

Dear SOTL Family,

I promised you that under my leadership, we would be **authentic** and **transparent**. The truth is, this isn't unusual, for much of our history Shepherd of the Lakes has been a community that is built on the **truth** of Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus proclaimed, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* He is the way when we are unsure of what step to take next. He is the truth when we face all life's uncertainties. He is the life that we ground our community on. Everything that we do is built on His redemption that He won for us through His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

One month ago former pastor Mark Milatz plead guilty to the crime of financial embezzlement of an amount that was under \$100,000 but more than \$50,000. As the BOD stated in the beginning of this process almost four years ago, we made the decision to not pursue a civil suit and we placed the situation entirely in God's hands. We left it up to the Michigan State Police and Livingston County Prosecutors Office to proceed as they saw fit with their criminal investigation.

I wanted to inform you that today he appeared before Livingston County Circuit Court and was sentenced to six months in jail, two years of probation and \$50,000 in restitution.

I know that may trigger a range of emotions. Some of you have been affected personally by this situation and others have been affected corporately. It is my prayer that this may bring some closure to those of you who have been victimized. Jesus promises to *"heal the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds"* Psalm 147:3. Both Pastor Tim and I are praying for you and lifting you up to the Lord. We here for you if you would like to talk or process this news.

It's times like these that we turn to the faithfulness of Jesus as the one who is our way, our truth and our life. Jesus has always been faithful to Shepherd of the Lakes and He has been faithful to every single one of us. Christ makes this promise to us in Joel 2:25, *"He will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten"*. I am confident that Jesus Christ will redeem the time that has been lost. Together we look ahead to what Jesus has in store for SOTL!

Jesus is alive!

Pastor Ben Bruns