

*“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for,
it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”—Matthew 18:18-20*

2021/2022 Lead Pastor’s Report

I wish that I didn't have to begin yet another Pastor’s Report with yet another acknowledgement of yet another year of un-sustaining stewardship, capacity challenging conditions, and *&^\$ pandemic impacts. But this is where we are...still exhausted, still (a little bit) afraid, and still wondering about the future of our beloved church. It is hard to be a very small church – a lot is asked of a small group of people. It is even harder to be a very small church in times such as these.

So we name that truth, and turn to God - the creative source that makes a way when there seems to be no way. We turn to the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our discernment and discovery. We turn to the Way of Jesus to clarify our call and find the courage, commitment, and capacity to follow that call – and make The Way our way.

As you will read in the [2022.2023 Mission and Ministry proposal](#) – not only have you all developed an imaginative way to discern through this liminal time and remain true to our identity and purpose – but it is clear that God has great work for us to do. God and Gods beloved creation needs for Sanctuary to continue to live into the wildly inclusive, creative, and deeply unique call to “be sanctuary” and to make love and justice real in Medford.

I am confident that we have what we need to do so!

You see - Jesus suggests that all we need are "two or three ... gathered in his name" (Matthew 18:20). He insisted that valid Christian judgments and decisions could be achieved when only two believing members of the Christ-body community gathered together with faithful hearts and minds.

If here were with us today - Jesus would tell us that we don't need a consensus or a quorum in attendance; we don't need standing committees or long-range strategic plans; we probably don't need a denomination (but don't tell our friends at the SNEUCC); we don't need two-thirds, 51 percent or a simple majority of those present; we don't need area ministers or ordained clergy of any kind in order to make valid, binding decisions within the living body of Christ.

What we do need is the mind of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. With Jesus, as a community of faith we can move forward, even though perhaps only "two or three are gathered in his name."

And beloved, without Christ's presence, not even an assembly of a thousand can achieve results that will empower the church for the future.

It has always been our goal to follow Jesus into the street and to follow his simple way of being in community – to operate lean, work with partners, and project a can-do and can-do-it-now attitude.

This is not to say that sometimes big jobs and big plans for the church don't take large numbers of people working at a multitude of carefully coordinated tasks. Christ can be present in a crowd. But let us not forget that all fellowships of Christ start small--where two or three are gathered in Christ's name.

As we find our way through this next year of discernment let us celebrate this heritage and rejoice in the fact that the church is truly an example of "every-member-ministry."

You, the person sitting on you right, and the person sitting on your left can literally change the world. That's all it takes. Two or three. Two or three committed believers can change the world.

Together, the prayers and faith of two or three can work the most astounding miracles this world has ever seen. You can incarnate the presence of Christ in this world. Joined together, we are the critical mass necessary for Christ's love to become a vital force on Earth. In the watchwords of Jim Wallis, "There is simply no other alternative than for each person to see to it personally."

Let us be the sanctuary where "see-to-it-personally" people come together to "see to it together."

With love and prayer,

Rev. Wendy