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For immediate release

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LENTEN PILGRIMAGE OF TWO OLYMPIA CHURCHES:

Good Shepherd Lutheran and St. John | San Juan Episcopal swap sanctuaries for Lent

OLYMPIA – For Christians, the 40 days of Lent recalls the 40 years Moses led the people of Israel in the desert, where they lived in between memories of life in Egypt and the unfulfilled dreams of life in a promised land. It also recalls the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert, where he lived in between life as a carpenter and whatever lay ahead.

The in-between times of pilgrimages provide excellent opportunities to have new experiences, reflect, dream, and to build fellowship with your companions on the way.

In Spring 2024, 10 Olympia-area congregations formed “Olympia Commons,” a partnership in which they have been exploring ministry they can do better together. Two of these congregations – St. John | San Juan Episcopal Church and The Lutheran Church of The Good Shepherd – are now seeking to explore how they can be together in practical ways, as a next step in that journey of ecumenical exploration.

Here’s why.

Good Shepherd has more land and building space than they are currently using fully; they are seeking ways to better align the use of the building with their mission. Plus, the use of their space is critical in addressing present and future financial challenges.

St. John | San Juan buildings are in great disrepair, and the congregation is discerning how to make best use of the buildings and property in service of their mission: loving God, loving neighbor, building community. St. John | San Juan may have to relocate – short-term or long-term.

These two congregations, well-known for their ministries in Thurston County for years, are both on journeys of redevelopment and are both being led by clergy who have moved to Olympia to lead the special work of redevelopment, as each congregation builds on the blessings of the past to give vision to these congregations’ futures. Pastor Carol Tomer came from St. Paul, Minnesota in April, 2021, and Rev. Janet Waggoner came from Texas in March, 2024. It’s a journey of experimenting, exploring, and stepping into the unfolding futures of these congregations with openness, faith, and excitement.

So, the question is now asked: What is it like to leave one’s physical spiritual home? What is it like to share “our church” with another congregation? The idea of a joint Lenten pilgrimage emerged, inviting everyone in both congregations to empathy and spiritual exploration.

For the season of Lent, Good Shepherd and St. John | San Juan will engage in a “Sanctuary Swap.” For five Sundays, March 9 – April 6, St. John | San Juan will worship in Good Shepherd’s sanctuary, and Good Shepherd will worship in the sanctuary at St. John | San Juan.

The Sanctuary Swap will be book-ended by joint worship services, with both congregations worshipping together at St. John | San Juan on March 2 and both congregations worshipping together at Good Shepherd on April 27.

The theological frame for this is pilgrimage as “spiritual dehabitation,” breaking routines and opening oneself to guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lent invites to step away from our usual patterns to deepen our spiritual journeys, a practice of renewal and awakening that has shaped the Lenten season for centuries. For these two congregations this year, this Lenten pilgrimage will be a journey of both souls and bodies.

The wider community is invited to join these congregations on this journey of exploration.

March 2 JOINT WORSHIP at St. John | San Juan Episcopal (Good Shepherd & St. John | San Juan together)

March 5 ASH WEDNESDAY – St. John | San Juan at St. John | San Juan // Good Shepherd at Good Shepherd

March 9 Sanctuary Swap – Good Shepherd at St. John | San Juan // St. John | San Juan at Good Shepherd

March 16 Sanctuary Swap – Good Shepherd at St. John | San Juan // St. John | San Juan at Good Shepherd

March 23 Sanctuary Swap – Good Shepherd at St. John | San Juan // St. John | San Juan at Good Shepherd

March 30 Sanctuary Swap – Good Shepherd at St. John | San Juan // St. John | San Juan at Good Shepherd

April 6 Sanctuary Swap – Good Shepherd at St. John | San Juan // St. John | San Juan at Good Shepherd

April 13 PALM SUNDAY – St. John | San Juan at St. John | San Juan // Good Shepherd at Good Shepherd

April 17 MAUNDY THURSDAY – JOINT WORSHIP at St. John | San Juan Episcopal (Good Shepherd & St. John | San Juan together)

April 18 GOOD FRIDAY – JOINT WORSHIP at Good Shepherd Lutheran (St. John | San Juan & Good Shepherd together)

April 20 EASTER SUNDAY – St. John | San Juan at St. John | San Juan // Good Shepherd at Good Shepherd

April 27 JOINT WORSHIP at Good Shepherd Lutheran (St. John | San Juan & Good Shepherd together)

Worship times can be found on the websites of both congregations:

www.gsolympia.org

www.stjohnsoly.org