

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH: 2015

Well, we here in the Ely U.M.C. are coming to the close of 2015 and yet another year of being in ministry with our gracious and loving **GOD** who has enabled us to have many reasons to **REJOICE** as the people of God who are seeking to serve in God's Ministries with **GOD!!!**

Indeed, we have been provided a wealth of opportunities for being in ministry with **GOD**; we have been provided opportunities to reach out in service, we have been provided opportunities to grow in our walk with God, we have been provided opportunities to worship our gracious and loving God, and we have been provided opportunities to be the Family of God as we seek to support one another as the Family of God, let us **REJOICE** in the many rich opportunities our gracious and loving **GOD** has provided us during 2015!!!

Indeed, there are a vast number of ways **GOD** has provided us the opportunity to reach out in service with God and with each other.

One of our long standing ministries with God is our "Parish Health Ministry" Team. Our "Parish Health Ministry" Team has continued through the years to be in ministry through a monthly Blood Pressure Program, visitation to members in the hospital and those who do not get out very much, a Pocket Cross Ministry, and a Prayer Shawl Ministry to name a few of the ways they are reaching out in service. New this year, the "Parish Health Ministry" Team started a Program which is called the "File of Life, this is a record or file for quick reference useful for to those responding to medical emergencies. The file is a summary collection of medical information. Our team has given out over 1000 of these "Files of Life" in and around the Ely area.

Another of our long standing ministries with God is our "Hearts 2 Hands" Quilting Group who makes quilts for "Kids at Risk". Our "Hearts 2 Hands" Quilting Group has been working together for roughly 12 years now and has just gone through a transitional stage with group membership. We joyfully celebrate the strength of this group as it has successfully transitioned and continues to be in ministry with God. During this group's 12 years in service it has made roughly 270 quilts. A secondary project under taken by the "Hearts 2 Hands" Quilting Group is the "Con-Kerr Cancer" Pillowcase Project, this year our group made 87 pillowcases in a one day blitz, awesome work.

Two other ministries which we have participated in during 2015 as we seek to be in service includes, the "Boundary Waters Care Center" Worship Services and the "Care Free Living" "Worship Services. These two worship services are held for brothers and sisters in the Family of God living within our community who can no longer easily get to the churches within our community. Our Ely U.M.C. participates in bringing worship services to these facilities so those living in these facilities have the opportunity to worship as the Family of God.

Another of our long standing ministries is in connection with "Children's International" and our sponsorship of a girl from Guatemala named Evelin Sarai Jiatz Cotzal.

Also during 2015 we participated in Ely's "Relay for Life" Cancer Walk. Our Team the "M & M'S" or the "Methodist Milers" logged the most laps and raised the most money for cancer at the 2015 "Relay for Life" in Ely. We were able to bring in over \$7,000.00 as a team, awesome!!!

*Indeed, our gracious and loving **GOD** has blessed us as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C. over and over again during 2015. Let us, as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C., joyfully pause to **REJOICE** and give **THANKS** unto **GOD** for all **GOD** has done, is doing, and will do among us as a part of the Family of God, as we reach out in service in these and many other ways!!!*

*Indeed, there are a vast number of ways **GOD** has provided us the opportunity to grow in our walk with God and each other as the Family of God.*

2015 has been a wonderful year for the Sunday School Program here in the Ely U.M.C., we had three Sunday School Classes going in 2015. The first class, is our K-6 Sunday School Class which has been ably coordinated by Chris Urbas. During 2015 we have seen a bit of an upturn in the number of people willing to help with teaching during the year, awesome. The second class, is for our very young children and has been ably coordinated by Devon Luthens and Jan Rue. We are looking for ways to enhance this aspect of our Sunday School Program by upgrading our tools for teaching the very young. The third class, is our before worship time of reflection on the Scripture Reading for the upcoming morning worship. This class is in its' second year and continues to have good attendance and valuable participation.

2015 has also seen our Youth Group continue to bloom through the leadership of Sheri Rue and Keith Rue. What a joy to see the commitment made by our young people to meeting together on a weekly basis during the school year. They also led two worship services during 2015, awesome.

Bible Study continues to meet on Thursdays during the school year with many rich opportunities for sharing, learning, and growing, as we focus on various Scriptural Topics sharing our thoughts and ideas in an atmosphere of caring for one another. What a blessing this Bible Study group is to each of those who invests their time and energy to this opportunity to grow in relationship with God and with each other, awesome.

Guild, the Women's Group who fellowship and study together provide yet another opportunity for our Church Family members, at least the women, to grow in their walk with God and with each other. The Guild group has a wonderful devotional study time together followed by fellowship time around the table.

During this past year, 2015, we participated in three Special Studies as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C. First, we did a study called "Three Simple Rules". Second, we hosted a movie night showing "God Is Not Dead" with a discussion group the following week. Third, we participated in an Advent Study called "Under Wraps, The Gift We Never Expected".

