

# Annual Report

Valley of Peace Lutheran Church  
August 2021



**THE MINISTRY OF VALLEY OF PEACE  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Living in God’s love and compassion, we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit works through us for healing, justice, and peace.

Annual Report to the Congregation

August 15, 2021

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## Minutes of the August 16, 2020 Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Due to safety concerns from the Covid-19 pandemic, earlier this year the VOP Council voted to delay the meeting with the hope it could be held in-person. Despite continuing safety concerns, the Council determined the meeting should not be delayed further and should proceed on-line using Zoom technology.

Pastor Ashley noted that there was a quorum present, and Congregational President Tom Ewald called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Pastor Ashley led us in prayer by reading a hymn that was played in today's service. Secretary's Report. Secretary Steve Hoge read the minutes from the May 19, 2019 Annual Meeting, the June 16, 2019 Special Meeting, and the February 20, 2020 Semi-Annual Meeting. Bob Hoyt moved to approve the minutes and Dave Gilyard seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Judy Greeninger gave an update on the results of the 2020 budget, including that VOP received a Federal stimulus loan of over \$37,000 which will not need to be repaid and which leaves VOP with a positive balance. Without the loan VOP would have a deficit; however, less of a shortfall than this time last year. Contributions and expenses are both below budget. Tom opened it up to questions and comments. There were none.

Presidents Report. Tom referred people to the Annual Report for his report, and lauded the Staff and Committees for their work.

Pastor's Report. Pastor thanked everyone for adapting to using technology to continue our worship and mission and thanked the Staff for their creative work adapting to the requirements from the pandemic. She also noted the work of the Covid 19 Task force to create policies for operating safely, and the upcoming communications to launch the fall church activities.

Election of New Officers and Council Members. Ruth Larson read the following list of new candidates to serve on the Church Council and Committees for the terms noted below.

### President Elect

Jim Crofoot

1 Year Term (President Year 2)

### World Missions

Patricia Holmstrom

2 Year Term (reelect 2<sup>nd</sup> Term option)

### Property

Jim Jasper

2 Year Term (reelect 2<sup>nd</sup> Term option)

Worship and Music Darcie Rodman	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Treasurer Nancy Clemens	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Social Ministry Barb Mikelson	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Parish Life Open	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Faith Formation/Adult Ed Open	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Church Council Young Adult Kari Roll	1 Year Term
Personnel Team Member Sara Hoge	4 years (1 term)
Nominating Team Member Diane Hinderlie	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)
Nominating Team Member Pat McGraw	2 Year Term (reelect 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term option)

Since the positions are not contested, Shennon Black made a motion to elect the slate by acclimation which was seconded by Sally Daniels Herron. The motion passed unanimously. Thereafter, Tom Ewald acknowledged the service of individuals who have completed their terms on Council.

Pastor Ashley then led the Installment of the new members.

Tom Ewald turned the meeting over to newly elected President Ruth Larson.

Dave Gilyard moved to adjourn the meeting, and Julia Madison seconded. The motion passed without objection and the meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Secretary Steve Hoge

## **Minutes of January 31, 2021 Semi-Annual Meeting**

Due to safety concerns from the Covid-19 pandemic, the VOP Council determined this Semi-Annual Meeting should proceed on-line using Zoom technology.

Noting that there was a quorum present, President Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 11:07 a.m..

Pastor Ashley read a devotion and then led us in prayer.

Judy Greeninger shared information about a congregational gift from the Estate of long-time member Dorothy Sanford

Stewardship Chair Diane Hinderlie gave an update on the stewardship drive and a request that if each giving unit gave another \$25/month we could balance the budget in 2021.

Treasurer Nancy Clemens gave an update on the results of the 2020 budget, including that VOP received a \$38,000 forgivable PPP loan to balance the budget. No one had questions about the report of the 2020 budget.

After Nancy explained the proposed 2021 budget, Ruth opened it up to questions on the 2021 proposed budget and the following discussion ensued.

- Nancy explained VOP is not eligible for another PPP loan.

