



April 11, 2018

FEELING THANKFUL

I am thankful for this congregation at all times, but for the past two weeks I have been particularly thankful. God's Spirit is at work in signs of health and life!

Holy Week Worship. Participation in the services – from Palm Sunday to Easter – was robust and full of energy. The health of a church is not defined merely in numbers, but it is good news when so many people worship together, including a record number at the Maundy Thursday service.

Master Planning. Right after Easter, we began a series of meetings with Jeff Shaw, the architect who will work with us to create a master plan for accomplishing the needed renovations to the church building. Key groups will provide input all month, and the entire congregation will be able to give feedback **on Sunday, April 29 at an Open Forum.** This is faith in action, preparing for the future of ministry with hope.

Clergy Sabbatical. On Sunday, we will offer Rev. Judy Swahnberg our prayerful blessing for three months of sabbatical leave, a time for rest and renewal. Adam Isbitsky will serve as our interim minister to attend to the week-to-week responsibilities of pastoral care and worship. A congregation which supports clergy sabbaticals is one of trust and care for its ministers.

The Egg Hunt and the Rummage Sale. The church was full of life in the days just before and after Holy Week as dozens and dozens of people collaborated to host two classic church events. In addition to welcoming hundreds of visitors into the church, the hours of preparation are where relationships are formed and deepened among volunteers.

In the past two weeks, I have also: witnessed the faithful work of the Search and Call Committee, who are conducting a thorough process to affirm a settled Minister for Youth and Families; met with the new men's group, who are engaging in thoughtful and honest conversations; and talked with visitors to the church who are discovering a warm welcome and the authentic life of faith in this congregation.

Life at the Hills Church reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.... And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best."

I'll see you in church!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister