

Pastor's Report

Traditionally the pastor's annual report is a recitation of what the pastor did over the last 12 months. The pastor's report done in such a manner allows everyone, pastor included, to see what the pastor has been engaged in over those months. I suppose the object of a report such as that is to make sure the pastor is "doing" the ministry he or she has been called into. It may become a measuring stick or a way for the congregation to evaluate their pastor over and against their own expectations or even the neighboring pastor. This year I have chosen to give a report similar to how Jesus answered John the Baptizers disciples. Allow me to set the stage.

¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"²⁰ When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'"²¹ Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind.²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.²³ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." (Luke 7:18-23) You see the ministry of the one who is to come is found in the work done and spoken of in verse 22. Please take a moment now and reread that verse. Now allow me to give you a report of the ministry of Our Savior Lutheran Church.

The medical needs of many of God's children have been met through the ministries of a doctor, a physician's assistant and a large number of nurses from the congregation. You see, the ministry of the healing arts is one of the gifts that God's Holy Spirit breathes into God's beloved children. The lives of many are enhanced through the work of engineers who labor to make products that are safe and functional. This too is a ministry of many in our congregation; it is a form of service which God calls forth from those who serve as builders. Those of our members who are teachers or have retired from the teaching profession bring not only knowledge to the younger members of the community, but for some of the youth who are called students, this might be the only love they receive. The ministry of education and the sharing of wisdom have been lived out very richly through the ministries of many from Our Savior. Jesus broke bread with many while on this earth, food 'provides the moment when God intimately enters into the human life and story. The ministry provided by those who work to bring food to the table from our farmers, to transportation people, to those who work in grocery stores and cafe owners has brought glory to God through service to others.

Our ministries have not ended with the fore mentioned ministries. We have those who minister within the legal system serving as State Troopers and lawyers, ministries which ensure safety and provide for the common good. The ministries of Our Savior have also included those who serve in many capacities in business and those who support them. Businesses and business persons in all capacities minister to the many needs of the neighbor. The ministry of those who are self-employed has been realized in the joyful service provided. And lest we begin to think that ministry ends when one "retires" from work just pause and reflect upon the amount of ministry accomplished through the lives of those who are "retired". The love, time and energy shared with family, friends and community, the hours and sweat poured into the community by those retired is a ministry which is hard to quantify, yet very real to those who received it.

So if John the Baptizer's disciple were to ask me about the ministry of Our Savior Lutheran Church this is where I would begin. The list that you have just read is by no means an exhaustive one. If I have failed to lift up the ministry that you believe you have lived out in this corner of the kingdom please accept my deepest apologies and may I have your forgiveness? I may have missed your ministry but know that God has not and neither has His children. I would hope and pray that you would be able to add to the list. I would also hope and pray that you have experienced being the minister as well as being the recipient of the ministry lived out through the faithful members of Our Savior Lutheran Church. As we end this year I would like to report that it is my deepest belief that Our Savior Lutheran Church has lived well with one another and with God too.

Now to those things which have become the ministry of the church. We have gathered for worship every Sunday this past year, with the exception of a couple of times when the weather required we cancel worship. We served the Holy Meal in response to Jesus' call to do this "often in remembrance of me." We have baptized those who have been brought or brought themselves to the waters of baptism, joining them to the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pastoral care has been provided to those who rejoice in the gift of new life and to those who grieve death. The sick and the hospitalized have been visited and the word was shared with them and prayers offered.

"⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another 'the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated ' by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses." (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Those words, services and activities; mean here ministries and they apply to you. Your ministry is breathed into you by the Holy Spirit and you are empowered to live out those ministries by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, my report is a report of your ministry. And to each of you I add what Jesus says; well done good and faithful servants.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." (Philippians 4:23)