



April 22, 2024

To the staff and families of Blessed Beginnings Learning Center and School-Aged Program, and the Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church staff and congregation,

After much prayer and consideration, the Nazareth Church Council has made the difficult decision to suspend operations of the Blessed Beginnings Learning Center and School-Aged Program. The last day of operations will be Friday, May 10th, 2024. Over the last several years Blessed Beginnings has faced significant challenges and is currently functioning under an unsustainable financial model. The Council's decision is based on the following realities:

1. Expenses exceeded revenue by more than \$90,000 in 2023, and more than \$20,000 in the first quarter of 2024. The program is nearing bankruptcy.
2. There has been a continued decline in student enrollment since 2021.
3. Statewide labor shortages have made it difficult to hire and retain additional qualified staff within our limited wage scale.
4. Many of the staff depart when the UNI semester ends on May 10, and there is no clear path forward to meet strict state minimum staffing requirements beyond that date.

Had it not been for one large donation, given to Nazareth Lutheran Church, and made available to Blessed Beginnings in May 2022, Blessed Beginnings would have been forced to suspend operations much sooner to not place the church at financial risk.

To our current Blessed Beginnings staff, we thank you for the countless hours and love you have shown to the children entrusted to your care. To the families of Blessed Beginnings, we thank you for your support and trusting our staff with your children's well-being. We are sorry to all of the families, staff, and volunteers who are affected by this unavoidable decision. If Blessed Beginnings parents have questions during this transition, please reach out to Phil Plourde or Ashley Yuska for clarification.

We are thankful to the Lord for Blessed Beginnings and celebrate the many former and current staff, parents, and volunteer congregation members who have cared for the children of this community and worked diligently to instill in them a firm foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

The Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church Council

President Wayne Jacobson, Vice-president Kristina McBurney, Treasurer Cindy Wilson, Secretary Julie Creeden, Nate Greiner, Beth Harris, Kristie Lehman, Ron Martin, and Chris Hansen, in consultation with John Lehman, financial advisor to the Blessed Beginnings Committee