

Church Office

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Meeting location

Marshall Middle School
25 S. Pontiac, Janesville

Pastor:

John Swanson

*Declaring the greatness of God and serving
others for joy and His honor (II Cor. 4:5)*



August 29, 2000

Dear

If you regularly read this letter you know that usually I aim to teach something about God and our relationship to him. I do not generally focus upon practical matters regarding our life together as a church. However, there are going to be times in our life together when we need to give attention to a more practical matter. This month, it seems to me that we need to address two issues.

First, as you know, on Sept. 10th about 60 people from those who have prayed for us and invested in us will be with us. We are hosting them in order to mark a very significant milestone in our growth as a church and to worship God for his faithfulness to us. I hope that we will be an encouragement to their faith and they to ours. We will have our “normal” worship service on that morning at 10am. We aim to serve lunch at 12:30pm and then we will have a “Service of Celebration” from 1:15 pm-2:15pm.

During our celebration we will tell the story of God’s work in our midst. We will conclude our celebration by inviting any who would like to share something of God’s work in their life to do so at an “open microphone.”

I’d like to ask you to think about what you might share that would show God’s mercy at work in our midst. It is very important that all that share be brief, be Christ-centered and are careful to not criticize any other Christian or church. After a time of sharing we will spend a few minutes in small groups thanking God for his kindness and asking him to show his mercy through us in even greater ways.

The second issue I need to address is in regards to our commitment to the children God has given our church. As I regularly say on Sunday mornings, I am excited that God has placed so many children in our midst and that we get to be a part of their learning to worship Jesus by being with us. I am regularly reminded of how good it is to have our children with us as I read the Scriptures. Recently I read in Nehemiah of the celebration in Jerusalem when the walls were built. It says in Neh. 12:43, “And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.” God gave the children, along with the adults, great joy and they worshipped him together. God aims to do the same thing in our midst.

However, I’ve also become aware that we need to be more alert to our children following the worship service, during our time of fellowship. Our children, like all children, love to run and play at every opportunity. We want our children to enjoy being with us and with one another. But we also need to make sure they are kept safe, we respect the school we are renting and we are sensitive to those among us who are not used to being around lots of active children.

Our rental agreement with the school limits our use of the school to the cafeteria. Our children are not to enter any other part of the building. In addition we cannot have unattended children in the teacher’s lounge which we use as a nursery during the service but as a kitchen following the service. Children should not run in the sanctuary nor should they climb on any of the stacked tables and chairs or play with the electronic equipment.

Obviously parents need to keep an eye on their children. But also it is important for those without children to take the time to get to know our children. You will bring great honor to Christ by taking the time to get to know and appreciate the children God has given to our church (Matthew 18: 1-14). In all of this we need to make it our aim to serve one another in love and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 5: 13-15).

Children are not a hindrance to what God wants to do in our midst but are a vital part of the life God has for us as his people. We are his family (Eph. 2: 19, Gal. 6:10) and as such must learn to care for each other and that includes the children he has given us. It seems to me that as we learn to be a community that loves and appreciates the presence of children we will become magnetic to people living in a culture that sows suspicion and discord between the generations. As we get better at motivating, equipping and supporting parents in their vital work of passing on their faith to their children we will become more attractive to parents who feel swept away by the tidal wave of immorality and violence in the youth culture. As we adults learn to relate to children as humans made in God's image and as children learn to relate to adults we will become a haven for the many lonely people who feel cut off from knowing what it means to be part of a family.

Jane and I are so thankful to God for all he has done and so delighted to be part of this church. We feel happy to be part of a congregation that yearns to know Christ better and delights to care for and love one another.

Rejoicing in His love in our church,