

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Five and a half years ago, I responded to a call from God to pack it all up and move to Florida from Wisconsin to pursue a new adventure in life and ministry. It would be the next significant ministry happening for me to be called to serve our Living Christ as a DEM and Ass't to the Bishop in the FBS. The adventure has been what I had hoped for... you never know what's going to happen next!

Over the years of my time in the Church as a pastor, I found that God had given me a passion for pastors in ministry. I've been mentored well by many fine colleagues and have also been given the opportunity to walk beside so many others to share the best of what I have been given in very sincere partnership in ministry. I had been particularly interested and enjoyed accompanying my previous DEMs as they impacted leaders and congregations. So, when 21 years of time concluded at my last call, I felt compelled to pursue a position of DEM for the potential that the possibility has.

Bishop Suarez and I were formerly acquainted as we were both pastors in the SCSW for many years together. Later, from a distance, I celebrated his election to be Bishop of the FBS, having already believed he was destined to be in such a position as this. Then, being called to be supportive of him in his call has been something special for me. I am appreciative of his faith expressed through the Church, his collaborative leadership style, and his commitment to God.

Working with the staff of the Office of the Bishop has been remarkable and their selflessness as a team has been a genuine gift. Sometimes, things ran like the proverbial "well-oiled machine" and sometimes we trudged forward together exploring previously uncharted pathways for us. As I have experienced it, we have always worked to build and share a similar and compelling vision for the Church, responding as we can and encouraging as we are inspired. What I have experienced is a journey of comradery with accompaniment and prayerfulness. I'm grateful and humbled.

It has also been a time of the incredible to have walked beside our pastors, leaders, and congregations in the North Region of the FBS. I have

looked to be at my best with my call to serve the Christ in collegial accompaniment to the degree that I have. I have met some amazingly faithful people and have learned a whole lot. At the very most, it has been my commitment to keep our leaders and congregations in prayer every day. What a pleasure and what an honor! What a people!

So, by now, if you have guessed that my transition is in the offing, you would be right. My call to be the DEM in the North Region of the FBS will conclude on January 31. I will then be stepping into a new position in another synod. Currently, because of the current level of confidentiality with the transition to be happening in that place, I am not at liberty to say where it will be. However, when I can, I will also share that information with you all.

So, soon on to the next adventure that God has for me and my wife, Dianna. As we leave, know that we take with us what is exceptional about you all, your commitment to the Gospel, and the incarnate love from God living through us. I leave behind my continued commitment to keep you all in prayer. I am grateful!

Be blessed! God's Spirit is with you all!

Rob Carlson