

ANNUAL REPORT TO UNITED EVANGELICAL CONGREGATION
FOR YEAR 1969

By the 'grace of God' we meet here this evening. So often we blithely pass over this phrase with little thought. But the 'grace of God' is important. We are here this night by His grace, because in His love He gave us the power to come. This church is here by His grace, for it was because of His blessings it was founded 97 yrs ago and has prospered through the years. Thus, it is in praise of His Holy guidance that we hold this meeting of business, even as we come together to worship in His love. And it is in adoration of our wonderful God through Christ our Lord that we would now review the past year and look into the future.

In a time when on a national level the average of attendance at both Church Services and Church School is dropping fast, we can report that we have been holding our own in both the morning services as well as in the educational sessions. And, it takes even a great deal of effort in these days, with so many pressures upon folk, to even maintain the same level. Our average Sunday attendances for the year, save the summer months, stands at 388, compared to 390 for last year, or a figure of 55% of our membership, far above the national level of about 33%. The average for all the Sundays of the year is at 368, or 52%. The average for the Church School for all Sundays is 47% of total attending membership, not including the Cradle Roll.

Other statistics:

- 40 baptisms
- 55 weddings
- 47 funerals, including
- 14 members deceased
- 10 transferred out, or erased
- 25 adults received into membership
- 20 Junior Confirmands

Membership at beginning of 1970, 705, an increase of one person.

When we seek to review the year, we note there were not too many outstanding events. It was a good year, however, with the spirit of cooperation and togetherness in the congregation growing perceptibly. Worthy of special mention is the continuation and increase in advance planning and consideration of the church's program and policy as well as purpose on the part of two Task Forces, which got their inception at a very fine Laity Sunday, of which Dr. Weisser will give a fuller report. This new zest in the congregation originally got its beginning at the Retreat in Oct. of 1968.

The year 1969 was what it was because of the splendid team work on many fronts in the life of the church, and for these evidences of love and devotion I want to express appreciation. First, to the staff here - to Dr. Weisser, for a wholehearted assistance in every phase of the work; to our chief secretary, Mrs. Fader and her many assistants, for undaunted loyalty and willingness to achieve the multitudinous tasks which are a part of the business side of the church; to Mr. Schnader, the choirs for loyal and fine service; to the members of the Church Council who served so faithfully on the Council and in Committed work, with a special thanks to those who leave the Council - Wm. Bark, Jr., Louis Smith, John Lenning, Robert Logue, Sr.; to the officers and personnel of our organizations for loving service to the church, and not least, to our caretaking staff for giving us one of the cleanest and most orderly churches to be found anywhere.

And now I come to that final section of my report, one in which I

Express appreciation for 1. Raising in 1969 2. New Confirmands

point up a number of very specific items for discussion and decision this evening.

1) I recommend that as of this year 1970 we eliminate the Presentation Service of the Confirmands in the morning Sunday service, and place their formal examination rather on the Thursday before that Sunday, at the regular hour, with the parents and family members invited, and also the members of the official Board, who will then hear their testimony. I make this recommendation because more and more this is becoming the practise in the majority of churches, and secondly because it seemingly is not appreciated by the majority of the church membership in that there is a same-ness about it and many do not attend on this occasion, feeling this is not the worshipful experience it ought to be.

2) I recommend that as of the year 1970, as of September, we increase the time for Confirmation to two years, the first of these years being scheduled on Sunday morning during the Church School session, in which the 12 yr. olds would be enrolled in a special class, under a special teacher, not the pastor, and would have specific assignments and work in the background of the Bible and its content during the year, then meeting with the Pastor the second year, when they are 13, for the regular Confirmation sessions, which would then be more wholly devoted to the tenets of the faith and the whole matter of churchmanship. (This year, however, to get the practise begun, we would organize two classes, the one for the 12 yrs olds, to begin meeting on Sundays, and a second of the 13 yr olds, to meet with the pastor on Thursday nights, this being the last of the one year classes,) this group to be confirmed on Palm Sunday, 1971.)

3)

3) By the action of the Council, the Junior Council was opened to girls. It is now my proposal that the participation of the Junior Council be enlarged to include direct participation in the morning services on the part of youth, both young men and young women. These who desire will be formed into a Corp of service assistants and would be thoroughly trained before participation and would assume such responsibilities as Scripture reading, the leadership of the Apostles' Creed, the Service of the Offering, etc. Through such participation I feel we can increase the concern of youth in the church and perchance even bring more youth into the service of worship.

4) Much of the concern with the Christian Church today is with the youth, to solve the problem of having more youth participate in the worship services of the church, in the life of the church. One method being used in many churches is to have youth vitally concerned with a number of the worship services of the church through the year, presenting their own liturgies, their own music by unusual accompaniement, their own messages, even their own interpretation of the Sacrament. I desire the congregation to discuss this this evening, for I want direction from you as to the philosophy of our life in the coming months. Many feel that only the usual type, staid form of worship should be our mode, and are very critical whenever this is departed from. Thus we hesitate to do anything other than this. Is it now time to enlarge our vision about these matters? Your pastor desires your help.

5) One of the understandings the congregation ought to firm up is the use of the property for community functions. We have wonderful property here, which virtually lies unused most of the week, a gym, a large number of rooms in the Church School bldg. More and more there will be calls upon us to put it to use. But to do so may bring about the evidence of usage - some breakage which cannot be avoided, scratching up of floors which may cause more caretaking service, increased use of electricity and oil, all this resulting in some increase in budgetting

items. It is the opinion of a certain portion of our congregation that our property should be used, under strict supervision and within certain rules, though there may be some extenuating facts which will increase our cost somewhat. Then there is the other point of view which holds that we have our property in good shape, and its use should always be such that there is caused no extra work for our caretakers, and that the possibility of breakage, hard use, wear and tear be eliminated as much as possible. We need to know that if we are to serve the youth, of the children of the community, even the adults of the community - there will be times we cannot avoid effects upon our property. Your Council should be given direction as to how their decision should be governed, and it can best be done through open discussion.

6) I should like to suggest that the congregation take action to change that by-law which states that our annual meetings must be held on the ~~Friday~~ of November and of January. The times of today make the insistence that the affairs of the church and the decisions of the congregation be brought to pass and engaged in by a larger number than we are able to muster in either of these nights. Most congregations are now using Sundays for such meetings - either combining such a meeting with the morning worship service, where the attendance would be about ten times what we secure on such an evening, cutting the service short and going directly into a meeting, or, having a meal at the church on a Sunday and then having the meeting directly after the meal (one of our churches, much smaller than we, is having such a plan either this Sunday or last, and when I heard had over 150 reservations for the meal) The by-law does not need to be specific as to time of meeting, merely stating that two meetings be held, at the discretion of the Council, one the later part of Nov. and the other the latter part of Jan.

7) I should like to recommend that the Good Friday evening service be eliminated from our schedule. Time was, when because of large communions, this service was necessary, but of late years it has been a declining service in numbers, and, further, sufficient communion services are provided so that all may find time to commune - either on Thursday evening, Friday morning, or at either Easter service. By Good Friday evening, with the service in the morning, the three-hour service and the other services of Holy Week, the staff and choir members are completely done, and this becomes an anticlimatic service. Theologically, a Good Friday evening service is out of place also, for Lent ends with 3 p.m. on Good Friday afternoon, with the death of Jesus. The big service of Communion ought to be on Maundy Thursday, the very night of Jesus' institution of this sacrament.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul A. Rave

Jan. 30, 1970