

*Introduction: “Cheryl is an active member at Christ Lutheran in Warren, Michigan. She was on both the congregation’s Transition Team and subsequent Call Committee.”*

Once our pastor of fourteen years announced his upcoming retirement he organized a transition team. One of the primary tasks of this team—joined by our Executive Committee—was to begin a search for an interim pastor. Pastor Brandt then became part of our process, having had discussions with our pastor prior to his public retirement announcement. Pastor Brandt worked with us via Zoom, since he is out of state and we were also working through Covid restrictions, which he helped set up and use for all our meetings. We had many discussions with Pastor Brandt regarding the processes we were navigating. Years prior we had been in an Interim Pastor search and the resultant hiring did not work out well for the congregation as a whole. The Interim Pastor at that time had caused much debate, anger, and separation within the church leaving a very negative vibe towards going through this process again. Since an Interim Pastor was a necessity due to our Church Constitution we went forward cautiously. One of the first things Pastor Brandt asked us to do was conduct a congregational survey [Wish-list] to find the greatest concerns and needs of our congregation. Once we obtained this information he helped us break it down and created an inventory of the congregation’s immediate needs and recommended priorities during the interim transition period. Once this was done, Pastor Brandt, also guided us through the process of setting up interview questions, while helping us develop and send letters to NALC and LCMC websites with a request for Interim Pastoral candidates. Once we began to receive applicants, Pastor Brandt sat in on our interviews essentially behind the scenes. He did not want to be seen as a decisive person during the interviews. When the interviews were over he would ask us how we felt about the candidates, and how our questions were answered. Suggestions about how our questions were answered and how we might get more of the information we would like was then made, and we continued with the process. Once we made a decision regarding a potential candidate, Pastor Brandt then sat in on our second interview and afterward held a discussion offering support and thoughts to consider. We had multiple candidates, some of whom were excellent, which made our choice difficult. Ultimately we agreed upon a candidate and were able to hire him with a start date the week prior to our retiring Pastor’s last day.

Once our Interim Pastor was hired and working we began the process of a Pastoral candidate search. With the help of our Interim Pastor we also requested the help of Pastor Brandt. The Interim team felt very comfortable and confident in Pastor Brandt’s assistance and support. Our IP and Pastor Brandt helped us set up a Call Committee and leader. Pastor Brandt was of great assistance to us during this time as well. He helped us review the congregational needs from the Interim process, as well as the needs of the business of the church. We applied again to NALC and LCMC for Pastoral candidates. We again set up interview questions with Pastor Brandt’s guidance. This time the pool of candidates was quite small and disappointing. We received only a few candidates. By chance, we received an email to the Call committee chair, from out of country, to see if we would accept an interview. Pastor Brandt was able to review and share information regarding the out of country candidate. After much discussion over several weeks, we agreed to consider our out of country candidate. Pastor Brandt also sat in silently during this interview and afterwards led a discussion, and offered suggestions to consider. A second interview was held, and a decision to invite this candidate to visit was made. There was still serious

discussion with debate especially regarding all the complications of travel, costs, and citizenship, as well as some language barrier. Eventually we did offer the Call to this Pastor and after many months and trials of obtaining travel VISAs for him and his family, he is an integral part of the ministry of Christ Lutheran Church. Pastor Brandt is a kind, supportive, and encouraging leader without whom I feel we could not have completed these two searches successfully.

Yours in Christ, *Cheryl Gothro Council President*

Christ Lutheran Church-Warren, Michigan.