



Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

To: All members of the Congregation
From: Adele King, President of Council, and Pastor Caruana, Interim Pastor
Date: August 26, 2020

This is, by far, the hardest letter I have had to write to all of you. Most of you are aware that Pastor Caruana has severe medical issues. She has been struggling a lot lately with her insulin pump and with her extreme fatigue that comes with her autoimmune disorder. We have talked almost daily, and her ability to stay above these issues has been less and less. When you add the stressors that come with this position, it has caused a real deterioration of her health. We have had so many problems associated with this pandemic and admittedly, we are not an easy congregation to lead. She puts so much into all that she does, and she puts her heart ahead of her head very often. It is difficult for her to say no and she always goes above and beyond. It is, therefore, with a very sad heart that I tell you that she has resigned her position of Interim Pastor, effective September 12, 2020.

Please read her words and message for all of us:

My Dear Friends in Christ,

When I accepted the position as your Interim Pastor, I must admit, I never expected I would be at Zion for almost two years. During that time, I just couldn't help myself ... I wanted to be truly involved with Zion and help alleviate the pain the church had experienced in the past and was still experiencing when I came on board.

It seems to me that in a very short time we bonded together, and that former pain was replaced by smiling faces and people who began mingling around after worship services and chatting about all sorts of things. It made me feel good to be part of that transition.

And as time continued, my love for Zion grew, and I began to look for ways to bring a sense of unity to the church, ways to proclaim God's word in a way that resonated with the members of the church, and ways to bring us together through fellowship events around food. How about that Fall Harvest Bash?! (After all, what Lutheran doesn't love gathering around food.) I looked for ways to show my appreciation for each of you during each of the festival days in the church calendar by personally presenting each of you with a little gift meant to be an example of joy, hope, and love. More than anything, I wanted to be a good and faithful servant to the members of Zion.

A little less than a year ago, I began to realize I was struggling ... my body started rebelling. I thought I could push through to the end of my contract, but more recently realized I just couldn't do it. When my blood sugars became uncontrollable and all I wanted to do was sleep, I knew I was in trouble and needed to start taking care of myself ... something I find difficult to do when there are needs to be addressed in the congregation.

But the truth is, we don't always get to do what we want to do and are forced to change direction. For me that meant I needed to leave Zion ... quickly. Although I'm struggling with the decision, I know it is the right thing for me to do.

As I prepare to leave, I'd like to leave you with a few thoughts.

1. Don't give up. Keep striving to move Zion forward. Concentrate on establishing Zion's identity.
2. Answer tough questions like: Who does Zion want to be within the community? What do you want the future of Zion to look like ... and then go for it!
3. Look at yourself with eyes wide open and be honest with yourself about the future of Zion.
4. Reach for the stars through your actions as a community of faith. Figure out how to be a church formed through mission and then develop a plan for reaching that goal.
5. Decide what characteristics you want in a pastor. Don't just settle for the first person that comes your way. Then, support the pastor so he/she can support you to the best their ability.
6. Work together as a team so everyone shares in the work of the church.
7. Establish ministries that meet the needs of the young, middle aged, and the not so young – both inside the church and outside the church.
8. Always remember to look to God for strength and help.

I know this may all sound overwhelming and will take time, but always stay focused on your goals. At the same time, don't try to take on too much at one time. You can only handle so much ... particularly when change is involved. Remember you can accomplish anything you want if you put your heart and soul into it. I know you can do it!

In closing, I thank you for the great opportunity your have given me to serve our Lord and Zion Lutheran Church. I will miss you greatly and pray for you daily.

† In peace and love,

Pastor Barb

Pastor has given us many things to contemplate and upon which to take action. As for the call process, Council and the Profile Committee are virtually meeting with the Synod this evening, Wednesday, August 26, to review and finalize the profile. We expect that it will take a few months for us to get responses to our call. In the meantime, we hope to have a new interim in place to take care of our needs. I am currently working on that with the Synod.

I implore all of you to not give up, but rather, to dig in your heels and get to work to create a loving and caring atmosphere at Zion. We must work together, and I hope each of you is now asking, "How can I help?" Begin by praying for our church, our Council, and our future. I will continue to look to God, as Pastor Barb suggested, as should each of you. We will get through this ... together!

In Christ's Love,

Adele King