

Pastor's Report

Submitted by: Michael Caine

(I am using a partially adapted version of the report form asked for this year's annual meeting; I am also appending a summary report at the end.)

List the members currently serving on your ministry or leadership team.

- ❖ I guess I would say that every member of this community is serving in my ministry or leadership team!

As you look at your goals for 2019, what were you able to accomplish? Please be as specific as possible.

Hmm, specific goals for the church last year would include:

- ❖ Present a noticeable, compelling and fleshed out incarnation of "Love First," an alternative vision to much of our world's business as usual, dog eat dog, strong beat the weak ways we experience in our personal lives and in broader life.
- ❖ Support the gathered community in worship, service, pastoral care, stewardship and our life together -- in ways that stretch and increase our individual and collective faith and its reach.
- ❖ Coax more people towards various forms of living out their faith. That means, of course, inviting people to help out with our outreach ministries. (We need the help!) It also points to acts of mercy and reconciliation among the people of this community. But we do not want to overlook or fail to include the ways church inspires people to service / witness elsewhere or in their daily lives. We are here to send out disciples / apostles.
- ❖ Build up the interconnectivity / depth of relationships within the church community. We can't easily work as one body or support one another without the force of deep relations.
- ❖ Help this community / institution to develop new flexibilities with which it can respond to the changing socio-cultural environment around it as well as the changing realities of church in our day / midst.
- ❖ Move ahead the internal and external prerequisites to get the new building project both ready and well-positioned for funding.
- ❖ Having gotten the building project rolling, we need to begin a planning process for what else we feel God calling us to do...

Were you able to achieve your goals for 2019? Please be as specific as possible of your successes and failures.

- ❖ I worry that we may not be broadcasting sufficiently our message about the distinctive vision and practice of Christian faith at Old First. While I believe we basically fulfilled this goal, I would be interested in thinking how we might measure our success?
- ❖ I often think of the faith of Old First as "service Christianity" -- that we are more pragmatic than dogmatic. We are about and effectively produce Christians who

understand their faith as lived out actions (mitzvahs!), rather than some kind of winner-take-all right beliefs. But are there more ways we might resource better the jump (leap of faith!) from heart-beliefs to action in the world, living out one's creed?

- ❖ This always feels a bit like something millennial, even unattainable -- the complexity of our not having people who live near / see each other outside of church to reinforce our fellowship efforts. And we keep working on it, need to keep working on it. I am always thrilled and gratified to stumble on some surprise, unexpected relationship.
- ❖ I take the decision to cease with the shelter when we have permanent housing and overall the lack of fallout involved in ceasing with the animals, as signs of growing flexibility -- there is more to the essence and continuation of Old First than even our most beloved traditions.
- ❖ We made incredible progress towards the realization of a new building along 4th Street. We thought we were going to be competitive applying this year, but got caught up in some city politics. But we are / will be completely ready -- in fact in a very strong position -- to apply for funding in the next round, beginning in the fall.
- ❖ We did not engage in longer term planning.

Where is your group or ministry area stuck? What 2019 goals were not accomplished? What is your group or ministry area pondering?

- ❖ I think that there is trouble for us engaging in and producing long term plans. It's been a part of the Elders' mandate that hasn't really gotten to. But other governing bodies who have also not gotten past the current moment to visions for the future. Church is often more familiar with and adept at responding in the moment or even responding to crises.
- ❖ We also need to come up with some commitment to and living out of a Christian Education ministry. Perhaps for adults, but certainly for kids. I know the families' schedules and the kids' age range complicate what we can do and how we offer it, but the kids / families / church needs to be teaching. And counting on me to keep on top of a weekly rotation of volunteers and curriculum isn't practical. We need a leader and worker bees because this is an important ministry.
- ❖ I also think we need to attend more deliberately, with more effort, to our responsibility sharing our understanding of the Good News extramurally. Related for me, at least, is that I believe that we should be serving a larger worshiping community.

What do you hope to accomplish in 2020?

