

## Annual Report 2021/2022

I could not have envisioned that I'd be writing this year's annual report from my office overlooking 8<sup>th</sup> Street just above a cannabis and vape shop and across from where Elim Church stood for over 30 years! I could not have imagined the events that brought us to where we find ourselves as a church family. But God knew and He knows the "why" behind it all. For over 40 years of pastoral ministry I've walked with families who have gone through situations for which there seem to be no good answers to the question of "why"; "Why me (us)? Why now? Why this?". Where there are no satisfying answers we trust that God is at work and is accomplishing His good purposes, and of that I am confident in this challenging season of our church's life. I have taught and preached that God works ALL things for our good and I continue to believe it.

In reviewing the past year there are many things to be grateful for; The ability to meet without restrictions in July 2021 enabled our church family to gather in person and resume ministries in ways that had not been possible for two years. From the Sunday we were able to open our doors many newcomers joined us. Several had not been to church for years but sensed a need to "go to church". At the same time, we continued to see good engagement with our online services. Our in person services saw a slow but steady growth in attendance between July 2021 and June 2022 returning to attendance levels of up to 80% of our pre-covid attendance. On December 24<sup>th</sup> we were able to hold our first in person Christmas Eve Candlelight service in two years. Pastor Pat and the Creative Team did a great job of ministry both in person and online.

In June the disruption caused by the flooding of our building has us back to finding the path forward in a time of change and uncertainty. As well, we realized that some people had disengaged from church life altogether and were unresponsive to several attempts to connect with them.

In February I shared with our congregation that I've asked our Board to begin the process that will result in the transition of leadership to a new Lead Pastor. The Board appointed a Future's Team that began the work of laying the groundwork for the pastoral search process and eventual transition. This work includes congregational consultation, preparing a candidate profile, communications and calling our church to prayer as we prepare for our next leader. Check our website (the Future's page) for information and updates.

This past year we experienced several staff transitions; Luke Gordon transitioned to become the Lead Pastor at Connect Church. Ben Counsell joined us to take on the role of Next Gen Associate/Young Adults Pastor. Angela McDonald went on maternity leave in January 2022 and Erin Latham took on the pastoral leadership of Elim Kids. She is assisted by Julie Martell. Pastor Mike Rogers stepped away from his role as Youth Pastor, and student intern Bailey Hittinger stepped in to lead. In August 2022, our new Pastor of Women's Ministry, Terri-Lynne Clarke started with us. We're grateful to Jaclyn Widenmaier for her interim leadership of this ministry. Jaclyn will continue to serve in her role as Connections Director. I'm grateful to our staff team who continue to serve in and through the unusual challenges of this season.

Looking ahead to Christmas, plans are in place to hold the 25<sup>th</sup> Elim Christmas production November 23, 24 at TCU Place. It's an opportunity to bring together musicians and singers for a final Christmas Production under the direction of Pastor Blaine and Anne. It marks the end of an era after many years of fruitful ministry through this very special event. It will also be an opportunity to formally close off the

ministry of the choir and to celebrate the many decades of choir ministry at Elim. Elim was among the last, if not the last church in our denomination to sustain a viable, regular choir ministry.

A word about our finances; You'll see in our financial report that we closed the year with a positive balance. While contributions were not as strong as budgeted, spending was reduced to make up the difference. In March we experienced an unexpected drop in contributions and giving continued to be below what we anticipated. Your continued faithfulness in giving is deeply appreciated. For Missions giving I'm pleased to report that our mission partners received 100% of the funds that we committed to them.

I am grateful for our Board who serves so well. They are my "Boss" and are the best supervisor/overseer a pastor can have. I appreciate their support, care and diligence in governance. Their care particularly in this challenging season has been a strength.

In closing I'll cut/paste my closing words of last year's annual report. It is even more applicable today than it was a year ago:

*"The future continues to be marked by uncertainty and we have a message that brings light into darkness and hope into hopelessness. We continue to move forward to be a community on the journey to be more like Jesus. With God's help we'll continue to embrace all people, experience God's fullness, equip God's people and engage our world."*

For those who are interested in statistics:

Weddings: 4

Funerals: 10

Baby Dedications: 22

Baptisms: 15

Submitted with gratitude,  
Pastor Marvin Wojda