MESSIAH
LUTHERAN CHURCH

October 21, 2026

Dearly beloved Church,

As children, we are frequently confronted with the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” *Doctor! Firefighter! Astronaut! Rock star!* I never had “Pastor” on my list until early adulthood, and even then, I wasn’t soon convinced this vocation was suited for me. Yet, God’s call has been persistent and I have been so very fortunate to be a pastor, to be *your* pastor for these many meaningful years in Cleveland.

Sometimes God’s call surprises us with changes, though, both in our professional lives and in our family lives. This has been the case for Katie and me in recent months. Our vocation as members of our family has been growing: as Brother and Sister to our three siblings, as Aunt and Uncle to our four nieces, and as adult children of aging parents. In this season of life we have felt a stronger draw to be more present in their lives, and to be closer geographically than we have been able to be for over twenty years.

It is with both a joyful and mourning heart that I write to you today with news that Bethel Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio has called me to be their next pastor. This affords Katie and me the chance to fulfill our growing family roles in the years ahead, but it also means that I must resign my call here at Messiah after more than eight years of partnership together in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I hold close to my heart the many gatherings we have shared together as Christ’s Church: Fat Tuesday Sundays, Park-and-Pray worship, God’s Work Our Hands Sundays, Pub Theology Mondays, weddings, funerals, baptisms, home visits, the dedication of the Sittler Lounge, Interfaith Thanksgivings, Sunday School classes, Carols & Cocoa sing-a-longs, First Communions, Confirmations, VBS, Reformation Lunch-and-Learn lectures, Faith Circle, Men’s Lunch, and so many more. Your joyful commitment to the love of Jesus has inspired me in our work together. Your enduring faithfulness has seen us through some really good times and some exceedingly challenging times, and I am so grateful, dear Church, for your witness to and embodiment of God’s grace even when we thought we might not find our way through.

The weeks ahead will be filled with many feelings: sadness, grief, relief, anger, frustration, and joy, among others. At this time, we are hoping to gather for a farewell potluck on Sunday November 22nd (Christ the King Sunday), followed by my final day preaching and presiding on Sunday November 29th. Our bishop, the Rev. Dr. Laura Barbins, is aware of our transition and will be assisting in the coming weeks to help you prepare for what comes next at Messiah, including who will be present after I leave to provide worship leadership and pastoral care as needed.

Finally, beyond my last day, I will no longer be your pastor which means I will be disconnecting both physically and digitally. Please know that “unfriending” on Facebook and “unfollowing” on Instagram are practices that allow space for us each to begin to form new relationships going forward, as difficult as it may be. As the Apostle Paul has been known to say to the churches he was fortunate to know, “I remember you frequently in my prayers,” and I hope we can continue to follow his lead and remember one another in prayer, even as the distance between us grows.

Peace be with you, beloveds. Be strong in heart, tender in care, courageous in new beginnings, open to all things, and grounded perpetually in God’s love.



Pastor Paul