



Salem English Lutheran Church

Spirit-led. Welcoming. Bold. Rooted

May 17, 2015

Dear Salem Members and Friends,

“I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,
because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.” – Philippians 1:3-5

In early July 2003 I came to serve at Salem. It was a part-time, one-year contract with typical pastor-type duties (worship, preaching, pastoral care) and a special emphasis on neighborhood outreach. Little did we know where these next 12 years would lead: a big reality check about our facility, years of brave discernment and the Spirit’s leading, hard and good votes, negotiations with the neighborhood, meetings with developers, partnerships with Lyndale UCC and much later First Christian, new friends and members, strong and capable leaders, blessed memories, a mighty legacy, a gracious God, a move, an amazing extra-ordinary ordination, another move, wise and patient architects, finally another move, a shared ecumenical life, and even more friends and companions on our journey into ventures of which we cannot see the ending. Thanks be to God for you. Thanks be to God for all of this.

Writing this letter is one of the hardest things I have done, and yet it is important and needed. Today the congregation at University Lutheran Church of Hope in Dinkytown in southeast Minneapolis voted to call me as their Lead Pastor. Over the last months I’ve been in conversation with Hope’s call committee and slowly listened to the Holy Spirit nudging me, and then calling me. At the end of June, I will complete my time as your pastor at Salem. While I am excited for this new opportunity in ministry, it is painful to leave Salem and SpringHouse; that is how good-byes are, especially when times are good. I love this congregation and you all, and care deeply for the ministry we are doing together. So often pastors leave because of conflict or discontent; that is not the case here. It is actually a good and healthy thing to make these transitions and open doors for God to empower Salem with a new leader for this next leg of the journey. I trust and pray that in the same way that the Holy Spirit has been leading me, the Holy Spirit will keep on leading Salem.

The Salem community has been such a blessing in my life and our family’s life. You “grew me up” as a pastor. You’ve watched Jane and me grow in our partnership and marriage. You courageously took a risk to ordain me before the ELCA’s policy change. You welcomed Eliza and then Alice with open arms and much generosity and love. We’ve dared to follow Jesus together and to grapple with how to live faithfully—what a gift to be part of this faithful congregation. Thank you.

June 28 will be my final Sunday at Salem. Over these coming weeks, feel free to be in touch with questions or concerns. I would love to share conversation and prayer with you. I am confident in Salem’s Executive Committee and Congregational Council. They will lead you well in this time of transition and far beyond.

With deep gratitude, and much love,

Pastor Jen Nagel

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