

Farewell Message
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
February 5, 1978-2006
Isaiah 4:28-31

Beautiful Place. . . Beautiful People. . . Beautiful Savior

28 years ago **this** very day—February 5, **1978**—
a new and **surprising** chapter of life began
for me, my wife Jane,
our 12 year-old daughter Amy,
our 10 year-old son Dan, and
our 9 year-old son Tim,
as well as for a handful of courageous and determined people,
as we gathered for the first time for worship
at Thornydale School on Oldfather Road, one-half mile from here.

That was **Sunday**, February 5.

On **Tuesday**, February 7, a Steering Committee met.
Of course! Church and Committee are both “C” words!

The 4 persons who met reported—

- +that the first Sunday Offering was \$460.60;
- +that \$13,896 was pledged, and, I quote:
*“this included **only** 19 cards.”*
- +that 6 graded-Sunday School classes were organized
with **2** teachers in 4 of the 6;
2 substitutes; and
Jane was Secretary!
- +that sign-up’s would be out the next Sunday for
ushers,
offering counters,
coffee servers,
nursery helpers,
greeters and
lectors;
- +that a member volunteered to head up the Altar guild; **and**
- +that 3 persons agreed to play piano for worship
on a rotating basis.

Whewwwwwww!

The next day was Ash **Wednesday**, February 8.

That evening we gathered for worship
in the Community room of a bank
that was at the corner of Oracle and Ina—
it is now a Credit Union.

On **Thursday**, February 9, I wrote a letter to everyone,

maybe 30 families.
I indicated that we had a lot of excitement and would meet again
the next Sunday!
I noted that there was an unbreakable tie in choosing a name
between Immanuel and Beautiful Savior.
We would decide the next Sunday.

*Beautiful Savior, King of Creation
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve Thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.*

HOW WILL I EVER GET ALONG WITHOUT YOU?!

I have pondered that question for quite some time.
I ponder it even today!
I **do not** have **any answers**,
but I do have **promises**—
promises from a **trustworthy** God—
promises that are **not only** for Jane and me,
but promises for **you** who continue as disciples of Jesus
and fellow-servants with each other.

*“He will also strengthen you to the end,” St. Paul assures, “so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **God is faithful**; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

(1 Corinthians 1:8-9)

Jesus:

*“My sheep hear my voice,” Jesus says, “I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will **never perish**. No one will **snatch them** out of my hand.”*

(John 10:27-28)

St. Paul:

“And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

(Philippians 4:19-20)

*“My grace is sufficient for you,
for [my] power is made perfect in weakness.”*

(2 Cor. 12:9)

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose,” so says St. Paul.

(Romans 8:28)

Isaiah (from today's First Reading):

“Have you not known? Have you not heard?,” asks the Prophet Isaiah, “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

(Isaiah 4:28-31)

So as Jane and I bid you Farewell,
we will hang on to these promises **for dear life.**

I invite you—
I urge you—
to hang on to these promises of God **for dear life, too—**
promises kept first
in *the coming, the living, the dying, the rising*
of Jesus, the Christ—our Beautiful Savior,
who accompanies us to the mountaintops
and into the valleys,
who strengthens us when we grow weary,
who bears us up as on eagles' wings—
just as he has done for you and me for 28 years.

How will I **ever** get along without you?!

Beautiful Place. . . Beautiful People. . . Beautiful Savior

are the words printed at the bottom of the church letterhead.

They remind me how extraordinarily blessed **I have been**
as the Pastor of this congregation for the past 28 years!
How blessed **we have been together!**

Beautiful Place

What a strikingly attractive property we have—
situated on an elevated corner,
along a busy, major thoroughfare!
Thank you, **Erna and Bill Werner**, for sharing your land,
your faith, your love with us!
Thankyou to many “*stewards of the earth*” in this corner of Eden,
the beauty of the landscape continues to mature and improve,
making driving by or pulling in such a pleasant experience.

