



21 July, A.D. 2022

Dear friends in Christ at St. John's and Trinity,

I am writing to inform you that after prayer, conversations with my wife, and serious contemplation concerning how I might best serve the kingdom of God, I am accepting your divine call to serve as Partnership senior pastor.

As I prepare to be installed into this new pastoral call sometime in the coming weeks, I would like to share with you two thoughts on how I will be approaching this new position.

First, I intend to use the title "senior" pastor as sparingly as possible, and I would encourage you to do the same. I fully acknowledge that good order, structure, and authority are all God-pleasing characteristics of a congregation, a home, and creation in general. Therefore I will take care to carry out the unique duties of my call as Partnership senior pastor to the best of my ability.

That being said, my primary responsibility as a called and ordained servant of Christ remains the same: to preach the Word, deliver the Sacraments, and utilize these means of grace for the pastoral care of those souls who Christ the Good Shepherd has placed among me. There is little benefit to your faith to dwell much on whether I am your "senior" pastor, or "head" pastor, or - heaven forbid! - "administrative" pastor. Far greater is the fact that I, just like the man we will call to serve alongside me, am simply your pastor.

Second, I intend to approach this new call as your Partnership senior pastor as myself being one servant among many. The reason you called me to be your pastor is because the responsibility of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments is a task properly reserved for the office of the Holy Ministry. However, our congregations are filled with Christians with varied callings and talents in life that all have the opportunity to contribute to the spread of the Gospel and the love of our neighbor in significant ways. Now more than ever our ministry Partnership (and my survival of this vacancy!) depends on you faithful lay people offering your time and talents for the good of Christ's Church right alongside my pastoral service. In fact, I will find great joy in exploring with you new and impactful ways that we can serve the Lord together in the coming months.

In concluding this letter, I would like to thank God for you all, and especially for my wife, Hannah, and children, Penelope and Amelia, and for your patience and grace during the continued challenges of our pastoral vacancy. Please continue to pray for me, and pray that the Lord of the harvest would quickly send another laborer to serve as pastor among us.

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Thomas Cowell

Partnership Pastor

St. John's & Trinity Lutheran Churches, Burt & Algona IA, LCMS