

Grace, Peace, and Thanksgiving be with you all.

I give thanks to God for each one of you. Over the last few years, we have experienced joys and sorrows, changes and conflicts, a sense of normalcy and a sense of uncertainty. In these years we have welcomed into our community others by birth, baptism, and transfer, and we have given our farewells to those who have completed their baptismal journey in death, those who have departed us by movements or life circumstance, as well as those who no longer join us regularly or find themselves traveling between church homes. No matter how we have come together or grown apart, I give thanks to God for the time that I have been able to share and grow with every one of you. I keep you all in prayer and hope that you are also moved by the grace of God in your growth into the person that God sees you capable of becoming.

I would be remiss- failing to identify moments that are not always positive for all- in new and developing information. I have recently been given the opportunity to join a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) position in Des Moines to work as a Chaplain for UnityPoint Health. This is a position that I have accepted and will be joining this program in the beginning of January. Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup> will be the last worship and day I will have the joy and privilege of being with you. I believe that the opportunities and growth as a Pastor that I have had with all of you, and the support you have given me in ministering as a Chaplain in the Army have helped me chart a path onwards. I understand that this is a short time for transition, but I also know that everyone at Bethlehem and St. Mark are equipped to support themselves and one another. I have been given the opportunity to serve with all of you, and I know that by the grace of God and the love for one another that you all can continue great ministry and the love of God amongst yourselves and the communities in which you live. I have been in contact with the leadership of Southeastern Iowa Synod, and they will be available to help assist and guide us all during this period of change. I will continue to work with the Synod office and both Church Councils to make this transition as smooth as possible and assure that you will have the support needed moving forward.

While this change is sudden and taking place at a very busy time of the year, I hope that you can experience this as another way forward as a church body to into a new year and find new opportunities to be the hands and feet of God in the world together. I cannot put into words the love, welcome, and opportunity to continue to further grow into the person that God has called me to be during my time with all of you, and I hope that my time with you has given a glimpse of the same opportunity. While we are preparing for the next steps in our journey ahead, Chelsea and I will be keeping you all in prayer, and I hope that you can all do likewise as we look ahead to what comes next for us all. If you have any questions or concerns in the next coming weeks, please don't hesitate to reach out to me with anything on your mind.

Thanks and Peace,

Pastor Daniel Pell

360-395-8868