

Pastor Mark's Council Report: January 2018

WORSHIP

- Jan 7: Presided at 8:30, led CWT at 11:00
- Jan 14: Preached at both services
- Jan 21: Created & led CWT at 8:30, presided at 11:00; Rite of Welcome at both
- Jan 28: Preached at both services

LEARN

- Facilitated and taught Adult Forum on Sunday mornings Jan 7, 14, 21 & 28: All four were part of six-week series on the Gospel of Mark
- Led Adult Bible Study on Wednesdays Jan 10 & 24
- Hosted & led The Way on Jan 10 & 24
- Lent 2018 Planning & Teacher Recruitment

CARE

- Hosted Council & Staff Christmas Party
- Memorial Service for Cherie Merrick
- Visits at Mission
- Hospice Care for one members
- Workplace visits
- Calls, texts, emails, office hours

GIVE

- NC Synod: Lay Preacher Training Team
- Lutheridge: Fifty Forward Planning Team
- LRU Grad Center consultation: connecting with local parishes and camp

LEADERSHIP

- Met with Executive Committee & Council, coordinating study time for January meeting
- Led weekly staff meetings
- Met with Personnel Cmte
- Meetings with NPK Director & Membership Secretary

CONTINUING ED (none taken this month)

REFLECTIONS: Annual Report (next page)

Senior Pastor's Report

Highs, Lows & God Moments

Campers at Lutheridge are taught to reflect by naming their "High, Low and God Moment" at the end of each day. Nativity Youth observe this same practice on Sunday evenings to reflect on their past week. We can do the same in looking back at the past year of ministry together.

Highs

Reformation 500 tops the list of Highs for 2017. Do you remember? It was a day which exemplified the best of Nativity. Most of us were able to be together that day for worship and fellowship. We sang with gusto as we celebrated communion, and we enjoyed one another's company amidst food, games and laughter. On a day when our Gospel proclaimed "the truth shall make you free", we burned our mortgage in the joy of being debt-free. Our elected leaders on council provided the leadership to make the day happen. Despite the cold weather, our community was warmed by the Spirit that day. It is a symbol of Nativity at its best, and a vision of what we can do together.

Lows

No doubt my Low in 2017 was the death of my dad during Holy Week. Thank you for your love and support through those difficult days.

In like manner, our community Low for the year would be losing those we loved. Each memorial service, though festive and joyful, brought about change, grief and a new reality. Other "good byes" were those relocating in later retirement, job transfers or local parish preference. Serving a long pastorate among you makes such losses especially poignant. However, the memories are dear and can come quickly to mind.

God Moment

My God Moment for 2017 was the solar eclipse in August. To begin with, it was an awesome experience of our Creator's handiwork. Moreover, circumstances had me in the path of totality that day, as I was teaching at our seminary in Columbia. You provided that opportunity as part of my sabbatical leave. Time spent teaching as well as traveling renewed my spirit and challenged my outlook for daily ministry. Thank you for that. The learnings of this year run deep and hopefully have enhanced our ministry together.

Adult Catechumenate & Faith Formation

Year two of "The Way" is helping to reshape how we welcome new folks into our community of faith. Built on the ancient catechumenate, this process allows individuals to inquire, explore, prepare, and ponder the call to follow Jesus. A new cohort of The Way begins each Fall, leading toward baptisms and affirmations of baptism at the Easter Vigil. This small group gathers midweek for a Christ-centered prayer, supper, and sharing. The Adult Catechumenate is slowly evolving within Nativity. In May we hosted a national training event, which allowed us to learn more about it and to share that with the other parishes who traveled here for the experience.

Similarly, coordinating and teaching Adult Forum this academic year (as we have returned to a full hour of Faith Formation on Sunday mornings) has provided yet another opportunity for sharing stories in the light of God's story.

A normal year ahead?

Is anything "normal" anymore? While the blessings of sabbatical and teaching made last year memorable for your senior pastor, being fully present in the parish is a welcome change. Personal goals for 2018 include: Working with Council, Pastors and Staff to build and re-build ministry teams for mission; Launching year three of The Way; and, Experiencing new horizons in homiletics (aka, "preaching").

Thank you

It is a privilege to serve as one your pastors. I look forward to the year ahead and give thanks for 2017. Thank you for sharing your life, love, and light with me.

