

## Pastor's Report

from Interim Minister Michael Bausch

Having arrived as your Interim Minister on October 16, it's kind of hard to review the past year! But even in these three months with you it's easy to notice that you are a healthy, self-organizing system deeply committed to "doing" church in fresh and revitalizing ways.

Were I to highlight "talking points" that describe this congregation, what comes to mind are: Messy Church, the remodeling project, artistic Sunday worship, Sundaes on Thursday, the Valentine's Food Pantry benefit, people who deeply care about one another, musical variety, people who step up to do what needs doing in and around the building, awareness that mission is both in the church and in the community surrounding us, commitment to trying new things in worship, intergenerational welcome and engagement. Just to name a few things!

It's been a year of big changes, with Pastor Kerri's taking a new call as Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches. It's hard to say goodbye to a beloved pastor who endeared herself to you and who loved you as much as she did.

The remodeling project pushed the edges of your fund-raising and giving abilities, and has created some pretty major disruptions, what with no kitchen, fewer working bathrooms, deciding what things to remove, what furnishings to upgrade, and how the worship sanctuary should look, while renegotiating how the space is to be used. This is a work in progress. My short answer to the knotty challenges is that God needed a lot of chaos before creation could happen! Or, new life emerges out of the creative chaos.

Meanwhile, a Pastoral Search Committee begins its work, the Messy Church working group continues to plan monthly themes and activities for the second Sunday afternoon of each month, the choirs rehearse and provide music for worship, and your SaLT team watches over our ministries, programs, and finances. Your administrative assistant, Melissa Mendl, continues to prove indispensable as she produces worship bulletins, develops visuals for worship services, monitors social media posts, updates and coordinates the details of your work, and handles more and more visitors to the church who seek financial help.

As for me, I like learning about you and your church, and sharing my observations with you in the hope that you will continue to learn as well, and grow and thrive as a church of Jesus Christ. Having "hit the ground running" arriving right as the remodeling began, and as we entered the busy Thanksgiving-Advent-Christmas season, I now look forward to the completion of the remodeling project, and to reflecting with as many of you as want to talk about where we're at now as a church that is "between the no longer and the not yet." What are the rough edges we need to smooth? What are the smooth edges we need to crinkle?

Looking ahead we soon enter Lent and the preparation for Easter, this year uniquely situated between Valentine's Day and April Fools' Day! I see this as a chance to continue to align ourselves with our mission and purpose as a congregation, and to preserve the heart of this church while stimulating forward progress! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!