

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,



As summer fades into autumn, folks at St. Paul are busy making plans for the remainder of 2018. Our year began with the formation of a call committee who have been diligent at the tasks before them. Quickly an excellent and honest profile of our congregation was assembled. Thom announced that the committee is currently interviewing pastors who have expressed an interest in being our pastor. Our congregation has met with Zion Lutheran for worship and a picnic hosted by our neighbors to the north. My thanks to all who have participated in both events. We are making plans to host Zion on September 16th and I hope all of you welcome those who worship with us that Sunday. In my absence during two Sundays two assistants to the bishop led worship so that we had an opportunity to know them better and they became familiar with us. All of this is happening during a time of transition. My thanks to all who are assisting our congregation: those in our congregation and members of Zion and members of our synod staff.

Transitions are times of discomfort for all involved. Things will not remain the same and we are creatures of habit. St. Paul wrote many letters addressing the stress of adapting to a new way of living and a new way of believing. The beautiful words of I Corinthians 13 were written to a conflicted congregation. If you read between the lines, it becomes obvious that some folks were clinging to old ways of doing things, People were insisting on their own way of doing things, some folks were resentful. Most of the congregation was not so patient. Folks were not being kind to one another. The real zinger was when Paul contrasted the difference between childlike behavior and the behavior expected of mature adults. Paul loved the congregation at Corinth and wanted them to be unified, to uplift one another as they worshipped one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul also addressed 2 problems that always hang over a congregation: the nature of leadership and the elusive character of Christian unity on Ephesians 4. In his eloquent words, Paul urges the congregation to:

"live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (4.1-3)

Of course it is easier said than done! That is always a task of our leadership and membership. That is why the call committee and council have had frequent meetings throughout the summer months. Transitions bring out the best and worst in us. Children best exhibit the stresses of transitions. Last spring my niece's family was trying to move during the constant snow storms in New Jersey. The children worried about where they were going to sleep each night, what their new bedrooms would be like, what would their new school settings be, could they make new friends, and would the family from western PA visit. There was some bed wetting, refusing to eat new foods during lunch in new settings, and constantly reminding their parents of what was left behind.

There will be changes for us as we transition with another congregation to call a pastor. Changes in worship time, worship format, meeting times, sharing worship and council meetings, getting adjusted to a new pastor and that person's strengths and weaknesses. We know it is time for a change because the old ways of doing things haven't been so effective. Learning new ways of doing things is awkward. This is true both for congregations and for pastors. You

can ask John Bulger about learning to adapt to different congregational styles of worship. Where are the offering plates, who says what prayer, how are hymns introduced, how are people greeted and included and invited and welcomed. Such are some of the challenges of transitions.

St. Paul reminds us that we are all called by Christ to lead a life worthy of the calling. But each of us is given different gifts for our ministry. Differences can result in conflict or enhance the depth, breath and scope of our ministry. Hopefully we will continue to be patient and kind, loving one another and being the unity of a congregation that loves Jesus.

One transition that will happen very soon is that I will not be preaching most Sundays. My RA continues to progress as chronic progressive diseases do. I will continue to be the local interim pastor, attending council meetings, teaching catechism, visiting the sick and homebound. John Bulger, the synod staff and I are working out a worship schedule for the months ahead. I will continue to lead worship on special occasions: funerals, baptisms, weddings, Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday etc. I love and respect all of you and am changing my "work" schedule on orders from my doctors. Although I will miss being with you on most Sundays, I will still be available for you and look forward to those occasions when I will lead worship. I have enjoyed being your local interim pastor and hope to continue until a new pastor is called.

Shalom,
Pastor Bev+

