

RECTOR'S REPORT

Submitted by the Rev. David J. Lucey

February 19, 2023

Dear Franciscans,

There is a sense that whatever else is happening, we are in that place of the new normal post COVID lockdowns. That new normal may not be totally satisfying because of the lingering trauma and anxiety wrought by the pandemic, but we have been worshipping without interruption in-person since January 2022, communion in both kinds is the norm of our Sunday services, pastoral visits can happen without undue preparation, and Franciscans of all ages are in the church every Sunday. It is a joy to be able to make these proclamations in an annual report once again.

Life in the new normal is not, however, without challenges. Some members of the church continue to engage worship from home, some members have not returned to being present in the community, the average Sunday has declined by about 40%, or 50 attendees from pre-COVID levels, and our pledge income for 2023 is projected to be 80% of what it was in 2022.

Today, a new class of Vestry members will be announced. All of them are wonderfully gifted and faithful members of our church. They have my thanks for their willingness to serve. Combined with the returning class of 2024, David Black, Brice Eldridge, and Judy Stocks, and the returning class of 2025, Mike Semko, Richard Storey, and Sandy Walker, they will be working on ways to discern how to deal with these vitality issues, including, but not limited to spending some time in strategic planning.

Because of the challenges, we will be in a place in the near term to make some hard choices about what we are focusing on and how we spend our financial resources. That discernment has begun and will be ongoing over the next few weeks. Decisions regarding these choices and plans will be communicated with the congregation as they are made.

Among the challenges are the wonderful signs that the Holy Spirit continues to move vitally among the people of this congregation. Today, we baptized a new member into this community, and Aaron and Stephen have become wonderfully present to the whole gathering on Sundays. The Creche is having a powerful year and registration for next fall is moving forward quite well. New faces have joined us for worship in the past few months and are returning. We have a Lenten discipline coming forward in early March as we connect with Bishop Isaac and the Ezo Diocese, while we work on raising money for bicycles to help their priests get around to proclaim the Gospel and serve their neighbors.

Franciscans are a faithful, hard-working, and practical body of believers. As the year moves along, we will be doing what we have always done: proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, we will serve the neighbors among whom we live, and we will work with the Holy Spirit to transform the world.

Before I close, I must acknowledge the work of the graduating members of the Vestry. As always, I would never allow for graduates if it were my choice and legal, I would just add more members to the Vestry every year. This year's graduating class is no exception: Jennifer Murphy, Molly Reynolds, and Gary Pan have devoted themselves to the work of this church even as they live lives already booked to the top. I know that they already have post-Vestry commitments to this church, and I commend their hard work, generous offering of time, and commitment for the good of the congregation to your attention and thanks.

In Christ's peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David J. Lucey +". The signature is written in black ink and includes a small plus sign at the end.

David J. Lucey
Rector