



Clergy Reports (April 2024)

Pastor Reggie

I want to spend a moment talking about overall church objectives and goals we had for the first quarter of this year, in addition to some events that took place to help meet those objectives. (For more detailed information, a report on our Mission and Ministry for the First Quarter will be presented in the April meeting of our Executive Council).

I feel 2023 was a year where we were able to move beyond all the issues we dealt with in 2022, and reset our priorities and objectives. Beginning the year establishing what we felt was the mission of this church was critical to that, and everything that was done, even the typical ministry and mission was done with that as the focus. It was important to get everyone on the same page, or at least knew what the page was.

We ended 2023 on a very positive note, and beginning in 2024, I felt it was necessary to create a new organizational structure that I feel will take us into the future; this structure will be evaluated quarterly and adjusted where necessary. We are still living into this, and I am pleased with the early returns. Our first Sermon Series in 2024 was “What We Believe”; this series was to set the tone for all that was to follow in our teaching, preaching, and spiritual growth in order to enable our church to truly live out its mission. As was stated in the overview of this series, our mission as a church is and has always been demonstrated in our ability to embody the principle of loving God and loving others. This sermon series dug deeper into several of the critical components of our faith; a faith we hold fast to as a church, and a faith that enables us to achieve a holiness that emboldens us as we strive to Follow Jesus, Build Real Relationships, Grow in Real Discipleship and Experience Real Transformation. That’s what it means to be a member of this faith community. We recognize, absorb, and live out the love of God. That’s what We Believe!

Our Executive has led us with all of this in mind-leading us in our ability to live into this mission and experience the vision that is before us. I think what has given me the most joy about this group is that there is a feeling of collaboration about the mission of this church. Your Executive Council feels it is important that we all are a part of this, and the goals and objectives have not been staff driven or even lay leadership driven-we are all in this together, everyone has a part of this, and all of us are working toward the same corporate goal-loving God and loving others. You

have heard the terms “multi-generational” and “intergenerational” mentioned frequently over the past 15 months. That’s because it is important to understand this is who we are, and in my opinion, what every church focused on Jesus should be. Our Executive Council keeps not only who we are, but who we are becoming at the forefront of everything we do.

Our Staff does the same thing. We are constantly having discussions about what we are doing, not from the perspective of where “busyness” justifies our existence, but from the perspective of “ results” where the vision of anything we do will be realized. Our Staff Meetings are focused on devotion and prayer, celebration of events and activities, debriefing and assessing the success when we meet our objectives, and to a lesser extent reviewing upcoming activities. I have tried to lead us where our mindset has become more about understanding who we are than checking off boxes as to what we have done. We are still working at becoming better at this, but one thing I know is that my goal is to have our staff understand that their investment in this church is important to the success of everything we do.

Our Discipleship Journey is going to be the backbone of our ability to achieve success in everything we do. It is important that all of us understand that. We are all on different aspects of this journey, but we should all be focused on spiritual growth no matter where we are. Last year, we made some major changes to what we are doing and in how it is presented; under Susan McEly’s leadership, we will continue to impress this year how critical it is to get new people to realize the importance of this earlier rather than later, and to get our current members to focus on opportunities to grow.

You will hear about the work we are doing with our Church in Action and our Age Level Ministries later in this report. As part of our Traditional Worship Community, I have been blessed by the spirit, enthusiasm, and engagement of our congregations, and by the new faces we see each and every week. New Members and Baptisms have become something that we anticipate regularly. Our Worship Communities experienced a wonderful Lenten Season, culminating in a great day on Palm Sunday with our Party in the Park, and including wonderful presentations from our Traditional and NewSong Worship ministries on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Easter Sunday was as glorious experience around here that you will ever be a part of, and my goal is that we will get to a point that Easter isn’t just a day we celebrate the greatest that has ever happened in this world, but will become more of a day we celebrate what we have been doing all along-living in a manner and telling the world that Jesus is indeed Alive!

As always, I am thoroughly humbled to lead this church, and look forward to all the things we can do together!

Pastor Thea

This year we have begun to redefine “Outreach” in a way that includes and moves beyond our local mission partners and into new ways to reach those not already here. This is primarily lived by taking faith conversations to the streets with more coffee shop meetings, taco shop conversations and the podcast realm, striving to reach people where they are with invitations and a willingness to hold honest conversations about faith and doubt. While there is still much more to learn and try, these first three months in new spaces have proven to be welcomed, enjoyed and shared with others.

