

# **Transcript of Icon's Conversation with Pr. Mike**

## **Let's start by having you introduce yourself?**

I am Michael Jacobson, I am the senior pastor at Martin's Lutheran Church in Casselton, ND.

## **How long have you been in that position?**

I've been here for 3 ½ years, April of 2016 is when I came to Casselton.

## **Do you have previous rolls as pastors at other churches?**

I was the solo pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cooperstown before I came here.

## **What called you to work in the church?**

I ran away from the church as long as I possibly could. My dad was a pastor so it's the last thing in the world that I ever wanted to do-was to be a pastor and God has this funny sense of humor and always wins. And so after we left or I should say I left the church for the longest period of time, living in Virginia I ran into a guy named Sam. We hadn't seen him in 2 years but he remembered my name and he said "hey, Mike and Jen how are you?" And that called us back to the church. I got active in our church in California and ultimately answered the call into ministry. I switched my degree program. I left the idea and concept of working for the Navy after 17 years to enter into the ministry.

That's a long story short, but for me, it was all in God making a new covenant with Mike – off of Jerimiah 31:31 of which was my first sermon I ever gave before I even thought about going into the ministry full time. It was God making a new covenant with the people of Israel. During that time I was working on that message and God was working and shaping me through the work of the spirit to call me into the ministry and service for the church full time in ordained ministry and I haven't looked back since.

To be a pastor is the best thing I've ever been asked or called to do. I love people and being with them each and every step of the way.

### **What are some of your major day to day tasks?**

It really varies, being a pastor there isn't one would say "a day to day task" because we never know what happens. Currently, we have a little over 1,000 members so the day to day tasks can shift based on what happens or what's taken place within the lives of our congregation or for that matter, someone in the community. Day to day tasks are really up in the air.

The first thing I try to do each day is to come in and set myself for the day that's ahead and not knowing what that's going to be. To read my bible study that I get in my email every day to center and focus for the day remember why I'm here and what I'm called to do. There are administrative functions that have to take place. Working with our office staff, sermon prep work that has to take place, Bible studies, prayer forums, education programs for our kids in the confirmation world, volunteers that need assistance to get people on task to do ministry of the church.

The church isn't inside the walls, although that's the thing that we believe. "Hey, I'm in a church so that's where it's at," but really the church is the people and we go out and serve. So for me, the day to day tasks are sometimes they trap me behind a desk but where I'd like to be, is out in our community in people's lives and with them each and every step of the day.

### **How long has the church been using IconCMO?**

The church has been using Icon, Martin's, far longer than I've been here. The Icon System has been in place, maybe as long as Icon has been around in that realm.

In that reality, my congregation that I was serving in Cooperstown that you asked me about, they were using the Revelations system to track people and haven't updated.

When I came here I heard them talk about Icon and until I went to your meeting, I didn't know that one replaced or superseded the other one. The system has been here and operational for a great number of years, well past the 3 ½ years that I've been here.

## **What do you like about IconCMO?**

The Navy trained me how to be an analyst. And so I'm intrigued by data and making sure that information is correct, and I think that matches with who we are supposed to be as a church as well. If we look at biblical history we look throughout the bible at who are the people. You look at the book of numbers and it says, I want you to count all the people, and who's within what tribe. We are also called to do that same thing. Who are the people that we are serving? To have this database that can track the members and all of the important dates and information about who they are and what they are experiencing, what they're going through in life is a super tool for a pastor.

One of the things we've learned, going through some of the sessions and having conversations with Icon is that we can have this as an app on my phone so if I need to go see Jane, I can go look on my app to get her address without having to call the church office, "Hey, by the way, can you give me the address or phone number for Jane?" Now it's all at the function of the hands to be there.

Just like any other system. It's all prudent or the focus needs to be on good data being entered into the system to get the data you need out. That's one of the things I really appreciate about Icon. I've talked to the staff at Icon about things we are trying to do and accomplish. Overall, I really appreciate just having the system at our fingertips to use.

## **How has it made a difference in the church so far?**

The ability or impact to find information about a person or member of the congregation at the touch of a button.

Recording of pledges to see where we are with our capital campaign. We are in the middle of a building project at Martin's. We are building a brand new 2.5 million dollar facility. To be able to set a pledge criteria into the giving module and enter pledge dates starting here and ending here and then to be able to run one report and get numbers with one click of a button and it gets you the information you need.