There being no more questions, Dave Gilyard moved to approve the 2021 proposed budget of \$385,714. Jim Crofoot seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

At 11:30 a.m. Nancy Clemens moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Catherine Martignacco. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Secretary's Note: After months away from in-person worship due to COVID-19, it was wonderful to see the faces of more than 60 participants in the Zoom meeting.

## Report from the Congregational President

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them." I have spent a great deal of time this past year reflecting on the importance of community in our walk as Christians. We have all had to reexamine our idea of "gathering" as a community during the last 16 months of the pandemic. As a church we found new ways to be community - through Facebook services, countless Zoom meetings, online retreats, online trivia games and online social gatherings. Community was kept in phone calls, emails and encouraging notes. There were scavenger hunts, outdoor celebrations and finally, outdoor church services this summer! This is definitely not what any of us preferred, but Valley of Peace staff and volunteers responded to the new restrictions of the pandemic swiftly, safely and creatively to continue as a community of Christ in a challenging time.

At Valley of Peace we continued to explore ways to love God and neighbor through worship, education, and service. I would like to thank Pastor Ashley, Sally, Emilie, Zack and Beth for their flexible and creative ministry this past year at VoP. Changing to an online ministry where none existed just days before was no small feat! Thank you, as well, to Matt Dellwo who was and continues to be instrumental in assisting with the technology to make online and now outdoor services work each Sunday. Thank you to the church council and their committees who met regularly on Zoom to keep up their good work at VoP. As you read through their reports, you will see that even though they weren't meeting in person, there was still great work happening. Thank you to the many VoP members who volunteered for solo tasks and as well as task forces old and new. Thank you to all of the members of VoP for your patience, love and support as we worked through this difficult year. You came to online services, came to Zoom gatherings, showed up at outdoor celebrations, reached out to others, continued to volunteer and so much more!

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the many losses and hardships we continue to grieve from this past year both in our Valley of Peace community and the wider world. The losses are many, varied and multilayered. As I know through experience in the unexpected death of our son Dan, grief of all kinds can deeply wound and paralyze us, leaving us hurt and questioning. But I also experienced the healing power of the love of God and love of a community of believers that walk alongside, honoring the pain.

May God's love for us and our love for each other, strengthen us and move us forward to continue God's good work in joy.

Peace to you all,

Ruth Larson

## Report from the Pastor

*I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old.*

*I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds.*

*Your way, O God, holy. What god is so great as our God?*

*You are the God who works wonders.*

Psalm 77:11-14a

As I reflect on the last year and read through the reports of all of the ministries that have happened at Valley of Peace this year, I find myself remembering so much. I keep thinking to myself, 'Oh, yes, we did do that.... and that did happen... and there was also that... and I had forgotten all about that.' There is so much to celebrate and so much to remember from last year. And, I don't know about you, but my sense of time and ability to remember events has felt very warped during the COVID pandemic.

I am sure there is a scientific explanation for why I have struggled to remember things during the COVID pandemic (or it could just be having two young children). So, this is not a scientific explanation, but I think it is hard for me to remember things right now because all of us are doing a balancing act of both remembering and rediscovering. At the same time we are both remembering what has been done before and rediscovering how to do that now, and that is especially true for the church.

Since March of 2020 our church has been remembering what was done before, for example, worship, or faith formation, or meetings, or service projects and then rediscovering new ways to do that. It meant asking for volunteers to record themselves for worship parts, it meant gathering for outdoor events, like confirmation, or it meant communion in pre-filled cups or on Zoom. The list could go on and on of the many ways that all of our ministries have remembered what has been done before and rediscovered new ways of doing things.

Everything that has been done in the last seventeen months, both programming and worship, has been reimagined and never done before in the history of Valley of Peace.

It takes a lot of energy, creativity, and support to do new things. I want to especially thank our staff, Beth Brandt, Zack Carlson, Emilie Moravec, and Sally Daniels Herron for their faithful, creative, and dedicated work. Thank you to the Church Council for their continued commitment in helping to discern needs for our community. And thank you to the many volunteers who stepped up in new ways to lead us in trying new things, especially with technology. And thank you to all of the members at Valley of Peace who showed up in new ways. Valley of Peace could not have done ministry without your presence.

