



April 3, 2022

Dear wonderful people of Bethany-Calvary,

I greet you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I write to you today to share with you the important news that I have received a new appointment in the Dakotas Conference of The United Methodist Church. What this means is that, starting at the end of June, I will no longer be serving as pastor of Bethany-Calvary United Methodist Church. I know this might come as a shock to you, but over the course of this letter and the information which will be shared over the coming months, I hope to alleviate your fears and illuminate the situation.

Why is this happening?

The first question you might be asking is why? In order to understand, I must outline a bit of how The United Methodist Church operates and where I fit into it all. In the UMC, we use an appointment system, which means that each conference has a bishop whose job it is to look over the many local churches and pastors in a conference and match the needs of local churches with the gifts of pastors. Normally, only pastors from the conference serve within a conference, but there are some exceptions. I am one of these exceptions as I belong to the Dakotas Conference but was allowed to serve in Wisconsin throughout my time at seminary. Now that I am completing my seminary degree in May, the bishop of the Dakotas has called me to serve back in my home conference as the pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Cavalier, North Dakota.

How did this happen?

Knowing that I would be completing my time in seminary, the Dakotas Conference bishop, in conjunction with myself and some of the other leaders in the Dakotas, has been discerning where the Holy Spirit is calling for me to serve – including if I ought to stay at Bethany-Calvary. This work of discernment has taken well over six months of careful prayer, discussion, and listening to the voice of God. Over the course of the last three months, the answer has become increasingly clear and has led to my appointment. I have always known that I would return to the Dakotas at some point, but I could never have known how my time at Bethany-Calvary would challenge my thoughts of returning and force me to listen ever more closely to God's call. I have so loved my time here.

What does this mean for us?

Naturally, the question is, what is next for Bethany-Calvary? In the immediate, nothing will change. I will continue to serve to my greatest ability until I complete my ministry here. **My final Sunday will be June 19, 2022.** I invite you to be here to celebrate our time together with worship at 10:15 a.m. and a potluck following.

In the mid-term, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee will be working with the Wisconsin Conference leadership to welcome our next pastor.

In the long-term, Bethany-Calvary will continue its growth. Together, we have seen how the Holy Spirit has moved through our church and has begun transforming us into different people. We are becoming more of who God is calling us to be and we can see the signs everywhere. From the cleaning and fixing up of the church building, to the beginning of new ministries and new approaches to discipleship – it is clear that God is up to good things at our church. And the same God Who is doing these amazing things – the same God Who called me to serve you as your pastor – is the same God Who will continue to work His wonders, transform our church, and call the next pastor to this congregation.

I know this news may be disheartening and sad. It's certainly bittersweet for me. I have celebrated each time I have been able to worship our Holy God with you. I have rejoiced at being able to start new ministries with you. I have loved getting to know and working along side each of you. So, this transition will be difficult for all of us. Yet, we know that God goes before us.

Jesus, when He was preparing for His death, spoke with His disciples. He said, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? ²⁰Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²²So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:19-22, NIV). The ministry of the Church has always been one of meetings and partings. Even Jesus knew that He would have to depart from His disciples and that they would feel the sting of that farewell. Yet, there is hope in the future because Christ is with us. His Holy Spirit continues to envelop us and lead us. There is joy in His presence of peace and His countenance of love.

I pray as we continue towards our future farewell, that the Holy Spirit will encase us in His love and peace and that by the power of that same Spirit, we can work towards continuing our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Please reach out to me with any questions you might have or if you want to talk about anything I've said. You can reach me at 414-258-2868 option 2, or at pastor@bethanycalvary.org.

God's continued blessings and keeping, this day and forever more,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Thanael". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Pastor Thanael Certa-Werner