

## SUMMARY OF PASTOR RASCHE'S ANNUAL REPORT

We are in the first month of 1968 which for the congregation is the 95th year of its existence. As we give thought to the business affairs of the church, we need always to keep in mind that we are God's people and that we do His work, therefore even our business is tinged with the spiritual.

We need, first of all, to look at the record of the life of our congregation for 1967. Our total attendance for the Sunday morning services averaged out just about the same as of last year. This revelation is not to say we are satisfied with the Sunday attendance. There are too many of our total membership who are loose in their Sunday by Sunday commitment to the Lord's House. To have contact with these folk, as with our membership at large, will be the responsibility of our Pastor of Visitation, Pastor Weisser.

The story of our communions follows the trend we've already mentioned, about the same as in 1967.

Other records - Baptisms, 40; Marriages, 49; Funerals, 51, of which 16 were members of the church.

I want now to share with you an observation which came to me as I studied the overall picture of the church of 1967. Actually I have noted it beginning in 1966. This is a seeming growth of the spirit of unconcern of folk toward the church. A study of our attendance shows that we maintained throughout the first 4 years of our time together a figure of about 440 in the services each Sunday throughout the year, one year a little more, the next a little less, then back to the medium figure. But in 1966 we saw that average drop off about 25 people per Sunday, at which figure it seems to remain.

This fact is not only an actuality here but is being repeated in many churches. But we do not say this to excuse ourselves. Partially this has come to pass by the growth of secularism in our day, and the decline of sacred or spiritual viewpoints in life. Partially it is the result of the hecticness of life and the fact of the increasing number of women at work, who then on Sunday no longer are so apt to be the 'fire' under the family to come to Church and Church School with her. There is a tendency of families to sleep in on Sundays, or to use the day for the weekly chores which did not get done on other days. And, it is still true that the family often follows the mother's lead, and when that inspiration is lacking or less urgent, the whole family fails. I, as your pastor, would have each of you look seriously at yourself, at your family - a mother, father, family member - and see if you can stand before God and not bow the head in shame because of this lack in your lives. Your faith is not to be a convenient 'crutch' for you to use but a 'way' for you to follow. Trends can be redirected if you will work at it in your family group.

I cannot leave the subject of the study of the congregation but that I give thought with you to the Church School, the Staff, the Organizations of the church, our Choirs and our Official Church Council. The church life has been a busy one through these past months. Many have been the activities of all groups. The majority of plans were fulfilled successfully because of the cooperation of those within the working groups. Special mention is made of our Choirs, who, although engaged in one activity, that of singing, have given wonderful service in their presentation of anthems at the time of worship. In relation to our Church School, this has been a year of growth and effectivity. The re-

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port to the denomination shows that we have a Church School with an enrollment of 530, which includes 100 on our newly reorganized Cradle Roll. The Staff of the church has been very cooperative and efficient. A grand spirit exists staffwise, which is commendable. We are happy to announce the coming of Pastor Weisser as our Pastor of Visitation as 1968 begins. We welcome Dr. and Mrs. Weisser to our congregation. Thankful cognizance need to be given the Church Council, the members of which have labored so assiduously in these months. At year's beginning we have three new members of the group. We were sorry to lose Messrs. Block, Bark and Mueller from the Council. I again express my personal thanks to them for loyalty and service given the church.

In closing I would mention two items which carry us into the future.

The first is our changing community. Are we aware of the changing conditions of our community, the community of which this church is a part? Many of us do not live in the immediate community and thus perhaps are not aware of these matters. The community is changing. The change is slow, but it is sure. Many very poor people live here, more than I was aware of 6 years ago. The change is not drastic but is that of which our congregation ought to be aware, if we are to continue effectively to serve the folk here. We know that crime and vandalism are on the increase. We ought to be aware that the instances of youth on the loose, without any effective family control is increasing in this community. What does this say about our church here? We are happy for the appearance of the Canton Christian Council during this past year and of the potentials of this group in our community as a cooperative Christian venture, not only on the level of youth, but in many areas of our common life. Through such a group as this your church will be able to make its impact upon the needs of the community, which we probably would not be able to do alone. This Council merits the support of all our people, for it will be serving in many expanding manners to meet the varied needs of our community as it becomes more conscious of the directions in which it must travel. As of now it is not even a year old, still an infant in its total programming.

The second item I would mention is our 95th birthday this year. It has been 5 years ago that we last celebrated an anniversary. It is time again to think of a special celebration....If any special effort is to be made, it is expedient that the congregation give it thought in this meeting tonight. (Note: Authority was given Council to begin the plans for the 95th birthday)

We come to the beginning of a new year of life for our congregation. We stand in the continuous need of God's grace and of His power in us to accomplish His work in this year. May our prayer constantly be unto Him for His help. To Him be all honor and glory in His church.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan. 26, 1968

Paul A. Rasche