

2016: Moving from Wishful Thinking to Grateful Excitement

Friends,

To say a lot has happened this year is an understatement. For many of us at NEC, the first half of 2016 had a 'hold your breath and hope for the best' feel to it. With much gratitude, the second half of 2016 moved from the wishful thinking that we would be 'OK' to the excitement that God is just as much at work as ever. Personally, the measuring stick I was most concerned with was life change. I knew financial and attendance numbers would fluctuate but if evidence of God at work disappeared we'd be in trouble. So it's with much gratitude that we bring this church year to a close riding **a wave of God-at-work transformation** here at NEC.

My top three life change stories this year all happened this month! The first came in the form of a confession from a gentleman after a Sunday service, who took a moment to tell me that, "**NEC has saved my marriage!**" He then went on to tell me that his marriage was on rocky footing so they decided to give NEC a try. God took what they experienced and used it to open them up to himself and each other in ways that brought health and healing.

The next life change story came when one of our members came up to me after a service to tell me that their mother-in-law, who is in her nineties wanted to be baptized at NEC! She went on to explain how for the past few months she had been coming to NEC and her faith has come alive. She wanted to mark her faith in Christ through public baptism. We had **our first "nonagenarian" baptism on November 27!**

The last life change story happened last week when someone who has been coming to NEC for only two weeks came up to me to thank me for NEC and to tell me how much she has been enjoying it. When I asked how she heard about us, she said that 'so-and-so' invited me. That left me with a huge smile because 'so-and-so' has only been coming for a month himself. **One person went out on a limb** to 'give church a try' and ended up experiencing God to the point where he is already inviting others to do the same. Talk about a vision win!

These are just three of many more wins experienced in all our ministry areas. 2016 has seen youth coming to Christ, children initiating family prayer, heartwarming stories of compassion and service and people growing in their faith. All these God-wins are made possible because **you help make NEC happen**. Your time, service and financial generosity IS what NEC is made of.

This year we braced for a 20-30% loss in numbers (attendance and finances) due to the Senior Pastor transition. We are fortunate to have only realized about a 19% loss. Having said that, a 19% drop in offering means we are facing close to a \$400,000 budget shortfall in 2016, our **second biggest December gap** to date. This number seems daunting, but every year nearly 40% of our budget comes in November and December. Through the generosity of our members and regular attendees we have always finished the year financially strong.

This year **we need your help more than ever**. Your financial sacrifice to the mission of NEC will allow us to finish 2016 well and plan for an exciting new year of God-at-work in 2017.

Can we count on you this year to help us finish strong?
(To give online visit newenglandchapel.org/giving.)

With much gratitude,

Pastor Mike