**Pastor’s Report**

This has been a year of transition for me.

I was new at the New Beginnings United Methodist Church at the beginning of the year. We were beginning to work out a plan for what it means to be ¼ and ¾ with the two churches.

Meanwhile, the choice was made to downsize facilities here at UPL in order to be more “fleet” for the challenges ahead. Our church and other users adapted fairly smoothly. The remaining building is evolving slowly and intentionally as it should be.

Boy Scouts continue and includes girls now. One announced to me that she would be our first female Eagle Scout. I’m guessing that will be true.

AA continues to add to the number proclaiming that the meetings we host are saving lives on a regular basis.

Meg and I seem to have adapted well to shared space. She might have a different opinion, but I don’t think she’d be shy about expressing it.

Many of our meetings are on Zoom, limiting the challenge of fitting into the building and freeing people from travel on various nights.

Ministry continues with worship, including our music ministries. Faith Formation is still finding ways to nurture and connect the younger people of our congregation. Worship planning has included gifts in both churches. We shared World Day of Prayer and focused on Taiwan. Summer services were held jointly in July and August. Worship series helped us dig deeper into our own faith formation with the Family Tree of Faith, the Peace series (with voices of many different parts of humanity), etc.

With a Fresh Expressions Grant from the New England Methodist Conference, we were able to connect many of the Boys and Girls Club youth in tending the community garden. They were able to learn about planning, planting, nurturing, and sharing its produce.

I attended a Fresh Expressions conference in March learning about how churches are expanding beyond their walls and even without walls. I will continue to seek ways of empowering this eclectic ministry. In essence, we are seeking to bring ministry into what we already do and are. This means risk, experimentation, and failing forward. We are looking especially for spiritual entrepreneurs who might operate less on an institutional level and more on a level of creativity outside the box of “church.”

I did lead another class of Disciple 1 to conclusion and begin another that will be complete by May. These courses take you through the whole of scripture rather than the soundbites we normally experience over the years.

One week was doing my service at church camp. I was a part of Christmas in June at Creative Arts Camp and taught Photography again, along with other roles through that week.

The church has been gracious with the challenges of adapting to my changing relationship in adding another church, changing offices, a lift for accessibility in the parsonage, meals during some of the challenging demands, adjustments to make things work for all.

The latest episode of my life -- the flooding of my retirement home – you, as well as others, have given, in efforts here and there, in service and giving, and I realize there is more to come. It is humbling, comforting, and empowering to know your embrace.

Was the mural on the office wall supposed to be a sign, Noah’s Ark on the Mountain. I guess that it means we’ll come out alright on the other side.

You have chosen to move on to your normal cycle of alternating congregational leadership under the Lunenburg Plan. Between Rev. Reeves, Rev. Black, and myself it has been about 10 years of UMC leadership and there is an understandable need to balance that in who you are with UCC leadership.

My plan is to prepare clear information for your interim and beyond. I will also work to finish well with you.

There is a course of Pastoral Self-examination nearby that I will take to help me with the support of a mentor and counselor along with peers to navigate the journey ahead. Maybe I can say, “I’ve got this.” I got this a lot better if I do it with all the resources God provides rather than squeaking by on my limited experience and precarious pride.

As a runner, my best times were often in the last lap. In the relay they often made me the anchor in the last lap. I will seek to finish well and finish strong with you and hope you will with me.

--

Pastor Ernie Farrar

United Parish of Lunenburg

978-582-6572