

Senior Pastor's Remarks:

It is not uncommon that the Annual Business Meeting would dominate the weeks leading up to the event itself, but this year is something else entirely. The need to have the meeting via Zoom is something none of us has done before, and we hope it will not need to be repeated in the future. Yet regardless of the *format*, the work of the church goes on, and that means the business of the church must go on, too.

We have created a faithful proposal for a Ministry Spending Plan for the coming year. This is exciting. We have five excellent, entirely qualified candidates for Council. This, too, is exciting. We are going to elect the next year's Nominating Committee at this year's meeting - something we haven't done in quite some time, by the looks of things. While this part may not be as *exciting*, it is a step towards fidelity to our own governing documents, and that means it is progress. And in a time when a deadly global pandemic continues to spread with reckless abandon, we are doing all this work in a manner that is reasonably safe, which means we are not going to contribute to the spread for the sake of our annual business. The meeting itself, therefore, is a witness, that while we are *one Lutheran church together*, we are *also church for the sake of the world*. All this from a business meeting!

When Bishop Eaton articulated her fourfold emphases for the mission of the ELCA several years ago ([LINK](#)), she surely did not have the pandemic in mind. Still, her words hold true for us and make a claim on what we do as a congregation in Rock Hill, SC. As we look forward to another year of uncertainty - and yes, continue to exist in a period of some *political* uncertainty - these four emphases continue to provide us with stable ground on which to find our purpose in the world. They give us goals that can adapt to a changing landscape, and changing times. How does God call us to be *church*? How are we being called to live into our *Lutheran* identity? Emerging from a divisive year, how are we called to be church *together* in 2021? And in a time when our individual worlds may seem to shrink a bit, how are we being called to be church for the *sake of the world*?

Since most of my last few weeks has been consumed with preparation for the annual meeting, my answers to these missional questions tend to emerge from our spending plan - our best discernment of what God is calling us to do in the coming year. Speaking for your pastors' household, we are excited to grow in our giving and support of the plan that so many came together to form! We believe Grace's plan for the year ahead effectively addresses all four of Bishop Eaton's emphases - the goals in Grace's plan are concrete ways of *enhancing* the ministry we all share, and they boost our ability to *communicate* the best of what we do to the world around us. More people will come to know Grace Lutheran Church in 2021 and I am excited with what they will find!

Peace in Christ,

Pr. Gregg