



BETHANY
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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January 23, 2019

Dear Bethany family,

In the first month of the new year, the Church often finds encouragement and inspiration from Isaiah 43: *“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine... I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”* This year I’m finding enhanced impact from these words. As you’ve read in the letter from Mig Schaaf, God’s new work continues as I will be moving out of my role as Bethany’s Pastor for Outreach and applying to be a Bethany outreach partner.

First, I want to say that I love this Bethany Presbyterian community so very much. Words can’t adequately express what a gift it’s been to serve here for almost 16 years. I love the staff, the congregation, the session, and our outreach partners. I have been exceedingly blessed by the many ways this community demonstrates love for God and for God’s world. It’s been a privilege to be part of the ongoing commitment to be led by God’s Spirit as we follow Jesus together.

Bethany Presbyterian Church is also where Jim and I got married, where our two children were baptized, and where we all have been nurtured so beautifully. I’m forever grateful for how this community has graciously given me the space and support to be both a minister and a mom, and our family looks forward to continuing to worship at Bethany. Please hear my overflowing gratitude for an incredible season of church and family life here.

Looking to the next season... In his book, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, Richard Rohr talks about finding and owning our script. I discovered my script back in 1987 when I first volunteered with The Mendenhall Ministries in Mississippi. The words of 2 Corinthians 5 – that we are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation – grabbed by heart and became a life-guiding scripture for me. When I reached the 30-year anniversary of that life-changing summer in Mississippi, I started thinking of how many of my mentors are in their final stage of life and ministry. The desire to honor them, capture their thoughts on discipleship, and work more intently to equip the Church to “be one” has intensified.

The opportunity to serve with Pastor Allen Belton (who directs Ministries of Reconciliation under the umbrella of Urban Impact) presented itself, and last spring, I asked Personnel if I could reduce my hours to work a day/week with Pastor Belton. The Personnel Team has been very gracious to pray and work this through with me. Although in some ways it is a hard change, I believe that God has very much been in this process. I’m grateful to have another seven months of serving on staff and am committed to working hard to continue connecting with our outreach partners, as well as documenting the last 15 years of outreach ministry and

preparing in other ways for a smooth transition. After leaving my position at Bethany, the current plan is to increase my hours with Ministries of Reconciliation.

God is doing a new thing in our midst. I pray we will all have open minds and hearts to receive the Holy Spirit's leading, to stay positive and expectant, and to encourage one another in love as Jesus loves.

With much love, gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynne Faris Blessing". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynne Faris Blessing