

PASTOR 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

What a full and busy year we have had in 2008! Many things that were long in the planning have begun to come to fruition. With God's grace and blessing, many of them will be accomplished in 2009. Some will take longer, but, as the people of God, we gain as much in the process of doing as we do in the accomplishment of having done.

I am grateful for my partnership in the Gospel with Pastor Wendy. Our ministries at Saint Nicholas have been blessed by her work among us. I'm grateful, too, for our Council President Ann Wolfgang. Ann has worked so hard and so well to move the construction of the North Wing from a promising dream to a reality. I don't think any of us realized fully how difficult this would be, but Ann has met every challenge with grace and humor and purpose. Thanks go, too, to John Regner and Tim Schwartz who have ably led the Building Committee.

We are in a phase of our life together here that is, to my mind, a very joyful one. Our congregation has in my experience always been a joy to be a part of and we know that even in conflicted situations God is at work, but I think we have been especially blessed this year in terms of a spirit of amity and purpose. We have had many families join the congregation and they have begun to contribute almost immediately to our common life. This speaks well for Saint Nicholas as an open and welcoming community. We have had many families and individuals step into leadership roles in the congregation and this, too, speaks well of our openness to new influences and people. We have made good progress on our goal of becoming a discipling congregation – two dozen people have formed triad groups for Bible study and personal reflection, and we continue to emphasize our aim to “Love God, Love Others, Teach and Learn, and Serve the World” in worship and preaching, teaching and fellowship.

As I look back on the year, some events stand out for me. The Vacation Bible School, always a high point, gained from being led by a very able teen (Tierney Guido) and a new member (Donna Calautti). Cupid's Café, too, was led by our very capable Hannah Finlayson, continuing this tradition of strong teen leadership even for congregation-wide events. Safe Nights was truly a life-changing week, both for our guests and our members, and I am so grateful to Kathy Dangan and Charlie Bauerdorf for their hard work and wonderful spirit and to the congregation for the enormous outpouring of volunteer effort. Relay for Life was a wonderful, uplifting event that I'm glad we have returned to as a congregation, and I'm grateful for Kathy Dangan's leadership in this as well. We continue with our strong confirmation program, making Pentecost a very special observance year after year. I love to recall the faith statements our young people offer up to us and to God. And I always smile when I think about the flamingos.

This is a good moment to thank Jean Wolf who stepped down as Sponsor of Worship and Music, Cherise Ross, stepping down as Sponsor of Evangelism and Outreach, and Mary Jo Gebhardt, stepping down as Sponsor of Youth and Family. I will miss their wisdom, humor and enthusiasm. I am grateful to Jean for continuing to lead the Chancel Choir, to Sandy Griese and Val Schlickbernd for their artistry, and to Lisa Churchill, the Sing and Rejoice Band and the Angel Choir for making our worship joyful and fun. We can all be grateful for Barbara Harris, who asks for help so graciously that we actually enjoy saying “Yes.” I'm grateful, too, for Vicki Williams,

our DCE, and Charlie Bauerdorf our Stewardship Sponsor. I am especially grateful for our Mutual Ministry committees who have been so supportive and encouraging. And I thank God daily for Anna Kitzmiller, our administrator, who keeps everything going with grace and humor and deep faith in the rightness of what we do here.

We face challenges in the coming year. Finances will be tight given the economy, but our expenses will be increasing as we take on the increased mortgage. We face the New Year with vacancies in key lay leadership roles. We can expect to say goodbye to Pastor Wendy as she seeks a new call. Much will change as we move from hoping for and planning the North Wing to moving in and paying for it.

The people of God have always faced challenges. We surmount them thanks to the God who has never abandoned us at need and never will. We pray for a year of continued challenges and blessings, advancing spirit and God's continuing grace.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Greg