

Pastor's Annual Report 2018

How would you describe our church? I think that is an interesting exercise as I prepare this year's annual report. This fall in worship we filled a tree with leaves of gratitude for the church, the community and the gift of faith. Those leaves of gratitude became a description of who we are.

Here is what comes to my mind,

Our church seeks to follow Jesus and his teachings with:

A heart for service. . . . This church has a deep commitment to service – in the community and beyond the community: regularly serving a delicious homemade dinner at the Hixon house, generously donating backpacks and school supplies to children in foster care, making and filling school kits for Church World Service for children in refugee camps and disaster relief centers. Folks in this church have individually served meals on wheels recipients extra love with flowers, handmade Christmas placemats and then the LadyBs did Christmas homemade stockings filled with treats. Plus our little church organizes, supports and participates in mission trips – locally partnering with Habitat for Humanity (this year in Claremont), the annual Youth Mission Trip to New Haven, Ct and recently 24 volunteers travelling to Puerto Rico to work with the United Church of Christ Disaster Relief and Recovery. There are many other ways that you show your faith through service to one another and by volunteering here at the church- holding the church together through your commitment and service.

Connection and belonging. . . . There is a wonderful sense of connection and belonging in this church family. And it is always important to practice hospitality so that everyone, *everyone feels welcome*. Our youth groups continue to meet regularly, enjoying laughter and games as well as exploring faith questions. With Director of Christian Education, Mary Jo Ramsey's gifted leadership, the Church School children have grown together, creating friendships and connections to one another and to this church family. Gathering in fellowship and service, the LBS reorganized into the "LadyBs" making quilts, participating in Old Home Day, hosting a spring tea and a Christmas luncheon, deepening connection and belonging by sharing adventures, skills and service. Along with Game Nites and Book club, these are just a few of the organized ways that we offer opportunities for connection and belonging. Far more important though is the connection that you experience in this church through relationships, shared history, caring and being cared for. And most important of all, the sense of belonging you experience through faith in God.

Caring for one another How to list the ways that this church community cares for one another?! Through the simple ministry of the prayer shawl group making, blessing and giving beautiful shawls for healing, hope, community. Through our weekly time in worship of pastoral prayer when joys and concerns are lifted up, held in love, cherished and prayed together. Through meals delivered, rides given, tears shared, cards sent, help given. And then there is the Hartland Christmas Project – an annual outpouring of generosity to and from the broader community for folks who need help, food, compassion. The Spirit moves deeply when we care one for another.

Active and engaging In a myriad of ways, this church supports and participates in programs and events for spiritual growth, study and engagement. The weekly Monday Night Bible Study, now in its 6th year of studying – with new folks welcome to the table and experienced folks going even deeper - that Monday Night bible study has enriched individual learning and our worship service as well! The Aging with Dignity class, Women's Retreat, the Passion Week study and presentations, Mission Trips – all ways to engage and go deeper. For a small church, we have a lot going on! This year, the Trustees worked to hire an office Administrator. Wow, Mary Sutton-Smith brings thoughtfulness, professionalism and organization to the church office – she is such a help to me personally and to our church as a whole. We are an active church living our faith daily.

Vibrant worship Our church worship services have evolved and changed over the years of my ministry here. Our service is more interactive and experiential – and you, the church community, have embraced new worship experiences: Palm Sunday monologues, Chalking the door, Starwords, Pentecost Birthday Parties, Children’s Books, Slideshows, Dramas. The music ministry has grown with the purchase of a (new to us) organ (thank you again for the generous donation Andrea Ambrose in honor of Clydene Trachier), while the music team of Ginny Dow and Becky Wood and volunteer church choir “wow” us each week. May we continue to worship God, our creator, through vital worship, with praise and prayer, reflection and music, honesty and truth.

Finally, a deep sense of the Spirit at work and seeing the Divine Light in all God’s children. . . . that is you my friends. I see the Divine Light in each and everyone of you, as we learn how to be human together. Thank you.

How would you describe our church? Do you talk about this church and how it feeds you? Why are you involved ? I am here and love serving this church because of all of YOU and because the Spirit is here in this place.

In the Greatest of Hope, Thanks Be to God. Amen.

Rev. Lucia Jackson

1 Corinthians 12 portions

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to 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. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.