

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2020

In preparation to write this letter, I read through the President's Report from 2019. Who would have guessed that we would have had such a tremendously different year in 2020? The 2019 report was very optimistic. There was excitement about the new year with Pastor Carolyn. On February 2, the new council was sworn in. Planning for a 125th Anniversary Celebration that was intended to go on throughout the year had already started.

By mid-March, the feelings of excitement had changed to feelings of apprehension. What is COVID-19? What are the symptoms? How is it treated? When will it be over, etc.? The church was closed to services March 15 to coincide with the recommendations of the State of Wisconsin, St. Croix County CDC, Northwestern Synod of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Governor Evers. We monitored these organizations watching and learning from their guidance, sometimes a few reviews of data a week. From that date on the church would only partially open for a few weeks for small groups to meet. As of this writing, the church building is closed to all activities except for essential functions.

We have all learned many lessons from this worldwide pandemic. Our creativity and ability to adapt have given us the tools to overcome these trials. We have learned what "ZOOM" is and that it is our best method to hold meetings. We have learned what social distancing is about, how many times a day you can wash your hands, how to use sanitizers and to not go anywhere without your mask. This is a congregation that rises to every occasion that is needed. There are many individuals and several groups that have addressed challenges and provided solutions. The facility we call church is just a building, an important building, but still just a building. **The real church is made up of people and our spirit.**

Adding to Our Resources Through Talent, Commitment, and Effort:

- There was an unknown talent in our midst that rose to the occasion when we closed the church in March. Pastor Carolyn recognized the need to find a way to provide worship to our congregation while not being able to attend services in our church. She stepped forward and made it happen using her ability to create a worship video with the vast resources of a cell phone. She would create videos and then post these services on the internet, again using her cell phone, for us to watch on Facebook on Sunday morning. Music was provided by Deb Tonsager and Craig Gustafson joined by others on Zoom to create the services. The fact is attendance has increased from pre-epidemic services. The Pastors proof of concept model, and the trials and tribulations it caused her on a twice weekly basis, led the team to develop better practices and quality enhancements as they learned. Although the current method works reasonably well, it is not a sustainable model once we return to church. There is a need for cameras, monitors, and audio equipment that will suit the need when we return. The Information Technology Committee is working on gathering procurement specifications to provide the information needed to create sustainable practices that will deliver ministries to not only serve our congregation but our community as well. Please stay tuned for more information on this topic.

- In January 2020 one of our very generous members, donated a townhome to Mt. Zion. This is a very nice property built in 2005. Not wanting to be a landlord, we sold it adding \$150,000 to our liquid finances. The use of these funds has not yet been determined. We purposely have kept our resources liquid and available to serve our ministries as needed during the pandemic. Allocation of these funds will need to be decided at a later date when our future is more predictable.
- Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan for \$18,400. These funds were used to supplement our payroll, and overhead. We are waiting to be notified of its forgiveness.
- Generosity Intention Cards exceeded last year's Stewardship Campaign, exceeding a goal of 100 Intent cards, releasing a \$10,000 challenge gift for meeting our goal. **To those that donated and worked on the Culture of Generosity Program, THANK YOU!**
- 3 Year Plan has been initiated by the Executive Committee per the constitution. This is an ongoing planning process that we are starting this year. This is a tool that we can use to look at our congregation and our ministries and develop a plan to achieve established goals throughout the year. This is about Preparation, Planning, and Guidance for the future.
- Wilderness Committee is a new group that has been assembled to create policies and practices needed to manage the use of the church, church property, and opening of the church from a safety perspective.
- Administrative Committee is working on all of the administration policies and forms needed to take care of the "business" portion of our ministries. This is an ongoing project that has made good progress this year.

I have enjoyed working with everyone this past year. Although I am not going to miss 2020, I am going to miss coffee with Pastor Carolyn and Judy Meincke on Monday mornings to address the issues at hand for the week, some weeks that was a tall order. However, it was always good to know that the congregation would be ready to rise to any challenge. May 2021 be the year that we can look back on with happiness, positivity, and a sense of accomplishment for beating the virus.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Letourneau

Here we stand...in the freely given gift of Christ.... compelled to reach out into the world.