

## **Welcome to Reformation!**

This past Sunday, we welcomed 11 new people to our New Members' Class! This is a great number, considering at least 5 folks were out of town on Sunday who wanted to attend. I want to give you a few stats about 1) who our newcomers are and 2) what has drawn them to our church. Our new members range in age from 14 to 63 years of age, with 1 being born in the 1960s, 4 being born from 1984 to 1989, 5 being born from 1991 to 1997, and 1 born in 2010. We have 1 who identifies as Multiracial, 3 as African American/Black, and 7 who identify as White. Most come from Lutheran backgrounds, but there are a few who were either Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian or UCC/American Baptist. 9 of the newcomers live in the neighborhood (SE and NE DC), and 2 live in Alexandria (but work either on The Hill, or are Hill-adjacent).

Why they came to Reformation and keep coming:

- Reformation is close to their physical homes, and after trying other congregations, determined that our church was the best for them.
- Some were invited by members, and really liked it
- Reminded them of their youth, going to church with grandma
- Love the music ministry
- Appreciate the variability of worship (like Space for Grace services), denoting inclusivity and openness to diversity
- The overwhelming sense of community
- Pastor ("humanness" in worship and preaching ministry)

Things I'm happy about:

- We are continuing to live into our mission of being a church that is open, diverse, and welcoming! We are ever-reflecting the kin-dom of God in Christ.
- Our church continues to welcome newcomers who are diverse in age, race, background, and diversity of gifts. There is a sense of something special about how we gather for worship, for fellowship, and for outreach. The ELCA set a goal of 10% of the denomination being composed of people of color, and we are meeting that expectation in our weekly worship attendance.
- Many of the newcomers (including last year's group) are rooting in the neighborhood. One sign of a church's health is its rootedness in the neighborhood, both in outreach, and membership. When folks start coming who live in the immediate vicinity, that is a great sign!

Another key piece that we should be proud of and remember is that Pastors don't ultimately grow churches. The people do. Someone raised their hand and said, "Pastor, I don't know if you have a secret group doing this, but whenever we came, people would come up to us and make us feel welcomed, saying 'Are you new? Welcome!'" I then asked who all had experienced that in the group, and everyone raised their hands. It doesn't matter how great the choir sings, or how well I preach. If we don't show and have love, people won't come back. Time and again, the love that Reformation shows has reverberated for the newcomers.

We are ultimately continuing to grow because of the power of the Holy Spirit among us, and you. Keep being the warm and welcoming people that we are together, because people are drawn to that.

Thank you for your continued openness to the Spirit among us. Let's keep gathering and growing in Spirit and in Truth together. Why? Because we have something to say about Jesus that matters. Especially at times like these.

Love to you all.

-Pr. Kevin

## Funding Our Future Initiative

On Sunday March 17th, Pastor Kevin and Council President Mike Thompson provided the Congregation with an update on considerations that the Congregation Council is making to invest in our infrastructure and address outstanding debt. Reformation, at this moment in time, has a unique opportunity to not only grow as a parish church, but also to grow as an inclusive church community in a world that is in need of and, indeed, hungry for examples of communities such as ours. With this in mind, we need to address some significant resource challenges that have not been fully addressed over the past 30+ years.

Reformation has a rare, generational opportunity today to put our congregation in a secure position for the next 20 years, which will allow the Pastor and the Congregation to achieve the church's larger mission goals to gather, nourish and welcome. The following details from initial Council discernment were shared:

- In December of 2023, the Council discussed need to fund HVAC with partial payment needed in early July
- It was proposed that we fund the study with a \$50,000 draw on credit line, which would require Congregational approval
- Council agreed the study was needed, but that we wanted to explore funding options beyond credit line before presenting to the Congregation
- In January, the Council discussed the need to look at our expenses holistically — HVAC study, HVAC work, elevator, and outstanding debt on credit line
- Total costs are ballparked to be in the range of \$700K to \$1.5M
- The Council brainstormed the potential funding options that we would detail with pros and cons to present to the Congregation
- These ideas include: drawing down on some of legacy funds, sale of property, and a capital campaign
- The Council is working to detail these ideas out further which we will present to you next month to get your input (likely in the form of a listening session)
- Then in May or June, we will come together in a Congregational meeting to vote on options

In the meantime, we welcome any ideas you might have as we consider how we fund our future to support our continued growth! Please do share with a Council Member. — *Mike Thompson, Evan Schrage, Jessica Snowden, Matt Aviles, Suzanne Hazard, Scott Binde, Dina Finkel, John Hagood, Craig Middlebrook, Katherine Nelson, Lisa Nipp, Jennifer Novak, Elizabeth Wirick, Peter Poon*

