

PLUM Pastoral Message

January 2022

“FROM HEAVN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME . . .”

One of the great gifts Dr. Martin Luther gave to the church was the gift of hymns meant to be sung in public worship for the purpose of instructing the members of the church and inspiring the faithful with the Good News of salvation freely given to all people of faith. One such hymn, generally associated with Christmas, is “From Heaven Above” (Lutheran Book of Worship #51; Evangelical Lutheran Worship #268). The fourteen verses of this hymn sung to a tune that is far from the contemporary tones and rhythms to which we are accustomed proclaims the message of God’s grace and hope presented to us and to all the world in the newborn baby Jesus in Bethlehem’s manger.

As we pass from 2021 to 2022, I have made the difficult decision that it is time for me to step back and retire from PLUM. In the past eleven years I have had the privilege of watching PLUM grow from a small beginning to become the new face of the church in Pittsburgh. And I am grateful to the members of PLUM and to our wonderful pastors and staff, past and present, who have shared themselves with me and allowed me to share in this ministry together with them.

We have seen city and suburban congregations draw closer together in study and mission. We have taken great joy in seeing new leadership arise, and we have received great benefit from the strong, faithful witness of young and old alike. We have cried together and comforted each other with a comfort that arises out of our confidence that God never leaves our side. We have assured each other that God continues to walk with us through pandemics, social unrest and divisions, and circumstances that call for difficult choices. We know that it is the Holy Spirit who leads us and inspires new life in us.

Even though I will retire from PLUM at the end of February, I will not be far away and my heart will always remain with you. The future holds great promise, and the road ahead will be filled with new surprises and new experiences. The 14th verse of Luther’s hymn propels us into the future:

**“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
who unto us the Son has given.”
With angels sing in pious mirth
a glad new year to all the earth!**

God bless all the members of PLUM and our congregations as we boldly and faithfully move forward following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

+Pastor Paul Koch