

Composer's Statement by Aaron Pawelek

In January, the Social Justice pillar at North Parish held a workshop—*The Urgency of Now*—exploring ways people can get more involved in various advocacy and activist campaigns from food insecurity and immigrant rights to climate justice and much more. A highlight for me was a suggestion about the myriad skill sets and even identities we can bring to our work on these causes. One of the categories had to do with creative expression, and within that, the role of songwriters and song leaders was emphasized. Ever since then, we've been holding bi-weekly soul-singing circles after church services, and I've been helping to lead those.

Coincidentally, I had begun writing new songs a few months earlier with an old friend and bandmate for a recording project we are planning. After attending the *Urgency of Now* workshop, I was inspired to branch out and write songs responding intentionally to the moment we find ourselves in. Once these songs started emerging, I then set my sights on writing in a way that could speak deeply into the worship and communal life of North Parish. The songs you will hear on Sunday are the result of that effort.

The prelude, "*A Light By the Sea*", imagines the church as a beacon of light for 'those in trouble to find what they need most. The interlude, "*Carry Each Other*", is inspired by our joys and sorrows ritual. "*Breathe at the Same Time*", the offertory, refers to the communal act of deep breathing we frequently practice. We will then revisit "*A Light By The Sea*", singing it together as our closing hymn. And our postlude, "*River of Mercy*", will close us out with an exuberant demand

for our country to lead with compassion and kindness rather than the cruelty and brutality we have seen in recent months.

This has been a difficult year for many among us. To anyone who feels frightened, angry, sad, or helpless: these are songs of hope and resilience, and they are for you.