+ Pastor Mark

WORSHIP

- Preached once (January 21)
- Participated in 6 Sunday morning worship services (Jan 7, 14, 21)
 - Participation indicates preaching, presiding, and/or leading Children's Word Time
- Created 2 Children's Word Time

Christmas Pageant

- Subtitled & published video recording

LEARN

- Prepared for Adult Bible Study (canceled morning of, due to snow, Jan 17)
- Supported Sunday morning Faith Formation classes, ordered new curriculum
- Taking Faith Home printed & distributed
- Confirmation Sacraments Event organization (crafted & led by Pr. Gregg on Jan 28)

Youth

- Created dinner & volunteer schedules for Spring 2018
- Led 2 Young Youth meetings (Jan 7, 21)
- Led 3 Youth meetings (Jan 7, 14, 21)
- Youth Gathering
 - Led 1 prep meeting (Jan 14)
 - Published Youth bios in e-news weekly
 - Began work for Basket Raffle

CARE

- Pre-surgery visit (Jan 8) & follow up
- Attended Pub Theology (Jan 18)
- Parishioner meeting (Jan 24)
- Ladies' Lunch Bunch (Jan 25)
- Parishioner visit (Jan 25)

GIVE

- Endowment Committee Support
- Met with Calvary Food Pantry representative (Jan 16)
- Noisy Offering facilitated (Pastors' Discretionary Fund)
- Signed & mailed end-of-year giving statements
- January Money Minute – Mission Support
- Monthly projections crafted

MELC

- 37 + contacts personally, more through Pr. Gregg and Michele

Stewardship for All Seasons

- Mountain Cluster meeting (Jan 25)

- Fall Drive evaluation done

NPK

- Read in Little Angels (Jan 22)
- Attended NPK Chapel

Finances

- NPK December finance review with Janine (Jan 10)
- NPK review with Pr. Mark (Jan 11)
- NPK January finance review with Janine (Jan 24)

SYNOD

- Contributed to parochial report

COUNCIL

- Council Meeting (Jan 8)

STAFF

- Participated in 5 staff meetings (Jan 2, 8, 16, 22, 30)
- Personnel Meeting (Jan 3)
- Lenten Planning Meeting (Jan 18)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

- ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza – Houston, TX (Jan 26-29)

A good bit of my month was spent working on getting things ready for the new year financially – checking over last year and looking forward to this year. I spent time on NPK finance, making sure we have a solid plan in place for managing costs and income, and I believe we have a strong system ready for 2018. In terms of congregational finance, we finished the year nearly breaking even, which is wonderful, and January was a strong giving month, setting us up well as we start out.

During this current season of Stewardship for All Seasons, we are evaluating how our Fall Drive went and focusing on how we hope to achieve our goals in 2018. In evaluating our drive, I spent time calculating how we did on our goal of converting Freedom for the Future dollars and encouraging new giving to go towards our ministry goals for 2018 – we've done an excellent job of this as a congregation, and our commitments are such that we should be able to Make Christ Known in an abundance of ways. I am especially glad to say that 80 of the 136 households who made a commitment intend to increase their giving, and 29 more intend to maintain their current level of giving. There are always seasons in our lives relating to the amount we can give, and every commitment that we received was faithful in the midst of those seasons, whether the commitment indicated a decrease, a maintenance, or an increase in giving. Our strong giving in January also points to that faithfulness; I see God's people at Nativity honoring their commitments to our ministry together.

At the end of January, I went to Houston, TX for a Continuing Education event – The ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza. This event is designed for Youth ministers (pastors,

deacons, lay leaders, etc.) as an opportunity to take part in workshops, share experiences, and to learn more about the Gathering this summer. During this 4-day event, I was able to take a tour of Houston, which included finding our hotel for the Gathering, exploring a potential service project site, and seeing the NRG Park, where we'll spend time with the 30,000 other participants! I also learned a lot about what to expect, what to bring, where to eat, and how to travel through the city. This was incredibly valuable as we move into the last few months of preparation for our trip at the end of June. I also went to several useful workshops, including one on how to support and lift up volunteer leaders in the congregation, and one on asking powerful questions in order to lead well. I'm very glad that I went to this event, and I'm grateful to Nativity for the opportunity to use my Continuing Education time in this way. Thank you for your commitment to ongoing learning for your pastors.

