

Sr. Pastor's Report for Spring Congregational Meeting 2023

Dear Members,

It has been a while since we met, and I'm thrilled we are able to do so once again. Over the last year, we have had some gains and losses, some joys and sorrows. We've also started coming out of a worldwide pandemic that has thrown all of us for a loop and, likely, has changed "church" as we knew it to something different, but with elements of things past. We were hit hard by the pandemic, but with churches closing all around us, we managed to survive. It was difficult to go to "online worship only" for such a long time, and it has been a challenge getting people to return to in-person worship on a weekly basis. It is not unusual to have more than half of our congregation worshipping online any given Sunday. That is something we need to look at, as far as the size of our facility.

Here are some of the highlights from the past year:

We said goodbye to our Facilities Manager, Torrey Turner. In his place, we hired a professional company to clean the facility twice per week. (You may have met some of them: Lucas, Erica, and Inez. If you haven't, you're missing a treat. They are wonderful!).

We hired Louis Ramirez to fill two roles: part-time Minister of Music and part-time Office Administrator. We pay Louis a salary for his work as Minister of Music; we negotiated having him live in the church's upstairs apartment in exchange for his work as Office Administrator. I want to thank the Board of Directors, along with several other people, who came in and did a deep-clean on the apartment, patched/painted, and purchased new windows and appliances.

We hired a professional company (Church-Biz) to manage our finances. It has taken some time to step into the role that our former Treasurer Oyie Esquerra filled, but I'm so thankful for the work that Tony Martinez and Gef Aviles have done over the last year to finally get us back on track in our reporting, giving to the churches in the Philippines, and working with Church-Biz.

We have continued our Food Pantry, lead by Martin Miny and Rodolfo Romero. This team was receiving food on Fridays and distributing food on Saturdays, sometimes to over 300 families! During the pandemic, this team even expanded the food amount by introducing fresh fruits and vegetables. Thanks to Mark Talgo for picking up and delivering this food source each Friday. Thank you to all the volunteers that make this important ministry happen.

We have continued our Trans*Unity ministry over the last year. We've had wonderful leadership with Amy LaCoe and Ina Serene. They have had many yard sales to raise money for the annual Christine Daniels Scholarships. We gave out five \$1000 scholarships last year! They were able to do some work on the denominational level, as well. This team was also responsible for helping us enjoy the Trans Chorus of LA at our Trans-Visibility service. Thanks to all of you!

Our Spanish-speaking ministry continues to flourish under the leadership of Rev. Alejandro Escoto. They have brought in the Mariachis and the Marimbas, and they brought back the annual Passion Play this year.

We continued our Glenn Payne Card Ministry under the direction of Pam Fairbanks and Lea Polumbarit.

We expanded our Media Team (broadcasting and sound) under the leadership of Sandra Contreras and Don Mueller.

Our Creative Worship Team has worked in overdrive since the pandemic started. I'm so thankful for their faithfulness in making sure we have quality worship.

Once we were able to meet in-person, we were also able to start renting our space again. Most of the pre-pandemic groups have returned; others have been added. Pinwheels, the pre-school off our

courtyard, continues to rent the space, but the Board of Directors, with the help of our realtor, Jim Moore, was able to increase the rent. Thanks to Dean Coffey for his work in managing all our rentals.

Having Louis Ramirez taking on many of the in-house responsibilities, along with the pandemic easing, Rev. Alejandro and I have been able to turn our attention to more community involvement. We recently spoke at a press conference with more than 30 other Faith leaders in Los Angeles concerning the proposed law here in California that would have “outed” trans youth. I also spoke at the Drag March in West Hollywood recently, getting the name of our church out to multiple media outlets. I was recently interviewed for an upcoming documentary for Equality California, as well.

I’ve named some of the ministry groups here at Founders along with their leaders. There are many volunteers involved in each of these ministries, and we could not survive without them – without YOU. THANK YOU to all who give their time, talents, tithes, and testimonies so freely.

Church, I believe we are going in the right direction. We’re still here. We’re still strong. We’re still relevant. Let’s be encouraged for what God has “next” for us.

Pastor Keith