We are all in a season of remembering and rediscovery. As the church plans for more in-person gatherings there is both the act of remembering what has been done before and rediscovering how to be a community that keeps one another safe and cares for all people, especially when there are young people in our community who have not yet had the opportunity to be vaccinated.

The work of remembering and rediscovery can be exhausting. It can be tiring to continually rediscover new and creative ministry opportunities and rethink church life. It can be hard to remember details of what has been done before, or even last month.

In the act of rediscovery and remembering there are things that one may misremember or forget all together. And maybe that is okay. Maybe it is okay if we forget some of the details of programming or schedules or what has been done before. This provides an opportunity to rediscover how to be a church for this time and this place, a church that meets the needs of people right now.

What we will never forget, what we will always remember, is the presence of God at Valley of Peace and the way God's love is made known to all people through the love of our members. We remember the way it feels to greet one another, the laughter, and even the space for crying. We remember the stomp of children's feet and the noises of infants in worship. We remember the sound of voices coming together in singing. We remember the generosity of folks who bring school supplies and canned goods. We remember our church who values worship and music, intergenerational belonging, welcome for all people, and community outreach. All of this remembering will always shape who we are as a church.

The act of remembering is a holy act, it is what is lifted up in the verses from Psalm 77 that I shared at the beginning of the article. Because even though I shared that I may not always remember details well, what I do remember well is God's promises. Often in words for worship or in our liturgy you will hear the call to remember. We are called to remember the work of God in the Old Testament, a God who led God's people through the wilderness. We are called to remember the love and salvation of God present through Jesus Christ, who welcomed and served all people. We are called to remember the faith given to us by the Holy Spirit, which equips us to lead lives of faith.

Let us enter into this holy work of remembering God's promises and faithful presence. And in this work, when we dwell in remembering our God who works wonders, I know we will be surprised at what we rediscover about how to be church. I have hope in what is to come in this time of rediscovery and I hope you do too.

I look forward to this work of remembering and rediscovery with you.

In Christ,  
Pastor Ashley Osborn



## Report from the Treasurer

### 2020 Valley of Peace Financial Results

The 2020 Operations expense budget that was approved by the congregation was \$384,061. This represented a decrease of almost 7% from the 2019 budget. Items that contributed to the lower budget include salaries and benefits, benevolence to ELCA, and Ministry team expenses.

### 2020 Year End Results

For 2020, we ended the year with a surplus of 17K. This was due to the PPP loan program, in which VOP received 38K that was forgiven by the government. If the PPP loan was backed out, the year would have ended with a 20K deficit. Expenses were about \$16k lower than what was budgeted if the loan is backed out. Revenue was 10k less than budget, but due to the PPP loan, we were not in a deficit position.

In the dedicated accounts, Valley of Peace spent about \$14K for the study and plans surrounding the lower level remodel.

In September, we received 10K from the Dorothy Sanford Estate. In November, we were made aware that we would be receiving an additional gift from Dorothy's Estate. In the first quarter of 2021, we received an additional 810,000. Prior to receiving Dorothy's gift, a gift policy was established and is included in this annual report. The gift policy was created jointly by the Finance team and the executive team. The gift from Dorothy was unrestricted, so on the recommendation of the Finance team, \$800,000 of the gift was invested with Thrivent. Perry Jacobson is our financial advisor and has provided excellent service and assistance in getting this large undertaking accomplished. The funds are invested with Thrivent as follows:

350K - Calvert Moderate Model Strategy Fund (moderate risk)

350K – Thrivent Faith-Based Fund (moderately conservative risk)

100K - Thrivent Limited Bond Fund (conservative/preservation of principal)

The Finance team will meet a minimum of twice per year with Perry to review the investment portfolio.

We believe we will be in receipt of an additional gift from Dorothy's estate, once it has been finalized. What an amazing gift we have been given!

In terms of our overall financial position, the gift from Dorothy has substantially changed our balance sheet. As a congregation, we still have the challenge to meet our monthly expenses through member giving.

Valley of Peace supported many missions and outreach in 2020 through the dedicated accounts which are not reflected in the operating budget.

