



A Christmas Card that Connects

By: Bruce Pokarney

Receiving Christmas cards is a tradition among friends and families. This is true for churches as well. In the case of Bethlehem, a warm, heartfelt Christmas card from one of its families has come from 275 miles away. This card carried a message that speaks to the impression Bethlehem made and the connection the church continues to have with one particular family that moved from Aberdeen to St. James, Minnesota this past October.

The card was addressed to Pastor Jeff and Pastor Matt, but it could easily be intended for the entire congregation.

Merry Christmas
LOVE THE RUZICKAS



Todd, Danielle, Emmett, & Elise

“We would like to thank you, from the bottom of our hearts and our souls, for being a source of stability during our three years in Aberdeen,” wrote Todd and Danielle Ruzicka. “We felt welcome at Bethlehem from the moment we walked through the doors.”

Married in Loveland, Colorado, the couple moved to Aberdeen in 2022 as Todd transferred to a job at Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge. Danielle, as an occupational therapist, worked at a variety of jobs while in Aberdeen.

“We did not attend church regularly in Colorado when we first got married, but when we moved to Aberdeen, it was important for us to find a church home and have our son Emmett baptized,” recalls Danielle. “We attended services at three different churches and then found Bethlehem. It just felt right. Ironically, that was Pastor Matt’s first day [on the job] as well. We reached out right away and had Emmett’s baptism scheduled. When our daughter Elise was born, we also had her baptized at Bethlehem.”

The Ruzickas decided to move to the community where Danielle grew up and raise their two children close to her family. They might have left Aberdeen three months ago, but they have not left Bethlehem.

“We continue to use the livestream and project the Sunday service on TV here at our new home,” says Danielle. “Emmett knows the pastors by name, and we always feel connected to the sermons. While we always felt welcome bringing kids to church services at Bethlehem, the livestream was a great option when we had a newborn or when someone was sick.”

Now, the livestream is **the** option that makes that connection to Bethlehem possible despite being a state away.

The Ruzickas offer some advice to other young families who might be shopping for a church in Aberdeen.

“Try Bethlehem—the variety and flexibility of services make it an easy choice,” says Danielle. “Our kids were comfortable during the worship services, either coloring or walking through the long hallways when we couldn’t quite make it through the service! We also love Pastors Jeff and Matt—they are personable and honest, and their message is clear and thoughtful during their sermons.”

The Christmas card displays a beautiful young family with smiling faces. The message inside concludes with a light-hearted reference for Pastor Matt about the Minnesota Vikings—“you know, maybe one of these years?”—but also with praise that certainly echoes the sentiments of many young families at Bethlehem:

“We want you to know how appreciated you are. Often, a small detail of your sermon seems to directly target our lives. You have been such a blessing to our family, and we thank God for you.”

That’s a Christmas message for the entire new year.

Thank you for being a vital part of Bethlehem and for your support. With your partnership and the power of the Holy Spirit, Bethlehem is touching lives each and every day – connecting us with God, one another, and our mission in the world.



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