one of whom is a teacher and the other is a seminary graduate. His parents and sister live in Buffalo, and his brother, in Chicago. He is a lifelong Lutheran.

Matthew attended Colgate University for his undergraduate degree in biology. At Colgate, he was a leader in the on-campus, protestant church where he directed outreach and *Gastroevangelism* (combining good food with Bible Study and discussion). From Colgate, he went on to Niagara University to Complete a Master's degree in secondary education. He taught biology and while teaching, realized that he did not have enough time for serving the church, so he then applied to seminary. He then attend Princeton Seminary for his Master of Divinity, where he met his wife, Kara. They were married in 2006, just after he graduated, and they stayed in Princeton for two more years. Meanwhile, Kara finished her degree for ministry. Matthew then went on to the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, where he completed a Masters in Sacred Theology and became re-Lutheranized after 3 years with the Presbyterians at Princeton.

In 2008, Matthew and Kara moved to Annapolis, Maryland, where Matthew was the Vicar of Joy Reigns Lutheran Church in Edgewater, Maryland. Kara taught 3rd grade in the City of Baltimore. In August of 2009, their daughter, Amelia Joy, was born. They remained in Maryland for another year while Kara worked full time as a teacher and Matthew worked part time as director of youth ministry and men's ministry at Joy Reigns Lutheran Church. This gave him the time to be home with Amelia.

In 2013, the Smith-Laubenstein family welcomed another daughter to their home, Charlotte Jean. Amelia loves being a big sister and Charlotte is a great little girl.

More recently, Rev. Matthew has served at St. John's Lutheran Church (2010—Present), as Solo Pastor. St. John's is located in Johnson Creek, Wisconsin.

N5602 Switzke Road
Johnson Creek, WI 53038
February 24, 2016

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with mixed emotions that I write this letter of recommendation for Pastor Matthew J. Smith-Laubenstein. We are so very sad to be losing him as our beloved pastor, yet excited for this next chapter in his life and for the new congregation which will be blessed by his acceptance of their call.

Pastor Matthew began his pastoral duties at St. John's Lutheran Church, Johnson Creek, Wisconsin, in mid-September of 2010. My husband was on Church Council at that time, and I was president of our local unit of Women of the ELCA, a position I still hold. Before he even arrived, he had contacted me with concern and caring regarding the upcoming women's Bible study and other activities involving Women of the ELCA. The first thing he invited me to do was to pray together. There isn't a single area of ministry that Pastor Matthew has been indifferent towards. Rather, he has emphatically embraced the activities of Women of the ELCA, enhanced the youth group, Sunday School and confirmation studies, revitalized Vacation Bible School, introduced Men's Ministry, empowered various Bible study and prayer team leaders, all while faithfully visiting homebound, elderly and infirm members. Pastor Matthew was instrumental in getting our website re-designed, supports social media, procured a laptop and projector to Power Point our worship services on the big screen, and encouraged us to get pew Bibles as well. Oh yes, a fully accessible bathroom on the second floor was also installed in the last year or two.

My husband and I joined St. John's in 1979, and never had we previously experienced such a hands-on pastor as Matthew – a man who realizes ministry is accomplished in the kitchen while helping wash dishes and who gets his hands dirty at spring and fall clean up days. His laughter, his sincerity, his personality is as genuine as it gets. Never have I personally felt so much like a partner in ministry as when I was invited to participate in and then empowered to lead during a two-year Evangelism series called *Unbinding the Gospel*. Pastor Matthew was instrumental in bringing Stephen Ministry to our church, allowing me the opportunity to serve God in this new and powerful way. He invited us to read and discuss *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*, giving us “a new vision for financial stewardship.” I think when Pastor Matthew came to us, we recall thinking that he was over-qualified for our small town congregation. But he accepted, and we as individuals and as a congregation have grown by leaps and bounds by what he has brought to the table.

Certainly, I could write a book in recommendation of Pastor Matthew. To conclude, however, I truly believe he lives by the motto, “A person who feels appreciated will always do more than what is expected.” The many thank you notes received by us from Pastor Matthew for various reasons over the years attests to that. If I can answer any questions or provide additional information, please feel free to contact me at 920.253.5106 or hvacres@tds.net.

Sincerely,

Lynn M. Mehringer



February 23, 2016

Letter of Recommendation for Pastor Matthew Smith-Laubenstein

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my privilege to recommend Pastor Matthew Smith-Laubenstein as a full-time leader for your church.

Pastor Matthew's best asset is to observe and listen. When Pastor Matthew first arrived at St. Johns he had the patience to challenge all congregants at St Johns to discover our personal gifts and ministries. He then found ways to help us grow into and out of those ministries and gifts into the wider church and world. One of the ways he achieved this was through writing a grant for himself and our congregation to participate in the "Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism" bible study series http://www.gracenet.info/unbinding_the_gospel.aspx. This study revolutionized our church body.

Out of this study came the crazy idea to try a 5K Run/Walk fundraiser combined with an outdoor worship service. Our council decided all money raised from this event would go to an outside charity to help our community SEE the love of Christ working in the hearts of St Johns. Pastor Matthew not only supported and helped plan this effort whole heartedly, he took the time to write another grant to Thrivent financial to offset some of the event's expenses.

Pastor Matthew also saw a need for one on one layperson counseling and instigated the beginnings of Stephen Ministries at St. Johns. This is another way to equip the congregation to take ministry outside our doors to a hurting world <https://www.stephenministries.org/>. There simply is not enough room in one letter to list the endless accomplishments Pastor Matthew has achieved in his short tenure here at St Johns.

His knowledge of the Word of God is second to none. His knowledge of education, history, science, politics and world events is beyond vast and when you connect these together with his deeply rooted faith in God to sit and listen to him speak on any number of subjects he is passionate about leaves me in awe and always yearning to hear more.

It is also extremely important to note when Pastor Matthew has been faced with tenuous circumstances involving disagreeing congregants he has always handled the situations with a tremendous truth seeking, love speaking, calming and yet strong spirit. His compassion for all of his congregants is truly palpable and has brought me to tears on more than one occasion. He has endeavored to and succeeded at making St Johns a place worshippers can come Home to.

Again it is truly my honor and privilege to have this opportunity to write this letter of recommendation. Should you consider choosing Pastor Matthew Smith-Laubenstein as your full-time Pastor you and your congregation will be blessed beyond measure for years to come. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you might have.

In Christ's Love,

Diana DH Thomas
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Department of Nutritional Sciences
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

Notice of Congregational Meeting

**Sunday, June 12, 2016, immediately following
the 9:30 a.m. worship service.**

The purpose of this meeting is to vote on a recommendation from the Call Committee and Church Council to extend a call to Rev. Matthew Jon Smith-Laubenstein to serve as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

Please plan to stay for this very important congregational meeting and extend your vote!



Grace Lutheran Church

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