

2019 ANNUAL PASTOR'S REPORT

It's hard to believe it's been more than a year now since I began my pastorate at McFarland UCC. Wow. 2019 sure flew by! I have no doubt that's just how it's going to go for however long I'm blessed to be your pastor.

Much of the following is what I submitted to SaLT and the Search Committee by way of my own yearly review. I'd like you all to get a sense of my own perspective on how I'm feeling about our first year together as pastor and congregation.

First, as I reflect on this first year, here are some things that come to mind for which I'm feeling grateful. These are in no particular order, but I'll number them just in case anyone would like to use this report as a framework for additional conversation.

1. I think worship has been alive and meaningful for the most part. I feel pretty good about the quality and depth of my messages and the liturgies I've designed. I've gotten lots of feedback that people find worship meaningful and that it is helping us to worship God, grow in our faith, and experience Spirit-centered community. I also feel very good about the responses we got to special worship services like "Break the Silence," "One Love Interfaith Worship," outdoor worship, etc.
2. I'm grateful beyond words for all the new folks who have been attending worship and the over 20 who officially joined our congregation in 2019.
3. The weekly bible study after worship has been wonderful, and I hope it continues to grow. The desire to explore Scripture in this way, along with the responses of people to the theological content of worship, has reaffirmed and deepened my sense that there is a deep hunger in our community for this kind of education and spiritual exploration. As you'll see at the end of this report, one of my goals for 2020 is to offer more opportunities for adult spiritual formation and education.
4. I feel really good about the process we went through to clarify our outreach focus and the content and scope of our efforts.
5. I've done my best to be an accessible, responsive, loving, and attentive pastor and to be present when needed. I hope you all have experienced me this way and I trust you'll let me know directly if you do not!
6. I think I have built the beginning of some warm and loving and authentic relationships with quite a few people, including long term members and new people in our church. I'm so grateful for the genuine warmth and welcome that anyone who attends our congregation

feels immediately and for all the ways that you “regulars” here at MUCC make it easy for people to step into our community.

7. I feel good about my relationships and work with children and youth, and look forward to continuing to build on that. I would love to see more young people around here, as I know all of you would, and I’m eager to do what I can to reach out to families with children. At the same time, we “older folks” matter just as much and I am enjoying all the ways in which people of all ages at MUCC are “young at heart” and lots of fun to be with.
8. I’m grateful that my working relationships with our office manager Melissa and musical leader Diane Smeaton have been healthy and productive. I think things are going well in terms of our staff working well together and appreciating each other’s vital contributions.

Some hopes and goals for 2020;

1. The single most important thing that I’m taking away from this past year in terms of something I’d like to do differently/better is to put together a calendar for the entire year that will enable me to chart out the most important events in our life together and get out in front of things and make sure we are seeing the big picture and doing whatever planning we need to do to be well organized.

I learned the hard way this past year for example that if I don’t schedule my vacation time well in advance and plan around it that it can easily get squeezed out. I now have a huge calendar on the wall in my office that enables me to see the entire year at a glance and to have a better sense of the overall flow of things. There is a similar calendar on the in our all purpose room that anyone can look at, and we will do our best to make sure that upcoming events are on the website calendar as well.

2. I’m also aware that in order for us to implement the outreach priorities we have embraced that we will need to put some time and effort into organizing some specific groups and putting together a game plan for implementing specific goals and actions. We don’t have to use the word “committee,” if that feels old school, but I want to put some time into getting some of the newer things we’ve embraced (eco-justice, Haiti, NION for example) off the ground. I feel fine about where things are and how we’ve done our work during this past year, but I’m just saying that I/we need to start doing some of the detail/planning/goal setting/strategic work of bringing some specific efforts into being. Ultimately this will come back to calling forth the various gifts of people in our congregation and nurturing groups and specific commitments so that together we can accomplish the works of outreach we have embraced.

3. I'm well aware that our youth programs are in a retooling/regrouping place, and all I can say is that I want to do whatever is mine to do to intentionally breathe some fresh vitality into these programs (Sunday Funday! & Youth Group). I'm so grateful to all those who have been keeping our youth ministries going and to Mel Thompson in particular. It goes without saying that losing our beloved Dana Crumpton-Lee was a big part of our congregation's journey during 2019, and we are still feeling our way into the next phase of our youth ministry without Dana's leadership.

4. Adult Ed Programming: I'm just very much aware of the hunger people have (those with us already and those not yet with us who are searching for spiritual community and growth) for the ability to explore spiritual practices such as prayer/meditation, Mindfulness, mind/body/spirit practices like yoga, Tai Chi, Qi gong, drum circles, shamanic prayer journeying, etc. I have decided to put together a weekly Wednesday evening program through which we'll offer opportunities to explore many of these spiritual disciplines. I am in the process now of organizing this and putting a schedule together. The target date for beginning will be Wednesday, March 4th (The week after Ash Wednesday).

5. More parties and just plain fun time. I'd like to see us do more things that are just about being together and having fun! Movie nights. Games nights. Progressive dinners. Volleyball or whatever outside when the weather is nice. As I've said a few times during worship, our Jewish spiritual ancestors knew how to have great parties, festivals, and celebrations. We Christians need to party more!

And that's as good a way to close this report as I can think of. Thanks for making my first year as your pastor such a joy. I just love being with you and look forward to the upcoming year with lots of hope and anticipation of the Spirit moving powerfully in and through our community of faith.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Bryan Sirchio