



### **A Word from Pastor Tania**

Dear Westwood family,

At this point in my life, after much thought and prayers for where God might be leading me, I have decided to transition out of my position as Senior Pastor as of January 1, 2023. This is not a retirement at this point, as I still feel called to do ministry, and this is the place and people I love and where I feel I can be most effective. Yet, I do desire a change of role that allows Bob and me more time to travel and enjoy grandchildren. I'm currently in my 18th year in this role, I turn 65 this spring, my husband will be cutting back to part-time by this spring, and I know I would enjoy a bit more "breathing space" as I move into my later 60s.

Should this congregation choose to move forward with the proposal below, I couldn't be more excited about the possibility of transitioning into a new and supporting role. With this model, Westwood would have the chance to move through the upcoming pastoral transition in a unique way, avoiding a big transition or interim period, maintaining our forward momentum, and continuing to grow the vibrant ministries we have. This proposed "slow down" period for me over a few years would allow me to help create stability in some ministry areas as Westwood goes through some of the big things on our plate.

I look forward to the conversations the Council has scheduled with you so that we can talk together and explore this new path as yet untrodden.

Knowing that God's hand is leading us,

+ Pastor Tania

### **A Word from Pastor Jason**

The news of Pastor Tania's decision prompted a time of prayer and reflection for me, after having served here with Tania for the past 17 years. In such a circumstance in a faith community's life, it is critical for all to spend time discerning God's call for the future. That discernment time for me included several conversations with trusted mentors. After that time of discernment, I have decided to put forward my name for consideration as Senior Pastor as defined by the plan below. I am energized by this plan, which would continue the Grace and Vocation direction that we have been living out the last 8 years as well as the commitment to continue the shared leadership model that has developed with the pastoral staff. I look forward to the congregation's time of discernment and the opportunity to further clarify what this plan should mean for Westwood's future so that a faithful decision may emerge. May God bless us in this journey.

+ Pastor Jason

## **A Pastoral Transition Proposal**

As Pastors, we have spent the last several months prayerfully wondering about a possible transition plan to be put forward for the congregation's consideration. The process has included conversations with and guidance from several retired ELCA church leaders, with Bishop Ann Svennungsen reviewing both the idea and Westwood's Constitution and By-Laws, as well as a day-long retreat with the Westwood Church Council at the end of October.

After a process of discernment with the congregation, there will be a vote of affirmation on the proposal in February 2022. If the proposal is affirmed by the congregation the following 3-point plan will begin:

- + A congregational vote would be taken in the fall of 2022 to call Pastor Jason as Senior Pastor. He would begin in this role January 1, 2023.

- + Pastor Tania would stay on staff working at 2/3rds time, also beginning January 1, 2023. She would be on 1-year contracts to allow both she and Westwood the opportunity to annually evaluate this position.

- + A call committee would be formed in 2022 to call a 3rd pastor. The goal is for the 3rd pastor to be in place sometime after Pastor Jason's sabbatical and after the formal vote would occur in the fall. The hope is that the 3rd pastor would begin early in 2023.

Both of us are energized by and committed to this proposal and what we believe it means for the future of Westwood. We look forward to a healthy process filled with prayerful congregational discernment and feedback, and finally a decision about where God is calling Westwood in the next steps of its journey.

- + Pastor Jason and Pastor Tania

## **A Word from the Church Council**

Dear Westwood Friends,

After careful consideration, thoughtful dialog, and review of our Westwood Constitution and By-Laws, your Westwood Council enthusiastically supports the pastoral transition proposal. Council devoted our recent retreat to processing and analyzing this proposal, as well as discussing the most desirable outcomes. We believe this proposal allows Westwood to continue benefiting from the strength of our pastors' shared leadership model, as well as the individual talents and gifts of Pastors Tania and Jason.

Our primary goal is to discover the most faithful direction for Westwood's ministry and to maintain the vitality of our thriving church. As representatives of our Westwood congregation, our duty is to ensure you have a voice in this decision. With this in mind, we have planned multiple forums for

Westwood members to receive more information and ask questions over the coming months. We will invite the congregation to participate in a vote of affirmation for this proposal in mid-February.

Our Constitution and By-Laws, as well as additional information on this process, will be made available and updated regularly on the website. Please reference the outlined dates (below) for ongoing conversation and to submit questions regarding the proposed pastoral staffing plan.

We value and rely upon your input, and we look forward to continuing the discussions about this proposal with you during our upcoming Town Hall meeting on December 5.

Faithfully,

-Your Westwood Church Council

Daniel Aune, Toby Biebl, Lara Cleveland, Nicole Dimich, David Frank, David Guenzel, David Hill, Anna Martinez, Laura Ramsborg & LaDonna Reynolds.

### **Pastoral Staffing Transition Plan - Upcoming Events**

#### **Sunday, December 5: Town Hall Meeting at 9:50 a.m. & online**

- More detailed information, A Message from Bishop Ann Svennungsen, Mpls Area Synod, Opportunity to Submit Questions.

#### **Sunday, January 23: Pastoral Q&A at 9:50 a.m. & online**

- Pastors respond to questions gathered from the congregation about the proposed staffing plan, in both live and recorded platforms.

#### **Sunday, February 13: Annual Meeting at 9:50 a.m. & online**

- A congregational vote of affirmation on this pastoral staffing plan kicks off at the Annual Meeting. Members may vote all week via online and U.S. Mail options.

#### **Ongoing: Coffee Chats**

Sundays & Wednesdays in January (1/16, 1/19, 1/30) and early February (2/2), with both in-person and online platforms.

- Opportunities to chat and ask questions in a smaller setting; pastors and Council members will be available.