

Report to Congregation Council January 16, 2024

January reports have always been sort of strange to write in my opinion. My guess as to why I feel this way most likely comes from the fact that the report forces me to look back not just to the last month (which is normal), but to the last year, which includes the weeks leading up to Christmas and New Years. When the calendar flips, and most of our attentions also flip to the next year (with goals and resolutions and hopes for what the year might bring), Christmas and New Years and what happened in the past month feels ... well, it feels "so last year!"

And yet, what just happened this past month of this past year is "choked full" of events and experiences that are truly worthy of reporting. So, here goes: We finished up our Wednesday mid-week Advent services on the 20th. Once again, we used Holden Evening Prayer as our Liturgy and shared a devotion each evening that tied into the selected lessons for that night. Many reported back to me that the devotions "spoke" to them deeply as they prepared for Christmas.

As a staff, most of us were able to gather on the 21st for lunch and laughter at Los Cantaritos Mexican Grille. We shared gifts and visited for a few hours! We are blessed to have a group of people that enjoy not only serving and working with one another, but who genuinely enjoy one another's company!

On the 24th we had the unusual (albeit repetitive) experience of gathering for Advent 4 worship that morning, and later gathering for Christmas Eve services. The weather was MUCH more kind to us this year than last ... and both Christmas Eve services were well attended. We continue to gauge whether there's a need to add a 3rd Christmas Eve service. We haven't reached that point yet, as we didn't need to set up any of the folding chairs. However, we're getting close! Additionally, Deacon Lindsay and I discussed (and have since shared with the Music Team) that we might want to consider having one of the two services early in the day (say 2 or 3pm) in order to allow families with young children and adults that don't drive at night an opportunity to worship on Christmas Eve, since many people who fit that description aren't coming to worship based on the times we have been offering. It's being discussed.

On the 31st we had one worship service (lessons and carols) and incorporated a healing service into it, rather than hold a separate worship service later that day. Again, many commented that they "liked" having that service during the day vs later that night because it gave them the opportunity to participate.

Various committees didn't waste any time getting together when the New Year kicked in, coming together to continue their work and ministries. Some of the committee meetings I attended were the Worship Team, the Evangelism/Communication committee, and the LGL Samaritan committee. The Congregation Council also came together to continue their consultations with the Systems Team and how we might move forward together towards health and wholeness as a congregation. Look for a letter soon from the Council that will hopefully answer some of your questions. Bible & Brews also kicked back up after a couple of weeks off for the holidays.

The busyness of the holidays also impact my visitation with those of whom I regularly visit. With the change of the year, and the "extras" decreasing, I've been able to start to get

back to my visits. It's wonderful to get out again with the members and is one of the best parts of doing ministry!

I had the joy of baptizing Elijah McDaniels this past Sunday, the 14th. As one of the middle school youths picked up on and commented to her mom, baptisms make me happy!! In preparation for working with Elijah's parents, both have expressed an intent to join us as members in the upcoming future. With that said, I am once again working on assembling a "new members" list and class, and once I reach a number conducive to having a class, I will hold one. Praise God the Holy Spirit continues to blow on and through us!

Lastly, Deacon Lindsay and I will both be away for continuing education January 17-21 in New Orleans. Then, from January 23-25 we will both be attending the all-Ohio Rostered Ministers Gathering in Sandusky. Pastor Jim Watson (Zion Lutheran) will serve as the emergency contact from the 17-21. If there is an emergency situation, please contact Heike (Zion's office administrator) at (330)483-3873 first. Pastor Jim's number is (330)591-1422 if the emergency is after their office is closed. Pastor David Connor will be returning to serve as Pulpit Supply Pastor on Sunday the 21st.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey