

Dear Friends in Christ,

“This is the LORD’s doing; and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Psalm 118: 23

The Scripture above resonates with me, as it describes my feelings about being your Interim Pastor these past 20-months. All good things have their seasons and come to an end. My last Sunday as Interim Pastor at Joy Lutheran Church will be May 30th.

I write this with bitter sweet feelings! I will miss you, but I am so happy because you have moved right along in this period of transition and accomplished so much. I feel as a congregation you have done the work needed during this time, despite COVID. There has been grief, yes, in adapting to a new pastor after 22-years, but there has been acceptance, support, fellowship, important decision-making, new and continued ministry and working together! You are a warm and engaging congregation; I am thankful God brought us together.

The Ministry Site Profile Team and Call Committee did fantastic work, as well as the Church Council (which has grown)! In addition, God surprised us: we welcomed several new families, produced a Virtual VBS and Christmas Pageant, started a Sunday School staffed with fantastic volunteers, gave away over 250 of Joy’s handmade face masks, began to include more young people as worship helpers - just to mention a few things.

During the month of June, four Church Members have agreed to preach and others to lead worship. We are anticipating the Averys to arrive July 5th. An interval of time between your Interim Pastor and your soon-to-be-called Pastor will be good. It allows emotional space between pastors and will help a bit financially.

I want to thank all of you for the many ways you allowed me to be your Pastor. Though we have only been together for a brief time, I look back fondly on it; I hope the same is true for you. Together, we realized a few dreams, lived through a few trials, and persevered. The Good News is that Jesus Christ has been here from the beginning, through the many chapters of Joy’s ministry, and will be with you for the rest of time.

I especially want to encourage you to:

- Attend new ministry opportunities as they arise here under the leadership of Pastor Sean
- Invite someone to help you when you do any ministry. Someone once told me its important to do things in “twos.” In that way there is another person to get to know as you support each other, but also there is another person who knows how to do what you are doing!
- Welcome new visitors, introduce yourself and invite people to opportunities – whether it be Book Club, being a Reader at worship, attending Sunday School or helping in Property maintenance.
- Remember Pastor Sean is here to help you be the Church- pray about where your passion is and where you would like to grow in your faith and stewardship
- If you have been hurt in the past, I am sorry. Consider prayerfully trying again.
- Continue to give of your time, talent and resources! Stay engaged. You will find contentment as God uses your gifts for the present and future vision.

I will be in the Anchorage area for the foreseeable future so I trust we will see each other again.

In Christ,

Pastor Karen Sonray