



Dear Members of Emmanuel Lutheran Church,

God has been working mightily through Emmanuel in this pandemic time leading us to do more than just hold things together but also to take steps forward into our future as well. I thank you all for your generosity of support, time, hard work, and prayer that has made that happen!

This Sunday, we have the opportunity to take another step forward by calling an associate pastor for evangelism and mission. Going into that conversation in these unusual times and being supremely careful about confidentiality regarding our candidate, I offer up a few things here to better equip us for our discernment together.

About the Process

- We have been thinking and working on calling an associate pastor since before I was called.
- We discerned that we wanted to call an associate pastor to serve in the areas of evangelism and mission knowing that the ELCA does not train pastors to be specialists as such. Rather, that person will learn and grow into that calling over time with us and will help lead us as we work together as a congregation in evangelism and mission.
- We have been working with our candidate for over a year now leading us to this Sunday.
 - The bishop and synod staff have sought out and interviewed our candidate.
 - I had two lengthy and very honest conversations with our candidate before making my recommendation to the call committee.
 - The call committee and I interviewed the candidate twice on Zoom and spent a weekend together in this area interviewing and worshipping before making a unanimous recommendation to the council.
 - The 2019-20 council interviewed our candidate on Zoom. The previous council invited our candidate back for in-person interviewing, but that was interrupted by the pandemic.
 - The current council, now including two call committee members, interviewed our candidate on Zoom before making the unanimous recommendation decision to move forward to our special congregational call meeting.
 - Phone calls, Zoom calls, and emails have been happening throughout the process.
- Our discernment has been in search of a pastor who we will call and to whom we are called, a pastor who is the best candidate for our mission, our congregation, and our staff. Our hopes for such a pastor have been exceeded. We are excited for you to meet our candidate!

About Our Candidate

- A pastor of the ELCA who has previously served as an associate pastor and a solo pastor.
- A graduate of an ELCA college and seminary.



- Sense of calling: *"As a lifelong Lutheran, my home church nurtured me and gave me a sense of belonging from an early age. As a camp counselor at a Lutheran Bible Camp and also at my Lutheran college, my sense of call challenged and stretched me, and has never relented (Thank God). Most days I wake up in the morning to the humble realization that God has called me – a delightfully flawed person – to walk alongside other delightfully flawed people in their faith. This is a call that is reinforced with love and relationships. I have always felt God's hand in shaping my story, and I am privileged and humbled to walk with others, intersect with their stories, and to point out where God's hand is at work in their stories too. I do a lot of listening before I speak and make it a priority to reveal where I see these connections happening."*
- Vision for congregational ministry: *"A place that is passionate about living the Gospel, rooted in and appreciates liturgical tradition, but also willing to try holy experiments. A congregation that is interested in exploring ways to think out of the box, with lay leaders who are collaborators and partners in worship and ministry, of any and all ages. A community open to making room for creativity and innovation, embracing of justice and learning more about and being inspired by connections and relationships with each other, the greater community, the synod, the ELCA, other denominations, and worldwide organizations."*
- Theological convictions:
 - *"Your story is a part of God's Story." I love making connections between those "old Bible stories" to our own lives of faith, and pointing out where God is also at work in our own stories."*
 - *"Jesus is with you, no matter what." Jesus never told us that a life of faith is easy... but we will never be alone as we walk, to lead us, guide us, and support us, especially through challenging times."*
 - *"God is doing something new and we are invited to participate." God is always using surprising people to bring life out of death and joy from difficulties."*

About Sunday Evening

- "Meet and Greet" Conversation: we are not interviewing. We are discerning if the Holy Spirit is calling us together in ministry for the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Worship: this is not a tryout or a practice. We are gathered by the Spirit as the people of God and led by a pastor of the church in worship before making a historic decision regarding the ministry of Emmanuel, and we need it.
- Congregational Call Meeting: we are not going to make a job offer. We are potentially going to experience God calling us to call this pastor, and that is a holy thing to take in, remember, and celebrate for years to come.

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After Sunday Evening

- Confidentiality: we must **continue** to maintain strict confidentiality regarding our candidate. The candidate is afforded 30 days to contemplate the call.



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- Communication: in the case of a positive call vote and acceptance, we must keep the identity of the pastor and all information about our candidate secret until our candidate informs their congregation. They must not find out from anyone else any other way. Until you receive communication from ELC leadership making the announcement, please guard this confidence. Thank you.

Much like I did just a few years ago before your last congregational call meeting, I am praying for you, Emmanuel!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Tony



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