The Sanctuary, of course, is a landmark.
12+ years ago, I remarked with some seriousness
that we just spent a half million dollars
to let our neighbors know that we have made room for them
so they could join us to woorship and serve God

in a Place that reminds us of God's grace and greatness.
After the cross was put on the steeple,
people couldn't wait to tell me with great delight,
"I could see the church from the Price Club (now Costco)"—
which is more than a mile away.

We **must agree** with the Psalmist:
"I was glad when they said,
'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

[facing the wall behind the altar]
Eyes and hearts are lifted upward to "*the Blessing Savior,*"
watching over all who worship him as—
***Beautiful Savior, King of Creation
Son of God and Son of Man!***

Standing upon the mountain, with his head toward the heavens,
the two striking round windows call to mind
the words of the Third Stanza—
***Fair is the sunshine, Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.***

On your left,
these bright and artistic stained glass windows
provide visual aids for the Second Stanza:
***Fair are the meadows, Fair are the woodlands,
Robed in the flowers of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
He makes our sorrowing spirit sing.***

The opening words of **John's gospel** come to mind (1:1-5):
*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and **without him** not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. . . . **The light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. . . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

Finally, but **not least of all,**
what a delight it is "*to make a joyful noise*" in this room!
Indeed, it does help to "***make our sorrowing spirit sing.***"
To all who prepare this Space—
those who clean floors, wash windows and straighten books,
those who rehearse and offer faith-inspiring music,
those who prepare this Table, service after service,
Sunday after Sunday,

so that we may feast with our risen Lord,
those who change light bulbs and
those who help pay for electricity,
those who keep motors and fans humming
so we're cool in the summer and warm in the winter
to all of you and many more,
thank you—thank you for the sake of our Beautiful Savior.

Outside, the Memorial Garden,
nestled on the north side of the Sanctuary,
offers a serene, tree-shaded haven
in which to remember "*all our saints.*"
Those who provide arrangements for niches and plaques
those who keep flowers blooming and grounds welcoming,
thank you—thank you for the sake of our Beautiful Savior.

The original Chapel and Office/Fellowship structures,
was wonderfully remodeled and refurbished
by those who generously offered their "labors of love,"
thank you—thank you for the sake of our Beautiful Savior.

Now, what were once worship, fellowship and office areas
have been transformed into two well-appointed Ed. Buildings
that provide space for
our bustling Academy weekdays—
thank you Academy Director and Staff—
and lively Christian Education on Sundays—
thank you SS Leaders and Teachers,
thank you for the sake of our Beautiful Savior.

The year-old *Werner Heritage Hall*,
situated in **the center of** the campus
is often **the center of** activity,
especially for eating and meeting, fellowshiping and learning,
thank you to all who prepare and serve food,
thank you to all who plan and lead activities and events,
like for youth and families,
like Visioning and planning,
like Men's Ministries,
like Women of the ELCA,
like the Winter Shelter for the Homeless
—thank you for the sake of our Beautiful Savior.

Beautiful People

Garrison Keillor says that in Lake Wobegon,

*“The **women** are strong,
the **men** are good looking and
the children are all above average,”*

but I want to tell him, that until he visits Beautiful Savior,
he sure can't know much about

*“Strong women,”
“Good-looking men,” and
“Above-average children!”*

God has blessed this congregation with wonderful people.

Now there **may** be somewhere in the universe,
more wealthy folks,
more intelligent folks,
more sophisticated folks,
but there **are none**

more loving and generous,
more kind and compassionate,
more eager to be faithful to Christ
than the people of Beautiful Savior.

God has always provided for our life together

exactly the right persons with the **rights** gifts
for the mission-purposes God has in mind for us
at any particular time.

As I noted in the beginning,

the very first week of this congregation's life,

God provided more than enough leaders,

God provided more than enough SS teachers,

God provided more than enough music leaders,

God provided more than enough encouragers,

God provided more than enough money. . . .

and, I guess we could say,

God provided more than enough pastors—**me**.

