

Pastors' Annual Report to the Congregation  
December 13, 2009

*We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)*

This has been a year of challenge and change for our congregation. Amidst all of this, as your pastors, we often find ourselves marveling in our office about the incredible blessing we receive in being your Pastors during this time of transition. This congregation is blessed with amazing and gifted people filled with passion who seek to serve God and listen to the Spirit. Walking with you all is a rich gift that we both treasure deeply.

The year began in difficulty and turmoil as we sorted through the results of our last Annual Meeting. During worship on Sunday, March 1, Pastor David Rapp resigned his call to pastoral ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church after twenty-one years. Pastor Rapp's last Sunday at Ascension was March 29. He shortly thereafter resigned from the ELCA clergy roster. On March 14, Pastor Zane Wilson was presented to the Ascension Church Council by Pastor Susan Kintner, Assistant to the Bishop, as interim pastor. The Council voted to approve the appointment, effective April 1, 2009. Our first worship service together was April 5, the Sunday of the Passion.

One of our first decisions was to discard the practice of referring to pastors as "senior" and "associate." We are both pastors and we both do pastoral ministry as fits our gifts, skills, and abilities. We prefer to call ourselves "partners in ministry" and take great joy in working together to build up this congregation.

Ascension Lutheran Church is in the call process. One task for interim pastors is to assure that membership data is accurate. Following an extensive effort to contact all who are on our membership rolls we have removed 106 people from voting membership. Some of these folks resigned from the congregation; some have moved to other churches; some have moved out of the area. During the same time period we have received twenty-one new voting members.

There have been other staff changes during the year. We thanked Debb Gilchrist for her service as publisher and secretary and welcomed Carla Hutchins to a new title, office manager. The office of financial secretary has been separated from the office of treasurer and the financial secretary will become a member of the Church Council under our new constitution. We have hired Melissa Gurr to oversee the nursery. Charles Friesen has accepted the position of choir director. Susan Detwiler continues to be our very capable and highly motivated Director of Children's Ministries. Linda Sindt has volunteered many hours to the business of personnel policies and procedures. We continue to celebrate the ministry of Karen Halter as she serves as our custodian.

One of the more daunting tasks undertaken this year was writing a constitution and bylaws for the congregation. The original committee of Naurine McCormick, Gerry Anderson, Charles Lane, and Pastor Zane worked long and hard at the constitution. During the past several months Charles Lane has taken the lead in preparing bylaws. Presentation of the constitution and bylaws to the congregation for adoption is a major step in preparing the congregation to call their next pastor. The Constitution will be presented for adoption at the Congregation meeting in December. Charles has also worked with the congregation to prepare a mission/vision statement. That statement tells the world who we are and will also be presented to the Congregation for adoption during our Congregational Meeting in December.

For the first time in many years Ascension Lutheran Church conducted a stewardship campaign. Under the direction of Ted Menold, we used the "Consecration Sunday"

program. Pastor Jane Baker of Faith Lutheran Church, Roseburg, was our guest speaker. The event was well accepted and allows us to write a budget based on the estimated giving of the congregation for the coming year. Even though this year included a painful church split, we are excited and humbled to be able to announce that overall, our average giving per unit will be increasing in the coming year, giving testament to the dedication and hope our members hold for the congregation's future.

A few more moments to celebrate in this year's life of ministry include the wonderful Vacation Bible School that attracted over sixty children. We celebrated the return of "Oktoberfest" and the ALCW Bazaar was a major success.

During the year there were eight baptisms; six students were confirmed on the Day of Pentecost. Nine children received first Communion. There was one wedding. Four funerals were conducted in the church.

Perhaps the most exciting activity of the year, in our opinion, has been the emergence of lay-driven ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church. The congregation is the people. Pastors come and pastors go. The congregation is the constant. Our job is to work ourselves out of a job, and we are excited to see that becoming more and more of a reality everyday.

There are great things in all of our futures and we trust that through it all, our "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" will guide our feet and bless our lives.

Carry on in Joy!

The Pastors Wilson--A to Z.