

Pastor's Report to KFUMC Charge Conference. 11/22/20

Well, this is the second Church/Charge Conference I have shared with you as your Pastor here at Kennewick First. 2020 has been one of those years in which I feel like I am still a "newbie" at KFUMC, and a year that feels like it is lasting forever! I have told many people that the excitement of momentum and positive direction that was building in the Summer and Fall came to a screeching halt in March when we had to come to grips with this pandemic. I liken it to a broom handle being shoved in the spokes of the wheels of a bicycle while you are starting to pick up speed heading down hill. It almost feels like I want to do my first year over with you all. Just as I was starting to put names with faces and learn whose, who and who we all are in this congregation... face to face meetings stopped. Although I've been able to connect with many of you via electronic media, I fully admit I will have to re-meet many of you on the other side of this pandemic. On a personal note, I have been riding the rollercoaster of emotions over the past year like you all have. I go from feeling excited about the opportunities we have to try something new and in a new way... to feeling depressed as I long to be with a worshiping community and growing exhausted waiting for "someday"

I don't believe it was an accident, that just as the pandemic was hitting, and we were needing to close our facilities, we were beginning a Lenten Study on Scott McKnight's Book "Jesus Creed". The crux of his book is that The Kingdom of God that Jesus is ushering in, is centered on the notion that the Kingdom becomes a reality when our society reflects the purpose of Loving God and Loving our neighbor. For the past year I have felt compelled to preach that image of the Kingdom of God and our work as a church within our city. In a year when there is so much unrest over politics, so much anger over issues of racial and economic Justice, and so much mistrust over a pandemic... we have been exploring what it means to be a church that loves God with all we are, and loves our neighbor as ourself. I don't believe that is accidental timing!

In the year ahead I will be helping the friends and members of KFUMC put into action the creative ideas we have to Worship together, Serve together, Grow in our faith together and build Friendships together. The theme for 2021 that I feel God bringing me back to over and over again are the vows we make at our baptism. Vows that are rooted in the tradition of our church and in the truths found in scripture. To confess Jesus as our Savior, to reject and stand against the evil powers of this world and repent of our sin, and to surround each other with a community of love and support. My prayer is that we will discover what those vows mean for us as members and friends of KFUMC.

Finally, I want to give a big thank you to two groups of people. First, I want to give a huge thank you to the staff of KFUMC: Cynthia Bemont, Amberly Almarode, Rachel Loomis, Starlite Buckholze, Cheryl Nixon, Chuck Smith and Sharon Varzandeh. Over the years I've worked with multi-staff congregations, and pastored churches where I was expected to do and be the originator of every ministry of the church. I can in all honesty say that these who serve as our staff have been the best team I have worked with in my 25 years of ministry. I have leaned on them during this weird time in ministry as I am still learning who we are at KFUMC through the

filter of a pandemic and contentious times. THANK YOU KFUMC STAFF for all you do on behalf of our congregation and for the help you have given your Pastor!

Second, I want to thank the Church's Emergency Planning Team. From the very earliest stages of the shut down due to Covid 19, I gathered a group of people together that meet weekly to help formulate a plan for keeping the mission critical parts of who we are as a church functioning. Worshipping together, serving those in need, Spiritual growth, friendships and connections and financial stewardship. Their creative thinking and willingness to work together to formulate plans and procedures have helped us as a church continue to be the church God has called us to be and they have helped me beyond measure provide leadership to our congregation and community. Thank you EPT! Jil Berg, Kristi Thien, Rich Nelson, Michelle Hare, Dave Hare, Bob Kelly, Amberly Almarode, Rob Safford, Chuck Smith Kathy Bryson, Dana Bryson, Starlite Buckholze, Rachel Loomis and Cynthia Bemont

-Rev Mark McMurray  
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