



Jesus answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, "Be lifted up and thrown into the sea," it will be done. Matthew 21:21

PASTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 29, 2017

Dear Members of Faith Lutheran Church,

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ as we enter this new year. The reports that follow this one are filled with the good things that God has been doing among us in the past year, and the directions God is calling us to follow in 2017. Take a look at the extraordinary ministries we are doing together!

I thank God for your faithful and generous contributions in 2016. It is you and your response to God's grace, demonstrated by your faithful giving of time, treasure and talent that make our growing ministry possible.

We are a generous congregation. The year 2016 was, by God's grace, a good year for our common ministry at FLC in many ways. Your generous giving to our General Ministry Fund and our Mortgage funds was the means that made our ministry possible. In addition we contributed significantly to such special needs as:

- The construction of our 5th church in Tanzania, Africa, in Dakawa.
- Solheim Lutheran Home, Eagle Rock
- Love in the Name of Christ, Covina
- IVCC Homeless Shelter, Pomona
- Meals on Wheels for La Verne and San Dimas
- Campus Crusades for Christ for Tammy Enete's ministry
- The Haynes Center for Families, La Verne
- WiFi for San Dimas Sheriffs when at FLC
- Youth Pancake Breakfast
- Swim With Mike, at USC and nationally
- Our 6th Annual Family Harvest Festival
- Loma Linda Veterans Hospital
- Help for our members in need
- Seeds of Faith Garden
- East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless Cold/Wet Weather Shelter
- House of Ruth, Pomona
- ELCA World Hunger ministry
- Expanded recycling opportunities
- Fundraising and participation in the Great Strides Cystic Fibrosis Walk
- Multiple Casa Bonita Convalescent Hospital (next door) service ministries
- Outdoor Family Movie Nights
- APU and CBU visiting choirs
- Volunteer musician appreciation
- plus we transferred 50% of our 10% of General Fund income Benevolence Fund to our denomination
- and much, much more

Our total income from all sources was **\$403,221.47 in 2016**. I thank God for the great work being done at FLC and for your willingness to give faithfully and generously to **the living and the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ!**

We expanded our **web site**, which is visited by an average of 23 people a day, and developed our **varied social media presence** online, particularly on Instagram and on Facebook.

And, we opened our facilities **to share service work with such community groups as** The Autism Youth Sports League, Girl Scouts, the San Dimas Toastmasters Club, and more. We entered a float in the La Verne 4th of July Parade again, and our float entry in the San Dimas Western Days Parade would have been our 25th year in a row if it hadn't been cancelled, but we'll be there next year!

Youth ministries continued to prepare the church of today and tomorrow, including our Sunday School for preschoolers through 6th graders, our Nursery and worship activities for Children, a Faith Stepping Stones ministry that brings youth and parents together to the altar 7 times between baptism and graduation from high school. Three young people affirmed their faith on the Day of Pentecost and an active middle school Confirmation Class of two young people started in the fall. L.I.F.T.: Living In Faith Together, a youth group for high-schoolers, and our Christians In Action (C.I.A.) group for young adults both held their own activities and supported other congregational groups with their ministries for the church and the community. We expanded our use of acolytes with our CATs (Crucifers,

Acolytes, and Torchbearers) and offered additional training for them. In addition we benefitted greatly from the service of Assisting Ministers in worship by post-confirmation high school youth.

Music continued to inspire us in 2016 with the ministry of our Road Crew Worship Band, who have done an inspiring job of leading worship music. And, our Bells of Faith Hand Bell Choir brought great beauty to our festival services. In addition we were blessed throughout the year by our Adult Liturgical. And, the voices of the APU Bel Canto Choir and the small ensemble, "Elevate", from California Baptist University were a blessing as special music.

The thematic focus of our mid-week Lenten services was **How to Read the Bible**. We also reformatted and expanded our year 'round FLC **Study Group**.

We received **23 new FLC members**, and we **gave 5,683 lbs. of food and personal hygiene items to our local emergency food pantry**. In addition, we carried out such **outreach ministries** as:

