



Dear People of God,

Grace and peace to you from our gracious God!

We have been working together in Christ's church for about 7 weeks! I am glad to be getting to know many of you better and I look forward to getting to know more of you as we move forward.

There is an old adage that goes, "The only way out is through." The only way to get healthy, to reach the goal you envisioned, is to do the hard work of getting healthy. It's like getting your body physically fit. You can't get fit by avoiding working out, or talking about other people working out, or watching from the sidelines as other people work out. To get fit you have to work out. We are getting fit, spiritually and emotionally and organizationally. And it takes everyone to be involved to get a congregation healthy.

The first sentence of St. Paul's Vision Statement reads: "Our vision is to be a welcoming, caring, and healthy Christian community with people actively involved as followers of Jesus Christ." A large part of our work together during this interim period focuses around becoming the **healthy** Christian community that you envisioned together.

This past spring and summer you contracted with a consultant, Susan Nienaber, to assess and offer recommendations to the congregation. She delivered her recommendations in July, which included several items that have already begun. If you would like to see a video of her presentation, please contact the office.

So far, you are doing steps one and two. First, you are beginning to engage in rebuilding relationships. Several of you shared with me that you have met one-on-one to listen to one another and to repair broken relationships. I hope that as you feel confident to be able to listen, you will continue to do that work. Second, about twenty folks are studying and discussing *Congregational Fitness: Healthy Practices for Layfolk*, by Denise Goodman. This book challenges each of us to think about how we can more healthfully participate in our congregation so that conflict does not erupt causing harm to the congregation. I encourage you to dive into this book in discussion with others. You can join the discussion any time, Sundays after worship until about 11am. Also, please see our Facebook page and the Refresh and ReNews for on-line discussion options.

Your Council and I have identified three other action items to focus our work on congregational health in the next four-to-six months.

- 1) Breakthrough Prayer Initiative: Prayer for the Holy Spirit to breakdown any barriers we have toward being who God needs us to be here and now.
- 2) Behavioral Covenant: The congregation creates a covenant with one another about how we will act and how we will treat one another.
- 3) Facilitated Conversations: Healing happens when broken relationships are mended. Sometimes we need help doing the mending so we have conversations that are facilitated and focus on listening and being heard.

A fourth action item is to learn and talk about stewardship of resources. Over the next two months we will talk about God's Abundant Blessings and how we live in response to God.

You can see that there are six different activities for health happening or coming soon in our congregation. The best ways for you to take part are to make the health of this congregation a priority. Join the work out. Participate in worship, read and discuss *Congregational Fitness*, listen to someone with whom you may not always agree, pray, engage the steps to health as they come up. God promises to walk along with you, carry you through the hard stuff, and bless you along the way. And on the other side, the Holy Spirit will amaze us with opportunities to serve God and our neighbors.

Peace,

Pastor Sarah