

March 11, 2020

Dear Church,

What a beginning! From having your help moving into my new home, to a beautiful turnout at my installation service, and your attendance and kindness at each Sunday since, I think we have made a wonderful start!

As our ministry together is getting underway, I wanted to share with you some of the specific ways we are looking at being church together. When a new pastor is called in the ELCA, among the ideas discussed and documents filled out is an agreement about what special focus the pastor will undertake in their work and what specific ways the congregation will support that work. This agreement can be found in this month's Proclaimer in its entirety; for now, I'd like to go into a bit more detail around some of the specific points. I'd like to share my thoughts around what support and encouragement for your new pastor and new ministry can look like:

- Volunteering and Actively Participating

I am so thrilled that this is a community that already takes such a participatory role in things like worship, committees and council. My hope is that this spirit will continue and will be contagious. If you have wanted to learn what being on altar guild is about, but just haven't done it yet, now is the time! If you have ideas about what we should be up to as a church, submit your name and bio to the nominating committee for a council position. Join a lay ministry team and be part of Sunday morning worship. Church is something that takes all of us to accomplish. Furthermore, as new ideas and initiatives roll out, I hope to continue to see this spirit of participation and leadership.

- Being Open to Trying New Things and New Ways

During my conversations with the Call Committee, we discussed how my approach to ministry is a little different than what may have been the norm at Prince of Peace. I am what is known as a "missional" pastor. Many of you know already that the word mission comes from the Latin word "misseo" which means sending, or sent out. Missional pastors are particularly concerned with church as something that we are and something we do, rather than somewhere we go: we are eager for church to break the definition of something that happens on Sunday morning inside four walls. Given that this is one of my central convictions, we will likely see some changes while I'm at the helm. My request is that you keep an open mind and heart, that you work at increasing your imaginative capacity and help reframe what church, or council, or Sunday School, or

youth group can look like. Finally, I ask that you engage around change or newness: ask questions, get involved, go deep with me around the theology that informs the decisions we will make together. Let's keep lines of communication open.

- Pray for Her

This point is pretty straightforward: I need your prayers. This is my first time being a pastor. I am in a new place, and with new people, doing a new job. I'll ask you to pray for God's wisdom and guidance not only for me, but for all of us. One thing I will add here, is that it is a real pleasure to be prayed for. Though it is uncommon in Lutheran circles, it is powerful for someone to place a hand on your shoulder and entreat God on your behalf. I don't expect all of you to feel comfortable doing this, but if the Spirit ever moves you, I would welcome it! You can also expect me to pray for you in this way - just ask!

There are a few more points in this agreement around support that I will discuss in my next *Paper Pulpit*. I hope for now, I have provided some clarity, and given you some food for thought.

Peace be with You,

-Pastor Emily