

November 30, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Faith at First Lutheran,

We write this letter with hearts filled with both joy and sadness. After considerable thought, prayer, and discernment, Nyla and I have accepted a call to serve a congregation in the Seattle area.

Over the last couple of years, our distance from family in the midst of life's challenges, deaths, and struggles has been hard – and it has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 reality. Two months ago, when the opportunity to serve a faith community near family arose, we allowed our names to be entered into the process. It has been a time of discernment as we've looked back at our time with First Lutheran – as this week marks 18 years since we interviewed to serve First Lutheran.

We have been blessed to raise our family in Brookings, and there is no question we love this community. The care and grace and love that we have experienced here has helped shape our children, our faith, and our understanding of the calling we share. Your generous hearts, searching minds, and faithful responses have given us joy and strength in the midst of both life and church challenges.

This community has walked with us in both joyful and difficult places, and we have been honored to walk with you through your life's journeys. We have been blessed to stand beside you in baptism, to walk with youth confirming their faith, to challenge and listen to couples as they commit to walk through life together, to sit at bedsides and hospital beds as life has changed, and to walk with you as you commit loved ones to God's grace and care in their death.

When we accepted the call to First Lutheran, we prayed that this would be a place where our family would be strengthened and blessed, where we could serve and worship together, and help the church see an image of God that is easy to miss – it has been that and more. Thank you for your witness; thank you for your grace; thank you for your prayers.

We will continue to serve First Lutheran through December, and will be moving to the Pacific Northwest in early January. We, along with the church council, will look for a way to celebrate our time with you, and say goodbye, as our call here ends.

In Christ's service and grace,

Pastors David and Nyla Schoeld