

## **THE STATE OF THE CHURCH:**

**2014**

*Ah yes, 2014 is coming to a close and we here in the Ely U.M.C. have spent another year in “Ministry with God”! During this past year God has blessed us with many opportunities to be in “Ministry with God”! As we pause to reflect on 2014 and our “Ministry with God” let us do so with **JOY** filled hearts nurtured by the **WONDER** of God’s gracious **LOVE** for us as children in the Family of God!*

*Ah yes, as we move to the close of 2014 we can say that it has been a full and **WONDERFUL** year enriched by God’s **LOVE** for us, and by the **LOVE** we have shared with one another as brothers and sisters in the Family of God! Indeed, it is “God with us” providing strength through love, providing opportunities for growth as the Family of God, providing blessings and encouragement for our “Ministries with God”, that has provided us the opportunity to say of 2014 that it has been a **WONDERFUL** year in many a various ways!*

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” here in the Ely U.M.C. during 2014 ought to inspire within our hearts a spirit of **JOY** and **APPRECIATION** which causes us to celebrate with a heartfelt acknowledgement of our need to simply pause and prayerfully say **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” during 2014 ought to lead us as children in the Family of God to prayerfully say **THANK YOU GOD**, with heart, mind, and spirit, for all the **WONDERFUL** blessings and opportunities, to name a few:*

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” and with each other through worship as the Family of God. We have many things to celebrate in relation to our worship experiences.*

*As we have been reminded yet again by our District Superintendent that we have an awesome choir here in the Ely U.M.C., a choir which adds richness to our worship experiences throughout the year! We have been blessed as the Family of God by each person in our choir and the time, talent, and dedication, which they have shown throughout the year to enhance our worship experiences.*

*In like manner, we have been blessed by our organist, many pianists, and guitarist/soloist, who have continued to add depth and warmth to our worship experiences by the sharing of their time, talent, and dedication, through instrumental music ministry!*

*Further, this past year we have begun the process of trying to invite more active involvement by our laity in our worship experiences. The youth of our church will have led two worship services by the end of 2014. Sparked by this example of leadership from the youth we are hoping to see both the women of the church and the men of the church leading worship services in the coming months. Along with these initiatives, we are also now promoting a program by which the laity will read the Sunday Morning Scripture*

Reading during the worship service. Ah yes, worship, choir, musicians, youth, women, men, readers, **THANK YOU GOD !!!**

Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” during 2014 we yet again ran an “Alpha Course” program here in the Ely U.M.C. What a tremendous adventure this turned out to be. It had been about ten years since we had run the “Alpha Course”; the participation, the commitment, and the dedication, to this year’s (2014) “Alpha Course” highlights the value we found in participating, we had about thirty people signed up for the eleven week course plus one full day and we averaged through it all about twenty-five or twenty-six people per session, **AWESOME!!!** Further, thanks to the “Alpha Course” we as a Church Family have been looking for a good way to expand on the benefits we have gained from participating in the course together. This has led to our seeking to enter into a Church wide study of Rueben P. Job’s book “Three Simple Rules”. We will start this “Three Simple Rules” Study in February of 2015 with the hopes of encouraging numerous, numerous Church Family members to join in and participate. We are taking some time to promote this study! **THANK YOU GOD !!!**

Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” through the amazing efforts of our “Visioning Committee”. This committee has worked tirelessly with dedication and commitment to seeking out ways we can as children in the Family of God more fully reach our potential as we seek to be in “Ministry with God”! This past year (2014) we re-took the “Natural Church Development” Survey to see how we had been progressing with our efforts as a Church Family. Based on the “Natural Church Development” Survey we took four years ago, we began focusing on “Passionate Spirituality” as an area of growth for our Church Family. Re-taking the survey has shown that we have improved in all areas of our life together here in the Ely U.M.C. including our “Passionate Spirituality”, but it also showed that we could continue in this area of development as children in the Family of God. Therefore, looking at the results of the survey the “Visioning Committee” has intentionally decided to work on a two pronged plan seeking to enhance our potential with regards to “Passionate Spirituality” and also “Need-Oriented-Evangelism”! The “Visioning Committee” as already begun to discuss and consider new ideas for future endeavors with regards to our “Ministry with God”; we rejoice in the efforts made by this committee to seek out ways for us to remain vital and alive as the children of God here in the Ely U.M.C. Further, we rejoice that during this past year we have received new membership to this committee. **THANK YOU GOD !!!**

Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” during the past year while continuing to maintain two Sunday School Classes and the beginning of another for the very youngest of our Church Family!

Our first Sunday School Class is held during worship for our children grades K-6. The children begin with us in worship and then they move to Sunday School Class following the “Children’s Sermon”. We have been richly blessed by Chris Urbas and her many, many years of dedicated service to this vital aspect of our being the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C. Yes, loving and caring for our children, as we seek to nurture

*their relationships with God is a vital aspect of our being in “Ministry with God” and Chris has spent many years doing just this as our Sunday School Superintendent!*

*Our second Sunday School Class is an outgrowth of the efforts put forth by our “Visioning Committee” and a focus on “Passionate Spirituality”. This Sunday School Class is now moving into its’ second year of life. This Sunday School Class meets before worship and is open to anyone who would like to participate. We have been having steady participation in this class. When we gather together our focus has been on discussing the Scripture Reading for the morning worship service, which follows Sunday School. We have been averaging 6-9 people a week in this class and celebrate the example being set for our children. We can all continue to learn and study both individually and together!*

*Our third Sunday School Class is also an outgrowth of the efforts put forth by our “Visioning Committee” and two precious young folks in our Church Family, Jan Rue and Devon Luthens who have seen the need to provide something a little more structured for the very youngest of our Church Family. This Sunday School Class will be meeting at the same time as our K-6 Sunday School Class!*

