

Happy New Year, SUMC!

Well, 2026 is here—and many of us will probably write 2025 for a few months until we adjust. All of the Hulfachor Christmas decorations are stored away, so I thought I would share a few thoughts with you.

Here it is, 2026, and I remember Friday, January 31, 2000, sitting at work at 7:00 a.m., wondering if in 17 hours the lights would still be on and the refrigeration would still be working. As I think back, I wonder if my faith was waning. God takes care of us, and at 7:01 Indy time, the lights were still on in countries celebrating the New Year of 2000. It was, in fact, 12:01 a.m. in Christmas Island (Kiritimati), where the new year had already begun—and all was well.

Maybe my faith was a bit low at that moment. But SUMC is not low in faith.

If you remember, we went through COVID, and in 2021 we set a goal to pay off our mortgage by October 2024 for our 175th Anniversary. It was intended to be a three-year project (really more like 40 months), but we completed it in just three years, finishing in July. What a blessing—and proof of what a dedicated congregation SUMC is.

Now we are a few days into 2026 (almost wrote 2025!). In late 2025, we accepted the fact that the building—the brick and mortar that houses *we, the church*—needed part of the roof replaced. In truth, a good portion of it needed attention. All of the flat roof was well beyond its 20-year lifespan.

We considered doing the four sections over the sanctuary this year and the remaining four or five sections in the spring. Bids ranged from the mid-\$100,000s on the very low end (and \$175,000 does not really seem low) up to \$300,000. And of course, you always need to plan for a 10–20% contingency for hidden damage.

Well, Doug Lewis went to work on all of this—and once again, all of you faithful and generous members pitched in.

As of right now, weather permitting, the entire flat roof—all nine sections—will be completed by mid-January at the 2025 price quote. God has blessed us so far, and only three 4x8 sections have had to be replaced. With your support and pledges, the project will be paid for in full. The total cost will be

about 17% of what we owed on the mortgage in 2021, yet with your help, we are covering it in roughly three months of giving.

For 2023 and 2024, I served as Chair of the Leadership Team. (Please note: much of my job involved conferring with the pastor on an agenda, calling the meeting to order, and then adjourning it. Occasionally, if a decision was needed, I would ask for a motion, a second, and then take a vote.) But with eight other dedicated, loyal, and determined team members who love God, SUMC, and our community, some wonderful things have happened.

Thanks to you, the congregation, we paid off the mortgage, paid all the bills, kept the building and equipment in fairly good shape, and carried out some tremendous outreach projects.

I must thank Pastors Duane, William, and Brandon, along with Kathy, Mindy, the staff, and the Leadership Team for their support—and for their tolerance of my sometimes off-the-wall comments and antics.

As of January 1, as you may have already heard, Karen Decatur (a six-year member, two of those years as Chair) and Doug Lewis, after three years of service, are taking leave from the Leadership Team. Bekah Hamm and Connie Klipsch have agreed to join the team. Connie will be our new Chair, and she will be awesome. If you see them, be sure to thank them.

We are getting close, so hang on.

If you are not aware, Doug Lewis and Joe Howell especially—along with Phil Whisner and Art Littlepage—have handled countless maintenance issues in-house and have saved our church an incredible amount of money over the past few years. Many others have helped on workdays as well, and they are greatly appreciated. I offer this public accolade instead of a pat on the back and a box of “atta boy” cookies. Thanks, guys—and gals on workdays, too.

Now, in closing... In recent years, I have heard more than once that some people are reluctant to serve on the Leadership Team because they fear that seeing how things work “on the inside” might change how they feel about the church. Karen assured us at her final meeting that in her six years of service, she never once felt that way.

After my four years, I have a high regard for how the Leadership Team operates and for the thought and care that goes into every decision.

I pray that 2026 is a new adventure in faith and life at SUMC—for all of us.

Pat Hulfachor