For me personally, that is a Godsend. It's not having to track by Excel spreadsheets. We can send out giving statements and our members know exactly where they are on the drive and we don't have to answer a million questions. That's a win for us!

## **What's your experience with Icon support?**

It has been truly amazing. There hasn't been a time when we haven't gotten the support that we needed. It's an answer to a phone call immediately. If they don't have the answer right then they say, "hey, let me call you back" and they do. And it's not like a week later it's within the same day or next day we get a phone call back. I've been impressed with the best customer service in a product I've seen in my lifetime.

With their genuine care and desire to help congregations to be the best they can be on the business side of things. This goes back to me, there are parts of Icon that I didn't know about. What the system had to offer and what it could do for us as a congregation. My office manager came to me and said, "Hey, they're having an Icon meeting at the Synod office, can we go?" We went to the meeting and my eyes were completely opened to the operating system that as a pastor I had been dreaming of. You don't always know what you have until someone tells you or shows you. That's where I got to meet Connie and the rest of the staff, which was super eye-opening.

One of the other things we're looking forward to at Martin's, is implementing the financial whole package into our operation. Right now we use Quicken and then we have to force-feed these reports, export them into Excel or type them into Excel if we can get them to export to make all of these things happen for the business side of the church. And to know there is a tool inside of Icon to help make all these things happen, it will set everything at ease for myself for my office manager as well as the council because they have access to the financial reports online. They no longer need to ask, "will you email me this, or email me that, or run this" to try and get the data information you want. It's all in one spot – If everything is in one area, how can you go wrong?

That's what I think about Icon Support, you're here asking me questions- why? Because Icon is now big on my radar because I want to know more about the system and want to know more about what the system can do for me, but the flip side is - Icon wants to know and they see the importance of partnering with the church. They're asking, How can we make a product that will make your life better and easier? In my opinion - It doesn't get much better than that.

## **How do you feel about the price of the product and return on investment?**

The return on investment is huge. The cost is not that big for the church for all the components and pieces that the system has to offer.

The only hiccup that I see, isn't from Icon's perspective. I think it goes back to part of my original conversation, the church's role and responsibility of maintaining or looking at numbers of who they are as a people. From that perspective – the price is right. I think their pricing is very adequate, it's very good.

It's something we'll have to look at because We also like the idea of running payroll through Icon Systems. This is another thing I didn't know was possible, we didn't know it could happen. We'll see if our church or council wants to pay the dollars each month. \$25.00 dollars per month to run the payroll through Icon. My wife does payroll for a living, so to have a module that will do that, along with the rest of the things it will do. The additional \$25.00 per month for having the ability to run all your tax information to do tax reports is well worth the \$25.00 to make that happen. Come on, it's 2019 for \$25.00 what do you get? In most places, you can't even buy a pair of jeans for \$25.00.

### **What would you say if someone was on the fence about switching to Icon?**

I would say, "do it". Wholeheartedly I would say do it. There are so much up-swing and potential with the product that will make your office staff so much better and able to focus on other tasks that are required and need to be done in the church. It takes the majority of your administration and puts it all into one basket and makes it so much easier to maintain than if you're trying to run one software for finances, another for membership and reporting.

When you can take everything literally and put it together – What are you really waiting for? I can guarantee you, if you call the people at Icon and talk to them, they will start working on the program, to do something that you want the program to do. That's why they're there and that's what their customer service is all about, that we've noticed so far with Icon.

For us, all of this came about when we switched office personnel because she started delving into how she could use the system, how can it work better. We've continued to go down the road to see all that it can do. In essence, it's made our life easier at Martin's and as we continue to go down the road and use more of the product that we pay for. We'll see so many more benefits, and reap the reward of this operating system, that it'll just be unbelievable.

### **Anything else you'd like to add?**

No, again, I can't say enough about our office staff that knew about some of the functions of Icon, to ask the questions, to get engaged in conversation in meetings, to go and look for the system. That's the other thing I think just wholeheartedly about leadership is listening to what your people are looking for and what they think will help them do their job better to serve the people of the church.

The credit in all of this goes to my staff that said, Hey, I want to do better when it comes to these numbers and controlling data and I think Icon can do it. And they've been 100% spot on that Icon is the system we need to use and be on for the days ahead to make our life better at Martin's.