

REPORT OF THE SESSION

January 2018

The past year marked the beginning of a major transition in the history and life of Faith Presbyterian Church. For the first time in forty years the congregation is preparing to welcome a new senior minister. By action of the congregation the session's proposal to create a search committee (four elders, two deacons, two women chosen by Women in the Church, and three individuals chosen at large by the congregation) and to appoint the session as the pulpit committee was adopted. The two-body approach was thought to provide full involvement by the congregation in representative form and, at the same time, to guarantee that the new minister enjoy the full and enthusiastic support of the congregation's leadership. Succeeding a ministry of forty years poses particular challenges. To alleviate likely problems and to do our best to ensure a successful transition, the plan is to have Pastor Rayburn continue in a reduced role for an undetermined period of time following the arrival of the new minister. We hope and believe that the congregation is aware of what fine work has been done by the search committee and at what cost in time and effort on the part of its members. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

While the search committee was doing its work the life and ministry of the church continued. The round of departures and arrivals continued as it will in the course of life. We said farewell to Verna Pappuleas, one of our longest serving members, in January and to elder John Pribyl just a few weeks ago. But the Lord has sent us new members, infants and adults, throughout the year for whom we are very grateful. As always weddings likewise dotted the church calendar; happy memories!

2017 was the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. We celebrated the occasion November 3-5 with a weekend conference with Dr. Hans Madueme of Covenant College and Prof. Chuck King of Trinity International University as the speakers and with a portion of Bach's cantata *Ein Feste Burg*. Earlier in the year, on Palm Sunday, we were treated to a presentation of the Easter portion of *Messiah* and later in the year, in Advent, Vivaldi's setting of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. A piano concert in June by Sam Rotman, the world-class pianist and outspoken Christian evangelist, was a highlight.

We had a series of fascinating guests report to the Prayer Meeting through the year, as we always do. Through the good offices of Foxy Davison, wife of one of our Presbytery's ministers, we were for the first time connected to Progress House, the work-release center across the street from the church. We supplied the dessert for their Thanksgiving meal and presents for the children of the residents at Christmas. We look forward to opportunities to do more in ministry there. At the time of the annual meeting, Andy and Jennifer Sullivan will be making their way homeward from Manipur where they represented the congregation at the dedication of the first building to be raised on the new campus of the Reformed Bible Institute of the Presbyterian Church in India. A substantial portion of the funding for the construction of the building was provided by our congregation.

2017 also marked an important milestone at our Covenant High School. After 25 years elder Dick Hannula retired as the principal. He was succeeded by David Miller whose coming was an

answer to many prayers. Thankfully, Mr. Hannula continues to teach at the high school and to assist Mr. Miller in the transition.

As the congregation is aware, the session has proposed the elimination of Pastor DeMass' position at least by June 2019. The proposal has provoked some understandable concern, not least because of the congregation's respect and affection for Pastor and Mrs. DeMass. We regret very much and apologize for having contributed to that confusion and consternation. The elders and Pastors Rayburn and DeMass, in an effort to submit this plan to the judgment of experienced brethren, have recently met first with a sub-committee of the Presbytery's Ministers and Churches Committee and then with the full committee. We were helped by this process to recognize our failures of both process and communication. We are at work to repair those errors and to follow the counsel we have received. A cordial conversation between elders and pastors continues.

One recommendation of the Presbytery's committee was that a maximum effort be made to assure transparency. As a result we are committed to follow up on plans, previously announced, to meet with the congregation in numbers of manageable size to discuss with you this proposal as well as the several other important transitions the church is now facing. It is a very important moment in the history of the church and going forward we want us all to be considering the same information and reflecting on the same concerns. We urge every member of the church to attend one of these meetings. We are eager to provide you opportunity to ask your questions and give us your comments. We want the congregation to be fully informed before any decisions are taken. No plans were or are in place to schedule the congregational meeting at which action on this proposal might be taken. It is not necessary to hurry the process along. We are happy to allow time for thorough discussion.

In Christian affection,

The Session of Faith Presbyterian Church