- Deep Heart's Core retreats
- Night of Champions
- FLC Pens, now all over the world
- Christmas Caroling
- Prayer Vigil and Christmas Cards for Veterans
- Girl Scout Sunday
- Personal worship invitation cards for pocket or purse
- Thanksgiving Feast
- Christmas Invitation Cards
- Updated the worship settings at Wednesday night and Sunday at 10:00 a.m. services
- 6th Annual Family Harvest Festival
- 3 Outdoor Family Movie Nights (third year)
- Pizza with Pastor and Sally nights
- Added lanyards (for nametags at church or personal use) to our list of FLC logo items.
- FLC Night at the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes
- An excellent "**Cave Quest: Following Jesus The Light of the World**" Vacation Bible School ministry
- Father's Day Chili Cook-off
- The 3rd Annual Blessing of Students
- Great Strides Walk for a cure for Cystic Fibrosis
- Rally Day & Ministry Faire
- Providing food for the homeless
- Affirmation of Wedding Vows
- Clap for The Lord Sunday
- Had a Booth at the San Dimas Fitness Festival
- Welcoming the Bonita High School Marching Band at FLC at Christmas
- Walk, Dance, Pray group
- Seeds of Faith Garden group
- Friend Sunday
- Replacing the fallen cross in the Prayer Garden and inviting people to sign it
- Produce Share Table
- Agape potluck meals and En Theos Bible Study and Prayer on Wednesday nights
- Narrated Sunday worship services to help people experience the depth of their meaning
- Sundaes on Wednesdays
- Soup Bowl Sunday
- Weekly Big & Small Ways You Can Tell Others About Jesus.

Our annual Straw Polls, generated a wealth of information that has and is helping us determine a course for our future based on how we are collectively discerning God's will for our congregation's current and future ministry.

We have a paid staff of nine people serving in musical leadership, child care, and administration, in addition to myself. This year we honored Diane Biermann for her 17 years as my Administrative Assistant. We hired Lori Neu as my new Administrative Assistant. And, we hired Faith Secor as our new child care provider on Sunday mornings.

Our Flexing Our Faith Appeal in 2015 for 2016 asked members and friends of the congregation to submit pledges, or estimates of giving, for the year to both our General Ministry Fund and our Mortgage Fund. We conducted our **Freeing Faith Appeal** in 2016 for 2017 and are hopeful that God will provide for our needs through us in 2017.

We ended 2016 with a decrease **in our average weekly worship attendance of 5%** compared to 2015. Our **regular giving to the General Ministry Fund decreased by 8%** compared to 2015. This tells us that we have a way to go, but I am encouraged by the fact that we were behind 17% at the end of September. Let's keep that momentum going in 2017! In addition, we contributed \$108, 263.00 to our Mortgage Fund in 2016, or 115% of our goal, thanks to lots of givers and the particular generosity of two households. We also went through our second refinancing since construction and lowered our monthly mortgage payment from \$8,221.00 to \$7,305.00 in 2016. Let's live our mission of introducing people to new life in Jesus Christ that grows into enthusiastic Christian living by providing the resources to make it happen and inviting people to come and worship Him!

The world will be taking note of the **500th anniversary of the Reformation** leading up to October 29, 2017. We will mark the celebration with personal devotions, a Lenten season of reflection, creative use of social media, film festival, Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, a book and media festival, synod events, and much more. We will celebrate together the story of why the Lutheran church becoming necessary and share the grace of God in Jesus Christ that made it happen. Our world knows little about us. This is a wonderful opportunity to let them know who we are.

We will be expanding our current ministry to focus on being a **Missional** congregation in addition to be an Attractional one in 2017. We are planning ministries to where the people are and invite them to know Jesus, the one thing we have to offer that the world cannot give. We will invite speakers from the various groups we support to our worship services, offer an expanded, non-sequential membership class, continue to streamline worship, focus on an expanded emphasis on the arts, and continue to encourage one another to also invite friends and family members to our worship services and community service activities, by far the most significant factor in church growth.

We also know that we live on God's timetable, and not our own. Our hopes for the **future development** of the church include expanding our ministries and hiring additional staff. How soon we realize these hopes depends entirely on our giving.

Our total mortgage indebtedness at the end of 2016 was \$1,231,400.53, while the July 2006 appraised value of our property was \$4,125,678.00. This is a very good ratio, especially for a congregation of our current size! We are hoping to resurface the south parking lot as a part of needed major maintenance in 2017

We have continued to use a Mission Investment Plus Money Market Fund (used to make loans to mission Churches) to rebuild our future pastors housing loan fund, maintain our Building Fund, and have kept a Lutheran Credit Union (now merged with America's Christian Credit Union) money market fund open to establish credit.

I invite you to examine the reports of our auxiliary organization, including our **Women of Faith** group, **Men of Faith** group, **Altar Guild**, **Deep Heart's Core** retreat group, **Christians In Action** young adults group, **Walk, Move, Pray**, **L.I.F.T. High School Youth** group, **Seeds of Faith Garden**, group and **many others** who are doing amazing things.

Our **Church Council** and **School Committee** have done a wonderful job in providing leadership for our common ministry to reach the goals we believe God has given us.

