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The Reverend Dr. Mark E. Fitzsimmons, Pastor

November, 2015

Dear Nativity Family,

In a recent sermon, Pastor Mark talked about what motivates us in our planning for the future. Do we consider what *we* want to do.....or.....do we open ourselves up to respond to the needs of *others* around us? He reminded us of the abundance of God's love and the significance of faithful living. What a timely message as our congregation enters into an emphasis on stewardship of time, talent and treasure as we continue to shape our vision for Nativity for another calendar year and beyond.

This past year has been full of significant events in our Nativity church community. As a congregation, we made decisions regarding our marriage policy, we conducted a very successful capital campaign to retire our mortgage debt, we bid farewell to Heather Langan as Director of our Learn Ministries, we concluded our participation in the intern program, we began a process to evaluate the validity of re-locating our church campus, we began a process to call a second pastor and we accepted the resignation of Michele Grush as Director of our Care ministries.

Change can be very unsettling and stressful. As we look to 2016, we realize there will be challenges, but there are so many opportunities that lie before us. We have excellent staff members that are functioning well and are working harder than ever to cover the areas of ministry during this time of transition. We hope to shape our ministry team in the first quarter of 2016. Our facilities are in reasonably good shape, and we will continue to make improvements and repairs in a timely manner. We know that there will be some major issues that we will have to address with our facility. Our preschool and kindergarten, youth groups and faith formation classes are off to a good start in the Fall of 2015. We hope to continue to expand these programs, but that will take creative thinking with regard to the use of our facilities. As our staff continues to be a real strength of our congregation and our facilities are being properly maintained, we hope to focus on increasing the financial resources that can be devoted to program.

So, the question is: **"How do we respond?"** How do we respond to the changes in our midst? How do we respond to the challenges and opportunities in our community? How do we respond to the call of discipleship that our Lord puts in front of us each and every day? How do we respond to the gifts that were first given to us by God? Over the coming weeks, each of us will have the opportunity to reflect on the gifts that God has blessed us with. We will have the opportunity to respond with commitments of time, talent and treasure. We ask everyone to prayerfully consider the gifts bestowed on us by God and how we can use those gifts to make Christ known in our Nativity community.

During our campaign, we heard many stories about what Nativity means to many of us. Looking forward, we know there will be many new stories created in this place.

Thank you,

Fred Park
Council President