Many thanks to the finance team members: Dave Gilyard, Paul Mikelson, Chrys Johnson, Pastor Ashley, Judy Grenninger and Mariana Duffney, for their diligence in handling the gift policy creation, the investment of Dorothy's gift and providing guidance on budget and expense issues this year.

Nancy Clemens, Valley of Peace Treasurer

## **Report from Audit Committee**

With this report, the Audit Team presents its audit of the financial books and records of the congregation, youth checking account, and the Endowment Memorial Trust.

**Church:** Valley of Peace Lutheran Church

**Synod:** Minneapolis Synod

**For the period beginning and ending:** January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020

The audit objectives related to the internal audit of financial books, records and operations include determination that:

### **Purpose of the Audit**

- All assets and liabilities recorded in the congregation's books and records are supported by appropriate independent documentation (i.e., bank statements and vendor invoices).
- All general ledger balances are appropriately reconciled to their underlying assets (i.e., bank statements) and liabilities (i.e., accounts payable).
- Expenses are appropriately approved and supported by the appropriate documentation.
- Proper segregation of duties is in place for all key financial transactions and are not being circumvented.

### **Valley of Peace Financial Controls and Guidelines**

- Financial statements for VOP will be prepared within 5 days of the EOM.
- Financial statements will include transaction details for the month to reconcile with the book and bank balances.
- The person creating the financial statements will not be the same person signing the checks.
- The Treasurer will review all financial statements, invoices and documentation in the monthly folder and sign off.
- Invoices/documentation will be provided and approved for all disbursements.
  - Routine operational invoices are assumed to be approved via the congregation's approval of the annual budget.
- Checks/cash will be properly safeguarded in a locked cabinet or safe.
- The counters will be rotated.
- Funds from Sunday contributions will be deposited within 3 days.
- The Treasurer will match the Bank Deposit receipt with the deposit slip and follow up on any discrepancy

Due to the Covid Pandemic, the Audit Team was unable to review the 2020 books. Based on prior audit work performed, we feel confident that the books and records of the congregation and youth checking account continue to be materially accurate in all respects.

It is assumed that the controls governing the financial operations process continue to be in place and are operating as intended.

Again, due to the pandemic, the Audit Team was unable to resolve the minor recommendations from the prior year listed below. As such, the Audit Team will look to resolve these during the 2021 audit.

From the 2019 audit - Although controls over financial operations appear to be adequate, the following recommendations were made for the records of the congregation:

- Require the audit team to review all transactions over a certain dollar amount that will be determined by the Finance Team.
- Require documentation be available during the audit of the split of expenses between Valley of Peace and All God's Children Learning Center.

From the 2019 audit - The audit team did not have the books and records of the Memorial Trust to audit. The following recommendations were made for the audit of the Memorial Trust:

- Make available monthly bank statements from all financial companies that manage funds for the Endowment Trust.
- Make available documentation on funds available to disburse.
- Create documentation on how funds are managed and invested, including financial controls and guidelines, and make process documentation available for audit team.
- Create an official process to receive, approve/deny, and track Endowment Trust requests and make process documentation available for audit team.
- Provide audit team with evidence of all requests, whether they were approved or denied, and if approved, date, check number and recipient of disbursement.

This report was respectfully submitted by the following audit team

members: Dee Kendall  
Linda Peterson  
Becca  
Anderson

## **Report from Children, Youth, and Family Team**

It was a program year like we have never seen before! With all activities moving online with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Children, Youth, and Family Team remained focused on providing education and faith formation opportunities that met families where they were at and focused on maintaining community relationships and opportunities for renewal and support.

One goal the CYF Team had this year was to strengthen our faith formation programming for our youngest families with children age birth through preschool. In partnership with Angela Crofoot, Emilie provided monthly emails to these households with at home faith formation activities based around a monthly theme. Angela provided delightful monthly music videos in these emails. Kelsey and Emilie worked together to create multiple opportunities throughout the program year for parents of these children to meet online and discuss the joys and challenges of raising young children during this time. We also delivered two care packages to these households this year. One in the fall and one in the spring, letting families know we were thinking of them and value their presence at Valley of Peace.