In my coffee meetings, believers are asking good questions like, *“What does it mean to be a part of a church?”*, *“What are practical spiritual practices to deepen my faith?”* and *“How do I share my faith with my family who are opposed?”*. At Torchy’s, each week we gathered to dive into deep wonderings like *“What parts of the Bible do we have to believe?”*, *“Are our pets saved too?”*, and *“What might heaven or hell really be like?”*. These open and honest questions answered in a public space were witnessed by other guests, multiple visitors and the staff who saw us gather weekly to wrestle, willing to both agree and disagree, and come back for more.

Real Talk is another place for great experimentation and reach. By offering an accessible conversation space, we are sharing our faith unique from what a Sunday morning can do. With over 200 episode downloads overall, *“What does it mean to be a Christian?”* and *“Raising Future Followers”* are the most listened to topics. I learn about new listeners each week, discovering and enjoying the honest conversations. Reaching beyond our own community with this medium is the next goal to tackle. How will we increase episode shares and subscription numbers so that others, not connected to FUMC Pearland, will engage in the conversations too?

NewSong Worship has welcomed over 35 first time guests in worship this year, with many attending three or four times by Easter. There we continue to strive to offer an authentic and engaging experience with varied voices leading, singing and preaching to underline the goal of creating a community of equality. In the brief conversations and follow ups with our guests, the honesty and inclusion of all people is the most compelling.

Over the next three months, my plan is to renew another five weeks of **“Let’s Taco-bout Our Faith”** launching in two locations, East & West Pearland. My goal is to extend the accessibility and chance of a non-connected invite on both sides of town. I hope you’ll plan to check one out. **Real Talk** will host a live event, **Podcast on the Patio (April 25th, 6-8pm) at Grace Pizza** in an effort to bring the listeners together and create more visibility for the podcast and FUMC Pearland in the community. Real Talk season two is in the plans, and those logistics and start date should be confirmed soon. I look forward to you being there, and sharing with friends!

Looking ahead, this summer worship will offer more storytelling and easily accessible ways for varied voices to share their perspectives, insight and testimonies. Our September Service Day is scheduled for 9/15, thus planning is beginning. This event will again offer hands-on projects as well as include opportunities to experience “outreach” in a new way, like faith conversations in public places with new and the unconnected.

FUMC Pearland has an opportunity to be a place of wonder, intrigue and curiosity in a time when more and more are hungry for faith conversions yet afraid to raise their hands amidst their understanding of church community. What might it be like if we continue to live into this reality? What ways might we continue to reach beyond ourselves and into the world that is lost, lonely and looking for something more. In light of the resurrection Jesus extends, I ask you too to continue to dream, look ahead and ask “what new thing is God doing?” and “How might I be a part of it?”.

Pastor John

Christmas Song

“His heart was full of love, love, love

Love, love, love

Love, love was all around”

(The Dave Matthews Band)

This song has always been one of my favorites. It takes a Jesus I walk with daily and makes Him very real to everyone who hears it. The song covers most of His life and talks about some of the relationships that Jesus has in His life. It is a song that thousands have sung for many years performed by a man that is not outwardly expressive of any faith that I know. But through the years I have had so many conversations with people about faith because of this song. It opens a door and allows an entry point for people who might not otherwise talk about faith in Christ. I thought of it this week because of the line “Love love love was all around.”

I had conversations with a couple of people this week who talked about our church. These two people couldn't be further from each other in their faith journeys. One is a very active part of our church that we see often. She attends Bible Studies and is active in a discipleship group. The other has been attending our church on and off for about three months. She is trying to find her footing in her faith walk and has found a place to do that. But they both said the same thing. They both spoke of the feeling that they get when they step into the doors of 2314 North Grand

on a Sunday. They felt a sense of love. They felt like they were seen and they felt like God was present.

This brought great joy to my heart and reminded me of why we do what we do as a body of Christ. It made me proud to be a pastor who can partner with a congregation and staff of people who see others and help them feel the worth that God gave them when they were created. It gave me even more hope for all the ways that God moves in and through us as a people with faith in Christ. To see this not only in one part of our church but all parts of our church no matter what ministry.

It also made me want to take the time to say thank you. Thank you for sharing. Thank you for all that you do whether it be cooking, organizing, teaching, or whatever gift it is that God has given you to share. Thank you for being filled with the Holy Spirit and taking it out of these walls so that you can share it with others. Thank you for hearing the call and answering it. The race is not finished and there is still more to be done but thank you for running with purpose and sharing it with others.

Blessings!