

November 27, 2017

Dear friends in Christ of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

My name is Pastor Dan, and I've been asked to share a little about myself, my ministry and my family, as we continue to discern together what God's got in store for us in these exciting days:

I was born in Stavanger, Norway. My parents are American, but Dad was serving as pastor in an English-speaking, inter-denominational congregation in the 70's. I've got two younger brothers (one who now lives in the Metro DC area). My parents moved back to the states when I was only 3. I really grew up in Houston, TX. Baptist preschool, Episcopalian elementary-middle school, and Catholic (Jesuit) high school. Swim team was how I survived summers in Texas.

Ventured to the West Coast for college (Lutheran, at last!), got married after graduation, and then Heather and I moved to Chicago, where I went to seminary. Heather was a middle school teacher in the inner city of Chicago. During our last year in seminary, Micah was born. I was assigned to the West Coast, and we happily returned to this part of the country. Heather's whole family is here, and we've very much loved having our — now two (Katie was born 3 years later) — children close to everyone. Needless to say, we'd really miss them.

My first pastoral call was for 2 years. I was the third pastor on staff of a very large congregation. My areas were youth and family ministry, but I quickly realized that I enjoy and feel called to serve all ages, not just the young. After a short call process, we moved to a much smaller congregation about 2 hours away. And we've loved it here.

I've been in my current call now for almost 10 years! It's a family-sized church, similar to Bethlehem. We have about 100 in worship every Sunday. Preschool, quilting, Lutheran camping and "fellowshipping" are among our stronger ministries. We also just completed a major capital campaign and building project (adding some new classrooms, accessible restrooms, larger kitchen and a new sacristy). All that said, ultimately worship is at the heart of everything we do. In the last year (or two) I've sensed clearly that my chapter with them is drawing to a close, so I began the call process quietly and prayerfully. Now, here we are.

In addition to ministry, I love non-fiction and music. I'd call myself "a campfire guitarist". I also play the Scottish bagpipes. We love to travel as a family and will drive all over the country on vacation. Heather and I have become Europhiles too, with several trips all over in the last decade: Ireland, Scotland, Belgium, Italy, France, Germany. Still want to get back to Norway...

Heather chose to leave teaching back when Micah was born, but for the last 5 years, she's been working part-time as a doula at UCSD Medical Center. Micah (almost 12) is in Little League and plays piano and the flute. Katie (8) plays soccer, and loves art, animals and dancing. She's also obsessed with *Hamilton*. I hope this is all helpful information, and I hold you in my daily prayers.

Grace and Advent peace to you all,
Pastor Dan

My "Personal Ministry Statement" (from my Rostered Minister Profile):

Ministry is movement: Bath-Story-Table-Sent. This is the movement of the liturgy, and it is our movement to and from the church. From the "barn" (Bath-Story-Table) to the "field" (Sent). Nurtured by Word and Sacrament we are flung out to love and serve...only to come crawling back, tired, in need of forgiveness, in need of Gospel. Week after week, year after year. This is the rhythm of the saints. And it is my indescribable joy and honor to facilitate this movement.

Also from my paperwork, this is the "Candidate Commentary" —

Henri Matisse has a famous painting called "La Danse"...the original is in the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. One day, I hope to see it...



This is my image for ministry, for life in God's church here on earth. Matisse calls it "The Dance", which certainly works for me; but I think of it as "eucharistic centripetal force".

When God's people gather together for worship — as simple and even sloppy as worship can be at times — we are being spun by God's grace. Through the Gospel words, the waters of baptism, the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine, we are joining hands and spinning like the women in the painting. And we too make ourselves vulnerable in church life (symbolized by their nakedness in the painting). Being vulnerable is not a cultural norm. But this is what it means to "live among God's faithful people," as our baptismal covenant puts it: we weep together and sing out of key together and goof up together. We share honestly our fears and our doubts. And yet we gather in a circle around the Welcome Table of God's mercy and love.

Despite our imperfections and histories, God chooses us still, nourishes us still. We get caught in this dance of grace. And suddenly, we can't help but go flying out into the world. That "eucharistic centripetal force" sends us, flings us, outward to love and serve. Amazing grace throws us. Upon closer examination of this painting, one can see that two women in the foreground have let go of each other's hands. I see that as the moment in worship where we say, "Go in peace and serve the Lord." Our hands break apart, and we go flying outward, like a child who joyfully gets flung from a merry-go-round.

We don't advocate for the poor and serve in the world because we *have* to, or to prop ourselves up, or to gain more members at our church, or to earn a fast-pass ticket to heaven... No, we love and serve both neighbors and strangers alike -- even the earth itself -- simply because we can't help ourselves! God's grace is that good, that it compels us outward! We serve in response! Like the old hymn says, "Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?" We are flung out by this "eucharistic centripetal force" to love and receive love, to live ultimately without fear, to joyfully proclaim Christ crucified and risen through our every word and especially, I believe, through our deeds. We reek of Christ, after coming in contact with his grace. "How can I keep from stinking?" ;)

I am excited to live in a community of both church and non-church children of God...and to be continually about the work of naming God's ongoing creative and redeeming work in the everyday lives of the people. A mother picking up her child from school: I want to name God in that. A freshly picked crate of strawberries: I want to name God in that. A beer after work among construction workers: I want to name God in that! The list is as diverse as it is endless.

And this whole understanding of God's deep incarnation, for us who follow Jesus, is the result of the holding-hands-and-moving-in-a-circle of Sunday morning worship. I'm not sure we'd be as conscious of the omnipresence and creative redemption of the Divine without weekly gathering, without this weekly re-remembering of Water, Word, Wine & Wheat. The Church and the church is necessary and central to our rhythm as sinner-saints of God.