

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH:

2011

Ah, let us **CELEBRATE** for our gracious and loving **GOD** has provided us the rich opportunity to share in God's Ministries, we share in God's Ministries as we continue to grow as brothers and sisters in the Family of God located here in the Ely United Methodist Church in Ely, Minnesota!!!

When we pause to give thoughtful reflection over our last year together here in the Ely U.M.C. we ought to give heartfelt **PRAISE** and **THANKSGIVING** unto our gracious and loving **GOD** who has journeyed with us, guided us, and has nurtured us along the way, as we have sought to share in God's Ministries with God!!!

Indeed, 2011 has been a wonderful year with a great many rich **BLESSINGS** from **GOD** as we have journeyed together as sisters and brothers in the Family of God!!!

As we begin to say good-bye to 2011, and as we begin to look forward to 2012 we ought to pause in a spirit of prayerful **PRAISE** and **THANKSGIVING** for all God has provided!!! Let's take a closer look at 2011:

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God as we have shared in God's Ministries by gathering to worship together as God's Family! We must give thanksgiving unto God for the many wonderful blessings God has provided us with that have enriched our worship experiences during this past year. We give thanks unto God for the many brothers and sisters we have who gather with us in worship during the summer months, people from many different places who set an example of the importance of spending time in worship by sharing as a part of our Church Family here in the Ely U.M.C. during the summer months! We give thanks unto God for the wonderful efforts of our awesome Church Choir and their dedication to enhancing our worship of God through music, a choir that almost doubles in size during the summer yet continues continuing on during the winter months! We give thanks unto to God for our organist, our pianists, and for those who willingly run our CD Player when necessary, music is a rich blessing to the voices which ring out with praise and thanksgiving unto God as we worship our gracious and loving God! We give thanks to all the different brothers and sisters in the Family of God among us who take on leadership roles in our worship of God, ushers, acolytes, lay leaders, the communion stewards, fellowship time providers, and all the rest!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for the wonderful work that is being done by our Visioning Committee! We have a very strong group of Church Family Members who are serving on this committee, seeking to nurture growth

possibilities as identified by our participation in the “Natural Church Development Survey” program. To this end, we have focused our attention on “Passionate Spirituality” which we have summarized for ourselves as “Developing a Closer, More Meaningful, More Intimate Relationship with God”! To this end, we have to date held a six week study on developing a prayerful spirit, enhanced our church library with new books and video studies, developed a inspiration board highlighting our awareness’s of God in our lives, worked on ways of being more open and inviting with regards to opportunities for nurture and fellowship, and we continue to expand the possibilities as the “Visioning Committee” moves on, with a focus on a future as a part of the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C.! To this end, the future, we continue to look at new possibilities for ministry, like additional studies on pray and the possibilities of additional Bible Study groups meeting at different times, a possible return to the “Alpha Program”, and also more Church Family potlucks or as we like to sometimes call them indoor picnics with programs; yes moving on with a focus on the future as God’s people.

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for the many opportunities we have for learning about God and growing closer to God! We have had a strong afternoon Bible Study for years that continues to meet and study God’s Holy Word together sharing thoughts and ideas, nurturing and encouraging one another, as we seek to grow in understanding. This year, we have a wonderful group of young people participating in Confirmation Classes, we give thanks that God has blessed us with each one of them as we seek to help nurture them and encourage into a deeper and more meaningful walk with God. We continue to have a group of women called “The Guild” who gather together on a monthly basis during the school year taking time to study together and to fellowship together. Finally, God has blessed us with a group of people who have made a strong commitment to seeing if we can continue to maintain a Sunday School Program at a time when we were looking at the possibility of having to discontinue the program because of the numbers participating or rather the lack of numbers participating. This group is looking at trying some different approaches to Sunday School so that we can keep on providing this valuable ministry as we participate in serving God and caring for our young people!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for the many opportunities we have been provided by God to share in outreach ministry! Indeed, 2011 has been a very active year for the Ely U.M.C. with regards to looking beyond ourselves. We continue to have an amazing “Prayer Shawl Ministry” which touches many lives beyond our church walls because of the great dedication and effort on the part of those who coordinate and lead this valuable aspect of our ministry with God and for God’s children. We continue to celebrate the work of the “Hearts 2 Hands” quilting group of our Church Family who make quilts for kids who are at risk. We give thanks for all those who are dedicated to sharing in our “Parish Nurse Ministry” as we seek to look beyond the gathered community of Sunday morning worshippers. “Stanley the Scare Crow” helped us raise over \$700.00 for our Ely Area Food Shelf during our October drive, a great year for “Stanley” as we reached out to others. As we continue to look beyond our

