

Report to Congregation Council
February 21, 2023

I'm not sure this past month's-worth of time could have been packed more fully. Between the normal weekly and monthly events (Bible & Brews and LGL Samaritan Fund on Thursdays; Choir Rehearsals on Wednesdays; 5 Star and committee meetings most Tuesdays and now on a couple Mondays, monthly Cleveland West clergy meeting) were added some additional activities (Constitution & Bylaw meetings; pre-marriage meetings; lots of extra Personnel meetings; Dandelion Team meetings; property meeting; and weekly Tuesday morning staff meetings). Additionally, there was a trip to the bank to get things squared away for me on the Flour Barrel Fund, a Friends & Family CPR training at the fire department, and the first of five 1st Communion instruction classes after Sunday morning worship. And these were just the meetings and activities!

Our worship life together also contained some different items: first, the Worship Team released the new worship pattern to the congregation after months of discussion and discernment. At our monthly meeting I presented to the Team a draft copy of a funeral policy for consideration. St. Matthew currently doesn't have a policy in place for Funeral Services held at the church. On the 5th of February we recognized the Scouts in the congregation with a special liturgy, on the 12th the Luther Middles participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring, and on the 19th we themed our worship around the Dandelion Project. On the 1st of February I presided over the funeral service for Heather Haycook's grandfather, Nesim Muharemovic. Finally, I spent time preparing for the upcoming season of Lent, planning Wednesday night worship services and finding people to play the various parts for the drama, *The People vs. Judas Iscariot*.

I am glad to have been able to work back into my monthly rotation of visits. January, with the many extra administrative tasks, among a flurry of other new activities, impacted my practice of getting out most Thursdays to visit. Visiting is one of the joys for me in ministry, as I get to spend time with the membership and "know" who each of you are. This past month I was not only able to get out most Thursdays, but also got out a couple Wednesdays during the day, attended a basketball game for one of our youth, and spent time with some church members socially.

One of the highlights of the month for me was being able to travel up to Sawmill Creek Resort with Deacon Lindsay for the All Ohio Rostered Ministers Gathering. The time there provided us with an opportunity to connect with our colleagues, worship together, and learn about "Spiritual Directors" and how important it is for us, as leaders, to take time to tend to ourselves while we are tending to the many people of our congregations.

I plan to be away Sunday March 26th as I will be blessed to not only preside but celebrate with Deacon Lindsay and Austin during their wedding weekend! Additionally, I will be using a week of vacation the week following Easter, April 10-16. Pastor Shelly Nelson-Bridger will fill-in for me on March 26th and is aware she will be preaching our last Dandelion sermon series on Baptism.

As I look ahead to the season of Lent that begins this coming Wednesday, I know our time together will undoubtedly be just as busy. We are what I'd term "a big church in a small building." We operate much like a large congregation with the many activities and wonderful ministries happening within our life together. I pray that these next 40 days of Lent will provide us each with the "time" to look inwardly and to "make room" for those things that center and deepen us in our walk with Jesus.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey