

Charge Conference Report - Dec. 2022
submitted by Heather Harriss

As pastor of Spiritual Care and Connection, I am the staff liaison for Outreach, Worship, Welcoming, Congregational Care, Encore, and Sacred Path Ministries. I'm deeply grateful to the incredible folks who lead these ministries: Steve Bryant, Gayle Morin, Mary Beth Franklyn, Eric Patton, Carolyn Primm, Martha Hooper, and Sharon Helton.

There has been a lot of amazing ministry happening this fall. Our Outreach Team continues to focus on two initiatives. One with families experiencing homelessness - we partnered with Metro School's HERO program and connected families with needed resources and agencies. Outreach's 2nd initiative has been to look at ways to create equity for our youngest children. This team has been tireless in researching options and reaching out in our community to problem solve and see what is possible. The Weekday School is an active part of this team. If you haven't already, please plan to give generously to our Christmas Miracle Offering which will go to Community Care Fellowship, an agency doing great work in both of these areas. January 21-28, 2023, we have a mission team going to participate in AWARE, a part of the Give Ye Them to Eat (GYTTE) Ministry in Puebla Mexico. United 4 Hope, our partnership with Eakin Elementary, has been actively providing a delicious lunch for the faculty and staff as well as collecting items for families in need.

This fall, we've had the great joy to celebrate many baptisms and great sorrow as we have celebrated the lives of dear members who have gone onto glory. Poinsettias were delivered to our members in assisted living and nursing homes and to our homebound. In the new year, Congregational Care will continue to look at ways to be connected with our members and also to consider a hospitality team for funerals.

Encore Ministry hosted a great Thanksgiving lunch and continues to have as its focus reaching out to members who are not a part of a Sunday school class or other group outside of worship. We express our gratitude and thanks to Jim Robinson who has led Encore ministries for the last five years. His leadership during COVID and after has been lifegiving and much appreciated.

We have continued efforts to create ways to welcome people into deeper connection with God, self, and others. We're finding ways to meet people where they are and to hear how God is at work in their lives. Belmont 101 is a monthly opportunity to learn more about being a part of a community of faith. We had a pilot Connect Retreat where 12 women gathered on a Saturday and through contemplative practices, reflection, and sharing considered their connection with God, self, and other. In the new year, we'll offer retreats on a regular basis and create small groups for those who want to continue to meet and share together how God is at work in their lives.