

## A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR

In July of 1921, a group of people gathered to dedicate the \$8,600.00 renovation of a small church building in downtown Williams Bay. While we don't know what was happening in each of their lives, by their actions we can determine that they were making radical decisions that would position the church to reach people with the gospel in a new and changing world. Our church has roots back to 1891, but because of the vision of those who gathered to dedicate the renovation, we date ourselves from that moment. While they could not have known it at the time, their decision to open the church to English-speaking people, moving away from Swedish-only services, would shape the mission of Calvary for these past 100 years. It was a selfless act in response to the changing culture. The Free Lutheran Evangelical Church, with services conducted in Swedish, became the Williams Bay Free Mission Church. Since then, the same commitment to communicate the truth of the gospel of Jesus has held us, along with a passion to act selflessly to make decisions that allow us to reach a changing culture. It is our heritage.

The gospel of Jesus and the truth of His word are not just our heritage; they are also our hope. It is what we look forward to, as well as what we look back upon. There is no way those who gathered in July of 1921 could have anticipated what the next few years would hold for them, but they knew *who* would hold them. They had just lived through World War I. They had survived a worldwide flu pandemic (the deadliest in history), which infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide—about one-third of the planet's population—and killed an estimated 20 to 50 million victims, including some 675,000 Americans. They would soon step into a stock market crash and the Great Depression. Truly, these people of faith knew they had been entrusted with the message of hope for their generation.

As we look forward to 2021 and prepare to celebrate our 100-year anniversary, we remember our heritage so we can maintain our hope. Just as our founders were ready to make bold changes to encounter a changing culture, so must we. 2020 was a year like no other in our time. A global pandemic has altered the way we view community, and the response has stretched people and raised the level of angst and unrest. Our economy has been shaken and our country is divided in significant ways. Our culture continues to struggle to find a moral compass and the Church is being marginalized and devalued. This is the time that has been entrusted to us. The answer 100 years ago is the same answer today. We must look forward and take bold steps to prepare our facility and our ministry to be ready to meet the immediate challenge, while, at the same time, laying the groundwork so that, should the Lord tarry, 100 years from now, another group of people will have been equipped to take the baton forward.

That is why the time is right for us to complete the building project which began in 2013. The time is right for us to prepare our facility to handle a changing world. We need to prepare a place that is central and safe for our children. We need to have an entrance that is completed and allows for people to move more easily at transition times. We need to repair the 50-year-old parking lot. We need to ready our technology to have an online presence that will help us reach an ever-expanding virtual audience. We need to be prepared to communicate with them as they engage with us, so we can help bring them into the community of the body of Christ. These improvements will help us reach out in new ways—in a new language, if you will. Just as our founders made the bold decision to move from Swedish to English, so we must make bold decisions that will allow us to speak to a new audience with clarity and purpose in a language they can understand. So, this year, we will launch the Centennial Generosity Campaign to raise the necessary funds and pledges to begin the next steps of our future. We will build on our heritage as we look forward in hope.

With Hope,  
Pastor Chuck Cervenka