Because, as most of you may know,

one of me is ALWAYS **more than enough!**

God has always provided—**always**.

Now, it may seem like semantics,

but for all these 28 years we have never had a **problem**.

We have had *crises, calamities and challenges,*

but we have **not had problems**.

I like the way Jesus looked at things:

*“....give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, **will be put into your lap**; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”*
(Luke 6:37-38).

For 28 years, God's abundance has overflowed
into our congregational lap.
That we never had money in a reserve account—
that we even borrowed from ourselves—
is **not a sign** that we are failing,
but that our desire to do more ministry
and support more mission
is greater than the resources **we have asked each other to provide
from the bounty God has given to us!**
That is **not a problem**. Those situations are simply **opportunities**—
that have always been there for us **and** always will be.

IF you desire **with all your heart** to continue being a church
with a passion for those who live without the hope of the gospel,
who hunger for the Bread of Life. . . .then. . .
then you will see that your mission **is for the sake of those in need**—
in body and spirit.
You will see yourselves as ambassadors of our Beautiful Savior,
God making his appeal through you
for the sake of others—
as **your opportunity** to be eager and joyful servants of Christ.

I retire from this beloved community of Beautiful Savior
with the confidence that **God is still providing—abundantly.**

Although I have been a part of just about everything that has taken place
over the years,
when I leave, you will still be **Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church!**
No name change will be required.

I have only been the pastor,
trying to follow the best traditions of the church—of
*“Comforting the afflicted and
afflicting the comfortable!”*

Beautiful Savior

There are **not many congregations** that have their own theme song!

These days, *Beautiful Savior* is sort of an old fashioned name—
not like Spirit of Hope, Community of Joy,
Spirit of Life, Lord of Mercy.
Then, too, we are Beautiful Savior **Lutheran Church**—
not like those that are simply “community” churches,
sometimes trying to hide their affiliation—
their theological perspective.

But we have a wonderful name—with two parts—to live up to—
Beautiful Savior and Lutheran.

So I commend you, people of *Beautiful Savior Lutheran*,
to the *always-enough* gracious care of God and
urge you to go forward in faith and delight—
in what marvelous surprises God might have in store for you
in the **next** 28 years!

I will be watching “*in my rearview mirror*” of my mind and heart,
cherishing the memories of what good God has done with us and for us.
I will be praying for you to experience **at least** as much
joy and satisfaction in serving our Lord
as I have had in my life with you.

[Conclusion]

*God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

Refrain:

*Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.*

I will miss this holy Place—

I have no hope that Jane and I will ever find a **Worship Place—**
with the power, the beauty, the memories—
that lift up our hearts in the ways
that being here with you has done.

I will miss you holy People—

I have no hope that Jane and I will ever find a **People of God—**
with the faith, the love, the kindness—
like you, with whom our hearts are bound so closely.

But, thanks be to God, we—you and I— **will carry with us**
our Beautiful Savior,

the One whose love's and mercy **bound us together** as a community
where we shared a common vision of being the Body of Christ—
blessing the joyful,
welcoming the stranger,
guiding the young,
comforting the sorrowful,
counseling the hopeless,

feeding the homeless,
nudging the complacent,
encouraging the gifted—
in which God's grace, forgiveness and compassion was freely shared
in the triumphs and the tragedies,
in the celebrations and the struggles,
in the accomplishments and the failures.

For a time, known only to our gracious God,
we **will go** on our separate paths,
not in **forgetfulness** of each other,
but with thanksgivings and prayers,
THAT GOD WAS SO GOOD TO US—
giving us each other for support,
giving us a mission for the sake of others **and**
giving us the Holy Spirit for the power and will
not to think of ourselves first
as we dreamed our dreams
of how God might use **ordinary people** like us
to accomplish **extraordinary blessings**
for the sake of the world.

In a week's time, we will say **our final farewells**,
commending each other, as we always have done,
to God's gracious care.

So . . .

*God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

Refrain:

*Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet. . . .*

God be with you till we meet again.

Amen.