

May 22, 2019

Dear Members of St. Paul Lutheran,

It is with great regret and sadness we inform you Pastor Grant Applehans tendered his resignation at Tuesday evening's Church Council meeting. As outlined in the enclosed letter from Pastor Grant, it is both from a personal and professional point of view he has made this difficult decision. Council has accepted Pastor Grant's resignation. Pastor Grant's last day with St. Paul Lutheran will be Sunday, June 23, 2019. Please take a moment to thank Pastor Grant and to wish him God's blessings as he and his family move on in their faith journey.

The St. Paul Area Synod has also been notified of Pastor Grant's resignation. Based on conversations with Bishop Lull's assistant, Pastor Justin Grimm, it is our understanding the Synod will appoint an interim pastor to serve our church until a permanent pastor is called. Members of the Council will continue to speak with representatives of the Synod about what this process will mean for our Church and to ensure the needs of our church are met. The Council will continue to communicate with you as this process progresses.

The coming months will be full of challenges for our Church. We have been down this path before and with your prayers and assistance we will make it through this journey and become a stronger and more vibrant place of worship and community member.

Now, more than ever, our Church and the Council needs each of you. Please provide your thoughts and concerns to any of the Council members. Please volunteer your time and talent to help our Church carry out its mission to share Christ's love with joy. Finally, please continue making every effort to meet or increase your financial giving to help our Church weather the financial strain this process will place on us. If we all are able to positively respond to these requests, the Council feels this process can be a positive and healing event in the life of our Church. We hope you all agree.

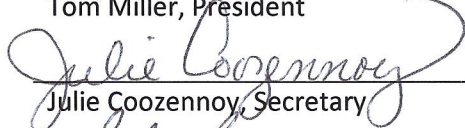
To begin this healing journey, Council has contracted with Susan Nienaber, a congregational consultant, to help the congregation work through the recent conflict and learn healthier ways of communicating. Please see enclosed page explaining further details.

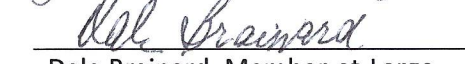
In the coming weeks, the Council will adopt a plan of action for moving forward. We will communicate this with you and will update the scope and timing of the plan as necessary. This will be a long process, so your patience and understanding are needed and appreciated. We all believe there is light at the end of this tunnel and with God's help, and the hard work of all of us, we will reach a better place.

Thank you and please reach out to the Council with questions or concerns at any time. In Christ's name we move forward.

St. Paul Lutheran Church Council



Tom Miller, President


Julie Coozenoy, Secretary


Dale Brainard, Member-at-Large


Julie Hyrkas, Member-at-Large


Jon Quale, Member-at-Large


Tyler Kroschel, Vice President


Katie Fetterly, Treasurer


Chris Clark, Member-at-Large


Arlie Post, Member-at-Large

*⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹ For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field... **1 Corinthians 3:5-9***

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and Jesus the Lord of Life!

I am writing today to let you know that I will be stepping down from the role of Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran, effective June 23rd. This was my choice, for my personal and family's wellbeing. I was not asked to leave, or compelled to do so by any agent or action of this congregation or the St. Paul Area Synod.

There is much to say, and only a fraction of it can be contained within this letter. But as a start to the process of saying good-bye, I offer the following thoughts:

As I think about the congregation and my time here, my first and strongest feeling is **thankfulness**. I am **thankful for the opportunities to get to know you, and walk beside you** in good times and bad. We have worshiped together, prayed together and played together. We've spent time together at church, in your homes and mine, in hospitals and nursing homes, at Stagecoach Days and the Fourth of July parade. We've gathered for weddings, classes, shoveling, serving, confirmations and first communions. We've gathered to pray for those in crisis and welcome new Christians through the gift and Sacrament of Baptism. We've gathered to commend to God those who have died in the faith, and to continue to support one another in their absence. In all of this, I have been thankful to walk with you and serve as your pastor – to point to our Savior in all that we do, and to testify to the Light which shines in the darkness, the Peace which the world cannot give and the Love which will not go away and which the world cannot kill. I am **thankful for those who have stepped up to lead when called to action**. The Holy Spirit is the strength and inspiration of the church, and it calls us into the creative tension of sharing Christ's love with joy. One of my great joys in life is to see folks living into the strengths that God has given them for the benefit of God's Church and their neighbors. While here, I have had a front row seat to many such blossomings, and for that I am truly thankful. But most of all, I am **thankful to our Lord**, who draws us together, joyfully walks with us Saints-and-Sinners that we are, and pours out His forgiveness, grace and love, that we may be filled to overflowing with His abundant life!

