



Grand Canyon Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Office of the Bishop
Stephen S. Talmage

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Dear Partners in Ministry:

Last week I have been sharing and meditating on Psalm 38:2:

***“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.”***

It was announced to our Synod Council members this past Saturday, and today to the members of Love of Christ Lutheran Church, Mesa, AZ that I am being recommended for call to serve as their next Sr. Pastor. My term is scheduled to end August 31, 2018, and due to term limits, I would not be eligible to consider another term as bishop. Barb and I have been in prayerful discernment over the past nine months about what the next chapter might be for us. The more we prayed, the clearer it became to me that I needed to be open to the possibility of leaving this office earlier than expected. As I drove to preach at Love of Christ last Labor Day weekend, knowing the recommended candidate for call had discerned to stay in the candidate's current call, I could not help but sense I needed to be open to the possibility to be considered to serve this community. As I again reviewed their profile, and as I consulted with trusted advisors, including our presiding bishop, I engaged in conversation with key leadership of the congregation, and then participated in two formal interviews with the Call Committee. After meeting with the Congregation's Council this past Thursday evening and receiving their recommendation to present me to the congregation, I believe God is calling me from this office of bishop to become the next pastor at Love of Christ if called. I wanted you to get this news directly from me.

The congregation will be voting on March 12. If called, I plan to accept the call and would then submit a formal letter of resignation to the Synod Council with my effective end date as bishop being July 31, 2017, which would complete 11 years of service in this office. I cannot begin to express the privilege it has been to be called by the members of this synod to serve the rostered ministers and members of the congregations during some of the most challenging times in the life of the ELCA and the Grand Canyon Synod. I have been blessed to work with gifted staff members, share in recommending many new candidates for ministry in this synod, and participate the larger work of the ELCA.

Due to this early exit the Synod Council decided that in order to provide the time necessary to create a synod profile and prepare for an election of a new bishop they will be requesting the appointment by our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of an interim

bishop to begin serving August 1, 2017 with the goal of electing a new bishop at the June 2018 assembly, which will be held in Tucson.

Please be assured I will faithfully work with both the interim bishop and newly elected bishop in any capacity to support successful transitions in any congregation in the midst of a call process or any leader who may be anticipating a change in call status.

I do ask for your prayers for my family, the synod staff and Synod Council. Please pray for God's faithful provision of the interim bishop and next elected leader of this synod. I am humbled and honored to be able to serve you as bishop since you first elected me.

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen D. Palmer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "In Christ's Service,".