

Dear Members of Our Father's Lutheran Church,

I greet you with the peace of Christ on a stunningly beautiful first day of Fall. In the midst of the challenges and struggles we face these days, God's creation reminds us of His timeless grace and mercy that is with us always.

I write to you at this important moment in the life of your congregation as you prepare to welcome a new pastor to Our Father's. On behalf of the Minneapolis Area Synod, I have had the privilege of working with your call committee, executive team and church council for nearly two years as your congregation moved through the process of identifying who your new pastor might be.

From early on it was evident that the process at Our Father's would not be a typical one in terms of identifying your new pastor. First, you had a co-interim pastor for a time, which is not a common arrangement. Then, as a congregation you determined that you would not to commit to a specific pastoral model for Our Father's, but rather you trusted the Holy Spirit to bring forth gifted candidates and to guide the call committee to a clear outcome.

During the call process, Pastor Cathy was serving her call to Our Father's for a specified period of time dating back to when she first started, and then it was renewed while the call committee completed their work and discernment. That made it challenging both for her to serve as your pastor and for the call committee to consider her gifts for ministry alongside those of other candidates.

And then, a global pandemic and a summer of social unrest created difficult circumstances for everyone.

Let me say that the fact your process was not typical does not imply that it was flawed or improper in any way. It simply means that it was quite complicated!

What I want you to know is that Bishop Ann Svennungsen and I have been inspired and impressed by the faithfulness and perseverance of your congregation's leadership. As we closely accompanied them throughout this process, there were times when the way forward was not entirely clear. At those times your leaders talked, prayed and forged a clear course. At other times when communication was not always timely or complete, they stepped up and made sure that information was shared and timelines were reestablished.

So while the process was not typical, it was carefully handled with the diligence and integrity we expect to see from congregational leadership at such an important time in your church's life.

The call process concluded with the call committee discerning that someone other than Pastor Cathy would be best suited to lead the next chapter of ministry at Our Father's. You should know that this is not a judgment on Pastor Cathy. To the contrary, everyone affirms her extensive gifts for ministry and believes that God will use her in amazing ways to serve Christ's church in the future.

In the coming weeks we look forward to joining you in welcoming Pastor Aaron, and to supporting Pastor Cathy as she explores future possibilities in ministry. And we give thanks to God for the love and courage that sustains us all in these times filled with uncertainty and opportunity.

Peace in Christ,  
Pastor Craig Pederson

Assistant to the Bishop, Minneapolis Area Synod