

Comments by David Beecher

November 13, 2022

Yes, I wrote my “acceptance” speech out, just as if I were receiving an award. I don’t trust my memory as much as I once could, but in a real way you are rewarding me with your presence, your friendship, your love.

For me, today is all about gratitude. As I sang during worship, courtesy of Stephen Schwartz, “All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above. So thank the Lord for all his love.”

I am full of gratitude for lots of reasons. I am grateful that I grew up in a home with parents who were deeply devoted to God; that I grew up in a church that encouraged me from an early age to explore music; that my college suggested that Music Education was a more practical path than music performance; that I discovered Lutherans by a happy convergence of circumstances; but that I was still Baptist when I went to seminary—otherwise I never would have met Miriam! I am grateful for all my seminary experiences, and in practical terms, to Dr. Lin for introducing me to handbells in 1979.

I am even grateful that I found myself in disastrous circumstances in the two Baptist churches I served out of seminary; otherwise, I might not have been receptive and relieved when Pastor Solberg invited Miriam and me to come back—to come home—to the Lutheran church.

I am immensely grateful that John Weber found out about Miriam and me in a most unusual way, and that he and Christ Our Shepherd took a chance on two recovering Southern Baptists. I am thankful that the adult choir was flexible enough to allow someone with a very different approach from my predecessor’s to lead them. I am grateful that parents of children not only told me of their hopes for kids at church, but volunteered to help in lots of ways. I will always be grateful that Karl Dietmeyer offered to exercise leadership when I was drowning in a room full of middle-school instrumentalists. We all know where that has led. Also, that he suggested

in 2003 that we attend the quadrennial Moravian Music Festival, reawakening memories from my past. As a result, Karl and his daughter Laura helped make our first Love Feast happen that December.

Another who has contributed to our ministry is James C. Hagberg, our unofficial composer-in-residence. Besides conducting and recruiting *da Chiesa* Strings players, he has written several beautiful anthems for us, including the ones we heard this morning and last Sunday.

I am grateful that the church did not accept our required pro-forma resignations when Pastor Weber retired, and that Pastor Fritz was willing to work with us after he arrived.

I still have trouble believing how staggeringly generous you have been to us personally, and in giving the church everything from handbells to grand pianos to a bass flute and flugelhorn!

I am thankful that in 2002 (yes, 20 years ago) the church was willing to try—experimentally—a Sunday morning contemporary-style worship service, with the Rothfuszcs and Pedersons and others working to make it happen. And, like so many other ministries, there has frequently been new leadership available when transitions have occurred.

I am grateful for just about all the other ministers it has been my privilege to work alongside on staff here. They have blessed Miriam and me richly.

Three people who must be mentioned individually are ladies who have taken care of details and done heavy lifting for years, our uniquely-skilled Worship and Music Assistants. They have been essential and highly-valued! My profound thanks go to the late Joanne Pritchett, Lynn Kalinke, and Joni Siepert.

I thank you for your tolerance and flexibility as we have dealt with the nearly three years of changes brought about by Covid, innovating streaming broadcast options, and coping with all the changes that has brought. I am grateful that we have had people with so much more expertise than mine to lead us through those changes.

The time is right for me to move on. Those of you who know me well and

work with me closely have noticed the changes over the past year or two, particularly after I had Covid last December. After all, I just marked my 72nd birthday! The only things I will *not* miss about this ministry are the day-to-day, every-week responsibilities that have evolved in astonishing ways over the 1,293 weeks or the 9,050+ days I have been in this position. We are not moving away, and I will still be available to help in whatever ways are comfortable for my successor and me.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude for you, the Christ Our Shepherd family. With our kin living hours or states away, you have been our family. You have been a tsunami of support and blessing.

The Committee who planned this event have worked so much harder than I had hoped they would. I cannot thank you enough!

Most of all, I am thankful for our sons, Andrew and Matthew. Having both parents in ministry means they put up with a lot growing to adulthood and since. They have survived without much complaining, and I am extremely proud of them.

But of course, my most profound gratitude to God is for Miriam. It is she who has provided the wisdom, support, calm, and faith I have relied on for all these years. I would never have kept this position or my sanity without her. You already know what a caring and Christlike person she is, so just intensify that feeling about a hundred times, and you might imagine what I treasure every day of my life.

Enough. Thank you for your patience in listening to all this. Please know that I will love you all until my dying day and beyond. Thank you.