



RISEN SAVIOR *Lutheran Church*

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Hi, RSLC family! Seeing all the political ads on TV for the upcoming elections reminds me of another election, the one in 1992, and a man named James Stockdale. Remember him? I'd be impressed if you do! He was the running mate of Ross Perot who ran as an independent candidate for President that year. In the run-up to that election, there was a debate for the vice-presidential candidates that also included the far more well-knowns Al Gore and Dan Quayle. The unknown Stockdale, a retired U.S. Navy Vice-Admiral and former prisoner of war in Vietnam, introduced himself at that debate by looking into the camera and saying, "Who am I? Why am I here?" A lot of people chuckled at those remarks since it was exactly what everyone was thinking! But those were perfectly legitimate questions, and maybe the same questions you have about me! Who is this new pastor, and why is he here?

To start with, I'm Pastor Mark Koch (I don't care if you call me Pastor Koch, or Pastor Mark, or just Pastor, or... whatever you're comfortable with). Carolyn and I have been married for 35 years, and we have two grown children, Andrew and Deborah. Andrew and his family live in Nashville, Tennessee, where he teaches high school English, and Deborah now works for a company in Seattle that installs solar panels.

I've been a congregational pastor in the LCMS for 30 years, the first 24 as a "regular" pastor. But now, with Carolyn at my side, I have been called to and received specialized training as an Intentional Interim Pastor, to serve churches going through times of significant transition, resulting in healthier congregations that are empowered in hope, engaged in mission and ministry, and energized for the future.

So that's WHO I am, which brings us to WHY I'm here. Now you have called me to Risen Savior to serve as Intentional Interim Pastor. I'll do all the stuff that you would expect any congregational pastor to do, such as lead worship, conduct Bible Studies, perform funerals and weddings, make hospital visits, etc. But there are two special features of an intentional interim, as indicated by the term itself. The first is that I'm "intentional." That is to say I'm here because RSLC is going through a unique time of transition that has included some significant struggles, and you are intentionally asking for a little extra guidance, which is what I will provide. Just notice that it's "guidance." It will still be up to the congregation to make its own decisions to do the work to follow through on those decisions.

The second special feature of an intentional interim pastor is that I'm "interim." While I'll serve as your pastor in every way that you would expect, and I'll treat you as lovingly as I have the members at any church I've served, I only expect to serve here for 12 to 24 months. No matter how much we may come to like each other, you will not be

able to consider me for a permanent call. This allows me to more effectively deal with issues in ways I think will be in your best interest for the long run, and then I'll move on to another congregation after we have securely set the stage for your next resident pastor.

All that being said, please understand that I don't come with the answers already in mind (we might not even agree on the questions yet!). Instead, we will all work together to find the answers that will glorify God and achieve the mission for which He has created RSLC. We will do this through digging into His Word, lifting up our needs in fervent prayer, giving God our very best in praise and worship, and also through open and loving communication with one another.

What happens now? I'll be spending much of my time during the first several weeks just listening. Besides meeting with congregational leaders, it's my goal to have many opportunities to talk with every member of the congregation before the year is out. And not just current members, but as many former members that I can as well, plus any others who have had some significant connection to RSLC in the recent past. As I learn more about you, I expect that a plan of action will start to gel fairly quickly, which will be shared with the entire congregation in detail as we go.

So please keep your eyes and ears open for how you can participate in this process. But don't feel like you have to wait. You are welcome to be in touch with me for any reason at your convenience. Feel free to call or email me using the contact information on the church website <<https://rslc.org/staff/>>, or call/text me at my personal cell number (713-732-4377). Or even stop by the church unannounced. If my door is open (which it almost always is when I'm there), come on in! Or maybe we'll go out for coffee or something. In any case, I'd love to hear from you.

A quick caveat: Don't expect this process to be completely neat and tidy or even painless. I'm a sinner and so are you, so everything we touch this side of heaven has some degree of messiness. But as we humble ourselves under the cross of Christ and submit to God's clearly revealed will in His Word, I'm confident that we will all grow in faith, as well as in the joy that comes with being able to call ourselves children of God and members of Immanuel.

With joy in Jesus!

Pastor Mark Koch <><