

We are finally here - safe and sound in Buffalo Center. Who knew then, that after I accepted the call to be the pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, on June 13, that so much would change in mine and my family's lives, along with many challenges: me falling and breaking my face, my subsequent back issues, surgery and recovery, packing and moving logistics while laid up. On top of all of that, Connie was working fulltime, running our home, and now caring for three (me included) children. There were many times that I wanted to throw up my hands and give up. I cannot speak for Connie, but I imagine her feeling the same way.

But our steadfast and unchanging God remained faithful. He upheld us and guided us through all the ups and downs. He led us through the dark valleys, fought our battles with the Evil One, and gave strength and healing to our weary bodies. He gave us what was necessary to accomplish what was needed to be accomplished. In the end, to God be the glory because believe me, we did not traverse this summer under our own power or ingenuity. We did not arrive here safely because we are strong. The unchanging love of God sustained us and continues to give us hope.

During the children's message at our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary worship service I spoke about our unchanging God. I showed the kids various Bibles. The first one I showed them dated back to 1885. Next, I showed them my dad's confirmation Bible from 1964 followed by my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Bible from 1979. I finished by showing them my preaching Bible. But as we looked at all those different Bibles, I highlighted the common thread: **God's Word**. It is a Word that has not changed. God's love is a love that has not changed. His grace is a grace that has not changed. Jesus, the Son of God, is still and always will be Lord and Savior. God's faithfulness from when He said, "**Let there be light**", has continued unhindered ever since and will continue for all eternity. It is this unchanging God to whom we can cling.

Much has changed in our congregation over the past 125 years, but God has not. Much has changed in our world these past couple years, but God has not. Much has changed and will continue to change in your lives, but – wait for it – God will not. And thus, we can always look to the future with hope. Granted, you and I will not be here when Bethlehem Lutheran Church celebrates its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary (that is, if Jesus does not return first), but one thing will be certain. At that celebration, they will be able to praise God for His unchanging love and faithfulness still.

And so, as we continue into this new chapter of ministry together, that will indeed be filled with changes, challenges, ups and downs, cling to our unchanging and always faithful God. What a great God we have, Amen? Amen!