own walls we can include ministries like, participating in community wide efforts to provide worship services to those who can no longer gather in our church facilities by providing worship experiences at both the "Boundary Waters Care Center" and at "Ely carefree Living", an Ecumenical Lenten Supper Ministry, "The Giving Tree Ministry" in connection with the Ely Community Resources Team, during this last year a senior exercise program in connection with the "Northwoods Hospice Respite Partners", Young Life, and Children's International. Yes, 2011 has been a very big year for the Ely U.M.C. as we have participated in looking beyond the walls of our church building here at the Ely U.M.C.!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for the response of the Ely U.M.C. Family with regards to the "Imagine No Malaria" campaign being promoted by the United Methodist Church Denomination. The Minnesota Annual Conference challenged us to become a church that would commit to a \$7,000.00 pledge towards the "Imagine No Malaria" campaign. This pledge of \$7,000.00 would represent the possibility of saving 700 lives in Africa; remember "Imagine No Malaria" is a Denomination wide effort! We rejoice that the Ely United Methodist Women's group accepted the challenge very quickly and following suit almost as quickly was the Ely U.M.C. Ad. Council! Now, looking at this \$7,000.00 pledge over a three year period we can celebrate that we have already put in the bank over \$6,100.00 towards meeting this three year pledge and 2011 has not yet come to a close! Yes, we give praise and thanksgiving unto to God for the gracious spirit of the Ely U.M.C. Family with regards to "Imagine No Malaria"!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for those God has provided us who are seeking to establish a youth group ministry in our midst. We have gone many years without being able to provide something for our younger Church Family Members beyond Sunday School and then Confirmation Classes, this year we have had some folks within our Church Family step forward to seek to establish a new youth group in our midst for our young people. So far, they have been meeting almost every Wednesday night with a small but awesome group of young people! Further, we give thanks unto God for the Ely United Methodist Church Women's group who has made a financial commitment to helping our youth group get going! This is a very exciting moment in time for the Ely U.M.C. Family, for indeed God has blessed us with some wonderful young people while also challenging us as the Church Family to nurture their futures with the opportunity to grow in God's love in a new and unique way, a youth group! Ah, an old but new opportunity to be in ministry with God and with each other as the Family of God!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for all those wonderful workers who continue to participate in our "Pasty Making Ministry"! Indeed, God has richly blessed us with this "Pasty Making Ministry" that not only helps us with our financial responsibilities as the people of God here in the Ely U.M.C., but it also

provides us an amazing example of what can be done when God's people pitch-in and work together on a common goal. Indeed, year after year, and month by month in each year, the pasties get made and people have fun. What a wonderful opportunity this "Pasty Making Ministry", a wonderful opportunity to work together as the Family of God and to fellowship together at the same time, while giving us a very strong example of what can be done when we serve God together!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for the Ely U.M.C. Trustees and their tremendous labors of love towards maintaining our base of operations, the church buildings, the parsonage, and the grounds, as we seek to be the people of God, in ministry with God, within the community of Ely and beyond! Yes, our Trustees as a group and as individuals have done an amazing job of maintaining our facilities so that we can keep participating with God in God's Ministries. The Trustees provide regular and dutiful attendance to our properties without hesitation, this careful attention to the properties provides us the opportunity to maintain a regular flow of activities within our facilities! We have been blessed by God with all of these caring and talented people whom we call our Trustees, who serve God in this unique area of ministry!

We pause in a spirit of prayerful praise and thanksgiving unto God for all the gracious givers in the Ely U.M.C. Family! Yes, God has blessed us even during these difficult economic times. Indeed, we have been able to continue to pay our Apportionments to the Minnesota Annual Conference in full throughout the years. Although we are not quite to the close of the year 2011, it looks like we will again be able to pay all of our Apportionments, while also continuing to meet all of our other financial responsibilities. Truly, God has provided the resources we have needed to participate in God's Ministries within our community and beyond.

*The one thing we continue to struggle with as a congregation, is a continued decline in our attendance to the worship of God on Sunday mornings. Our "Ad. Council" as well as, our "Visioning Committee" have **not** maintained a "Blind Eye" concerning this issue, rather they have acknowledged it as a reality and the "Visioning Committee" has been an active part of seeking out ways to address this issue! We can give praise and thanksgiving unto God for the many open hearts of God's Family Members here in the Ely U.M.C. who have lovingly been willing to work on this challenging situation!*

The people of God, in the Ely U.M.C. Family, has truly developed habits which involve giving, they give of their precious time, they give of their precious skills, they give of their precious talents, they give of their precious financial resources, and most of all they give of their precious love!

In a spirit of praise and thanksgiving unto God for all God has provided we have tried to summarize the "State of the Church" here in the Ely U.M.C., this is not an exhaustive list, but it is a list that demonstrates that we are not simply sitting on the sidelines of life watching the world go by but we are actively participating in God's Ministries as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C.!

Love in Christ,

Dana