

Sunday, June 2, 2013

To The People Of Zion:

In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace!

After much soul searching and prayerful deliberation, I announce to you my decision to resign as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Stratford. I have been called to serve as Assistant to the Bishop of the Eastern Synod of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. I accepted that call this week.

My time with you, as your pastor, will end on September 15, 2013. As that is a Sunday, that will be my last time in the pulpit as your pastor. Somehow after 18 years of preaching here, at Zion, it seems so very fitting to end where I began in September of 1995.

Since this call no doubt comes as a surprise to many of you as it did to me, I feel I need to make a comment or two. My reason for saying yes to this call can best be summed up in the words "change" and "challenge." Yes, change. I have been privileged to do pastoral ministry in a parish setting for 29 years. I simply recognize that at this point in my life and vocation it is time for a change. As you know we often form our lives in certain routines, doing business as usual. You know I resist change even when I recognize the need for it. That's why I admire the story of the paralytic in Mark's Gospel. When Jesus told him to stand up and walk, he had the courage to do so. Jesus asked him not only to change pace but to do something he certainly was not used to doing. I feel called after all these years to change my routines, to do something I have never done before, and to enter areas I could never have imagined. Yes, change can be difficult for me but I do recognize when it needs to happen and that time is now. I am humbled and grateful for this opportunity to take up a new challenge.

I suspect some of you will experience a range of feelings in response to this news. Some of the feelings will range from confusion to anger to disbelief to apathy to relief to who knows what. That is normal and to be expected. If there is anger, I would ask that you direct it to me alone. No one from Bishop Michael Pryse, synod office or at Zion forced me to make

this decision. It was up to me alone. I feel I have made the right decision. If you would like to speak with me about my leaving Zion Church and perhaps to vent some feelings, please get in touch with me. We can arrange to get together.

But now a word from my heart.

I want you to know how much Zion Lutheran Church has been home for me and my family.

You have nurtured Sharon and, in earlier days, Mark and Lukas, with your love and care. It has been a joy to be your pastor. A privilege to be your friend.

As I reflect on the prospect of moving to synod office, if not from the Stratford community, I also affirm in my heart that Zion will always remain “my church.” A lasting bond has been formed by all that we have shared together. You will always have a special place in my heart, as I trust I will have in yours. Sharon would readily agree with me.

God calls me on a new journey. As I prepare to make this transition and you begin the process of finding a new pastor, which can take time, let us all pray that we will be sensitive to God’s presence and even more responsive to God’s guidance. By having drawn more closely to God, we will be drawn even more closely to each other.

There will be a time for personal farewells later. Let this word be enough for now.

Peace be with you,

Rev. Douglas Reble
Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church