

Pastor's Report 2014

“The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.” Psalm 145.13b

God always does what is good and right and perfect. What hope that brings to our lives! As we have been memorizing Psalm 145 as a faith family we have been reminded that it is good to reflect and meditate on what God has done, so we are primed to trust him tomorrow – that’s the essence of faith. My report is aimed at reminding us of a few of the ways we have seen him at work .

As Family we experienced the Spirit’s work of sanctification. As we have seen in our study of Judges, since The Fall people tend to run after other gods rather than THE God. But God passionately seeks that which is best for us, so he is not content to wait for us to change our minds – he actively engages the sins that have won our affections and removes them. As a result, we worship him and him alone.

That blessed truth has changed us this year; most notably, when God brought to light an area of sin in Josh Otte’s life. As a faith family we were challenged to believe that God is faithful – always faithful – in his words and works. Three things stood out. First, our elders led well through a painful time clinging to God’s words about the beauty and value of discipline. They are men to be admired and trusted, strong men who humbly sought to restore and care for the Ottes. Second, I cannot express my thankfulness and admiration for Josh and Heidi’s willingness to trust God. Few Christians get to see the level of honesty and humility demonstrated by this godly couple in one of the most difficult situations imaginable! They have made such strides in holiness and deepened love for each other this year, while walking with a few key counselors from inside and outside this church. Third, as a church family you have made such an impact. You have loved them and accepted them with great intentionality – even though that was stretching. Many churches would have solved this by rejecting the couple involved, thus proving their disdain for sin. You proved your love for Jesus by gently restoring him “in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal.6.1).

Now this is just one visible picture of what God has been doing inside of us – many other stories exist. We are so thankful that God flips over the “rocks” of our lives to show us what lives under there (sins) and then by his great power set us free from them so we can live lives of worship to God and service to others.

As Missionaries we have partnered to share Jesus. Our Missional Communities are the front line ministries of WBC. Instead of plowing hundreds of man-hours into choirs or events, we have called the people of WBC to live on Jesus’ mission, relying on the Spirit’s leading, to pursue God’s mission. Marked with a gospel intentionality, you have looked for ways to bring the good news that only Jesus could offer to others – mostly by doing what you are already doing. That means that we had many missionaries of all ages who prayerfully asked the Spirit, “What do you want me to do next?” Then they did it – making meals, watching movies, playing corn hole, camping, repairing cars, coaching sports, sitting around a

fire... these are just a few examples that I know of. And we did that as family – working together, using our varied gifts, and caring for others. And we have seen a handful of people come to trust Jesus this year. One lady who is a friend of mine grew up attending a parochial school, but came to know Jesus for the first time this year. There are others who are being disciplined toward Jesus – they don't trust him yet, but they who he is through you. Others have trusted him and are saved, but needed to be reminded again. That is missionary work, too!

As Servants we have worked hard. Since Jesus, our King, came to serve instead of be served, we share the same DNA. We are learning that life is about serving others and growing in that skill. We have rhythms of serving – like teaching the children of WBC, giving money or goods to the ministry, cleaning the building, serving food, carrying tables, folding bulletins, counting the offerings or mowing the lawns. Thank you for all you do. We also take opportunities to serve God-given needs. Some of you updated the paint in the gathering place – thank you, Josh Otte, for leading that. You have served our families who have been adopting from Haiti – praying, making meals, and encouraging. A large group of our family here invested a day at the One Day training in Haverhill, Ma to better learn how to live on mission as a family of servants. Then you have helped your neighbors and co-workers and family and friends. Jesus is so proud of you, even if no one said thank you yet.

It is important to mention a few other significant realities of the past year:

- Thank you, Don Carrier, for your many years as a faithful elder at WBC. Don is taking a sabbatical for the first time in more than 20 years of service. May this be a real time of growth and specialized service.
- Thank you, Sara Carrier and Sandy Winde, for daily walking with Jesus through one of the hardest callings imaginable. We are so thankful that God has helped you fight against your cancer, and that we have been able to watch your faith and lives. We also thank Don and Kathy and their families for their love and serving to them as they have taken this journey with them.
- We celebrate with Bethany and Jarred Bridges as they enjoy the gift of Grayson, their son of promise, after many years of longing for him.

I know there must be more, so I apologize to those who I should have put here. This past year was a year of progress and growth. I am so thankful for this faith family! It has been such a joy to be part of a people who want to be challenged in the areas where the gospel has not changed us, and who long to be the church; a people who are serving, and loving, and praying, and learning, and risking, and speaking the amazing news of God's work on our behalf!

Let us press on together, not to wasting our lives – but living lives fueled by confidence in our hope in our rock, Christ.

Pastor Mark on behalf of the Council of Elders