Pastor Bob Announces Retirement

PB’s sermon on April 15th: On June 10, 1983 I was ordained a Roman Catholic priest for the Diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota. After 15 years of ministry in the Diocese, I decided to transition from ordained ministry in the Catholic Church to ordained ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and have been a pastor for 20 years in the ELCA. That totals out to 35 years and if I figure in seminary training it would be 42 years.

This past March 1st marked the completion of 15 years of ministry here at Shepherd of the Hills. Fond memories Joni and I have are arriving at Shepherd of the Hills for a face to face interview with the Call Committee and later going out for dinner with the Church Council. It was a graced time and we both felt that Shepherd of the Hills is the congregation we hoped to journey together with. After my first Sunday service, I remember greeting people as they left the church and feeling a sense of love and community. We were thankful that the congregation voted that I would be privileged to be pastor of this wonderful faith community.

The other day I was meeting with a couple of people who will become new members of our church soon. They shared with me their experience of warmth and fellowship they have found here. Talking with them reminded me of Joni and my experience about 15 years earlier. Shepherd of the Hills has been a wonderful congregation for us to be part of.

After 15 years of ministry here in this congregation, I have found a desire to move on to new challenges and opportunities. I have been in touch with Bishop Jim Gonia and his staff as well as some of the leadership in our congregation for the last several months about this transition. I will be retiring the end of May of this year. My last Sunday will be May 20th, which is Pentecost Sunday. It is sad for Joni and me to leave because of the many people who have become an important part of our lives in this congregation. But I know it is time for me to make this transition, and think this will be a good change for the congregation too. Change is always bitter-sweet. Sad because Joni and I will no longer be a part of this Congregation, but sweet in knowing change and experiencing new horizons are part of life. Change is good.

My April Newsletter article was entitled: “The End of Christendom”. I purposely wrote it in light of my retirement. It refers to how Christianity and churches have evolved in Europe and America over many years, particularly since the 1960s in America. I encourage you to read and reflect upon it because it will help to explain the transformation we are seeing, particularly in mainstream congregations in the United States, including Shepherd of the Hills. This transformation is presenting serious challenges to congregations. The process that will be followed between my retirement and the calling of a new pastor will be a good opportunity to work with the interim pastor in making preparations for the future.
Just like you, I am not sure what the future will hold. Like Peter stepping out of the boat onto a stormy sea, venturing into the unknown is not easy. But what this Bible story tells us is that, when we keep our eyes on Jesus, we are able to meet the challenges of life. His grace, love and mercy are always there.

Presently Joni and I plan to continue to live in Canon City. It is our home and we love living here. The protocol for clergy who retire in the same city where he or she served, is that both the pastor and spouse are to have no involvement in the congregation for at least a couple of years. So, after leaving I will not be involved in any pastoral ministry at Shepherd of the Hills, and have no desire to. Please do not ask me to be involved in any weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc. This is in accord with the retired pastors’ guidelines from the Rocky Mountain Synod, and it helps to enable a better environment for successful new pastoral leadership to occur.

As I mentioned, the Office of the Bishop and leadership in this congregation have been involved in dialogue and planning regarding this transition for several months. The Synod has a clear process that is to occur when a pastor retires. Some may think that this is a short notice of my retirement, but I do not like long goodbyes.

Our Church Council president, Rick Wolken will now explain the transition process that will be facilitated by our congregational leadership and the Office of the Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod... (For those who did not hear Rick’s remarks, he mention the Council will be meeting with staff from the Office of the Bishop during the next few weeks. When the Council receives more information, he will share it with the congregation.) Then I continued my remarks:

Thank you for your gracious presence that Joni and I have experienced during the last 15 years. We will always be thankful for being part of Shepherd of the Hills faith community. It will be one of the highlights of my pastoral ministry over the past 35 years.

Please keep this transition in your daily prayers. I am sure the Holy Spirit has already prepared the ground for the changes that will occur.

Forever grateful,
Pastor Bob

Farewell Breakfast for Pastor Bob and Joni

After the 9:00 am service on May 20th there will be a farewell breakfast for Pastor Bob and Joni. There will be no second service on that Sunday.

Retirement Open House

Pastor Bob and Joni will host a retirement open house at their home on Saturday, May 26th from 3:00 - 5:00 pm at 2411 Greenway Circle in Canon City. Everyone is invited to attend.