This thankfulness is **tinged with sadness**. There are many things I have been looking forward to, that I will not be here to be a part of – concerts and games, plays and simply being there to cheer you on as you continue to develop in your lives and live into your God-given gifts. I am saddened to think of some relationships that are still budding now and would have been a joy to experience in their bloom. I am saddened to think of all the good and caring adults and kids that have become a consistent part of

Sam and my life, whom we will no longer see on a regular basis. I am also saddened when I think of some of the more painful experiences that have been a part of my life here. There have been difficult conversations, where we hashed out our differences and, through honest and vulnerable conversation in the light of God's grace for all us sinners, forged stronger and deeper relationships – *these conversations and relationships I rejoice over*. What has saddened me is when it seemed unexplored assumptions, a self-righteousness-that-forgets-we-are-all-sinners-in-need-of-forgiveness, an Us vs. Them tribalism, and an unwillingness to engage in mutually honest and vulnerable dialogue, have ruled the day. I do not want any of these things for you, for me, or for the church. They are poisonous to the gift of life we have all been given. If you believe you have received any of these from me, I am truly sorry and, as I have offered before so I offer now: *my door is open to you and your concerns*. If you believe you have used any of these against me, know that I believe you are still a beloved child of God, and, though this was not good, it also need not be the end of the story. Through honest conversation and the Love of Christ for all of us sinners we can get to something better for all of us. *My door is open to that conversation as well*. We will never all see eye to eye, and disagreement will always be a part of life, but *in the light of God's love and grace for each of us, those disagreements become opportunities* for us to reflect that light and be drawn closer to God and each other. It's not easy or comfortable work, but it is good and fruitful work in the light of eternity.

Finally, at this time **I also feel hopeful**. I am hopeful for the next chapter **with my family**. Even under the best of circumstances, juggling two senior pastorships and parenthood of a toddler would be a tricky maneuver. I look forward to more consistent bedtimes, and being more regularly present for Sam. I look forward to worshiping with Amanda and supporting her ministry in and out of church as a pastor's spouse. I look forward to making some space to breathe and consider a fruitful next stage for us all. **I am hopeful for the next chapter of the congregation as well**. There will be some challenging work ahead, but it will be worth it. God is the one who has called this congregation together, and God will be with you every step of the way. God's love is patient and kind, and the congregation that I have come to know is too. Lean on God in the steps ahead. His love, His care, His grace, will carry you through. Talk to God regularly and invite Him into your conversations with others. Engage in the creative tension of imagining with the maker of the universe who you are called to be in this place, and the results will be beyond any of our dreams. Do your best to follow Him, as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and though your life together may be completely different than what you had planned, it will be abundant and joyful as well! You are God's field, and I look forward to seeing you bloom, fruit, and prosper under His ongoing care in the years ahead!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Grant



The Path Forward

As mentioned, Council has contracted with Ms. Susan Nienaber, MDiv., LMFT. Ms. Nienaber is a licensed marriage and family therapist, consultant, mediator, ordained clergyperson and District Superintendent in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Two areas she specializes in are conflict resolution and designing and facilitating the dialogue process.

Council chose to work with Ms. Nienaber with the goal of sorting through the recent conflict within St. Paul Lutheran and to help us learn new ways of communicating with each other and dealing with conflict.

The first step in this process is to have small groups of people and a few individuals meet with Ms. Nienaber to discuss their perceptions of the conflict. This process will allow Ms. Nienaber to understand the conflict, learn more about the people of our congregation and build a plan to facilitate resolution and a path forward.

She would like to get started on this journey as soon as possible. She is offering the following dates and times to meet with small groups and individuals. If you are interested in participating in this process, please contact Coordinator@SharingChristsLove.org. When you do, please indicate three (3) days and times that you would be available to meet with Ms. Nienaber. Indicating a wide range of times is also acceptable (for example indicating all day June 8th would allow you to be scheduled at any time during that day).

Tuesday, May 28	6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Saturday, June 1	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Monday, June 3	11:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday, June 8	9:00 am – 5:00 pm

While we are very fortunate to have the Synod helping us offset the cost of Ms. Nienaber's services, St. Paul Lutheran does need to raise about \$2,500 to facilitate this process (total cost of \$5,000). Council is asking if you find this process to be one that can positively impact our church, consider donating what you are able to help us afford these services.

As we begin this process, please feel free to reach out to any member of the Church Council with questions or concerns you may have.

Blessings in Christ,

Your Church Council

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