

August 12, 2022

Dear Messiah Friends,

Nearly two weeks have gone by since my final Sunday with you, and I'm still recovering from the astonishment of it. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for so rousing a send-off—so gracious too. Thank you especially for that magnificent collection of \$10,000 toward Lutheran theological education in Papua New Guinea. I know how generous you are, but even so, this took my breath away.

I've been writing thank you notes on and off for the past ten days. I have many to go. If you gave me a card on the 31<sup>st</sup>, chances are you'll hear from me. Or if you don't, be sure that I read it and gave thanks to God for you as I did.

As for the offering for Papua New Guinea, I'm in the middle of finding the best way to direct it so it does what you gave it to do. I'll have this figured out before the month is out and will send a report to Pr. Bridger and Mrs. Waugh. I will leave it to them to pass the information along to the rest of you.

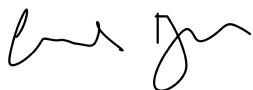
I went to church last Sunday at the ELCA congregation that's closest to my home. It was good to sit in the pews for once. The pastor was thoughtful and well-prepared. I will go back there again next Sunday.

A gentle reminder to all of you that I am indeed retired and should be thought of only as your former pastor. The office of Word and Sacrament among you now rests with Pr. Bridger and whoever else you might call to labor with him. No other pastor can be involved in this except at their express request or invitation. This is the rule—a good, essential rule. From here on it applies as much to me as to does to any other pastor of the Church, whether active or retired.

I will, of course, continue to treasure the years I spent among you, thanking God for the honor of serving you for as long as I did. Where I let you down, forgive me. (There's more of this for you to do than I care to think.) Where I encouraged you in Christ, remember that all the more. He alone is the one who will never let you down.

Continue, please, to think of me as your friend, or better still, your brother in Christ. I will think of you in the same way. I will pray for you too. Such a splendid congregation you are. May the Holy Spirit keep you rippling with Easter joy as the months and years go by.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerome Burce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jerome Burce