

June 29, 2026

Dear Trinity Church Friends,

Yesterday our congregation met and celebrated the many ways we have seen God's good grace on us this year, and we also cast vision for next year. The 2026-2027 budget was approved and both elders were affirmed. Based on His faithfulness to us, we continue to look with great anticipation at this next fiscal year and the ways God will continue to bless Trinity church as we carry out his clear mandate for making disciples who make disciples.

As you all know, I have been joyfully serving at Christ's command these past four years here at Trinity, and I pray annually for God to give me wisdom and guidance as to what He desires for me in the year to come. This year has been no exception.

I'm delighted to tell you that I feel His freedom to continue serving as your lead pastor for another fiscal year. However, I also am convinced that this next year should be my last. So, on June 30, 2027 I will step back from being your lead pastor.

Serving as your lead pastor has been an extraordinary experience. Lisa and I have met so many amazing people, made many deep friendships, and watched God do some incredible things. My decision has not been hasty or easy. I've reached this conclusion based on several factors:

First: I believe God has accomplished among us the three things He asked me to do at Trinity- *to encourage, renew, and inspire* us with who God is and what he could do among us. These three qualities are now very evident among us, by God's grace.

Second: I need to focus more on my 4 grandsons. They are at an age when a grandfather's presence will mean the most, and that means more travel time to be with them in Montana. Plus we have several family members who need our time and attention locally.

Third: When I took the full-time lead pastor role, I put my other two jobs on the backburner to serve with you. But both of them now need greater attention. Biola University is asking me to teach more online classes and my non-profit, *Living my Potential*, needs to grow in its fiscal stability. My desire in retirement is to offer free coaching to Christian leaders and individuals. To do that my non-profit needs to add more monthly prayer and financial partners. I will need time to invest in both these tasks.

Fourth: I believe Trinity's best days are yet ahead of us with a younger spiritual leader at the helm- someone who is just as convinced as we are that making disciples who make disciples is THE job of the church. Someone who is gifted at relationships, administration, coaching

and preaching. And someone who has a humble and loving shepherd's heart for God's people.

While this will be a transitional year, leading up to June 2027 it should not be a year to lament or be apathetic. In the time we have together this year I pray we will focus more on the "what" than on the "who". More on what it takes to grow disciples than on who is leading us to grow. More on the process of making disciples than on the person who is in the pulpit. More on the means of personal growth and discipleship than on the man. We have a great elder board. We are gifted with a phenomenal staff AND we have you, a wonderful congregation. I believe this next year will be one of even more progress and praise to our great God.

The plan!

Our Elders have reviewed and re-affirmed that the lead pastor's job is to guide Trinity forward in discipleship that is intentional and relational. They are working with Bob Osborne, the EFCA Church Health Director to assist with our transition. They are also reaching out to the "Relational Discipleship Network" (the team of national pastors I meet with twice a month to strategize discipleship growth) who can put out feelers in their organization for someone who might have the same heart for discipleship that we have. The Elders are researching a search firm who can help us look nationally. And our search team will be populated with people who are actively engaged in making disciples, so they know what to look for in a new lead pastor.

Please be assured that after taking a break to travel and see family after June 2027, Lisa and I are planning- God willing- to continue as a part of Trinity, but at that time we will be serving alongside you all as fellow congregants, wanting to be among our new lead pastor's most ardent cheerleaders.

We love you all and are keeping Trinity Church in our hearts and prayers.

May God bless us all this year as we advance the kingdom together.

Doug Baker