Pr. Rachel

Worship

- Preached once (Jan 7, Baptism of Our Lord)
- Led worship in 8 Sunday morning worship services (presiding, CWT, etc.)
- Presided at a memorial service for Cherie Merrick (Jan. 2)
- Rehearsed and sang with the Nativity Choir (Jan. 7, 14, 21)
- Rehearsed and rang with the Handbell Choir (Jan. 21)
- Assisted with Liturgical Arts event (Jan. 4)
- Planned for a different way to celebrate Transfiguration this year: Camp Sunday
- Designed new liturgy, using the Celtic Mass for regular worship in the season after Epiphany
- Created some of the new worship volunteer schedules for spring
- Various planning for Lent throughout January

Learn

- Taught Confirmed Youth Faith Formation Class (Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28)
- Taught Adult Bible Study (Jan. 3)
- Taught Confirmation Event: Sacraments (Jan. 28)
- Participated in Youth Group (Jan. 7 and 14)
- Participated in Youth Gathering Meeting (Jan. 14)

Care

- Pastoral care contacts on a daily basis throughout January
- A handful of unique pastoral care meetings this month: some pleasant, all holy
- Participated in Pub Theology (Jan. 25)
- Prayer Shawl Dedication (Jan. 28)

Give

- MELC assistance when people come by the office (1 or 2 per week)

Administration

- Oversaw production of bulletins and Weekly Nativity Notes
- Provided some assistance regarding the Annual Report
- We continue to work towards a more accurate membership roll, with Corinne and Michele devoting their time to getting the member info and numbers updated

Music Director Search Committee

- Met with Personnel Committee and Council as part of final negotiations with Primary Candidate
- Received word from Primary Candidate that our offer was declined
- Began the process of reviewing our first attempt to fill the position, first with Personnel, and checking-in with Search Committee to inquire about each member's willingness to continue into the second search (fortunately, all members are willing to continue)
- Spent a considerable amount of time documenting the details of the search process, from start to finish, which was needed for review purposes
- Estimated of average hours spent on search per week: 10-20, depending on the week

Building / Cleaning

- Finalized cleaning contract with Stratus Business Solutions (start date: Feb. 1)
- Final walkthrough with new cleaning franchise owner (Jan. 25)
- Participated in Property Committee Meeting (Jan. 23)
- Facilitated Asheville Quilt Guild's use of facilities (Jan. 16)
- Continuing supervisory conversations regarding building maintenance
- Shoveling and salting when necessary

Staff / Other Committees

- Attended weekly staff meetings (Jan. 2, 8, 16, 22, 30)
- Participated in Personnel Committee Meetings (Jan. 3 and 29)
- Participated in Council Meeting (Jan. 8)
- Attended Council and Staff "12th Nite Party" (Jan. 5)

Pastor's Remarks

There's an old Catalonian Carol that begins with the words "Cold December Flies Away". This new year suggests otherwise, however, as it was *January* that seemed so cold, and flew so quickly by. For my part, January saw a continued focus on a number of big projects, all of which

helped to contribute to the hectic feel of the month. One in particular framed the month, and so I'll keep my focus there.

January began alongside the final stages of our attempt to bring a new Music Director to Nativity. This was a most faithful endeavor, in which the congregation's leadership really stepped up, carefully considering the candidate brought forward by the Search Committee. In the end, it was determined that we had the right person for the job, though the timing was not quite right - our candidate could not accept our offer. This was difficult news, to be sure. Nevertheless, I was greatly encouraged that our leadership worked so hard and so faithfully to do everything in our power to hire our candidate. This response gives me great hope as we move forward into a new search. But, before we could begin again, we did the important work of taking time to review our entire process, assessing its strengths and its areas for improvement.

The strength of any process (including our search for a new Music Director) is measured by what it produces and how it fares when scrutinized. Seemingly, our process proved successful because the search produced a primary candidate who was worthy of being offered the position. Still, there is always more we can learn from the experience, so we took the time to intentionally review every step we took over the past six months that led to a job offer. In this review, we determined we have a search process that required only minor adjustments, which means we are well-prepared as the search begins anew next month. Following the same basic pattern - though now armed with more experience and a few important lessons - the leadership is in a better position than ever before to find the right person to lead Nativity in song.

In all this, I thank you for your patience, sisters and brothers in Christ. I know it was difficult to have to wait longer than expected to hear the result of the search, and I know it was likely disappointing/frustrating when the result was not the one for which we'd hoped. We will find the right person to lead us into the future - it's just going to take a little longer than we thought. In the meantime, I continue to ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit continue to lead the way, showing us what God wants for our congregation. We have every reason to believe God's plan will include exactly what we need, and empower us to *Make Christ Known* in new and exciting ways.

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Gregg