

*The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you" (Excerpt from "Footprints")*

I first encountered this poem from Mike, an 80-year-old regular customer at Russell Sohio – a gas station where I worked for four years during High School. Mike and I struck up quite a friendship and talked about the meaning of life and this passage so many times. As a graduation gift, Mike presented me with a beautiful, framed calligraphy version that hangs in our home to this day.

To me, this amazing poem is the heart and soul of our faith and relationship with our God. Every one of us encounters challenges in this life and are blessed by God's constant strength, power, guidance, and yes, companionship.

In 2020, we saw a confluence of challenges in our lives, our country, and certainly in our ministry at Fox Point Lutheran Church. Our Pastors, Leaders, Staff, and Congregation stepped up and delivered. It was my honor to walk with all these faithful in 2020. In particular, our Pastor Bill – he immediately grasped the challenge, envisioned our path, and led the charge – often by personal example. Challenging times give rise to great performances – we are blessed with his leadership and that of so many across our staff and congregation.

We close 2020 with many accomplishments and in a very strong position for the future of our ministry as we complete our monumental *Building Faith Forward* building renovation.

On Tuesday, March 10, our new Council was installed and started to work on five key goals for 2020. On Thursday afternoon, March 12, we decided to scrap that and move immediately to virtual ministry and three revised priorities: 1 - Adapt our ministry for the pandemic and all the challenges ahead to care for our congregation and community, 2 - Remain financially solvent, and 3 – Stay on track with our *Building Faith Forward* building renovation.

Pastor Bill, Pastor Bruce, our Music and Technology Teams, both led by Jeff Shoemaker, Tony Mudra, Choir Director along with Julie Schlifske, Director of Children's Ministries and her cast of characters did (I dare say) a world-class job in delivering our virtual worship experiences. From Concordia College to Port Washington Harbor to the Lorenz Family

Home to the War Memorial Museum to Congregation Shalom to a fully decorated Christmas Sanctuary (filmed in August) to so many interesting nooks and crannies in our church home – every message focused on the power of our faith – particularly as related to the challenge of our times in 2020. In addition to the strong virtual participation of our congregation – Fox6 selected our ministry for TV broadcast throughout 2020, including Christmas and the upcoming Easter services this spring. This has been ground-breaking work and will be a crucial part of our on-going ministry.

We observed Good Friday, celebrated Easter, confirmed our youth, strengthened faith with our high schoolers, conducted virtual VBS, honored Martin Luther and our Reformation, and had a wonderful Advent and Christmas season in addition to our weekly services. We also conducted many of our normal milestones - virtually - Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, High School Send off, College Graduation, All Saints Sunday for those who have passed, and added special live events including You Ask We Answer, Pub Theology, and a very compelling 4-week series with Reggie Jackson to examine racial issues in our society.

We have an incredible staff that have kept our congregation running, delivered excellent communications, and enabled our many ministries and volunteers across our congregation. Thank you to Jo Ann, Diane, Lori, Stacia, Mary, Mary Beth, and Sue for a job well done. You all continue to coordinate calls for prayers, online visits, food and medicine/medical supply distribution as well as handling the daily demands of church administration.

We continue to serve The Gathering, Serenity Inns, conducted a food drive to support the increasing needs at The MacCannon Brown Homeless Sanctuary and the Milwaukee Rescue Mission, donated 100 Blankets and 22 pillows to MacCannon Brown Homeless Sanctuary, continued our financial support for our partners in Tanzania providing scholarships for High School and College students, sent over 110 backpacks to All Peoples Church, and provided two scholarships to college bound students from Cross Lutheran Church. Covid-19 did not impair our awesome quilt making Piecemakers – sending our High School Graduates out in the world with a warm blanket and for the first time – sent quilts to Grateful Girls – a mission dedicated to supporting those escaping human trafficking.

Our Pastors and staff continue to minister to our community – with counseling, funerals, weddings baptisms, and providing care for all in need. The needs were greater than ever in 2020 (weddings – not so much) and our ministry team went well above and beyond the call of duty to address needs within and outside our congregation.

We are blessed with strong finances. As you can see from the enclosed income statement, we finished the year at 6% below revenue plan (-89K) and 10% below expense plan (-140K)

which resulted in net positive bottom line which exceeded our budget plan. Thus, we avoided making any dramatic cuts to our ministry or dipping into reserve funds. Likewise, we are proposing a balanced budget for 2021 with overall revenue pledges and forecasts at \$1.3M representing a 3% decline vs. 2020 actual giving – and expenses of \$1.3M to match. This is truly a blessing – thank you to our entire congregation for your continued commitment and generosity as we continue to navigate the pandemic and accelerate our building program.

I will leave it to Matt to share our progress on ***Building Faith Forward***. Matt is truly the backbone of this monumental project – from conception to design, through approval and now in construction. Matt has been a great leader – full of vision, conviction, tireless work, and a deep reservoir of positive attitude to engage and support the entire BFF team. With your strong support, we are on track to have a beautiful church home and an expanded ministry. Thank you for all of your generous contributions – we are on the home stretch with our fundraising with approximately \$900K to go!

No question, 2021 will also be a challenging year of growth for our congregation and ministry:

- Continue to invest in our Virtual Ministry
- Create a “Building Faith Forward” Ministry Vision and Plan to fully leverage the investment in our new church home
- Build and execute our Grand Opening Plan for late 2021

Thank you to our Church Council and Executive Committee for their strong leadership and guidance for all the above in 2020. Thank you to Paul Benson, Allan Cooper, Mark Grady, Jim Hoffman, Nathan Joynt, Renee Knapp, Jenny Kregel, Eli Lieungh, Gretchen Menard, Kate Muth, Chris Noyes, Peter Todd, and Karen Sullivan. And thank you to Jo Ann Berdelman, Matt Kirchner, and Sandy Murphy for supporting our council work through the entire year.

Our Lord is walking with our congregation, our ministry, and with each of us during this challenging time. I am thankful that Andy Barrieau continues to supply our ministry with an endless supply of laminated “Footprints” wallet cards. If you would like to spread the good news of our faith with these cards, send me an email at [mark@foxpointchurch.org](mailto:mark@foxpointchurch.org) and I will deliver some to you!

God Bless,  
Mark Metzendorf  
Church Council President