

My year in review begins on Tuesday, April 13 - my first conversation with the Bethlehem Call Committee. It seems like so long ago that God first brought us to together and started us on a whirl wind journey through the rest of 2021, at least it felt that way to me. After another conversation with the call committee and a weekend visit here in May; Bethlehem voted, on Sunday, June 13, to extend a call to me to be the next pastor here. It is then that Satan went to work to bring our union to a halt, but he failed in his plans. The next morning, Monday, June 14, I blacked out in my bathroom, fell and fractured my face in three places. I ended up having surgery two weeks later and finished my summer in some pain and discomfort. We eventually got packed up and moved to Buffalo Center on August 20 only to be greeted with a freak and massive rainstorm that brought water into the garage and basement. But after a rough summer and a wet beginning, God continued to show His faithfulness. This call and union was not a mistake but rather God's perfect plan - hence Satan's persistence to disrupt things, and I do not see him stopping anytime soon.

Since then, my family and I have settled in and continue to get to know people and this community. *So, what have you been up to since August?* That's a great question, so here we go:

- (1) I have been writing articles for the Buffalo Center Tribune twice a month.
- (2) I have become active in the ministerial; being elected as president.
- (3) Participated in the community strategy/planning meeting in October.
- (4) Participated in distributing Giving Tree gifts to families.
- (5) Presided at my first funeral and wedding here.
- (6) Taught confirmation classes and started leading a monthly women's Bible study.
- (7) Attended community/school events.
- (8) Lead the community ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve worship service that we hosted.
- (9) Attended the LCMC Annual Gathering and met several colleagues from the Iowa District.

(10) Released my inner Clark Griswold and plastered the parsonage with lights 😊

Those are just ten highlights, but now some things I am looking forward to in 2022:

(1) First Communion with the 5th, 6th and 7th graders. Classes will be Sundays, March 6 and 13 during Sunday school. First Communion will be during the Maundy Thursday worship service on April 14.

(2) Lenten midweek services: Following Ash Wednesday, we will meet for midweek services. Details are still in the planning stage; with the Book of Jonah being the midweek preaching/teaching series. Keep an eye on the newsletter and bulletin for more information.

(3) Being a part of restarting worship services at Timely Mission. The ministerial is in talks with Timely Mission to figure out a good day/time to begin having worship services there again.

(4) Getting to know all of you better and better. This is definitely an ongoing process. Please do not be offended if I have to ask for your name again.

(5) Working with the various leaders here at Bethlehem in glorifying God and being available to everyone.

[I thought this was going to be brief, but that's what you get when you give a pastor a microphone or space in a newsletter 😊]

Basically, I am excited about the future. Satan's hard work to derail this ministry partnership only emphasized and confirmed in my heart that God is up to something special here at Bethlehem. I am not sure exactly what that will look like in the future, but whatever it is, we can be sure that God will receive the glory.

Blessings to you in the New Year and may God be glorified always and forever. Amen.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Eric