

Dear Our Saviour's,

As we continue walking through Pastor Ben's transition, we wanted to share what comes next and how Our Saviour's will move through this season together.

One of the strengths of the ELCA is that every congregation is unique. While our Constitution provides the framework for pastoral transitions, there is not a single checklist that every congregation follows. Instead, congregations work closely with their bishop, church council leadership, and pastoral staff to discern the best path forward for their particular context.

Over the last few months, I have been in regular conversation with Bishop Miller, Pastor Elisabeth, and the Congregation Council Executive Committee. Together, we have prayed, discussed a variety of possibilities, and developed a recommendation that we believe provides both stability for today and flexibility for the future.

In the coming days, the Congregation Council will consider a proposal to call a part-time contract pastor who would primarily focus on pastoral care and congregational wellness. This position looks very similar to the work Pastor Al did as a contract pastor on our staff years ago. This recommendation is supported by Bishop Miller, who has advised us that a contract pastor is the appropriate step rather than appointing an interim pastor.

The council will have the opportunity to review the pastor's qualifications, meet them in person, ask questions, and decide whether to move forward. If approved, the contract would provide approximately one year of ministry while allowing the congregation time to discern our long-term staffing needs. This also allows us to have a preacher of our choice working with our worship team, rather than rotating guest preachers throughout the year.

I recommend we spend several months listening and living into this new staffing model before making any decisions. This gives us the opportunity to evaluate the needs of our congregation, the realities of ministry today, and where God may be leading us next. We anticipate revisiting that conversation in January of 2027.

If the council ultimately recommends calling another pastor, we will then begin the ELCA's formal call process. That process includes forming a Call Committee, working closely with the bishop, and inviting the congregation into the discernment that leads to calling a new pastor.

I also want to assure you that your Congregation Council remains fully engaged throughout this process. The Executive Committee has worked alongside me between council meetings to explore options and prepare recommendations, a responsibility during significant personnel transitions. The full council will continue to provide wisdom, ask questions, and make the decisions that shape the future of our congregation. I encourage you to pray for them during this time of discernment and to reach out to them should you have any questions.

Transitions naturally bring uncertainty, but they also create space for new possibilities. I remain deeply grateful for Pastor Ben's ministry, for Pastor Elisabeth's partnership, for the faithful leadership of our council, and for the many ways God continues to work through this congregation.

We will be adding a new section to the News & Events page on our website to share leadership and organizational updates, helping keep you informed as we continue through this season of transition. Thank you for your prayers, your trust, and your continued commitment to the ministry we share together.

God is faithful, and I believe God continues to do wonderful things through our church!

In Christ,
Pastor Brian Wise
Senior Pastor
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church