

## Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

May 2022

### *Overall state of the Congregation*

I believe the overall state of our congregation is good and getting better. The fact that our Black, White and Gold Pledge Drive Gala was such a resounding success means to me that we are, at heart, a vibrant community eager to be back together and do good in the world. We have a lot going for us. Our Faith Formation program is engaging and well resourced. We have seen some nominal growth in new families over the past year. Our social justice ministry is well supported and is doing good in the world. Worship has been very strong this past year. And, as I will report below, despite some frustrations we are bridging the digital divide and providing for our on – line congregation.

There are problems. The pandemic has taken a toll on our music ministry. The number of choirs we now offer has been reduced. There have been requests for our music to diversify. Our pastoral care, while adequate, has struggled to re-engage with our congregation post pandemic. Reducing staff positions will affect our ability to provide new ministry. However, we are slowly learning to be more lay led in our programming. The Organ revealed a deep divide in our congregation that will need to be bridged through a more inclusive process of decision making and a renewed understanding of our relational covenant. I sense a tension between generations in our congregation that we need to address.

This may be the time for us to go through a new visioning process as well. I would suggest that we consider this next year as a time of intentional transition as we decide who we are and where we want to go for the next ten years. We are a very different congregation than ten years ago. Let's own that change and decide on our future together.

### *Dealing with the Budget Gap*

We made some headway towards closing our budget gap in the last month. First of all, pledge giving is up to just shy of \$450,000, about where we were last year. The good news is that those who pledged increased their pledges considerably. The bad news is that we still have many who did not pledge...yet.

Through staffing reductions and changes to benefits we have managed to cut out some of our people costs for the coming year. The structural deficit still exists.

### *Covid and Construction*

We have learned how to live with COVID although it has been hard. There are still some who are not comfortable coming back into the building. I believe that this situation will continue and that we now have a dual congregation. We will need to plan accordingly.

Construction has not been hampered beyond supply chain issues. We have completed the first of two phases of the capital campaign work. I will discuss next steps below. The building looks clean and well cared for. One outstanding issue is the new cork floors. The contractor is supposed to return to replace damaged pieces and we will have to seal the floor with several coats of sealer.

### *Completion of this Capital Campaign and Beyond*

We have approximately \$768,000 remaining in our Capital Campaign, if all outstanding pledges are paid. Our next project is to remove the sanctuary floor and the chancel. We will then build a new chancel with new wiring for electrical and AV. The new chancel will also be able to hold a new organ. A ramp will need to be installed on one side of the chancel for access. A new floor will then be installed. We might have enough to replace some more of the glass. The architects are completing the drawings.

Beyond that we will still need to replace the HVAC in the sanctuary, new lighting, new media such as screen and a permanent mounting of cameras. We will also still need to replace all the rest of the wall glass.

The architects have also provided us with several schematics for a gender-neutral restroom configuration. There was no extra cost for them to provide these drawings to us.

A future capital campaign would be needed to finish the work on the sanctuary and replace our restrooms

### *Use of Digital Resources*

Our streaming has vastly improved despite the occasional loss of internet. That problem seems to have been solved. To truly bridge the on line and in person services I believe we will need to mount permanent screens. I recommend a task force be formed to come up with a more comprehensive vision of how we might bridge our digital divide, including surveying other congregations.

### *Board-Executive Relationship*

This topic deserves more consideration. I am recommending an executive team be established who could help me work through some of the complexities of running our congregation and provide needed perspective to provide to the board as we re-prioritize our ends. We have important work to do. I also think it is important that our monitoring reports include an opportunity for me to report on my visions and struggles as your CEO.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. John Morehouse