Before I begin my message, let me use this opportunity on behalf of my wife Valerie and I to say thank you to Arlington Hills Lutheran Church. We owe a great debt to this church. Valerie was raised in this church since 1952. She was confirmed here and we were married at Arlington Hills in 1974. Her parents, John and Gladys Robertson moved to St. Paul from Nebraska in early 1952. They visited Arlington Hills when Pastor Hamerberg was preaching and they immediately joined. Both are buried from here - as is her brother Douglas.

After our marriage, because I was still in the seminary we worshipped here. One Sunday, Pastor Hedberg came up to us and said "I hear you're in the seminary. We have a seminary/scholarship fund and we want to give you some money for school from our scholarship fund. I wasn't even a member - but Valerie and her family were.

Valerie's parents loved, Arlington Hills. It's interesting that John once made a statement that "I'm never going to leave Arlington Hills. I'm going to be loyal to this church even if I'm the last dog standing!" Well guess what- His daughter -Valerie is the last "Robertson dog standing." "Thank You" "Thank You" "Thank You"

Now, on to my message!

The Lord is "MY Shepherd"
Psalm 23

I like TRUE letters written by children to GOD! You see, children are so incredibly Honest! Some examples:

-Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love everybody in the world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it.

-Dear God! Maybe Cain wouldn't have killed his brother Abel if they had separate bedrooms. It works for me and my brother.

-Dear God is it true that my father won't get into Heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house?

-Dear God, it rained for our whole vacation and is my Dad upset! He said some things about You that people aren't suppose to say. P.S. I'm not telling You who I am because You'll figure out who my Dad is!!

Now, I love the innocence of Children. However, What kind of God have they been taught to believe in? It bothers me when children or adults are afraid of God. When a child asks "Is it true my Father won't get into heaven? That's sad!

Children shouldn't think that God is mean and angry! You see, the truth is that God is LOVE! Do we understand that God sent his Son Jesus Christ, THE GOOD SHEPHERD to die in our place and for our salvation!

God loves us. Always has. Always will.

In the Psalmody Bible Reading for today, we read responsively Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is arguably the most famous chapter in the Bible. I love how it starts out "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Now I'm sure that to varying degrees, we all have some fear and anxiety as we realize we have just a little under 2 months before worship at Arlington Hills Lutheran Church will be no more.

Oh- Worship here in God's House will continue with "Remnant Christian Network - North America". But Saturday, November 21st at 10:00 will be our last worship service together.

If we want to have a sense of Peace and Comfort during this transition time, it is going to be extremely important to know that we not only have a Shepherd- and now comes the Key. The Lord is "MY SHEPHERD." It's personal. It's Comforting.

I like the story about a very famous actor who was once a Guest of Honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite poems and short stories. An elderly widow asked the actor to recite Psalm 23. The actor agreed on the condition that the elderly widow would also recite Psalm 23. The professional actor's delivery was beautiful with great dramatic emphasis. He received a standing ovation. Now it was the elderly widow's turn. Her voice was soft and broken. Her speaking was anything but professional. However, When she finished, there was not a dry eye in the room.

When someone asked the professional actor what made the difference. He said " I know the Psalm, - but she knows the Shepherd. Yes, there is a world of difference between "The Lord is like a Shepherd, and the Lord is "MY SHEPHERD."

In our fearful and anxious times, We are going to need a very Personal Shepherd who goes with us. During this time in A. H.L.C. history, Psalm 23 is so fitting, so perfect, so comforting.

The theme of Psalm 23 is that Jesus is leading his beloved flock. The imagery is beautiful. Like a loving caretaker, the Shepherd leads His sheep to green pastures and still waters, and like the Good Shepherd, God will lead us to the right church.

You see, the important thing is that we need a church community. God never intended that we live in isolation. Christianity doesn't work that way. Yes! Wherever 2 or 3 are gathered, there is Jesus.

Think of the imagery of God as a protector. "His Rod and Staff will comfort us." God's promise was that when we had to face the pain and the unfairness of the world, we do not have to face it alone. And right now, we are experiencing pain. But we are not alone. The Lord is "MY SHEPHERD."

When a sheep was wounded, the shepherd would apply oil on the wound. Just as the shepherd tends to his wounded sheep by anointing their heads with oil,"MY SHEPHERD" will heal OUR wounded hearts.

Valerie and I know this from experience. When we left Good Shepherd after 30 years of service, it was a very painful experience. But we realized that The Good Shepherd and the Holy Spirit are in all churches and we were led to "Green pastures and still waters", (sort of speak) when we joined Arlington Hills.

I love how the Psalm ends. "Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Did you know that 2 loyal sheep dogs would follow the flock of sheep as the flock followed the Shepherd? So when you follow Jesus to whatever Church that may be, trust that the loyal sheep dogs, "Goodness and Mercy" will follow you the rest of your life.

So now as we continue our Journey here on Earth to our Home in Heaven-even if we don't see each other here on Earth, we will be together in Heaven. ALLELUIA!

...AMEN...