



St. John's Lutheran Church
Sharing God's Grace, Serving Through Love

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Pastor P. Shannon Mullen
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Dear St. John's members and friends,

For many years I have started my annual report in nearly the same way: "I cannot believe another year has gone by so quickly." Again and again, I have marveled at how we leap from one year to the next.

But in the last year, my thirtieth in ministry and my twentieth serving at St. John's, things have felt different. Rather than marveling at how quickly time is passing, I found myself reflecting in amazement upon God's faithful leading and how much God has accomplished in the two decades we have joyfully journeyed together, sharing the Good News of God's Love, welcoming all people, caring for one another, serving our neighbors, and living generously.

This season of reflection led to much prayerful conversation with my family and with respected advisors, seeking discernment about congregation leadership, the completion of journeys, and how to choose the right time for transition. Eventually, I came to the decision that I would announce my retirement from full time ministry.

Following a timeline advised by Bishop Ginny Aebischer, my last Sunday as pastor at St. John's will be the last Sunday of April. I shared this decision with the Council on Thursday evening. I am sorry it is not possible to share this news with each of you in person.

Ever since Kami and I met in western North Carolina, we have planned eventually to head back to those mountains. We will be moving to Hendersonville, which is where Justice & Paula live with grandson Arthur, and is also near Corinne. We will be much closer to my parents and a little closer to Kami's mom. We are very excited about the opportunity to spend more time with family.

In Hendersonville, I will return to making art, something I have not spent much time on since majoring in studio art in college. I plan to set up a wood shop and a stained glass fusing studio, as well as try my hand at plasma torch sculpting and printmaking.

In the meantime, I will focus on leaving everything running as smoothly at St. John's as I can. I am confident that the members and staff of St. John's together will continue sharing God's grace and serving through love very well! The Bishop's office will work with the Congregation Council to plan for interim ministry, including worship leadership, pastoral care, and pastoral acts such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. In the ELCA, a pastor is not permitted to return for these things after a call has ended. The Bishop's office will also work with St. John's to coordinate a time of congregation self-study and discernment that leads to a pastoral call process.

This is a time of so many feelings for both Kami and me. We are at the same time very excited to see what the future holds for our family and sad that our chapter as your partners in ministry is coming to an end. But we believe this is the right time for us and for St. John's. There are so many more things I want to say – more than this letter can possibly hold – but I look forward to sharing more as we celebrate all that God has done among us between now and the end of April!

With much love for all of you,

Pastor P. Shannon Mullen