



***First of the Month @ CLC***

December 1, 2022

Dear Christ Lutheran Church,

For months I have made it known, first to the Church Board, then to the staff, and then to the congregation, that I was making plans to retire. The time has come for me to be more specific. My last Sunday will be February 26, 2023; my last day in the office will be Tuesday, February 28.

A Spanish-speaking friend of mine told me that the Spanish word for “retirement” is, *Jubilación*. Maybe you hear in the word “jubilation” the notion of being jubilant, as in, “I am jubilant about retirement.” But that’s not what I hear. The word “Jubilee” is an ancient Hebrew concept written about primarily in the Old Testament book of Leviticus. It was intended to be an event every 50<sup>th</sup> year when the Israelites were commanded to return to family roots, forgive debts, let fields lie fallow, and care for the poor. It is quite a radical concept of Sabbath-keeping and stewardship that was not practiced by other neighboring religions.

In a way, I am looking forward to a *Jubilee* year, of sorts. I will give priority to my family (especially helping to care for my grandson), seek to release the weight of 35 years of ministry, be restful, and remain committed to local efforts to respond to poverty. I have no clear direction on what the next chapter of my life will be. A huge part of the rest I am seeking is to be attentive to where God would use my gifts next. In taking the whole year to do this, I do not intend to serve in any capacity in the church.

It is the policy of pastors who leave or retire, yet stay in the community, to disassociate from the congregation they served. I believe this is a healthy practice. While I will remain in town and available to the next lead pastor for questions he or she may have, I will not be worshipping at Christ Lutheran Church, nor attending congregational events (my wife, however, will often be in worship). The new lead pastor does not need any interference from me as he or she takes on pastoral duties. I do have two off-site weddings scheduled, and will lead the local contingent on the September Reformation tour. Beyond that, I will not be available for additional weddings, baptisms, or pastoral counseling.

I believe the timing is right for a pastoral change. The challenges of congregational ministry have shifted much over the past 20 (or so) years. COVID further altered the way the church works. A new pastor with a new vision for CLC, and energy to match that vision, is needed. We have an amazing congregation made up of gifted and passionate members, and supported by a talented staff. We have a history of being vital to our community and responding to need. We exhibit signs of health and vitality. All the pieces are in place for a new lead pastor to take CLC to the next stage of congregational life.

Originally, when I had initiated conversation with my Bishop back in November of 2021, I had hoped that the success in bringing on our next lead pastor could happen while I was still in office. That will not happen. I am appreciative of our consultants with the Joshua Group (Jeff Kjellberg and Rick Heltne) for expediting the process and providing thorough ground work. But there will be an interim period where pastoral help will provide a bridge between my exit and the arrival of the next lead pastor. The Bishop’s office has the

responsibility to fill that need, and will do so with our Church Board's vetting. My hope is that the period of time needed for an interim pastor will be brief.

Speaking of our Church Board, please remember them in your prayers, thanking God for their oversight of the church and of this transition time, as well as asking God to continue to give them wisdom and discernment. President Cydney Oster has nearly tripled her time commitment to the church as she leads the Board through end-of-year responsibilities (i.e., church budget, budget forums, and congregational meeting), as well as serve as an *ex officio* member on the Transition Team and Call Committee.

Speaking of the Call Committee, they have completed and submitted all the necessary paperwork to the Synod office. We are now officially in the ELCA system for the Call process. Even better, Rick Heltne has created an "Opportunity Profile" that he is using as he makes contact with potential candidates (the profile can be found on our website under the "Transition" drop-down, "Reports" link). Because of the busy Advent-Christmas season it is not expected that there will be much response to either communications about our need. The Call Committee is anticipating activity come January.

The Transition Team has scheduled a congregational event on Sunday, December 11, after the 9:30 worship service. They are calling it a "Round Table Gathering" aimed at engaging conversation in order to share joys, celebrations, and hopes for CLC's future. As we prepare for the transition to a new pastor it is important for us as a faith community to have a clear sense of who we are, why we do what we do and where we want to go together into the future. All members and friends are invited to attend, but because there will be a light lunch, please call the church office to let us know you will be attending. If you are so inclined, we invite folks to bring a Christmas tradition treat/dessert to share with those gathered.

Of greater importance to the pastoral transitions at CLC, is the ministry of CLC. And this month is obviously full.

- The Budget forums will take place Sunday, December 4, at 9:05 and 10:35 in the Christian Life Center. Come to hear the 2023 spending plan, and ask any and all questions.
- Sunday, December 11, is the Congregational Meeting at 9:01 (immediately following the 8:00 worship service). On the agenda is the adoption of the 2023 budget, the approval of the 2023 Prayer Team, and the acceptance of the constitutional changes pursuant to the ELCA guidelines.
- Wednesday, December, 7, 14, and 21 are our midweek Advent worship services. Because of our Christmas project ("A Church Street Christmas"), we will be spending time collating, packaging, and delivering the hygiene kits. The first two services (on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>) will begin with a soup supper at 6:30 with worship at 7:00 here at CLC in the Community Connections Center. The service on the 21<sup>st</sup> will be at The Warehouse (400 N. Church Street) at 7:00 pm. We'll still meet at CLC at 6:30 for soup (and loading vehicles) before heading to The Warehouse.
- Our Christmas Eve worship schedule is, 4:00 ("the Service of Children"), 5:30 ("The Service of Carols"), and 11:00 ("The Service of Candles"). Each will offer a unique focus on the specialness of the evening.
- Christmas Day worship (a Sunday!) will be at 10:00am. Lahu worship will be at 12:00pm.
- "A Church Street Christmas" will be from 2:00 to 4:00 across the street from The Warehouse. Volunteers will be contacted about time and area of service. Let's make this a special Christmas for our neighbors experiencing homelessness.
- January 1 is a Sunday this year. There will be no on campus worship. We are asking our congregation to begin the year observing a Sabbath Day, resting and enjoying family and friends. There will be a special "activity box" available to be picked up for our folks to open on New Year's Day. Our hope is that by celebrating this day as a special Sabbath we will be energized and prepared for an exciting year to come!

I have an expectation that 2023 will be a momentous year for Christ Lutheran Church. Given my timeline for experiencing "jubilation," you have my word that I will stay focused and energetic toward accomplishing ministry tasks to the very end of February. And as always, you remain in my prayers for what God is doing in the lives of our members individually and collectively. I can't wait to see what God is up to!

Peace, Pastor Brian