

Reimagining Bethel

Dear Bethel family and friends,

My heart overflows with gratitude for all of you. I wasn't sure I would ever pastor in a traditional church setting again. But Bethel isn't your typical faith community. I recognized that a few years ago when I was with you for seven months. It's almost a year since I've been back with you, and my love and appreciation for you have only grown. You have something unique and beautiful about you.

What attracts me to Bethel? I think it's similar to what attracts most of you.

- *Bethel is a loving, welcoming community of regular folks on different spiritual journeys, coming together to encourage, support, and nurture one another. We are each unique, but we walk together.*
- *Bethel is a safe place to explore faith and to heal from past spiritual trauma. Many places speak similar words. Few live up to the hype. My experience is that Bethel lives into this commitment with grace and love.*
- *And Bethel takes the life and teachings of Jesus seriously. You're passionate about justice. You're not content with waving signs and signing petitions, as important as those things can be. You want to know how to have a real impact by partnering with your larger community, and then do it!*

All this is a tremendous gift you give to one another and extend graciously to those who show up in person and on Zoom. This is also a manifestation of your commitment to the work of justice and healing, not as a program of the church, but as a genuine expression of the community you are.

Now, I could launch into many good reasons for you to give financially to Bethel, your spiritual home, and likely you've heard all those reasons before. So instead of doing that, let me continue with what motivates Susan and me.

Bethel is at a threshold moment. You are all the things I mentioned above. But you're not satisfied with living in the past, you are willing to take risks and reimagine yourself so that you're relevant to the larger community into the future. This is huge! This isn't about growing the church or growing the budget; this is about love. This is about finding ways to have the greatest impact in our surrounding communities and world. This is about giving ourselves not just to each other, but to those around us and to future generations. This is what it looks like to celebrate our past while actively living into our faith in rich and meaningful ways.

I don't see this year's giving campaign as your typical campaign. Bethel isn't budgeting to be "typical." Bethel is budgeting believing that God is guiding us into something new, something even more beautiful, and something that will draw people to a well of living water that gushes with love, justice, inclusivity, and hope for us and the communities around us.

I invite you to join Susan and me in giving generously to Bethel this year. Invest in our work together. Invest in our common vision of justice and hope for all. Invest in our future as a vibrant community of faith that's not just relevant today, but also lays a solid foundation for tomorrow.