

MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE BOARD
MARCH 23, 2021
REV. DAVID CHISHAM

A thaw is coming, can you feel it? As we look forward to the Spring re-emergence, I'm seeing signs of life in the world, and amongst our congregation. The vaccine push is having a positive effect on in-person attendance; I've seen a number of folks who were sheltered in place for the past year returning to service, some of whom haven't been able to join us online.

While we haven't been given the "all clear" to fully resume activities, and indeed precaution is still in order as COVID case counts have bumped back up in some areas, this is a good time to begin pulling together leadership as we look forward to greater freedom.

One of the areas of change under consideration is the possibility of renting under-utilized building space to tenants. Working with Mary Thompson, Dak McInnis and Pam Jones, we've made an initial exploration of our campus, and yesterday met with leaders of Broadmoor Baptist Church who have rented classroom space to a school for children with disabilities. My personal "take-away" from that meeting is that their process relied heavily upon leadership from the congregation, rather than from the senior minister. I think this helped with buy-in from the congregation and has generated some life and excitement for them. They didn't give us a road map to accomplish this goal, but they shared a lot of helpful material, documents they've developed and lessons they've learned.

Pursuing this goal raises the question of our relationship with current tenants, especially the Berean Homeschool Coop group. Their plan, this coming Fall, is to return their elementary program to our campus, which means a large building footprint. As there is interest "building" to explore tenancy multiple days a week, simply moving the Berean group to another part of campus is not feasible. A motion was made in our last Finance Committee meeting to not renew the contract this Fall, which is coming to the Board for discussion and a vote in this evening's meeting.

I met with Pastoral Relations committee on February 25. At that meeting Chris Culp was elected chair of that committee. At this time we plan on quarterly meetings, the next one is scheduled on May 13.

In the Pastoral Relations meeting, I was encouraged to help facilitate bringing the elders together and encouraging them to explore their leadership direction as we move past COVID closures and precautions. We held a Zoom call last night and Chris Culp was nominated for chair of that group—the church office will send out cards to all the elders for the vote. We also agreed that a monthly Monday night 6pm Zoom call is a good way for the elders to have regular conversation both now and in the future. I look forward engaging our elders in leadership in this important time.

Through Lent, I've developed a devotional series that seems to have received deep engagement from many members. This series, built upon the theology of pilgrimage, has encouraged participants to explore Lent with spirit, mind and body. If you have taken this pilgrimage these past weeks, I hope that you have been blessed! I really miss our traditions of Holy Week such as Maundy Thursday communion service, foot washing service, and Good Friday breakfast and meditation, and look forward to gathering in those more intimate groups next year!

Moving forward I see a number of areas that will need the "reset" button.

Future Story—We will have to see where our partnership with OLOL stands and if their community resource is going to be available in the future. There is a strong feeling amongst the board that the SOS idea is an important ministry venture.

Children's Programming—Chris Culp approached me about facilitating a Youth Sunday with assistance from Pam Comeaux.

Hospitality—when we get to the point of hosting Coffee Fellowship (something many people enjoyed and miss) and Fellowship Luncheons, we will likely still have some hesitancy as people warm up to the idea of eating in groups again.

Worship and Music—hopefully in Fall we can gather for choir again. Presently there seems a satisfaction with a single service at 10am, but that may change with time.

Evangelism—this needs to be a central concern for our congregation, not simply as an approach to build membership, but because it should be a central concern for us as Christians. I shared a quote on Sunday from Frederick Buechner that expresses what many have found through this year of isolation: "You can survive on your own. You can grow strong on your own. You can prevail on your own. But you cannot become human on your own."

I hesitate to say that I'll be taking the week off after Easter, since we've cancelled vacation plans three times in the past 12 months, but that's the plan for the moment. Rev. Michael Elmore has booked us for pulpit supply on Sunday, April 11, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David Chisham