

Report to Congregation Council

January 2023

Do you notice anything different? No, it's not the date, but what's above it. The Constitution and Bylaws Team began meeting earlier this month, preparing the necessary updates to our constitution which hasn't been done since 2006. One of the discussions we had was how our elected leadership (executive committee) gets referred to within the governing body of the ELCA and our local churches. As a congregation and it's elected leaders this is a conversation that we will want to have at a future meeting. Although I titled my report in this way, it was just to just get your attention to this matter... we are still the executive committee until we say otherwise.

January is always a busy month. As rostered leaders we talk about how getting through the busy-ness of the holidays is always something we look forward to, and yet the busy-ness changes to what's necessary for the new month and year ... that being administration. Lots of reports, getting back into the swing of visits (which decrease through the holidays due to the additional demands), goal setting with the many various committees, and setting up schedules. This month was just that. Add to it two new committees (the Constitution/Bylaws, as mentioned above, and the Dandelion Team, which also met as a local group for the first time yesterday), as well as adding a weekly staff meeting in order to improve communication and coordination, and it's a full month!

Visits with members of the church continue to go well. I'm glad to be back getting out at least one day every week to visit with the membership. As I look back over the visits I had in 2022 I feel like I've made good progress toward meeting my goal to have "contact" with all of the members at least once in a year's time. I have 4 months to go to achieve that goal ... but I can't reach it without everyone's help. So, if we haven't connected (via a call, visit, meal shared) please reach out, or expect to hear from me!).

It feels like Christmas and the many services are so long ago, and yet they are a part of this past

month's period of time. Christmas Eve attendance was clearly impacted by the unusually cold weather and snow. We had planned to use this year as a gauge as to adding a third worship opportunity. Given the attendance numbers, it would seem we don't warrant adding an additional service. However, we will use next year as a gauge again, and if we see we are in need then we will discuss the options in adding a third. On Christmas day we offered something new ... a meditative, self-guided worship service with communion. The service was one which I grew up with, introduced at St. Luke's, and now here. Given that Christmas day was on a Sunday, we felt it important to offer "something" for our Sunday worship. We didn't expect many, as most have traditions Christmas morning that interfere. But for those who did attend, there was very positive feedback and a desire to offer it again. The New Years Eve Holden with Healing service was fairly well attended for an additional service and we will plan to offer it again.

As I look ahead towards 2023 and all that it will bring, I have certain goals that come to the forefront:

1. With regard to visitation, I will work towards completing my goal of having at least some form of contact with all of the members of St. Matthew before May 1st. Although there are many members with whom I have weekly and multiple contact, it's important that I know "all" of the people to whom I minister. I will also continue to participate with the youth of the congregation by attending youth events, as well as explore alternative ways in which to connect and deepen those relationships. Once this goal is reached I will start again for the following years.
2. With regard to administration, I will continue to work with the Constitution/Bylaws Team in updating our governing documents; work with all elected leaders and team leaders in the congregation in organizing and establishing a centralized place within the church facilities to keep important documents. The practice has been to keep said documents in personal homes, which is not a best practice.
3. Additionally, I will emphasize improved communications between all committees, leaders, staff, and various ministries by modeling my own communication with others and giving reminders to cc-in rostered staff and the church office on email

communications. The office should be the “central hub” for all things church, as people call the office for information and details. The office should be included in all communications of important information in order to be able to share and disseminate the information. Additionally, I will continue to teach and model healthy communication between all peoples of the congregation. I will instruct people in “de-triangulation” techniques and encourage people to speak with one another directly first (Biblical model), as well as how to discourage “parking-lot” conversations and gossip.

4. With regard to worship, I will work with the Worship Team and music leadership to improve our current worship services by “tightening up” some parts of the services in order to create a smoother and more continuous flow of the service. I will also encourage and lead in the planning of services at least one month in advance.
5. With regard to discipleship and evangelism, my goal is to continue working with the Dandelion Team in helping/leading our congregation and its members in their walk with Christ as well as exploring how our walking together impacts the world around us.
6. With regard to stewardship, my goal is establish a team of people to lead a year-round model for offering our gifts and resources.
7. With regard to education, my goal is to continue to offer both a Sunday morning adult Bible study as well as a Thursday evening study. I also plan to explore ways with Deacon Lindsay as to working with the youth of the congregation from time to time in their instruction.
8. With regard to congregational life, my goal is to work on a healthy life/work balance. Attention to my “self” this past year suffered with the transitions and adjustments to a new setting. It’s time to find a healthy balance again. In support of this will be quarterly meetings with a Mutual Ministry Team, which has been established and will meet soon for the first time. The purpose of this team is to offer a safe and confidential place to discuss joys, concerns, and issues that arise more regularly than just at the annual evaluation. This team serves as “two-way” communication between the congregation and the rostered staff.
9. Finally, my goal is to remain active and foster the cooperative relationships/ministries within the Synod as well as with the local ecumenical rostered leaders.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Rev. Steven Mahaffey