Autobiographical Statement

I am a 47-year-old man, married with two adult daughters, seeking to transition out of a career in law enforcement and into the Office of the Holy Ministry, if the Lord wills it.

My wife (Holly) and I live in Hodgkins, IL, a small suburb of Chicago. I was born here, and my family has been in the area since the late 19th century, when my ancestors immigrated from Pommern (Germany) to the United States. The history of their arrival, and how they made their way here has always been interesting and inspiring to me, particularly the story of how they tried to maintain sound doctrine and worship practices in the midst of American Protestantism.

The details of my ancestors' arrival are a little bit hazy. I don't know precisely what year they arrived in America, or when and how they traveled to the Middle West. When they got here, however, they wound up on a farm in Tiedville (present-day Burr Ridge, IL), and they were members of what would become Trinity Lutheran Church – Burr Ridge, IL. My great grandparents settled in Hodgkins, IL in 1909. They, along with the group of Pomeranian Lutherans who also lived in the area, were founding members of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church – Hodgkins, IL in 1912. The story goes that there was no Lutheran church in Hodgkins, and the Lutheran families were members at either Trinity in Burr Ridge, or St. John's in LaGrange. It was not easy for them to send their children to the Lutheran schools in those places, and they did not want to send them to the Protestant Sunday school that had been organized by another local man. They decided that there was a need for a congregation in Hodgkins, so the men approached the pastors of the churches in LaGrange and Burr Ridge for help. The congregation called itself Immanuel. They arranged to buy the old school building from St. John's – LaGrange for the sum of $1. Men from Immanuel disassembled the building, transported it by wagon, and reassembled it in Hodgkins, and it became Immanuel Lutheran Church. They called the pastor from Trinity at the head pastor, and the pastor from St. John's as the associate. I love the way that they saw a need for a church, and they just started prayerfully working toward that goal.

I have been a member of an LCMS congregation since I was baptized at Immanuel on Christmas Day, 1977. From an early age I have been interested in church work. As I attended church, Sunday school, and confirmation class at Immanuel growing up, I had a strong desire to be involved in some way with the church. I also knew that I wanted that experience to include music. It was at Immanuel, going to church as a child, that I developed a strong fascination with the liturgy and it's music, and my love of singing, and music in general. In high school I was deeply involved in the choral music program. Though he was not a part of the LCMS, our choir director was Lutheran. He exposed us to many beautiful and historic Christian choral works, the musical heritage of the Christian west.

I thought about the possibility of becoming a pastor for most of my life, but this thought really came to the forefront of my mind when I began confirmation instruction. During this time, the Jehovah's Witnesses began coming to visit my grandfather. As it happened, they would come on Sunday afternoons. He was an outgoing sort of fellow. Rather than turning them away, he liked to listen to what they had to say. I listened too, and would argue with them about what I had learned from Holy Scripture, and was summarized in the Small Catechism. They would come back week after week, in pairs. The main Witness would always return with a different companion who was either an expert in a particular doctrinal point, or someone who needed to be trained on how to go door-to-door. We spent hours arguing the resurrection, the nature of Christ, eschatology, justification, and all kinds of other things. In order to prepare for these apologetic discussions, I would ask my pastor, Rev. Adam Dietrich, for help. He spent a lot of time teaching me outside of confirmation class, and giving me resources to read. These experiences reinforced an interest in researching and learning theology, teaching, and defending the faith. It was with Pastor Dietrich that I first discussed my desire to be a pastor, and he encouraged me to pursue it. However, I always felt as though I was unsuitable, and I was apprehensive to work toward that end. I chose to pursue music education instead.

In 1995, the end of my senior year of high school, I applied, and was accepted at, Concordia University – Mequon, WI to study music education. However, a friend who was also planning to study music education encouraged me to audition at Murray State University, saying that the music program was outstanding. I auditioned there, and Director of Choral Activities won me over. I chose Murray over Mequon, and spent

the next five years singing Bach, Brahms, Mozart, Schütz, and many others. During this time I began teaching myself how to play the organ (poorly). While an undergraduate, I directed a church choir at Immanuel Lutheran Church – Murray, KY for a brief period.

