



Minister's Report – Reverend Drew Johnston

Overview

We have been busy with nary a lull in activity for me. Remembering that I am here to encourage transformative experiences for individuals and the congregation as a whole, I can note success and progress in many ways.

Some of our tasks have progressed slower than hoped, but none could be said to have failed. I continue with a sense of optimism as we move into the future together.

What is working well?

President Alicia Biggers and I seem to work well together. The Board has worked hard this year to avoid getting distracted by the temptation to over manage. Instead, they are tending to look at things from a policy level. An example is the decision to devote a portion of our rental income to caring for the buildings – treating the challenge as a process rather than a series of surprise needs.

The congregation took a similar view of replacing the furnace: taking the time to install a system that is cleaner, more economical to operate, longer lasting, and simpler to maintain than a direct replacement would have been.

We have established a Wednesday Church Night that includes worship, food, and meetings of various kinds. Women's Alliance assists with managing this. After expanding from 2 to 3 Wednesdays per month, it appears that next Fall we will expand further to every Wednesday. Additional activities are being planned.

I continue to be delighted by the ease of working with Todd Ballou and the quality offerings he creates as Music Director.

Also of particular note:

- The new Social Justice/ MOSES Core team is quite active and just hosted a rally that filled our hall with concerned, active citizens.
- We had a strong return on renewals and new memberships in the UUSC.
- 30 church people have signed up to be reading tutors with the Siena Literacy Project!
- Although it's too early to make conclusions, the Annual Canvass seems to be going well. The first 55 pledges total nearly \$90,000. Of those, 7 are new pledges. The first 28 increases total about \$14,000 and our overall average has improved significantly. There is more data to collect and some distance to go before we know the actual outcome.

What is the latest focus of change?

By now you have heard that Lynda Smith will be taking the position of Assistant Minister. This will support and alter the work of Athena Kolbe in Faith Development, and me, as well as provide new resources for the entire congregation.



What are you trying to improve next?

Most of our challenges are the things you expect when things are changing – uncertainties about how things will work now, taking time to integrate new ideas, avoiding returning to old patterns. I hope to encourage us all to be kind and persistent in letting go of old patterns that will only yield results from the past.

We are planning to enhance the Canvass process so it is active year round and so that the leaders of the Canvass will have time to plan. Currently, the last part of the process takes way too long.

We also look to enhance the role of the Nominating Committee so that they will be active all year.

At the administrative level, I am working with Wendi Winston to clarify her job for everyone's benefit, and to make adjustments that will serve us all better.

What changes do you suggest?

We are continuing to move the Board structure toward a policy-focused group, and we need Trustees to participate fully in the process, attend consistently, and follow through on their tasks. This, in fact, applies to all of us – consistent participation and follow through! So I hope to find a way to improve the odds of this happening.

I hope to successfully convey the importance of showing up and demonstrating that our congregation is important.

What are your goals for the near future?

My next task, and a nearly continual one, is to ascertain the degree to which this congregation is willing and able to take itself seriously. Personally, I believe this congregation matters, and I am pleased to be here with you.