



Introducing Pastor Josh Buzbee

Call Committee & Council recommended candidate for
Associate Pastor, Youth & Families

Pastor Josh Buzbee graduated with a BA in Theology from Valparaiso University in 2011 and attained his Masters of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2015.

During his internship, he served as Vicar at All Peoples Gathering Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI from 2013-2014.

- All Peoples is a predominantly African American and Puerto Rican congregation. As such, their worship and preaching styles are heavily influenced by Lutheran and non-Lutheran traditions.
- Pastor Josh quickly adapted to this new setting, and both preached and lead worship in a way that was faithful to the confessions of the Lutheran Church and the traditions of the members of the congregation.
- Members of the church were approx. 50% under the age of 25. On any given Sunday they would have up to 50 children under the age of 16 in worship.
- All Peoples had a program called Kids Working To Succeed (KWTS), where many youth, ages 8-16, would come to the church on Wednesday evening and Saturday mornings to work in our garden, orchard, and greenhouse. This program was designed to teach the children about stewardship and discipleship, as well as to give them a positive place to be when they were not in school. Pastor Josh was one of two people who were in charge of running this program on a weekly basis.

Pastor Josh served as Pastor (solo) at Our Redeemer Luther Church in Indianapolis from 2016-2018.

- ORLC is a very traditional Lutheran congregation, where Pastor Josh had the opportunity to use his preaching and leadership style to help them remain faithful to that tradition, as well as stretching themselves to explore different styles of worship and preaching.
- Pastor Josh helped to run both an after school program and a summer camp for youth in the city. We provided homework assistance and other educational programming as well as group building activities and field trips across the city.
- He started a number of social ministry initiatives to get the congregation more involved with the neighborhood.
- He led a team in starting monthly cookouts in our parking lot, where we had lunch and invited our neighbors to join us for food and conversation.
- He also formed a team that was committed to regularly walking through the neighborhood to meet and engage with the neighbors around us.
- Unfortunately Our Redeemer had grown unstable in the years leading up to Pastor Josh's arrival. Over the course of his years there, they made many attempts to reverse their financial problems. In the end, it was too great a hurdle for the congregation to overcome. Pastor Josh helped them make the decision to close the congregation. In doing so, they were able to leave legacy funds behind with organizations they worked with and close their ministry in Celebration on Easter 2018.



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Most recently, Pastor Josh has served as a Chaplain Resident at Deaconess Hospital in Evansville, IN.

There, he honed his skills to preach to people across cultural and spiritual divides. He worked with youth in acute medical distress, as well as serving as the Chaplain in the youth wing of the mental health hospital, helping them to process and deal with a variety of issues.

From the Call Committee

We have assessed Pastor Josh to be the ideally suited candidate for the needs of Gloria Dei in this call. He will bring countless blessings to our church that could reach so many in our congregation and community. He is passionate about youth and family ministries, and also brings gifts in pastoral care that would complement Pastor Tim's gifts.

Pastor Josh sought out the Gloria Dei call – he was not one of the candidates who was encouraged to apply. Pastor Josh has specific ideas about how we, Gloria Dei, can evolve and change to attract and serve more youth & families.

He loves to sing and has interests and gifts in drama and acting that could find many applications with the youth & family ministries. He enjoys board games and can relate to youth about these and many other topics.

Pastor Josh's faith story is both compelling and heartbreaking. His childhood pastor told him just before his Confirmation that she knew he would become a pastor. He didn't hear the call himself, however, until early high school. His extended family was not accepting of his sexuality, and he contemplated suicide. We will allow him to tell the story, but God works through others, and Josh was saved by a sudden change in his parents' plans the night of his planned attempt. That night, he heard God's voice speak to him and he went on to study Theology at Valparaiso University and then continued to seminary.

While the call committee recognizes that some GDLC members might have some uncertainties with the idea of an openly gay Associate Pastor, we encourage you all to meet him before making a judgement. Every week before communion, we all say "All are welcome." This is an opportunity to show that all are welcome. His faith story informs his passion for social justice and related ministries as well as his conviction that "God's love is for everyone. No one is unlovable." So many people in our congregation and community are struggling with their own sexuality or sexual identity, and Pastor Josh strengthens our opportunity to reach out to the unchurched, dechurched, and marginalized people in our community. His sexuality is part of who he is, but does not define his ministry.

Regardless of sexual orientation, he was ***the strongest candidate*** – by far. Overall, Pastor Josh fits the role of an Associate Pastor, Youth and Family and would fit in well with our youth and our church family.