

Hello, All:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing this to inform you all that I am taking a time of renewal/well-being leave at least through the month of July. I have consulted with leadership in the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church (District Superintendent Roger Spahr and Director of Ministries Rebecca Trefz) and the Pastor-Parish Relations Committees of both churches, and they believe this is important for me to do. This time will be intentional with specific things I will be doing in order to actively heal and recover. For over a year, I have been dealing with depression that has been very severe. Perhaps my condition has not been apparent to many of you, but trust me when I tell you that I have been struggling mightily.

After being in counseling for eight months, I have decided that a bigger step must be taken for my mental health. It has reached a point where if I do not do something, I fear what may happen. I know that my ability to lead as your pastor will suffer, as it already has. The depression, in my opinion, is likely caused by multiple factors: personal, familial, professional, and living conditions. There have been many life events, professional struggles, feelings of inadequacy and disrespect, and other problems that have torn and frayed Alyssa and myself. Rather than get into these details in this letter, suffice it to say that I am at a very dark place mentally and emotionally. Furthermore, through all of this, I have begun to question my calling into ministry.

Therefore, in order to get better and hopefully rekindle the fire within me for ministry, I need to take a time of leave from serving as your pastor. It is with a heavy heart that I do this, as it is a very difficult time in the church, figuring out how to return to in-person worship safely. Yet I know it is a necessary step for me rather than waiting for another dark moment of crisis in my journey through depression. Even though I am still walking through a very dark valley, I know God is with me and there is light even in the valley. God is walking with us all in the dark valleys of our lives. Remember God does not abandon or forsake us.

Thanks to all of those who have already supported me in this decision. That has been a huge sigh of relief when finally opening up about what has been going on in my life. Also, remember that the church is more than a building, as we have found out through this pandemic. And the church is more than one person. You all are ministers of the Word and disciples of Jesus Christ called to transform the world through love and mercy. Blessings to all of you.

God's peace be with you,

Pastor Jordan Louks