

One in a *Ver* Million Meet William Johnson

By David Lias

david.lias@plaintalk.net

William Johnson has lived in Vermillion for less than a month, and he's already become one of the community's biggest cheerleaders.

"I think this is a great place. I have loved Vermillion so far," he said. "The lack of traffic is fantastic; I love being able to walk everywhere. Most places are within a mile or a mile-and-a-half, so I'll walk just about everywhere I can.

"People are very friendly. They'll say 'hello,' or wave if they know you while they are driving by or walking down the street, and people even say 'excuse me' or 'pardon me' in the store, which is fantastic," William said.

After moving here the last week of August, William has settled into his new role as intern pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church.

He will serve in that capacity until August, 2013.

"I grew up just south of Seattle, WA, with two older brothers, and lived there until I went to college in Spokane, at Whitworth University," William said. "I then worked at Luther Haven Ministries in Coeur d'Alene, ID, before I went to seminary in St. Paul for the last couple of years."

He has finished his first two years of study at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. This year's internship will represent his third year of study; he will return to the seminary for a fourth and final year of learning there beginning in the fall of 2013.

"I will sort of be bringing everything together (during that final year) - all of the different things that I will have learned this year, along with the academic learning," William said.

He comes to Trinity Lutheran Church with a list of goals he hopes to fulfill in the coming year.

"One of my goals is to become an effective

teacher of all ages - preschoolers to people who have been longer than I've been alive," William said. "I hope to make things intriguing and real for them. That will come about through studying different teaching techniques and actually doing the teaching, and getting feedback from different people.

"Another goal is to become more comfortable in different worship settings - from Sunday mornings to funerals and everything in-between," he said.

While growing up, William said he was often told by many people he should pursue a career in the ministry.

"I grew up in a church family; my parents took us to church every Sunday," he said. "Sometime when I was in middle school or high school, people started telling me I should be a pastor, and I wasn't too keen on that."

During his college studies, he minored in theology, and worked at a



Christian camp.

"People started telling me not that I should be a pastor but that I was going to be a pastor," William said. "There was an old pastor at my home church who, as he progressed through Alzheimer's, started saying 'you should be a pastor,' and 'you're going to be a pastor,' and 'so when are you starting seminary' and then finally 'so how was your first year of seminary' and I hadn't even gone yet. It was kind of this prophetic voice that I continued to fight."

Things changed during, of all times, when he was cleaning a bathroom at a summer church camp.

"I thought everyone

had left; it was a Friday morning, and this guy opens the stall door and he walks out," William said. "He looked me in the eye, and he said, 'Have you ever thought about seminary?' I said, 'Yes, sir, I have thought about seminary.' He looks me in the eye, and he says, 'Well, stop thinking,' and he turns around and walks out.

"My first thought was, 'That's disgusting. He didn't wash his hands.'" he said, laughing. "And then I got to thinking that there was a deeper message behind what he said. This guy had only known for five-and-a-half days, and he was telling me I should

go to seminary and become a pastor. That's when I really got to thinking that if people who have just met think this should be a calling in my life, maybe I should pursue it.

"I got to looking into it more and more, and decided to give it a try, and I have fallen in love with it over the past few years," William said.

After completing his studies at the seminary, he hopes to lead worship in a Lutheran congregation.

"Being a pastor in a parish is a plan of mine," William said. "I would also love to be a camp director at some point in my life."



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