We also participated in an Ecumenical Church Picnic with Grace Lutheran Church and the Ely Presbyterian Church, seeking to nurture the bonds of Christian unity and the sense of Christian Family beyond the walls of the church. This little adventure into ministry enhancing the potential for growth was well worth the time spent. Similar to the

picnic, is our continued participation in the Community Lenten Suppers with many of the other area churches.

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*Indeed, **GOD** has provided us the opportunity to worship our gracious and loving God and to do so as the Family of God.*

Our worship services during 2015 have been enriched in numerous ways. We have an awesome choir who through their dedication, hard work, and loving service, and by way of blending their voices, have provided a heartwarming depth to our worship experiences for which we are very thankful. Our Choir truly does inspire our worship experiences.

We have a number of wonderfully gifted musicians who have willingly served God and Church Family during this past year who have also enhanced our time in worship through music. We give thanks for our organist Susan Germek, our pianist Sharon Luthens, and our guitarist and soloist Marshall Monthei. Sue, Sharon, and Marshall, have shared their musical talents, their time, and energy, to help make our worship experiences bloom in ways that can potentially lift our spirits unto God.

During this past year we have also had the wonderful opportunity to see our youth, our men, and our women all lead worship services and in all cases they provided inspiring worship experiences, thanks be unto God.

During 2015 we have also sought greater participation by the Laity through their reading of the Scriptures for the morning worship service.

As we worship we continue to encourage a sense of our being the Family of God who are communing with God as we worship God. We continue to try to truly allow our children to be involved in the worship experience as acolytes, through the sharing of prayer concerns which they may have, through sharing their announcements, and yes the sharing of Children's Sermons. Indeed, we seek to live out our worship experiences as family, God's Family.

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*Indeed, there are a variety of ways **GOD** has provided us the opportunity to support one another as the Family of God.*

We have already celebrated numerous ways we support each other through a variety of growth opportunities here in the Ely U.M.C. as we study together from young people to

adults, from Sunday School to Bible Study and more. We also support each other as we worship God together as the Family of God.

Another valuable aspect of our support for each other is nurtured by our Prayer Chain Team and our prayers for each other in worship and beyond as we lift each other up in our daily prayer lives.

Our Coffee Fellowship, following worship, is a rich avenue for our lending support and care for each other here in the Ely U.M.C. We give thanks for the many, many people who participate in making that experience happen on a weekly basis. Our Coffee Fellowship allows us time to open our hearts to each other as brothers and sisters in the Family of God.

Our Pasty Ministry is a twofold blessing. Clearly, the financial benefit is obvious as a Fund Raiser for the church pasty making helps us remain viable as we continue to share in God's Ministries with God and each other. However, another awesome benefit to our pasty making adventures is the opportunity it provides to us to walk with each other and support one another while working together. Indeed, the fellowship that occurs as we work with God and each other is priceless. Our pasty making adventures are a solid witness to what we can do when we work together as the Family of God here in the Ely U.M.C.

During 2015 we have also started a "re-do" on our "Pictorial Directory". These directories are a wonderful tool for helping new Church Family members become connected to the rest of the Church Family. There is an old saying which may apply, "a picture is worth a thousand words". Connecting with each other and sharing a thousand words with each other is easier when we can tie a name to a face and then begin to bond with each other as brothers and sisters in the Family of God, awesome.

Our financial support for the church and our work with God as the Family of God remains solid as we continue to meet all of our budgeted commitments, which includes our Apportionment Responsibilities to the Minnesota Annual Conference as a part of the larger United Methodist Church.

Along with Apportionment Responsibilities 2015 has found us making a \$2,020.00 commitment to the Minnesota Annual Conference Campaign of "Reach, Renew, Rejoice". This is a five year Campaign; now, our first year commitment to "Reach, Renew, Rejoice" was 2% of our 2014 Budget and we will make that goal in 2015. We have yet to set a commitment level for 2016.

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Yes, as we look back at 2015 and as we look forward to 2016 we have much to be **THANKFUL** for here in the Ely U.M.C.!!! **GOD** has richly blessed us as we have sought to walk with God and each other as the Family of God!!!

*Yes, as we look back at 2015 and as we look forward to 2016 we have much to be **THANKFUL** for here in the Ely U.M.C.!!! **GOD** has richly blessed us as we have sought to work with God and each other as the Family of God!!!*

*Indeed, as we continue to serve in ministry, grow in love for God and each other, worship as the Family of God, and support one another as brothers and sisters, let us do so **REJOICING** for all **GOD** has done, is doing, and will do among us here in Ely U.M.C.!!!*

Love in Christ,

Dana

**SERVE IN MINISTRY
GROW IN LOVE FOR GOD & ONE ANOTHER
WORSHIP AS THE FAMILY OF GOD
SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER**

**LET US WELCOME 2016 AS WE SEEK TO WALK
WITH GOD
WITH PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING!!!**