- ❖ I think that I thought this would continue the 2019 goals, as well as what the Elders want to think about for the 2027 goals. As well, could we get a Christian Ed SLG up and running, and finally do something throughout the year with Discernment?
- ❖ Personally, I'd like to work this year on getting my job into some more reasonable work hours.

What are the ways that the church can support your team in achieving your goals?

- ❖ I would like us as a church to articulate more clearly what is involved in and also the rewards of church participation. I think this would help us as a metric for judging the success of our ministries as well as talking with others more powerfully about what they can expect church to add to their lives.
- ❖ Jonathan Vogan said something this year that Mark Wagenveld had spoken about my first year at Old First. Jonathan said he wished everyone could find it in themselves to be in church more often. Mark had talked about how people have a responsibility to others, because people come to church not just for themselves and what they receive, but also for what they offer and how their presence supports others. I suppose their insights point to the fact that it is easy for folks to count on us being here (when they are free or need us), but there does not seem to be a very compelling sense of responsibility to one's presence / participation as part of making sure that Old First is present and functioning.

The church will be 300 years old in 2027. How do you see your ministry evolving in the next seven years? What will it take to achieve those goals?

- ❖ Changed campus with the new building and changed community with the advent of our neighbors in permanent housing as part of our church community, and our ministries changed / changing accordingly.
- ❖ Larger community overall -- could we aim to be a worshipping congregation of 150 or even 200 each week? What changes would we have to make to accomplish this?
- ❖ Clearer sense of how we articulate and explain our faith, both internally and externally.
- ❖ More programmatic resources dedicated to growing the kind of Christians we hope to produce and share.

Overview of 2019 from my perspective:

It was a great year with a lot that got accomplished. Really a lot. Much of that got somewhat overshadowed in the mid-year by what felt like was going to be a bad financial ending. But as that was averted in a strong end of year for receipts, we can think more easily about what was accomplished.

- ❖ We ordained three young adults, Haeman, Katrina and Margaret, and sent them off to ministry in 2 parishes and 1 parish / other ministry setting. We are still working on getting Amy finished up in MA. And now Max has arrived and is studying at LTS; we need to recommend them as a Member in Discernment.
- ❖ We baptized 3 "young men:" Sir, Prince, Ayodotun Nathan.
- ❖ We welcomed Aubrey, Elijah, Madeline, Prince and Theo into the fellowship of the church through confirmation. Isaac also participated in the class but chose not to join. I think it was one of the best confirmation classes we have pulled off.
- ❖ We welcomed Alicia, Corlis, Jan and Steve, Max, Paula and Bob by letter of transfer.

- ❖ We released Eli and Jane to a UMC congregation where they moved in NJ; and Vicky Jo Mest to a UCC congregation in Central PA where she moved.
- ❖ We married 3 couples, Jackie and Travis, Evie and Michael, Christina and Ned.
- ❖ We hosted the fall meeting of the Philadelphia Association.
- ❖ We got the Worship SLG up and going, and saw the fruits of that in various additions in our liturgies / worship.
- ❖ We set Mark S. up as our “recruiter” for liturgists and lectors, and he’s been doing a wonderful job getting varied and new people to help lead our worship.
- ❖ We got monthly youth group activities going for the post-Confirmand crowd again.
- ❖ We figured out a different way to share the crèche. Creating both a cast of animals and story boards to actually provide more of the sacred story than live animals did. However, the latter were definitely more of a magnet. We are beginning conversations about having more animals with us on Christmas Eve next year.
- ❖ We accomplished the internal decisions necessary for the new building project, namely that approval of the basic design in the massing project as well as the decision that the permanent housing would replace our shelter ministry when the new building is occupied.
- ❖ We also managed to build support in the Old City neighborhood and across the city for our permanent supportive housing. This involved a series of over 30 individual meetings with leaders from other faith communities, neighborhood organizations and political interests, and culminated in a community-wide meeting about the project wherein we were met with significant questions but ultimately unquestioning support.
- ❖ We got the zoning we need for the property and the zoning permit; we got permission from the Historical Commission to move the Fox Building.

It was a blessed year. We did much of what God wants of us. And I continue to be honored to serve among and beside you.