

PASTOR'S REPORT to the CONSISTORY of RICHVILLE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

January 3rd, 2022

A blessed New Year to everyone! Praying that your holiday(s) were enjoyable amidst all of the craziness of the last couple of weeks. With yesterday having been Epiphany Sunday, we have now concluded our celebrations for Advent and Christmastide, and I am grateful to everyone who made it all possible. This was another different kind of year -even as many Covid restrictions were altered or lifted, we still had to face others and the cultural shifts experienced as a consequence of the pandemic. The weeks leading-up to Christmas were fruitful (if reduced in scope from years past). We were able to support local and national seasonal mission projects, engage in community outreach, honor our own liturgical traditions, and maintain the day-to-day ministries of RUCC. Reception of our devotional books and the daily ones I write/share online was favorable. The addition of the Youth and Families one was a good idea and those who took advantage of it seemed to like it (however, we probably ordered at least 1/3 more than necessary).

Called 2 Care was dutiful in taking the Advent Lantern to a few of our home-or-facility-bound parishioners, and people were grateful and enjoyed the visits. Breakfast with Santa was a big hit -with over 50 kids and at least as many adults (not counting our own volunteers). The makeup of the crowd was encouraging -as it was a mix of member, non-member, returning, and first time participants; and alongside of the Outreach and Christian Education committees, our older Sunday School Youth, Confirmands, and R.I.S.E. kids all helped to pull it off. While we couldn't do our presentation at The Legends this year, we did manage to hold the annual Kids' Skit at church and the congregation received it very well (plus, we had as some of the best worship attendance we've seen since the lockdowns began). Our school and community partners were touched by our annual gifts and letters to them (via Outreach), and we even received a couple ourselves. Golden Charms had a more intimate gathering last month (which frequently happens in the winter anyway), but everyone once again thoroughly enjoyed the meal, fellowship, and entertainment (from Exalt!). Christmas Eve turned-out quite amidst some of the alterations we had to make, and though attendance was quite low this year, that was to be expected with the realities of the Corona-virus and how people tend to alternate where they worship from year to year. Once again, I so appreciate those who participated in setting-up and leading service; and we had fun doing a couple of things differently. Furthermore (similar to Breakfast with Santa), those in attendance were a great mix of people (out-of-towners, our regular membership, first time guests, and so on). I also want to note that, even as we've been navigating social transformations, there has barely been a week that has gone by this Fall/Winter so far when we haven't had brand new &/or recent (and returning) folks on Sunday mornings.

Elsewhere in worship, we have been having some A.V. glitches here and there and I am constantly trying to troubleshoot/repair them. Most of the time, it is a result of automatic software updates that we aren't always initially made aware of, then attempting to get the assorted pieces of technology and software to be compatible with one another. There is also, occasionally the challenge of adjusting sound for the assorted microphones -an issue that generally has to be rectified "in-the-moment" by whomever is closest to the equipment on the chancel. This usually occurs when we add a feature (play an accompaniment CD, use an additional mic, etc.) and can often be corrected to the standard formats right after, but, it sometimes alters the digital settings in our video equipment (which is hard to detect and a bit of a pain to fix). Nevertheless, I am in regular contact with all those people/companies whose products and services we use; and Gary is doing his level best to manage everything as worship occurs on Sunday mornings.

On the administrative front, the new format for the Annual Budget went incredibly well and was perhaps the fastest congregational meeting I've ever attended (and I've been in the church my entire life). Further, the new

PASTORAL CARE for DECEMBER

"By The Numbers"

- Visits/Counseling Sessions: 18
- Communion (off-site): 3
- Hospital Visits: 7
- Nursing Home Visits: 2
- Funerals: 1

definition of quorum was useful and removed the anxiety about attendance (though it we had a good number that day).

In regard to spiritual formation and congregational development, I am still/once again trying to negotiate schedules with the assorted handful of new(er) people wanting to pursue membership. As I stated last month, I am praying to get that off the ground now that the 1st of the year has passed. Also, originally, we were hoping to do a lock-in and service-project with the Confirmands during MLK Jr. weekend, but their competing demands won't allow for that. Yet, I'm pretty confident we'll be able to get one on the calendar soon.

Not surprisingly, Pastoral Care was rather demanding last month, but manageable (not necessarily in pure volume of calls, but the nature and duration of some of them). It is always a difficult time of year for many people, and our flock has been going through a lot of specific concerns lately. I am thankful to all those on the Prayer Chain, Outreach, Called 2 Care, and throughout the leadership/staff/general congregation who help me to care for everyone.

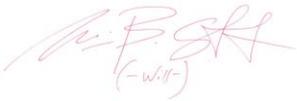
Coming up, of course, will be the (traditional) Annual meeting, so thanks for another faithful year of service, and please remember to get reports into Jenny. Additionally, on that Sunday (January 16th), during worship, we will be installing the officers elected/re-upped in the Fall.

Looking forward, following the holidays, I have, in the past, customarily taken either a week of vacation or a couple of days of Study Leave (that occurs when Lent comes early, but is not as much of a concern this year, since it doesn't start until the beginning of March). At present, I am planning on taking some time away, but circumstances are making it a little difficult to pull-off. Nevertheless, it is a priority and I hope to make it a time of renewal and long-range planning. Praying to be able to share specifics with you all soon.

In closing, I want to once more share my admiration and appreciation of how you all have weathered a weird couple of years. Thank you for your dedication, flexibility, creativity, and generosity. My gratitude, too, goes out to the whole church for the all of the lovely cards, calls, and gifts given to my children and me!

Respectfully submitted...

All Peace, Love & Blessings; your brother & servant in Christ-Jesus,



Will Stuart (pastor)