*Yes, we have been richly blessed by God during this past year with regards to being able to provide learning opportunities such as these two Sunday School classes which have been ongoing, and the possibility of a third Sunday School Class starting up.*

**THANK YOU GOD !!!**

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” through not only Sunday School but other small groups within our Church Family. We give thanks today for our Bible Study group which has been meeting for 28 years now and continues on Thursday afternoons. What a wonderful opportunity to share, study, and fellowship while seeking to grow in understanding concerning God’s Holy Word. We give thanks for our women’s group known as the “Guild” as they continue gathering monthly for study, support, and fellowship. We give thanks for the short term study and fellowship group which took part in “The Journey”, a video and book study. Finally, we give thanks for the Men’s Group which has begun meeting irregularly, but meeting none-the-less, as this year has led us to seek to re-establish a long missing men’s group here in the Ely U.M.C. What an exciting opportunity this is for the men within our Church Family. **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” through our Youth Group during 2014. What a joy to celebrate a group of 7-10 young people who meet together on a weekly basis during the school year, to commune with each other through meals, ministry, fun, and fellowship together. We here in the Ely U.M.C. have been truly blessed by our Youth Group. During 2014 they will have set the example for the rest of us by leading two different worship services as an example of their walk with God! As has been mentioned prior to this, both the women and the men of the church are each going to be following the example of the Youth Group in the coming year as they too seek to lead a worship service as an example of their walk with God! We also celebrate the Youth Group and their service to the community by helping us with the Christmas Tree Project in the Senior Apartments. Yes, our Youth Group has been awesome yet again in 2014! **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, "God with us" as we have participated in "Ministry with God" through many different Outreach Projects during the past year.*

*We continue to support a child from Guatemala through Children's International (Evelin Sarai Jiatz Cutzal).*

*"Hearts Two Hands" to be mentioned in the coming paragraphs continues to be an awesome outreach within our Church.*

*We continue to participate in our Local Food Shelf through the encouragement of "Stanley the Scarecrow".*

*We continue to participate in our "Giving Tree" Project which is a community wide effort to get Christmas gifts to children within our community who made not have as blessed a Christmas Season as other children within our community do.*

*Further, we as a Church Family will during 2015 participate in the "Reach, Renew, Rejoice" Campaign as established by the Minnesota Annual Conference. Our Ad. Council has committed to trying to raise \$2,020.00 for "Reach, Renew, Rejoice" in 2015. This commitment is 2% of our 2014 budget. Over the next 5 years 2015-2019 we will revisit this commitment year by year. Ultimately, if things go well over the next 5 years we will try to renew this commitment year by year. When 2019 comes to a close we will have then raised \$10,100.0 or 10% of our 2014 Budget for the "Reach, Renew, Rejoice" Campaign. This campaign is one which is meant to help establish new churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference and revitalize others! **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, "God with us" as we have participated in "Ministry with God" through some wonderful ongoing programs within our Church Family.*

*Our "Parish Health Ministry" Team continues to provide opportunities for Church Family members to get regular monthly Blood Pressure Readings. Further, an offshoot of the "Parish Health Ministry" Team has been our "Prayer Shawl Ministry" and our "Pocket Cross Ministry" both of which nurture a spirit of love and care.*

*Our Prayer Chain Ministry continues to remain active and supportive as we lift others up in prayer.*

*We also continue to support the efforts of the community to provide worship services at the "Care Free Living" Facility in Ely and also the "Boundary Waters Care Center" Nursing Home. We have a number of people who continue to be willing to help with these very important ministries as we enter into worship with those of our community who can no longer get to worship services at the churches of our community.*

*"Hearts Two Hands" continues to be an awesome aspect of our efforts to be in "Ministry with God". Yes, they continue to make quilts for at-risk-kids, but this yet they also provided 100 pillowcases for the "Conkerr Cancer" Program. The "Hearts Two Hands" Ministry has been going strong for many, many, awesome years now! **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, "God with us" as we have participated in "Ministry with God" through our "Pasty Making Ministry" during 2014. We have had yet another tremendous year of working together and fellowshiping together on this very special aspect of our being in "Ministry with God" through service. Our "Pasty Making Ministry" has provided many benefits to us as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C.; first, our "Pasty Making*

*Ministry” has been a blessing with regards to our ongoing financial stability; second, our “Pasty Making Ministry” continues to exemplify the reality of what we can do as the people of God when we work together! What a precious reminder of that which we can accomplish as the people of God when we work together be it with regards to a great number of pasties or a great number of pillowcases, or a great number of...! **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Ah yes, “God with us” as we have participated in “Ministry with God” and as we continue to remain financially stable. Indeed, for yet another year it looks as though we will close the year 2014, with all of our bills paid to date, including our apportionments. **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*So, as we move ever closer to the close of 2014, we have a “spiritual passion” to re-invigorate our attendance to worship as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C. Indeed, we have a vital and alive congregation of brothers and sisters in the Family of God who are involved with seeking ways to more fully maximize our potential for “Ministry with God” while living their faith with each other through worship, fellowship, and study and the **WONDER** of “God with us”! For the many blessings God has provided us as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C. we say **THANK YOU GOD !!!***

*Love in Christ,*

*Dana*

**WORSHIP, SERVE, & FELLOWSHIP  
IN HEART, MIND, & SPIRIT,  
AS WE “REJOICE WITH THANKSGIVING IN OUR HEARTS”  
FOR WHAT GOD HAS DONE, IS DOING, AND WILL DO,  
AMONG US!!!**