



2023 Annual Report of the Pastor/Head of Staff

At North Lake I am privileged to lead a devoted, talented staff. With the growing experience of Pastor Shawn Smith, the addition of Pastor Liz Smith for Congregational Care, and the retention of Pastor Lynn Miller as Visitation Pastor, our pastoral team is as strong as any during my eight years as head of staff. We have anchors of excellence with Dave Belch as Church Administrator and Kathy Yoakum as Office Manager. In 2023 we added Andy Hough to coordinate our technology needs (including security), hired Heidi LaCentra into a key role for the Finance Office, moved Laura Skalski from OHB to our main office, and welcomed Chip Rice as Director of OHB.

In a season of changes, our staff framework and outlook are very positive. Perhaps the greatest challenge is replacing Mike Snow; after serving as our Director of Worship and Music for nine years, he accepted an offer to teach music at the same elementary school where his wife teaches. We are still looking to hire the right person to cover his responsibilities; and we are grateful for others who have absorbed extra assignments in the meantime.

In 2023 we also began planning for the future of Little Blessings when Linda Brown confirmed her intent to retire at the end of this school year. Pastor Shawn and the Little Blessings Board of Directors, chaired by Dick Young, lead the decision-making process. As Head of Staff, I am also consulted on some of the bigger questions pertaining to one of our Big Three missions.

Last year I advised the Personnel Committee of my retirement plans in June, 2025, soon after I turn seventy. We commenced a succession planning process that involved the Session and the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery. An announcement letter was sent to the congregation in November, and we began the steps necessary for North Lake to conduct a search for a new pastor. Pastoral ethics and Presbytery policy create important boundaries, so I do not influence the search and selection process.

However, I will be happy for North Lake if the early alert affords enough time for a smooth and strong transition.

Through 2023 I continued to support the Finance and Personnel Committee, the Mission Committee, and the Nominating Committee. I also served with a newly-established team to prepare and launch the Legacy of Hope capital campaign to pay off the North Lake mortgage. As Pastor I moderate most Session and congregational meetings. The combination of committee assignments, staff leadership, and other executive roles typically accounts for about half of my work week. Although many of these efforts are less visible, they may be even more significant for the health and culture of the congregation.

In a more obvious capacity, my worship leadership included 36 new messages and Christmas Eve story #7. The Lenten series, "Seven Deadly Spins," was supported by our own North Lake study guide. The Advent Devotional was written specifically to accompany the theme: "Word Made Flesh." And the perspective from my office was shared regularly in midweek videos, newsletter articles, and other special communications. I also cherish the opportunity to teach, such as the series of Building Blocks classes we offer twice a year. Another great discipleship venture involves a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In 2023 we planned and announced a 2024 trip to Israel. The trip filled with a waiting list in scarcely a week. Unfortunately, it became apparent after October 7 that our trip would not happen, and we needed to focus our prayers on the suffering and instability in that part of the world.

Sometimes the work is delightful, for example, sharing in the ribbon-cutting and dedication of the addition to the Christian Food Pantry, getting invited to show up in costume as Babe Ruth for the Presbyterian Women's murder mystery, participating in the Ice Cream Social and 25th anniversary observance of our Big Three, enjoying our FAB Tuesdays, serving as a narrator with my wife Bobbi for our choir's Christmas concert, officiating a wedding, performing five baptisms (two 1-yr-olds, two 2-yr-olds, and one 92-yr-old!), and just seeing the Spirit of the Lord at work in so many volunteers at North Lake.

Sometimes the work is deeply prayerful, even tearful, with the number of those grieving, facing surgeries and treatments, adjusting to new limitations, or living situations, worrying about the health or spiritual condition of a child or grandchild,

dealing with financial concerns, hearing the echoes of regrets, or trying to make sense out of a world that seems off-course. These pastoral contacts, including memorial services and committals, visits, phone calls, emails, and texts are a steady reminder of my call to pastoral ministry. Fortunately, we do have Good News to share, and our God is great enough, good enough, loving enough, to stand with us in all moments and conditions.

In 2023 I was both son and pastor to Lois Hosmer as she faced bravely and faithfully her final days, blessing others around her. Our family celebrated her life and resurrection, and we committed her ashes to their final resting place in the North Lake memorial garden. I will be ever grateful for the loving expressions from so many of you to my father and our entire family. How wonderful that in this stage of my ministry, I could have my wife's parents and my parents, all four of them in their 90's and living so close as North Lake members. We do rejoice and give thanks, knowing that in life and in death we belong to the Lord.

Finally, some of the pastor's work goes beyond the church campus and congregational boundaries. For example, once or twice a year I am invited to lead prayer at the beginning of the Lady Lake Commission meeting. I serve Central Florida Presbytery on two committees: a) Office and Personnel, and b) New Church Development. And in 2023 I began my term as a trustee on the board of The Outreach Foundation, the group that facilitates our partnership in Mozambique. They are an outstanding, effective mission organization, making a difference in hard places around the world. I am happy to represent North Lake and lend whatever help I can to these efforts.

I gaze over the past year with some amazement and amusement at all the Lord has been doing in our midst. People were fed, children were welcomed, budgets were met, the hurting were cared for, the faithful were encouraged, prayers were rising like incense, disciples were following the Master, and God was glorified in worship. It was a full year, a blessed year ... and now onto what the Lord has next in store for us.



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Hosmer