

## PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT - 2015

**9 New Members:** Pamela Hamilton, Judy Stone, Denise Copeland, Denise Casey, Madeleine Dubrovsky, Jane Hollis, Margaret Joseph-Robinson, Dennis Mose, Kennedy Nyangacha

**2 Baptism(s):** Joseph Wueste, Rebecca Siebert-Van Aiken

**First Communion:** Emma Wadleigh

**3 Confirmations:** Kevin Wadleigh, Genesis Fitch, Jessica Maffei

**Weddings:**

**4 Funerals/Memorials:** Margaret Blohm, Marilyn Mury, Florence Stofko, Walter Schnakenberg

**“Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true. In thanksgiving, I’ll be a living sanctuary, for you.”**

The words of this contemporary hymn remind of the significance of the church as well as the role of her disciples. These ideas may seem far-fetched from the things that may go on at church and in our lives. We are only human and we know all too well how short we fall from the glorious ideals expressed in our liturgy and hymns. Still God uses us, who are called to be the Body of Christ.

We do God's work in worship and service. Despite challenges we have faced as a church throughout the year, we have finally completed a long process of work on our physical building as this year comes to a close. I was installed as the full time permanent pastor of St. John's on January 17th and we installed a Church Council and prayed that God equip us for the work ahead of us. We have added new people to our roster of church membership and sadly had to say goodbye to more than we wanted to. We are also experiencing transition in leadership in other areas such as Music Ministry and Property Committee. Some of our committees have seen uplift and strengthening such as Stewardship and Social Ministry. Sometime it seems we move forward and then we step back. All in all it is God's good work and we are blessed to be a blessing to many.

I am glad to say that we have seen growth on several fronts:

- The Youth Night Ministry started in February 2015 has been a social and spiritual gathering for youth each Wednesday night. As many as 15 youth, ages 12 and up, gather to play board games, chat, play basketball or volley ball. Our gatherings regularly include service projects, prayer and Christian education.
- Sunday School/Confirmation Ministry has been strengthened in structure and practice and we have doubled the attendance. Although consistent attendance and more growth is still a challenge.
- Bible Study is delightful and is normally well attended by a core group of 7 or 8 people. Diakonia with St. John's as a host site is underway and I taught the first 5 week course. I do intend to teach and support the program as needed. We have 7 students attending at this time.

I have continued to serve not only St. John's community, but other local involvements have included support of New Jersey Together Community Organizing and Family Promise Homeless Initiative. For the larger church I serve on the NJ Synod Candidacy Committee, the NJ Synod Mission Advocacy Table (MAT) I have also attended the Bishop's Convocation, Synod Assembly, the ELCA National Youth Gathering and MYLE (Multicultural Youth Leadership Event).

Looking forward there is the need of another vacation. ☺ Planning for summer programming and continuing to grow the church in this new age.

Respectfully,  
Pastor M. Fitch-Elliott