At Murray State, I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree (2000) and met my wife, Holly. My major was music, with a minor in German. Upon graduation, I was accepted at the University of Kentucky (UK), Lexington, KY where I pursued a Master of Arts degree (2002). At UK I focused on music theory and composition, with an emphasis on early music, specifically that of the church, including chant and polyphony through the early 17th century (Heinrich Schütz is my favorite composer). Unfortunately, while I did complete the course work and my thesis (a mass for five voices written in the polyphonic style of the late 16th century), I did not finish the degree. My goal at that time was to become a music teacher at the university level, though thoughts of becoming a church worker had not completely left my mind. I wound up, however, with a much better job, though I didn't quite realize it at the time.

In 2002, after my time at UK, my wife and I moved to my hometown, Hodgkins, IL, where we had an inherited family home waiting for us. I assumed that it would be easier to find a job in the Chicago metropolitan area. That summer I was hired at St. John's Lutheran Church and School in Chicago (4939 W. Montrose Ave., Chicago, IL) as a K-8 music teacher. I also taught middle school German, directed the adult and children's choirs, and played organ for the German-language worship service they had. I was at St. John's for four years. It was this experience that solidified my desire to enter church work. During my time at St. John's, I took all the courses for colloquy via the distance learning program available at the time, so that I could become an rostered LCMS teacher. However, in 2006, after we had our second daughter (Emma), I left the school to take a job as a records clerk at the Hodgkins Police Department. I amassed a lot of credit card debt, and had significant student loan debt, and our living situation just became unsustainable. The job at the police department paid significantly more than I was making as a Lutheran schoolteacher and the career change made sense at the time. I spent two years as a clerk. In 2008, I went through the police testing process and was hired as a patrolman. I was a patrolman from 2008 through 2019. I was appointed to be the Deputy Chief in 2020, and then Chief of Police in 2022.

Being a policeman is a noble profession. That vocation was a blessing to me and my family, even if it was something I never anticipated that I would do. However, it was not something that I loved. I resolved to serve my neighbor through this vocation into which God had placed me until it was no longer my vocation. I focused on serving in my vocation as a policeman to the best of my ability, and praying that God would bring me out of my law enforcement career and give me the chance to be a pastor after I retired. During my 18 years at the police department, I had the opportunity to talk to those people I worked with, and those whom I met in a wide variety of circumstances, both good and bad. I thank God that He gave me the opportunity to proclaim Christ crucified to those people into whose midst He placed me at that time. I believe that these experiences have contributed to my desire to evangelize those who do not believe in Christ.

In January 2025, the Lord answered the first portion of my prayer in a way I did not expect: I was dismissed abruptly from my position as Chief of Police. While this turn of events was unexpected, it was welcome. I am now free to serve the Lord in a new vocation, whatever it may be. It is still my prayer that He would allow me to enter into the office of the Holy Ministry, but I submit to His will.

Holly (48), my daughter Emma (18), and I are currently members of Saint Paul Lutheran Church - Brookfield, IL. Rev. Edward Naumann is our pastor. We have been members at Saint Paul for the past 13 years. Prior to that, we were members at Immanuel - Hodgkins. Holly was raised Roman Catholic and grew up in Evansville, IN. We were married in Evansville, in the Roman Catholic Church after I graduated from Murray State in 2000, before moving to Lexington, KY; she joined the LCMS after we moved to Hodgkins in 2002, after attending adult instruction with Rev. Adam Dietrich. Holly is currently the secretary at Saint Paul. My daughter Emma is going through the culinary program at College of DuPage and hopes to one day become a baker. My daughter Caitlyn (20) is studying psychology and art at Murray State University. Saint Paul has a K-8 classical school, which both my children attended. I serve currently as the chairman of the Board of Christian Education.