

“If you but trust in God to guide you  
with gentle hand through all your ways,  
you’ll find that God is there beside you  
when crosses come, in trying days.  
Trust then in God’s unchanging love;  
build on the rock that will not move.”  
 (“If You But Trust in God to Guide You”, Georg Neumark)

Dear members of the Faith Lutheran community, grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the savior of the universe!

On Sunday Nov. 19, Amy Sinclair highlighted the following verse from the prophet Jeremiah while discussing the new mission of Faith Lutheran Church:

“They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.” – Jeremiah 17:8

The use of these prophetic words of hope and perseverance especially resonated with me in the context of mission, but also in the news I anticipated bringing to you this week; news both joyful and sad.

I can now share my news via this letter, I have been blessed with the opportunity to move with my family to Oregon, near our family and loved ones. I have accepted the call to be the pastor of West Linn Lutheran Church in West Linn, OR. My final Sunday will be January 7, 2024 which will also be my final day as your pastor. Sarah, Danielle, Theodore and I are sad to leave the only home our children have ever known and the first congregation I was ordained into, but we are joyful and excited to experience what God has in store for us. We are also especially joyful and excited to raise Dani and Teddy near the family and close friends that have long been too far away.

When I was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in April of 2019, after being called to be your pastor, I wasn’t really sure of God’s plan for me and I certainly could not have anticipated the love I would feel for this congregation. We moved out to Menifee two days after ordination, Danielle arrived 5 months after that and then the pandemic 5 months later. So much else has happened in this time- and God has been present with us all, through all of those joys and uncertainties, just as God always is and will continue to be in the weeks and months and years to come.

As I look back on the almost 5 years of ministry in partnership, I must offer my sincerest and most heartfelt gratitude to each and every individual who I have had the honor to serve. We have accomplished much together, but the list of specifics cannot truly express the depth of emotion I feel for our time together and the relationships in faith we have built. We can take pride in what we have done together, and more for the service we have rendered and friendship

which will last and live on through the Holy Spirit. The Lord guided us together, and now guides us apart. While we will be apart physically, you will all live in my heart and memory forever.

Through word and deed we've shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ in and with our community, the impact of which hasn't yet been fully realized. I am supremely confident in you as a congregation and that with support from the Holy Spirit, the Pacifica Synod, and- crucially from each other, you will keep the commendable momentum and spirit we have built these years and carry it forward to enact even more wonderful, hopeful, and worthy acts of ministry in God's name. As written in Acts of the Apostles 2:17, "It will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all peoples, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young women and men will see visions, and your elders will dream dreams." So, modern day apostles of Christ, receive the Spirit of God, breathe it deeply into your whole being, and dream many dreams of the visions of joy and hope of where God is guiding you next.

With this letter, I offer notice of resignation of call as the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Menifee. The decision to resign from this call is a difficult one, coming after much prayer and discernment. This announcement comes with mixed emotions and is tinged with sadness.

During this time of transition, the Reverend Dave Nagler, Bishop of our Pacifica Synod, along with the synod staff will be guiding the congregation through the next steps. An interim pastor will be appointed and the call process for a new pastor will begin. In the meantime, I will do my best to have a conversation with everyone in the congregation before Christmas. If you would like to discuss my resignation, or another topic, I invite you to please reach out to me through the church office (951) 679-1518, or through my cell phone (949)258-3452.

Thank you for the ministry we've shared together. It's been an honor to serve God and our neighbors alongside you. I ask that you remember me and my family in your prayers during this time of transition, as we too will remember you in ours.

So I will conclude by again invoking the wisdom and encouragement of both the prophet Jeremiah and Georg Neumark: be the tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream, which is not fearful or anxious, which stays green and does not cease to bear fruit. And always trust in God to guide you, trust then in God's unchanging love. And finally "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26).

Yours faithfully in Christ, Pr. John Barton