There are over **84 volunteer ministries** at Faith Lutheran Church. There is a place for everyone at FLC to use their God-given gifts in the service of the Body of Christ. In addition, we are a congregation ready to try new things when a member has an idea. **How has God called and equipped you to serve?**

Our **Faith Lutheran Pre-school and Day Care** ministry had an enrollment of 77, up from last year in spite of a currently free alternative in the public schools and the changing demographics of the communities we serve. We have been told that our school is the standard by which other schools are measured. An inspector told us this year that ours is the cleanest school he had ever seen. Our school is financially sound and has reimbursed the church **in full** for the common bills we paid on the school's behalf in 2016.

We don't do fund raising at Faith Lutheran Church as a matter of policy. We challenge one another to practice Biblical stewardship, that is, first fruits, proportional giving. My expectation is that each of us will increase the percentage of our income we give **in response to what God has given us**, leading toward a tithe (10%) and beyond. Sally and I are giving at a level of 12.5% of our income to Faith Lutheran Church in addition to our special giving and Mortgage Fund pledge, and we give additionally to various community needs beyond that. I challenge you to reach the goal that God is calling you to achieve as God's steward.

What can you do in response to the generous grace of God?

- Pray every day for the health of your church. Pray that each of us would respond faithfully to the gifts God has given us.
- Practice **proportional** (give a percentage of income), **first fruits** (give your best, off the top), **growth giving** (leading to 10% and beyond). Faithful giving must be planned. I can say from personal experience that if our giving comes first, there is always enough left for everything else, if our giving comes last, there is rarely if ever enough to give. God provides.
- Catch-up for Sundays or Wednesdays that you miss the next time you are at worship.

- Make a second-mile gift, above and beyond your regular giving, to push our 2017 ministries forward farther and faster.

We are fulfilling our mission to introduce people to new life in Jesus Christ that grows into enthusiastic Christian living. **I am convinced that we will meet the challenges and opportunities of 2017 together as we always have:** trusting God to work through us to provide everything our common ministry at FLC needs.

The people of Faith Lutheran Church have defined themselves as being able to face significant challenges and, by following the direction of God's empowering Spirit, overcome them. **I thank God for you for making all of this possible, and I pray that God will strengthen our faith, fill us with the Holy Spirit and bless us all in our ministry together at FLC in 2017.**

I also encourage you to make a legacy gift to Faith Lutheran church in your will. All Christians can be tithers through their will. Gifts can take the form of assignments of life insurance benefits, assignments of certificate of deposit, assignment of your Thrivent Choice dollars, transfers of property such as cash, bonds and real estate, memorial gifts, charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts. We also established an account with Pershing LLC, through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to allow members and friends to **give appreciated stock** directly to our ministry. Consult your financial advisor to see how this can have advantages for you.

The FLC Extraordinary Mission Endowment Fund for Major Undesignated Gifts and Bequests protects the congregation and helps it grow. "More than 3 trillion dollars will be transferred from the generation born before 1935 to baby boomers" (Thrivent Financial for Lutherans). "A bequest of \$100,000 to \$500,000 is not uncommon today," writes church developer Lyle Schaller. Plan to bequeath a portion of your estate to Faith Lutheran Church. Speak with your financial planner about how this can be done and still allow the transfer to your children that you desire.

I read widely from books, magazines, and online articles and news, and studied in particular, as time permitted about technology, Bible, theology, Spanish, arts in worship, Biblical Greek, and church development which has, I believe, **made me more effective.** I continued my elected position as a member of our Southwest California Synod's Council, serving again as chair of the Nominating and serving as chair or the Policy and Employment Manuals Creation and Revision Committee.

Sally and James and I have enjoyed this our **thirtieth** full year as **ministry partners** with you and we look forward to following God's leading in the future together. **I thank God and I thank you for making all of this possible.**

We ended 2016 with an average worship attendance of 136 persons per week at regular Sunday and Wednesday services. The biggest challenge we face now is continuing to break through the 150-per-week barrier. When a church grows to 150 in average weekly worship attendance it reaches the point where it must take risks in order to grow. Staff must be brought on board, facilities must be upgraded and expanded, and a desire to reach the unchurched must overcome the natural desire to conserve what we have accomplished. We must ask ourselves again and again to stretch out toward the vision God has given us to continue to be a model for the churches around us and to introduce people to new life in Jesus Christ that grows into enthusiastic Christian living.

We trust that future to God's hands, knowing that **faith, living faith, is God's gift, and that God moves mountains** and will guide us in fulfilling our mission to introduce people to new life in Jesus Christ that grows into enthusiastic Christian living!



Sincerely,

David Berkedal
Pastor



Freeing Faith

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—" Ephesians 2:8