Pastor's Page ~ November 2026

People and Programs

I'm sure you've barely noticed *wink wink*, but the American church is in a state of re-formation. Church goers are leaving the traditions of their childhood to engage entirely different ways of doing church. Or they are taking what they find valuable from their previous church experience and forming brand new communities. Some are leaving churches altogether. Some are switching to other forms of faith. People in the pews are re-forming the way church is done.

I don't mean there's a particular guru leading a reform movement. These are movements of like-minded and like-hearted people regrouping into communities that meet their deepest spiritual needs. People, not denominations or reformation leaders or pastors alone are making new connections and communities. Can there be anything more natural or human?

Many of these people are looking for someone to connect with, not new dogmas to embrace.

What will bring them to our home, a place where they feel affirmed, spiritually engaged, supported, encouraged for mission and ministry and justice? It's not our website. It's not my or January's preaching. It's not, although it certainly helps, free popcorn. It's YOU. It's people. The greatest gift we have to offer is ourselves. Each of us is the neighbor that seekers of faith communities can love and be loved by.

What keeps them coming is the way our people show up in this community. It might be children's church, fellowship, book and Bible study, Pride marches, choir, or free meals. The reason people stay in this special neighborhood of ours is because of our programming.

So, as your congregation leadership gets ready for our biannual meeting on Nov. 15th, I have been imagining what our next year will look like. What does do we offer community seeker and how do we make ourselves known to them? I keep coming back to *people and programs*.

People: Before the year is out, we will be offering order sheets for tote bags and tee shirts (more than one design to choose from!). It's my hope that each of us will carry our totes and wear our tees to the grocery store, the Y, the school board meeting, and on walks at Pokagon—anywhere and everywhere! I want people to meet us out in the world, to get to know us in our daily lives, and know which congregation we belong to. Because our people are the reason new folks come to our church. That's not my opinion; it's the most frequent reason cited by our new members. We need to let other people in our community get to know us through our everyday lives. Each of us is an ambassador for this congregation.

Programs: I have been working with Stephanie Hine, our Chirstian education chair, to launch a new children's church program called "See All the People." It's our conviction that this will lead to a congregation-wide learning model for all ages. Let us learn together what is meaningful, useful, responsible, and good about our Bible, our denomination, our beliefs, and our service to the world. To pull off good programming we need . . . people. We need your voice and your presence, and the voices and presence of newcomers to our congregation. Together we will craft meaningful spiritual, educational, missional, and relational experiences.

This vision for growth and new ways of discernment means a tee shirt for every person and a volunteer in every classroom (or fellowship hall, or mission . . .). I know you all give in so many ways—my gratitude is immeasurable. This isn't meant to be more work for the weary, it's meant to be an invitation for all current and future members to engage in ways that fuel our joy and service to God. We don't need to do more, we need to do what matters with our whole hearts. And we need to bring new neighbors into our midst to share this joyful coming together in the name of Christ.

So . . . can I put you down for a tote bag and two tee shirts? Let's show our larger community the kind of good and Christ-committed people who attend this church. As St. Francis (never) said, "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use tee shirts if necessary."

With gratitude for this body of Christ,

Pastor Nikki