

**Minister's Report**  
**January 14, 2018 Congregational Meeting**

Let me start off by sharing with you a somewhat tongue-in-cheek reading from my colleague, Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson:

In the church that doesn't matter, there are no quarrels, no arguments, and no one ever says anything they regret at the meeting to discuss the sanctuary's new paint color. There is nothing to inspire such passionate intensity because none of the decisions of the church touch anyone's heart, and no one lives or dies by its choices, or even feels for a moment like they might. Everything is easy as pie.

In the church that doesn't matter, no one has to ask for money, or even talk about it much: there is always enough to go around. There is always enough, because no matter how much there is, there is always less to do with it than that. The vision always shrinks to under-match the means. So canvass season is always a breeze.

In the church that doesn't matter, no one ever disagrees with the preacher's sermon. The music is always just fine. There is never a fight about the liturgy, not even if they do joys and sorrows (and not even if they stop doing joys and sorrows). There is never any controversy because no one ever says anything they really care about, and no one else ever seems to care. Because of this, the service is always equally inoffensive at both 9 o'clock and 11.

The sounds of children during worship, the recruitment of Sunday School teachers, the compensation of professional religious educators and the size and condition of space dedicated to religious education; none of these things are ever talked about, or thought about, in the church that doesn't matter. Those issues just seem to take care of themselves, somehow.

No one ever has to clean up in the church that doesn't matter. Or figure out the old electrical system, or consult the building codes, or climb a ladder. If no one bothers to make coffee on Sunday, no one complains, and if no one greets the visitors, no one seems to mind. Everything is easier in the church that doesn't matter.

The total solution to all the frustrations of congregational life requires no consultants, manuals, or webinars. Simply avoid, at all costs, meaning and purpose and anything that might lead you to either or both. Whatever you do, do not let yourself care about the people around you, or the covenant you share.

Yet, knowing this, we still decide again and again to ask tough questions, to take real risks, to do work that needs doing, and to tell the truth. We get out of bed on Sunday morning, we answer that email, we make something imperfect but still sweet for the bake sale and we give our time and attention to a meeting every third Thursday. We ask each other how we're doing, and mean it, we make phone calls and craft projects for the first grade class – we offer our gifts, both humble and great. And we do these things, sometimes in joy, and sometimes not in joy, because they are done in the service of a church that matters to us.

I am so glad to be part of a church that DOES matter – where people are passionate and committed. You show up, you care, and you do all the work involved in carrying out our mission: to make a positive difference in the lives of our members, our families, and the world at large through supportive relationships, religious and intellectual exploration, and social action.

One of the things that stands out to me at this point, in working with our dedicated professional staff and our amazing volunteers, is the spirit of teamwork that pervades this church. The Worship Team, for example, pulls together for special holiday experiences and guest speakers and making meaning in our services each week, even if I'm asking them to try something that sounds a little strange, like impersonating a king. By the way, we are, and I am, always interested in your feedback about reflections topics and the various elements of the service. And of course there are so many other volunteers who help to make Sunday mornings go smoothly.

The Pastoral Care Team, too, displays a wonderful spirit of teamwork. That group has embraced a new way of organizing its work this year. We're getting more systematic with a goal of providing consistent care, so that no one who might like support will fall through the cracks. We'll be formally commissioning our Pastoral Care Associates in worship next week, and I want to encourage everyone here to continue to call upon these individuals when you could use a listening ear.

The can-do spirit of teamwork is also palpable in our industrious membership committee, and in our passionate Social Justice Council, as well as in the Digital Communications committee. Digicom has been quietly toiling away at a new web site, which we hope will go live yet this month – I'm very excited about that!

And this year there are several new teams of people swinging into action. The Building Transition Team and its critical work; the AIM Task Force, charting a course to greater accessibility and inclusion for people of all abilities at Westside; and all of the people hard at work behind the scenes on our the stewardship campaign, bringing vision and creativity and all sorts of skills – what an outpouring of support at this exciting moment of change and possibility for this congregation!

I want to mention one other group you may not have heard of yet. A Small Group Ministry Steering Com. began meeting last month. They'll be looking at different models of small group ministry, talking with our members, and charting a course to launch a new program next fall that will help build deeper conversations and connections for members both old and new.

There are so many good things happening right now, and wonderful possibilities for the future. I don't know about all of you, but when I walk through our building these days, I can't help imagining what it will be like with the Angel Montessori stuff is gone, and we can really make it our own. Wondering what new programming will be happening here a year or two from now – and who will be participating in it. We are going to make even more of a difference in the lives of our members, our families, and the world at large through supportive relationships that are fostered here; through religious and intellectual exploration that takes place here; and through social action that is hatched from here.

Speaking of social action, if you're free tomorrow, you can get some of those good feelings, and connect with our wider community, by joining me and the rest of the Westside contingent in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day parade downtown. Details are in the Westside Weekly email [and your OOS insert].

As we do all this work together, we are living into our transcendent values of compassion, justice and equality. And we are moving toward the vision of this congregation: to continue to grow and become a more influential liberal religious presence through active service to our community and the world at large. Indeed, this is a church that matters. All the time, talent and treasure invested in this place makes a real difference. Find out just how *big* of a difference we can make!