

**Pastor's Annual Report to the Congregation: Pastor Greg Schaefer, University Lutheran Church of Palo Alto  
Feast of St. Bruno the Great of Cologne – 11 October 2015**

Today, 11 October, is the feast of St. Bruno the Great, an interesting character. The son of a Saint (St. Matilda) and an Emperor (Henry the Fowler), he was made personal secretary to his brother, Emperor Otto I. Soon, he was consecrated Archbishop of Cologne. For Bruno, the calls to serve the church and the world were not in conflict – both involved the bringing about the reign of God. May we, in our callings as citizens, family members, workers, students, volunteers, neighbors, and followers of Jesus, work for the day when there's enough for all, grace in abundance, and justice for creation.

About three weeks from now marks 8 years since I arrived as pastor. I think I say this nearly every year, but it simultaneously feels like a lot longer and a lot shorter. I want to reflect briefly with you on what I've noticed over these last few years, and give you a sense of where I see us headed.

This is a place where families find support, singles find community, students find refuge, individuals find grace and hope, strangers find welcome, doubters find acceptance, sufferers find care, sinners hear forgiveness, saints find inspiration, seekers find a home, and God in Christ finds us all.

Some of you have mentioned the increase in the number of children over the last few years. This is due in large part to the efforts of (over the years) Brian, Kay Marie, and Melissa, as well as Carol, Nicole, Tomas, Mari, our vicars, and the children's parents. UniLu, when compared to other church buildings, was probably not designed with children in mind – note the lack of classroom space other churches have. But, thanks to the efforts of many, children are being welcomed and nurtured in faith.

Children's Ministry is part of Christian Education – a pillar of our common life – where we spend time in pursuits academic, practical, and reflective. Marion has headed up the adult area of Christian Education and, through the capable teaching and leadership of several members, we have the opportunity to engage theology, history, faith and doubt, nature, practice, ecumenical and interfaith topics, and several other areas of interest.

The Social Justice Committee holds up before us opportunities to integrate faith and beliefs with lives of service and justice. Through the work of Justin, Bruce, Joan, Erica, Mary, Alan, and several others, we've had opportunities for the reading, service, outreach, shelter, support, and advocacy - central parts of our Christian faith that enliven our faith and inspire us to find opportunities to serve.

Our worship is often described as organic – that is, emerging naturally from the community. For many of us, the 75 minutes we are together on Sunday morning is the best (only?) opportunity for silence, prayer, reflection, and community, as we worship, receive the sacrament, hear the Word, and pray for self and world. Thanks to the choir and altar guild, musicians and artists, readers and servers, our vicars, Bill, Carol, Mark, and several others, worship continues to be vibrant, meaningful, and sacred.

Community Life has taken a more central role in our life together over the last few years. Thanks to Juan, Jeremy, Mary, Alan, Gwen, and others, events like Movie Night, Game Night, Ice Skating, Opera at the Ballpark, and other events have brought us together as a community around common interests.

This property, nearly 50 years old, continues to be lovingly stewarded by David, Craig, Kelly, Stephanie, and others. Resources of time, energy, and money go into caring for the landscaping, buildings, parking lot, plumbing, lighting, and everything else we rely on to help us be the church here. It's no small task and takes a lot of us (not just the aforementioned team) to steward this place in issues big and small – lightbulbs, painting, planting, fixing, cleaning, as well as long-deferred projects like steeple, roof, parking lot lighting, and accessibility.

We have, for our own sakes, for the sake of individual seminarians, and for the sake of the church, taken on the role of being a teaching congregation. Over the last several years, we have had very-part-time students from the seminary, as well as returned to the practice of having a full-time intern. This is not only a helpful practice for us (having another voice and skill set), but also a gift to the intern, who learns a lot in this congregation, and to the church as we help people discern their calls.

Several groups use this space to teach music and art, to help each other in recovery, to tend to the civic and communal needs, and to raise children in a cross-cultural environment. UniLu is a lively place even during the week, and we are providing space for some important community efforts.

And, stewardship of the congregation has been entrusted to the staff and Council. Under the leadership of capable presidents (Caitlin, Julie, Kris, Dana, Bruce, Maija), treasurers, and other officers, our office managers, vicars, volunteers, Councilors, Mutual Ministry, Internship, and Endowment Committees, and others have seen growth in our capacity for ministry as well as increased investment.

*1 Corinthians 12:12-26: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*

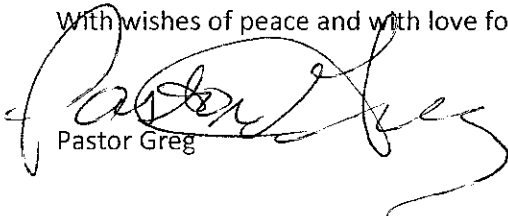
I said to Council recently that my experience of budgets is basically limited to our congregational Mission Spending Plan and the household budget that Gwen and I have. What I meant is that there are several others who have gifts for budgets, and gifts for all kinds of things that I don't. That's the nature of a community – each of us has responsibility and a calling. For my part, I am focusing especially on my role as spiritual leader in this congregation. It's in that role that I serve as pastoral counselor, spiritual guide, teacher, discerner, and pastor. Premarital counseling, pastoral care, weddings and funerals, teaching, preaching, presiding, justice, advocacy, planning, and admin are all, to me, spiritual tasks.

Toward the goal of strengthening my service in that role, I plan to enroll in a program of continuing education that focusses on the role of Pastor as Spiritual Leader. This is a program that I will engage very part time, concurrent with serving my call at UniLu, and which will result in a doctorate for me (a Doctorate of Ministry, D.Min.) This will involve my being away from church for 20 days out of the year, Monday through Friday, two weeks in January and two in June, over the next three years. This has the support of the Mutual Ministry committee and we are working out the practical details.

Where is God calling you to serve, to give of your time, talents, and treasures, to learn a new skill, explore a new idea, take up a new role, or find a new avenue of service? Not just here, but everywhere. How is God using your gifts and your context to help bring about the reign of God?

And, together, where is God calling us to serve? This place is an outpost of the Gospel. Here, neighbors, students, teachers, supporters, visitors, workers, and a variety of others find the Christ, find the God of their longing, find the good news of grace, find hope and peace, and find a hunger and thirst for justice. I think it is our privilege and our humble calling to be servants of God's mission in this place. (Are you still reading? Email me at [pastor@unilu.church](mailto:pastor@unilu.church).) What I see on our horizon is a community that continues to grow both in breadth and in depth – in new people discovering the grace and love of God in our midst, and in current people delving deeper into the Christian life. How can UniLu continue to be a place where the Gospel is heard, the sacraments are administered, justice is sought, and God's work in the world is being done through our hands? Let's work on this together.

With wishes of peace and with love for you all,



Pastor Greg