



*"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." Jer 29:11*

June 17, 2024

**To the Leadership and Members of A New Journey Lutheran Parish,**

This letter serves as my official resignation from my call as Synod Authorized Minister at A New Journey Lutheran Parish. My last day of service will be Saturday, August 31, 2024. It has truly been an honor to serve with you over the years in varying capacities – both in the previous parishes and together as A New Journey. I began serving as the Confirmation Coordinator/Teacher for the Bejou/Winger/McIntosh Parish beginning in September 2018, and began serving as Pulpit Supply in August 2020 – thank you for making me feel so welcome and included as a part of the community.

In the former Gary-Rindal Lutheran Parish, following many years of volunteering, I began professionally serving as Confirmation Teacher in 2019-2020, added Pulpit Supply during the pandemic, and then spearheaded the effort to join the two parishes together, formalizing what was already a naturally occurring partnership. It was a highlight of my life and call to be officially commissioned as a Synod Authorized Minister in May 2021 to serve this Parish. I am so very proud of the ministry we have done together. My most treasured highlights:

- Youth Ministry: Teaching 30 Confirmation students, helping them to grow in their faith and affirm their baptism. Leading monthly Youth Group events. Chaperoning Youth Gatherings.
- Children's Ministry: leading VBS, including re-starting it at congregations who had missed it. Growing the Family Playdate events to include large groups of community members. Teaching First Communion classes and giving away Bibles to young ones.
- Baptisms: I officiated 19 Baptisms since 2021
- Funerals: I presided or helped lead 18 funerals since 2021
- Weddings: I performed 5 weddings since 2020
- Preaching: A rough estimate of 350 Worship services led since 2019
- Working with and learning from wonderful colleagues in ministry: Pr. Gordon Syverson, Pr. Sue Tjornehoj, Pr. Keith Zeh, Pr. René Mehlberg, Rachel Roggenbuck, Sue Gunderson, Julie Gevik, and Anita Roy. Thank you for being wonderful partners in ministry and friends.

So, what is next for me? I am beginning a Masters Degree Program in Leadership and Innovation through Luther Seminary. I began taking courses at Luther last fall through a partnership with our NWMN Synod to earn a Graduate Certificate, taking one course per semester this past year. I now feel called to continue that education to earn a Masters, learning and growing so that I can continue to serve God's

Church in new and creative ways to meet the needs of the 21st Century. I qualify for Luther's Jubilee Scholarship, which means that my education will be fully paid for, and I should be able to complete this program in approximately one year. I'll complete most of it online, with a few trips to campus in St. Paul throughout. I would appreciate it if you keep me and my family in your prayers during this time of transition and study.

I anticipate some questions, so here are the answers to what I assume will be the most frequently asked questions:

**Will I still be around?** My membership will remain at Gary Lutheran Church, where I hope to continue to be involved, but no longer in any professional capacity. I will no longer be available to preside over any funeral or baptism of members of Gary, Ness, Immanuel or Our Savior's, or at the Lord's Supper at any of the congregations currently a part of A New Journey. I am not available for pastoral care to any members. This part of the transition will be difficult for all of us, as we work to maintain appropriate boundaries. It is not often that a called minister remains a part of the community after their call ends, so I will need the congregations' help to look to Pr. René and Rachel for any pastoral care needs.

**Will I be an ordained Pastor when I complete seminary?** No, I do not feel the call to ordained Word and Sacrament ministry. My masters degree will allow me to continue to work as a lay person in the Church.

**What do I want to do with this education?** I whole-heartedly believe that ministry at this time in history is changing, and I think that lay-led ministry is one way to meet these changing needs. I loved my time with you as a SAM, and I want to work toward creative solutions for other rural congregations to meet staffing shortages, dwindling budgets, and the different spiritual needs of folks today. I do not know where that passion will lead me, but I trust in the Holy Spirit's direction and discernment to come.

**Who will lead the areas of ministry that were under my leadership?** A New Journey has a wonderful pastoral and lay staff team, and they will transition to lead some of these programs. There will need to be hard conversations soon about capacity, budget, and prioritizing various parish and congregational ministries. We hope that volunteers will step up to lead and serve as well. If there is a ministry that falls down, and you miss it, I hope you will pick it up. This is God's Church, and we need many hands, hearts, and voices to carry out its Mission.

I thank you all for raising me up as a lay leader, recognizing gifts for ministry within me, and supporting me with your prayers and encouragement during my time as a SAM. Now I ask you for that same support on my new journey ahead. You all will be in my prayers as well.

Your Sibling in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie DeMarias". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie DeMarias, SAM