



Dear St. Luke Lutheran,

Filled with wonderful shared memories and with my deepest appreciation I write to you today to officially announce my resignation as Pastor of St. Luke Lutheran. While this is admittedly not an easy letter for me to write to you, know that I do so with my heart overflowing with shared joy, memories and blessings. And while I imagine this news may be coming to you unexpectedly, know that this has been a decision with which I have come to with quite deep and intentional discernment, prayer and reflection.

Over the last 15 years I have marveled at the opportunities that God has set before us in ministry and in our journey of faith together. From the beginning of our time together, way back in 2006, you took a chance on a freshly graduated seminary student and gave to me the highest privilege of sharing in God's love and grace in Christ with you as your pastor. You opened to me your trust and your story of faith. While I was new in pastoral ministry and had very little experience, you let me grow in my calling to serve you; even allowing me to stumble at times while also uplifting me in ways greater than I could ever deserve.

As I reflect on all the memories, I rejoice in the many diverse experiences in ministry with which we've shared. From Sunday mornings in worship together to Sunday school, mission trips, youth experiences and youth gatherings, birthday lunches, an incredible benefit breakfast ministry, our loaves and fishes outreach, Youthworks, Christmas plays, Advents, Lents, Holy weeks and so very much more - all of these experiences have served as beautiful testimonies to the Holy Spirit so actively at work across our church. We've shared in so many holy, deep and challenging moments too. From the passing of loved ones within our church family to many challenges and changes in our community we've sought God's comfort through one another and found God's peace again and again together.

While this might be somewhat of an understatement, our last many months have certainly been a great challenge for all of us in so many new and different ways. Navigating this time of Covid has had a profound effect on every aspect of our lives, including how we've continued as a church family together. While there was admittedly no Covid playbook to guide us, we persevered and found new ways to be in worship and to be community together in faith. At the beginning of the pandemic we became an online church in just one weeks time. By the end of last summer we gathered outside for worship and continued to do so through 3 full and weather changing seasons of the last year. We're only now starting to find our way back to something that resembles what we've treasured from before Covid, and yet even so it now seems somehow different than what we might have expected. In this regard I have spent many hours and days in prayer through this time seeking God's guidance. At times I have found unexpected leadership confidence, while at other times I have come to know more fully my own limitations.

In a way, our moment now feels like the end of one important chapter and the beginning of an equally important new one. In the new path before us it is clear that new thinking and leadership strengths will be needed and will benefit St. Luke. I have always wanted the very best for St. Luke. I always have and I always will. For this new chapter, soon to be written before us, God will bring new guidance, new gifts and

new opportunity. A new perspective and new energy in leadership will guide St. Luke to thrive into this new time ahead.

But, for this important joy to come, I have humbly and faithfully discerned the importance of my stepping aside. While this has not been an easy realization for me, especially considering the bonds we've shared across these many years together, I enter into this moment of change with gratitude and appreciation.

There may be, I imagine, some curiosity as to what is yet before me. I can honestly tell you that I don't quite know and am eager to sense the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I don't presently have a new ministry call or a new direction fully perceived, but I am excited to take some time to reflect and discern. I enter into this unknown future with high trust in God and anticipation for my next chapter in service - one yet unknown to me but well known to God. For now my family and I are planning to stay in our area and for Meredith and Emmy to continue in school locally. Yet too, where God leads us, we too will boldly go.

A retired pastor friend told me years ago that, when the day would come, my stepping away from my first call would be a very difficult experience. I knew then he was right and I know that now also. You are all my family. Our bonds will not change and we continue as friends in ministry, but in this time to come I will no longer serve as your pastor. Another will soon have that honor. She, he or they will be blessed to walk with you in faith and share in your beautiful gifts of ministry. For their great leadership to flourish I must take a full step back. In this regard I will not be able to participate in ministry leadership at St. Luke in the future - though I do hope that you might invite me to be with you once more to celebrate a homecoming service someday down the road.

As I tender my resignation I will be involved in completing my ministry at St. Luke in two important ways. First, my final Sunday leading worship will be Sunday, June 6th, 2021. Weather permitting we'll have just one worship service that morning and it will be outside. After this time the church council has set forth for me to oversee the process of transferring over the many areas of ministry presently under my care, to share in the upcoming mission trip with our youth July 4th-9th and to attend and lead, on the St. Luke's behalf, the funeral service for Colin Molzen in South Dakota in late July. I will also continue as supervisor to help Vicar Oscar conclude his internship under the shared connection of the NC Synod and Luther Seminary. While there will likely be several weeks of supply worship leadership, beginning Sunday, June 13th, before an intentional interim pastor is named, if there should be a funeral or pastoral need through the end of July, 2021, I will be available during that time to serve.

Thank you God and thank you, the people of St. Luke, for such a wonderful 15 years in ministry together. I cherish our many memories and great stories and will be forever grateful for all the blessings I have known through our walk of faith together. I will close by adding that I'm sorry I never did come around on embracing livermush, despite your best efforts. This said, I am constantly and pleasantly surprised by how Alexander County-ish I've become over these many years. Thank you too for putting up with all my poor puns and even poorer jokes. Somewhere in heaven, one day, God might pat you on the back a little extra for hanging in there through them all. You've had a profound and wonderful impression on me and with my deepest appreciation I thank you. I eagerly look forward to seeing unfold, from a distance, God's new and beautiful chapter ahead for you and for the ministry of St. Luke!

With my deepest gratitude and appreciation in Christ,  
Pastor Andrew

May 30, 2021