

The Pastor's Report

To the members and friends of our church, a mid-winter's welcome to you all. Whether these words find you around the block, in the next town, or even in warmer climes **I pray that you are well and that you feel both connected and part of the church on the Park.**

This winter I have given myself over to a great deal of pondering about our church. I cannot help but be struck by the things we are doing, and the wonderful spirit with which we are doing them. Obviously, there is much at work here, many aspects to a healthy, growing and vibrant church. Specifically, though, **what are the component parts, what is the recipe, and what is the most basic element that makes one church thrive while most only manage to survive?** After much consideration I have come to the conclusion that, at least in our case, our vitality as a church is directly proportional to the distance we are traveling on our *individual* spiritual journeys. That is to say, **who we are as a church is a function of our collective efforts to live our own lives of faith.**

I have never really taken to the metaphor of pastor as shepherd as it puts too much emphasis on the pastor and not enough of the congregation. However, one thing I do appreciate, more and more in fact, is the sentiment that **I know my own and my own know me.** It feels to me that we've been at this a long time (our 28th year now!). These have been full, rich years; dense in sub-

stance and experience. Along the way we have watched each other grow and change. I know that most, if not all of you have been **working diligently "on your stuff."** You have been facing your issues, dealing with your challenges, waiting upon God's will, and working very hard on your good works as a response to God's grace. You know what? It shows! Not just in you, but also in our church.

Sometimes possibility is a hard notion to entertain, especially when you go beyond everything that has been done before. Although a bit audacious, I have to admit that much of what our church will do from here on out is **"cutting edge stuff."** Meaning, you don't see very many churches out *there* running the kind of experiment we are attempting to pull off *here*.

Think about it, we are attempting to change the very *notion* of what "church" is from the inside out. Basically, we are a pretty orthodox bunch theologically. The way we *manifest* that theology, however, is often amazingly *unorthodox* (or unusual at the very least). We are inclusive, yet we have maintained our center. We look within as much as we gaze outside. We are working without a net. Which, I think, **is exactly what a church (every church) should be doing.**

So, don't be afraid this month to take **some small measure of pride** in what our church is accomplishing because of the things you *yourself* are accomplishing in your *own* life.

With thanks for you, - Rev. Mike

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. - Ephesians 3:18-19