Embracing This Season of Transition

A letter to the people of St. Paul Lutheran Church

Grace and peace to you.

Transitions can stir many feelings at once. We may feel hopeful about what lies ahead, grateful for what has been, and uncertain about the road between the two. Yet this in-between time is not simply a season to endure. It is a sacred opportunity to listen, learn, grow, and prepare together for the future God is opening before us.

As your interim pastor, I am grateful to walk with you through this important season. My role is not simply to help St. Paul "get by" until a new pastor arrives. It is to help us take an honest look at our life together—our story, our strengths, our challenges, and our hopes—so that we can move forward with faith and purpose.

We will ask thoughtful questions, revisit habits that may no longer serve us, and celebrate the many ways God is already at work among us. Along the way, we will deepen our faith, strengthen our relationships, and renew our shared commitment to Christ's mission.

Scripture reminds us that, in Christ, we are being "built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God" (Ephesians 2:21–22). This means every person matters. Every gift has a place. Every voice can help us hear more clearly where the Spirit is leading.

Your Voice Matters

Soon, members of the Transition Team will distribute an anonymous Congregational Survey. I hope each of you will take time to complete it and return it to the team. The questions are designed to move us beyond surface impressions and into a hopeful, honest conversation about our congregation.

The team will compile the responses and share what it learns with the congregation. Your participation will help us see St. Paul more clearly and take faithful steps forward together.

As 1 Peter 4:10 teaches, each of us is invited to use the gifts we have received to serve others. In this season, one of those gifts is your perspective. Please share it truthfully in love.

Bible conversation and prayer will ground every step. We are not simply gathering data; we are learning to tell the story of God's people at St. Paul and listening for the Holy Spirit within that story.

Preparing Together for What Comes Next

One of our most important tasks will be completing the Ministry Site Profile, or MSP. The MSP is more than paperwork and more than a step on the way to calling a pastor. At its best, it is a prayerful and honest portrait of who we are, what God has called us to do, and what kind of pastoral leadership will help us live into that calling.

Although the Transition Team, Congregation Council, and Call Committee have particular responsibilities, the MSP belongs to the whole congregation. Its value depends on broad participation. We need your stories, your experiences, your hopes, and your prayers.

How We Will Listen and Learn

The Transition Team will meet for seven sessions, with some work between meetings. The team will:

- build trust and ease anxiety as we learn to work well together;
- name St. Paul's strengths, goals, and current ministries;
- study congregational energy, trends, and the needs of Fullerton and nearby communities;
- review our mission, vision, and values while imagining a faithful and realistic future;
- clarify what we hope for in our next pastor and what our pastor can expect from us;
- prepare a first draft of the MSP; and
- shape that draft into a final profile for review, approval, and posting on-line.

After the Congregation Council reviews the MSP, it will go to the Office of the Bishop for review and approval. Once approved, it will be posted so that potential pastoral candidates can prayerfully consider whether God may be calling them to serve alongside us.

Looking Ahead with Hope

The Transition Team will hopefully complete the MSP by late winter/early spring 2027. The Call Committee will begin training to do its work when the MSP is approved. The Congregation Council will select the Call Committee members, so please speak with a Council member if you feel called to serve.

Many factors shape the Call process, so we cannot promise a firm date for extending a Call. We will keep you informed as the work progresses.

Waiting can be difficult, but waiting is not the same as standing still. During this time, we can listen more deeply, serve more joyfully, and become more fully the congregation God is calling us to be. We can try fresh ideas, strengthen our ministry, and prepare to welcome our next pastor with clarity, unity, and renewed purpose.

The prophet Isaiah speaks God's promise: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). I believe God is doing a new thing among us—not apart from our past, but through all that we have learned and all that we are becoming.

Thank you for your patience, your honesty, your prayers, and your love for this congregation. I am encouraged by the faithfulness I see in you, and I trust that Christ, our cornerstone, will guide us through every step.

Let us move forward together—with open hearts, listening ears, willing hands, and confident hope.

In Christ,

Interim Pastor Steve Awbrey
Keep looking up!

A sample Ministry Site Profile form along with updated transition materials, are available on St. Paul's website.