

Report to Congregation Council  
December 17, 2024

It's been a full but fun past month. The season of Advent, even as it inevitably jam-packs my calendar with more meetings and events than ever, still somehow always feels enjoyable to me. Maybe I've never lost the childhood sense of wonder and excitement ... hard to say! Or maybe it has something to do with the additional worship services on Wednesdays, and the more festive ones like the Children's Pageant, and the family-centric focus of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Regardless, it's all good.

There were lots of meetings this past month: Fun Fellowship; weekly staff; Medina Clergy; Evangelism; Property; 2025 Church-wide Synod members ... in addition to others that were on my calendar but which I didn't make it to, like Finance and LGL Samaritan. Don't misunderstand this as complaining ... I think it's awesome that we have such an active and vibrant congregation and that the many committees continue to move ministries forward!

I also spent some time out of my office visiting, which was great! As I've mentioned before, I'd much rather be out and about, than in my office performing the MANY administration items that need completion week in and week out. Visits included both home-bound members as well as actively attending ones. Holy Communion is administered when I'm with home-bound members, however I'm exploring/researching the past practice of lay communion assistants and reimplementing that practice, as I've had a couple people approach me about getting it going again. From what I can gather, it stopped right around when COVID struck (which makes sense).

Thanksgiving Eve worship had four more people in attendance in comparison with last year, a total of 44. Although that service continues to be a conversation topic every year at Worship Team meetings, the service certainly seems to stay steady with attendance and is meeting a need of the congregation. At the same time, Thanksgiving isn't a religious holiday (which I stated in my message this year), and as Christians, "giving thanks" is a daily activity and not reserved for just one day of the year. As a member of the clergy, I have certain family-centered religious holidays I am required to "be here" for, ones which I'd never consider missing (Christmas and Easter). Thanksgiving is the one major family holiday for which I can potentially travel to be with my family ... and as my children are now at an age where they are starting to host the holiday, there may be future Thanksgiving holidays where I will want to/chose to travel. Although I may be gone, there's no reason that others might be involved in leading ... it would just be that there wouldn't be Holy Communion that evening.

Wednesday Advent services have also continued to meet a need. Holden Evening Prayer is a quiet, meditative liturgy, one which most people love. Although the attendance numbers have been small (23 and 34 at the first two this year) and the service itself is short (20 minutes max), it provides us with a nice way to end the day as well as spiritually prepare for Christmas.

The Children's Christmas Pageant this year went very well. There were 139 in attendance, with many parents and grandparents in attendance. I'm thankful to those who were instrumental in working with all the young people for this special Sunday worship experience.

Bible & Brews kicked back off after taking most if not all of November off. We finally finished studying Proverbs and have dug into the Gospel of Mark with a new sense of passion. Although Proverbs contains much wisdom for life, there wasn't a lot of "meat on the bones" for teaching, whereas Mark has all sorts of history and theological applications that can be discussed. So far everyone has been thoroughly enjoying it.

The caroling this past Sunday at the Echelon was surprisingly well attended, with 23 of us in attendance. The residents were all very appreciative of our sharing a little Christmas cheer with them ... and if I might be a little prideful, we sounded pretty good too! It was super fun, and I'm sure we'll be discussing doing it again next year.

The first annual Church Christmas Party was also a lot of fun. 35 of us gathered at Forest Meadows, where we shared a potluck meal, had lots of goodies, and enjoyed one another's company. For the first time doing this, it went very well, and I can only imagine (as word spreads) will grow each year. There are already some new ideas being shared for what we might consider adding to next year's event to make it even more enjoyable for all.

And it might be purely a fellowship gathering of members, but the Men's Breakfast Group continues to go strong and grow. Just yesterday 13 men of the congregation, the most that have ever gathered, once again met at Yours Truly to share a meal and connect socially. What a witness!

As we look ahead to the end of this year and into the next, I'd like to remind committee chairs to write a short report for the Annual Report of this past year's ministries that were performed, as well as maybe share something exciting for the coming year the committee has planned. As I look ahead, I'm excited to share that I'll once again be holding a New Member class in preparation for welcoming more people into the life and ministry of St. Matthew. God continues to blow through our church as a blessing to our community and is still leading others into the life here. Praise God!

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey