

Annual Report for 2009
Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones
January 21, 2010

Dear Friends at Living Word,

Each year we (both congregation and pastor) submit a report to the ELCA about our ministry over the previous year. This discipline allows me to review the year and often results in a perspective adjustment that is very positive. This is what I have learned in recent weeks, working on the report (with the help of many people who actually know what they're doing!):

We are an amazingly dedicated and generous congregation. In-house financial statistics verify this: our giving exceeded our spending and our expected income, as it has for a couple years now; and we gave beyond our Sunday offerings to a special appeal for the building fund to the tune of \$15,000—even without having a building to fund yet!

But that's just normal for healthy congregations. What is more striking, and I think a measure of our faithfulness in this mission to which God calls us, is that in this year of economic recession, we also responded to neighbors in need with both financial and material gifts:

*Water to Thrive--almost \$700 from Living Word, plus \$3,000 from an event at which Phil Ruge-Jones was the performer

*National Youth Gathering offering of \$300 for Lutheran Hunger Appeal and local beneficiaries in New Orleans

*Christmas gifts and school supplies for children in Laredo, through the ministry of our sister congregations there, served by Revs. Mariana and Moises Mendez

*Contributions to the food pantry in Buda: 8 neighborhood food walks plus participation in their winter soup fundraiser

*Donations to the Austin conference for mission and to Texas Lutheran University for scholarships

*Regular benevolence of 10% of our offering to the ELCA, which supports camps, campuses, Lutheran Social Services, overseas missions, new start congregations, disaster relief around the world, hospitals, and more.

*We supported our youth attending the National Youth Gathering and Confirmation Camp.

It takes a lot of dollars to do these things, and even moreso, time, ideas, energy, and commitment.

Together we have what we need to do what God calls us to do (the second thing I learned).

In the year ahead, we will be discerning next steps in God's preferred future for us. As part of this congregation, we trust God will speak to and through you, so let your ideas and dreams be known! Continue to listen for God's guidance, for you and for Living Word, as we look forward to the next part of the journey together.

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me." Jeremiah 29:11-13

Peace++

Pastor Lori