

Pastor's Report

First of all, let me say that it is a privilege to work together with you in our common ministry as the people of God at Hegre Church. You are a gift to me and the church at large!

January 2004 – Unfortunately, the year started out with a funeral – for Jeff Gochnauer. We were all shocked and saddened by his death in a car roll over on New Year's Eve. We miss him still. We heard the words of comfort spoken to us in the holy scriptures, words that have sustained all our ancestors, words that sustain us still as we grieve in our turn. The good news on the first Sunday in January was that we received three new members, Walter and Marie Baumgartner, and Carrie Bakken. At this time we also held Julie Patterson and the whole Patterson and Knott extended family in prayer since she was quite ill. We baptized Mali & Emma Crouse, twin daughters of Todd and Faye Crouse on the 25th. Intern Pastor Brian Hanson continued to teach confirmation classes each Wednesday evening.

February – On 1 Feb Julie Patterson was in church enjoying a respite in her health. We were all glad to see her there. About once a month our Intern Pastor joins us for worship to either lead the liturgy or preach. Intern Brian Hanson was well liked each time he joined us. Each month I make anywhere from 10 to 20 visits with Hegre folks, and attend from 12 to 20 meetings of various sorts where I represent both Hegre and Gol to the Cannon River Conference, the SE MN Synod of the ELCA and the Kenyon/Wanamingo Ministerial Association, plus preaching and presiding at worship about 50 Sundays out of the year, and supervising confirmation classes. However, YOU are the “eyes and ears” of the pastor as you minister to one another and keep me informed of special prayer requests, etc.

March - For Lent this year we experimented with having a guest pastor, Dave Olson, come to lead worship while I was leading worship at either Grace, Gol, St. John's UCC or Nerstrand UMC. We also experimented one Sunday with a “dialog sermon” with myself taking one role and Gary Pavsek taking one roll. From the feedback received, I'd say it went quite well. This month our prayers were focused on both Julie Patterson and her father-in-law, Forrest Patterson. Julie quietly died on Sunday the 14th in the early evening, her fierce struggle with cancer over at last. We miss her a great deal, and I suppose we always will. The next week we buried a woman about twice Julie's age – Tillie Schultz, age 94.

April – The days were growing longer now as Palm Sunday began Holy Week – and Daylight Savings Time began once again. Holy Week saw the Seder Supper at Hegre, Tennebrae Service at Holden, the Great Vigil of Easter at St. Olaf College Chapel, and Easter Sunday at Hegre. In mid-April I was part of a group of first call pastors who traveled to ELCA Headquarters in Chicago to meet with Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. We were warmly received and got the “grand tour” of your church's international offices. It was quite impressive – they do a great deal on a very limited budget. After all, 90% or more of your offering to Hegre remains right at Hegre – only about 10% is forwarded on to the Synod and to the ELCA offices. You can be proud of those who minister in your name.

May – We rejoiced at the baptism of Zachary Linaman, son of Scott and Ashley Linaman, and we heard the public Confirmation of Brad Fitzgerald, Samantha Linaman, Crissa Knott, and Heather Jacobson. Then, we also had to bury Forrest Patterson, Ruth Duncan and Kenneth Flikke. All is mercy and grace. God's will is to love us forever and ever. Amen. Life goes on, and now we look forward to graduation from the local high schools. Baccalaureate services were at St. Michael's Church in Kenyon this year.

June – In June we “Honor the Grads” at Hegre by presenting them with a wonderful “blue jeans quilt”, and visiting all of their open house celebrations. Summer has begun at last! People are on vacation, but the work of the church goes on – visits, worship, attending meetings, etc.

July – Time for a little vacation. Intern Pastor Brian Hansen preached and presided at one service and Pastor Dave Olson at another while I was gone. Attendance drops off sharply when folks go on vacation – but maybe that is, in fact, a good thing! We all need to rest, renew and refresh ourselves. Of course we also need to continue our support of the church even while we are gone! And, when I returned I picked up where I left off on my round of visits and worship leadership. I represented the Bishop of the SE MN Synod at the 135th Anniversary of Wanamingo Lutheran on Sunday 25 July.

August - It was time to say “good bye” to Intern Pastor Brian Hanson, his wife Kendra and son, Aiden at a luncheon at Dale Church. But, even though we had the luncheon, Pastor Brian was just getting ready to take the Kenyon area kids out to Montana to hike in the mountains at Camp Christikon. And that’s exactly what they did for a glorious week! The evening of 20 August the ‘Relay For Life’ event was held at the park in Zumbrota. Hundreds of luminaries lined the paths of the park, out door fireplaces felt good too because we hit record LOW temperatures for late summer. People walked the paths and remembered those who had to deal with cancer. The sums of money raised all go to research. And, it’s working. Slowly and surely we are learning more about this family of diseases and how to treat them – and we pray for all who are faced with illness.

September – Time to dig into the school books once again! Our new Intern Pastor, Judy Holmen arrived and spent her first Sunday at Hegre and Gol assisting leading liturgy. Welcome Judy! A warm sunny Saturday, the 4th, was a great day to work with Hegre folks on the Habitat for Humanity House in Zumbrota. Hegre Leap of Faith had a campout for kids on 11 Sept to kickoff Sunday School and Confirmation. De Ann Engvall teaches confirmation kids on Sunday morning and I meet with them monthly to go over their progress in learning, service projects, spiritual growth, etc. We presented Bibles to Ryan Stucky, Nathan Nozer, Dakota Walker & Santos De Leon. I represented Hegre & Gol at the installation of Pr. Luther Mathsen at First Lutheran in Kenyon. We had great weather for the Hegre Men’s Retreat – and I caught the biggest fish!

October – Perfect Fall weather for the De Mars / Simon wedding at Shattuck – St. Mary’s chapel! I regularly attend continuing education seminars throughout the year, this month I attended two on ‘Family Systems Theory’ that will help me in ministering to people. We began an evaluation project of the liturgy in With One Voice. We used W.O.V. three out of the four Sundays. After several months we will re-evaluate and decide which liturgies we prefer.

November – Intern Judy Holmen accompanied me on some of my visiting rounds and got introduced to some of the Hegre folks. We both attended the annual SE MN Synod Theological Conference in Owatonna and heard an excellent speaker, Pastor Susan Briel lead a study on the Gospel of John. The Gideons came and gave a chancel talk on their Bible publishing work. I led the monthly Cannon River Conference pastors during a program at Vasa Children’s Home over by Redwing. They are starting their 150th year of serving young persons with handicaps. I helped the seniors in West Concord kick off Thanksgiving by providing some of the music for their feast. Albert (Duke) Ohlness died. Funeral at Hegre on 29 November. This was our 7th funeral this year.

December – The children got to see my icon of St. Nicholas up close and touch it. They each received a fresh orange with three fragrant whole cloves stuck in it – in memory of the three children saved by St. Nicholas so long ago. Preparations well underway for the Hegre Christmas program which is done by the whole Sunday School. It turned out to be a tremendous success with lots of great singing and fun! A joint Christmas party at the Sunset Home for Hegre and Gol residents was also enjoyed by all. For Christmas I brought the new icon of the Nativity that I had received. The children loved seeing it and holding it.

And so the calendar year came to an end. All is mercy and grace. Thanks be to God!

Pastor Keith E.O. Homstad