

On Sunday December 7, 2008 Family of Faith Lutheran church had a triple celebration – they celebrated the congregation's 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary, bid their founding pastor farewell, and experienced the ordination and installation of their new pastor.

Family of Faith is an independent Lutheran church who's beginnings are rather turbulent. A core group of about 14 people were associated with a large ELCA congregation in Traverse City. But after their pastors were removed from the congregation, this small group sought out Pr. Jim Vargo and asked him to become their shepherd. He agreed to lead them, and on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 the house church, known as Family of Faith, was born.

In the early part of 2008, the congregation tripled in size and eventually moved Sunday worship to the multi-purpose room of the Children's Montessori Center. Things were going well for the congregation, but not as well for the Vargo's. Jean Vargo, who had become the congregation's unofficial secretary, was an out-of-work pastor, and this was putting a strain on the family. After an unsuccessful search for a position in the Traverse City area, Jean began looking elsewhere in the country.

In the summer of 2008, Jean Vargo accepted a call to a church in St. Louis and shortly there after, Jim announced to the congregation that he would have to leave. He promised to stay until they found a new pastor, but knowing that he should be with his family, the council voted to release him immediately.

It was a God-moment when a couple of people were standing around talking about associations. The members of Family of Faith had been invited back to their old congregation, but most of the people favored the idea of looking for a new pastor. They realized that their search would be easier if they were associated with a larger Lutheran body and that is when the LCMC was mentioned. A light went on in one members mind as he recalled his good friend who was a pastor, associated with LCMC, and looking for his first call.

And email was sent, a call was made, and by November of 2008, Family of Faith issued a call to Daniel LeCouteur. Daniel has been a rostered member of LCMC a little over a year. He received his Mdiv from the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, and had completed his Lutheran year, partly through the TEEM program in Detroit and partly through Trinity Seminary in Columbus. After expressing a desire to plant a church near his Dearborn Heights home, he was sent to a Church Planting seminar by the association.

In as much as Family of Faith is such a new congregation, it is fairly certain that Daniel's training as a church planter will serve both him and the congregation well. The congregation is still considering whether to join the association and Daniel claims that he will continue to encourage them in that direction. Please keep Daniel and Family of Faith in your prayers as they continue to grow and do God's work in Traverse City Michigan.