

Greetings to everyone at Tree of Life,

With the challenges still existing to hold an “in-person” Congregational meeting, please accept this report as a way to keep everyone informed of Church Council actions and plans as well as the “rest of the business” behind the scenes here at Tree of Life. We are planning to hold an in-person meeting in July. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank our mighty staff of three lead by Pastor Chris and a handful of outstanding volunteers for an extraordinary service of love and dedication for the past year to not only hold things together but to advance the Kingdom of God. My report is organized into a few major sections.

CURRENT STATUS:

1. Financially, we are hanging in there! You may recall from the 2021 Budget you all approved in January, we projected a reduction in income of about \$100,000 from the 2020 budget and adjusted the expense side to get as close to a balanced budget as we could. The first quarter report shows we are on track, thanks to our Pledge Offerings actually being \$6k ahead of schedule and our successful garage sale bringing in \$6500. Non-Pledge Offerings are significantly behind (as we suspected) and will most likely continue on that trend until everyone is back in the church physically. On the expense side, we began the year knowing we needed to be prudent stewards of the resources and are very close to projections. Treasurer, Jim Lemaux jumped on the opportunity to apply for the latest round of PPP Loans, and we got it. The loans/grants were a life saver last year and will be again in 2021.
2. Administratively, the new 2021, 12-member Council reflected two new appointees from 2020 and two new members starting in January and the whole team has taken their jobs very seriously. We have gotten pretty good at ZOOM meetings but do look forward to meeting in person soon. We have been working on many things. In addition to the Federal money, we went back to Mission Investments (the holder of our Mortgage) and asked them to reduce our interest rate and THIS time, they agreed, dropping the interest rate by 1/2% and changing our ARM from 3 yrs. to five years. This will save us over \$4000 annually and \$20,000 over the life of this term. The Council also weighed an opportunity to work with the Greater Houston YMCA to provide our education wing this summer for their day camps. Our first step was to answer affirmatively this would be in line with our Mission Statement and advance us toward our Vision Statement. Secondly, was the issue of money. It was determined the \$500/week for 10 weeks vs. the expense involved was very positive. So, there will be lots of activity this summer and we are hopeful this is the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship, knowing that all relationships have their challenges. Our Memorial Prayer Pathway finally is “open for business”. There’s a lot more to getting a stone engraved than you think but we are now receiving financial gifts and engraving stones and placing them in pathway location of your choice.
3. Strategic Planning. So, thinking and planning into the future went on hold a year ago—we went into tactical survival planning and implementation and we are now at a point to “come out of our foxhole”. We will hold a planning session this June and are excited that our facilitator will be Bishop Mike Rinehart. 2021 is the end of my second term and Kevin Solberg will be stepping into President’s role, so this planning session will have a focus on “2022 restart”. A “Back to the

Normal” kind of feel. We are determined to have an “in-person” Congregational Meeting in July and we will plan to share the plan at that time.

4. Spiritual Welfare of Congregation. The Pandemic has been a war at many levels and kinds, especially against our souls. We began opening the church for in-person worship and had about 100 for the Easter Services. As things are being relaxed with Conroe ISD, we are also matching that transition and relaxing protocols as safely and prudently as possible. As May begins, we are now as close to normal as we can be at this time and look forward to the time when all protocols are gone. We believe this will happen in 2021 but we do understand safety is not to be rushed. I know I speak for everyone; it will be great to have the personal touch again. At the same time, on-line services are here to stay. Our outreach is far too great and useful to abandon. It will create a new “balancing act”, but our great staff and volunteers have already proved, no hill is too steep to climb. I would be remiss to not also thank Kathy Scott for taking the Bad Girls Sunday School class to ZOOM and Dennis McConnell for doing the same for the studies he has been leading. Kudos also to Karen Solberg and Angela Brown for finding a way to help meet the needs of the confirmation class and youth. I send out kudos to folks with reservations knowing I can’t thank personally everyone, and I hope others will thank the rest of our heroes on behalf of us all.

5. Thanks to one and all There is a light at the end of this tunnel.... We are fortunate that our light is THE light of the world and HE has made our journey as safe and hopeful as possible. We are blessed, despite all the challenges. He has guarded our pathway and provided light thru the darkness.

Jack Zimmer
Council President