

Pastor's Report 2021

Each team or committee was charged with making their report for this year's annual meeting a "Gratitude Report." We invited everyone to spend some time reflecting on the people and situations or experiences from 2021 that caused them to thank God and express gratitude. I want to accept that invitation as well.

First, although it was hard to **say goodbye to long-standing church staff colleagues** – Emily Thomas-Harned, Cindi Kyte and Steve Koch – I feel deep gratitude for the years I was able to serve alongside these ministry partners. Each one fulfilled God's call to leadership, service and discipleship with diligence, faithfulness and creativity. Our congregation and community is both better and blessed because of the good work of Emily, Cindi, and Steve. It is a rare thing to have gotten to work with the same team for almost 2 decades, so I feel blessed and grateful for that foundation, which gives us a firm footing to step into 2022.

I am also so **very grateful for the staff I continue to work** with on a daily and weekly basis.

Rick is a lot of fun and we enjoy some give-and-take. I am continually appreciative of the great job he does that often goes unnoticed. Rick is one who, whenever given a task, he is on it immediately. He is also one who does not wait to be asked; but instead, if he sees there is a need, he does it.

Donna has been a wonderful addition to our staff as Administrative Assistant. While Emily was still holding that position, she was always fond of saying "no two days are the same" – and that is still true! Each day and each month brings unique situations and projects for Donna to learn and accomplish. Donna is a great team player, persistent in problem-solving, and committed to making sure that each task is finished well.

When I announced that **Sue** had called me early one Sunday morning to explain that she would not be able to play the organ that morning, she confessed that this was the second time that had happened in 63 years. We dubbed her the *Iron Organist* that morning! Not only is Sue consistent, but she is an excellent musician whose breadth and depth of musical gifting and knowledge means that she is always able to find just the right piece for our worship.

Alex has continued to do youth ministry but, given that it is very different now than when it was fully in-person, Alex has offered his gifts in many other aspects of the life of our congregation. He utilizes his organization skills in very valuable ways. He helped plan and organize confirmation, working with families to determine if Zoom would work and then setting up the schedule. He has edited our worship services since the early days of COVID when we were fully online and did an excellent job. Then, when we returned to in-person services, Alex organized and trained the Tech Team so that we could move to live-streaming. If he sees a place where we need organization, he offers that. Along with learning Mailchimp and helping with congregation emails, he shared a communication grid to help us be consistent with the info we are communicating. We are excited that Alex completed Seminary last spring and is working his way through the ordination exams.

I'm grateful for **Gwyn** Straker who, when the pandemic first started, shifted our *Seniors in Motion* classes to Zoom, complete with a 15-minute coffee/social time. She continued that through 2021 and I heard from many of the participants of how life-giving that class and social time was during a time of isolation. In addition, people were able to

maintain their strength and mobility—something so important, but challenging to do alone.

I'm grateful for **Abbie** Leithold-Gerzema's faithfulness in creating our visuals for worship. Sometimes it can be easy for us to take that work for granted, but it adds so much value and beauty to our services. I am grateful for her steadfast commitment to all aspects of worship.

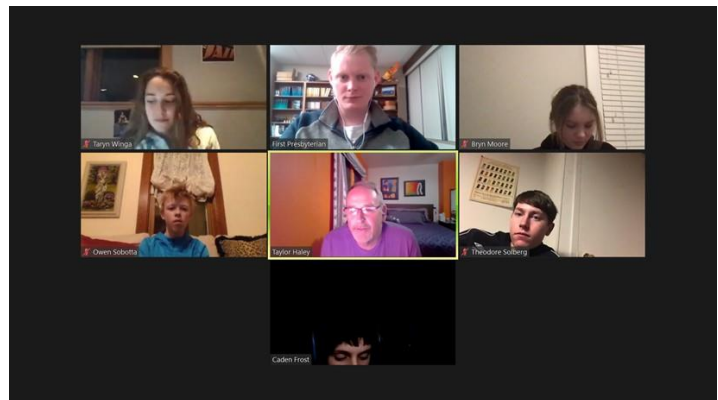
I am grateful for **all the members of our church who contribute to our ministry**—whether by calling fellow members, giving, offering their gifts, or volunteering in the different ministries and committees. We truly are a church that is *more than just Sunday morning*.

I was also grateful for our **drive-thru events**. I especially appreciated the opportunities I had to offer Communion—whether drive-up on communion Sunday or at a drive-thru event (Ash Wednesday pictured). It was meaningful to look into the eyes of masked friends and speak God's truths in-person, during the height of those days of isolation and quarantine.



While I would have much rather been in-person, I was grateful for the **technology of ZOOM** that allowed us to still carry out **Elder/Deacon training, our**

congregational meeting, Session/Deacon/Committee and Presbytery meetings, and Confirmation (pictured). I remember our first ZOOM Confirmation meeting, when most of the students had their screens blacked out. I invited them to turn their cameras on and we talked about how hard it is to be community when we can't see one another's faces. As their images appeared on the screen in their home setting, I was reminded of how much I appreciate our middle school and high school students, and the importance of the connection and learning we shared in Confirmation class.



This year, like every year, as a pastor I'm invited into families' lives in the most difficult of circumstances: when a loved one has passed away...And, each time, I am grateful for **the invitation to share in those sacred moments, as well as the trust that is expressed**. Many times the funerals that we offer are of long-standing members—20, 40, 50 years—and I am reminded that **the ministry in which we engage is built upon the shoulders of those who ministered before us, as well as God's work through them... and now through us**.

Lastly, I continue to be grateful for **the generosity of our church members**. Once again, even though we've experienced the restrictions of COVID, our members and

friends have stepped up and given financially of their resources, skills, and time. We experienced a year in which we had the resources we needed for ministry, and even a little bit left over. And that, too, is something for which I am very grateful.

As we continue to live in unprecedented times, **let us be on the watch for God's work in our lives and in the world, remembering to take moments to express our gratitude to God and to those around us.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taylor Haley', written in a cursive style.

-Taylor Haley, Pastor & Head of Staff