Children's Faith Formation met this year in one large group (kindergarten - 5th grade) on Sunday mornings prior to worship on Zoom. We followed the Narrative Lectionary, had a weekly check in time, and played games to support faith formation development throughout the program year. During the fall, we delivered faith formation boxes to these families with activities and supplies that supported at home faith development also following the Narrative Lectionary. The children were such digital rockstars and also put together a Christmas and Easter pageant that were presented during online worship. Our confirmation students started the program year online Wednesday evenings this fall. We focussed on mental health during the fall and moved to the online platform, Flipgrid, for our discussion of the Apostle's Creed this winter. Pastor Ashley and Emilie created learning videos during this time and students responded to questions and commented on one another's work through Flipgrid. To conclude our program year, Pastor Ashley and Emilie met students outside this spring at Valley of Peace for reflection on the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit.

The Valley of Peace Youth Group, middle and high school, gathered online the last Sunday of every month throughout the program year for games and conversation. We had multiple game nights and discussed the importance of servant leadership in the church. These gatherings provided a monthly opportunity to check in with students and continue to build relationships while we could not gather in person.

Here are some of the VOP activities that kept our children and youth busy this year:

## June 2020

- **High School Youth Mission Trip:** The New York City mission trip was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Students were encouraged to participate in the PRISM food drive and Juneteenth celebrations in our communities.

## July 2020:

- **Vacation Bible School** –Emilie organized and led a virtual VBS using Illustrated Ministries “Compassion Camp” curriculum. Emilie posted daily videos and participants utilized Facebook to post pictures and connect on learning from the week.

**September 2020:** Children’s Faith Formation, Confirmation, and Valley of Peace Youth Group were up and running as of Rally Sunday, September 13, 2020.

- **Rally Sunday Drive Thru Event** – The CYF Team hosted a Rally Sunday Drive Thru event in the VoP parking lot. We collected donations for the PRISM food shelf and had a raffle drawing for self care giveaways.
- **Blessing of the Backpacks** - We celebrated and prayed for our Kindergarten students in worship. Students received backpacks tags and a devotional letter in the mail prior to worship.

## October 2020:

- **Kids and Money Milestone Event** Second and fifth grade students were recognized for their commitment to learning more about stewardship and how we can manage money. We prayed for the students in worship and families received devotions along with a gift from Valley of Peace.
- **Halloween Scavenger Hunt** In place of our traditional Halloween party at Valley of Peace, this year the CYF Team hosted a Halloween Scavenger Hunt around the community. Valley of Peace members signed up to have a prize bucket placed on their doorstep and students (all ages) were given addresses and hunted for hidden images at each stop and collected prizes throughout the hunt.
- **Sister Michelle Walka** joined our mental health conversation in October with our confirmation students. Sister Michelle led us through a creative art project as we discussed what self care feels and looks like through art.

## November 2020:

- **Youth Yard Work Service Event** Our youth group went out in early November to clean up yards of those who need some help raking and cleaning up for winter. The youth also cleaned up the church lawn.

### December 2020:

- **Christmas Pageant** Children's Faith Formation presented "Do Not be Afraid," a virtual Christmas pageant, during online worship in December.

### January 2021:

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Bibles.** 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Bibles were delivered in January and we celebrated them in worship on Sunday, January 10th.
- **Valley of Peace Youth Group** We kicked off a series of online game nights and discussion for our youth group on the last Sunday of every month through April.

### March 2021:

- **Prayer Milestone** We celebrated a Prayer Milestone event with 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade families on Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. Teaching, experiencing, and practicing prayer early in a child's life establishes a strong foundation for the child's faith journey. The Prayer Milestone was one more way for the congregation to keep its baptismal promise to equip parents to pass on faith.

### April 2021:

- **Children's Faith Formation Easter Virtual Pageant** On Easter Sunday, the children and youth of Valley of Peace presented "Good News," a virtual Easter Pageant during online worship.
- **Egg My Yard** Families with younger children signed up for the youth group to "egg" their yard for Easter. The youth group placed over 25 filled plastic Easter eggs in each yard as a surprise for the Valley of Peace children Easter weekend.

### May 2021:

- **Confirmation Spring Gathering** Pastor Ashley and Emilie met confirmation students outside at Valley of Peace for a reflection on the fruit of the Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Students also completed an art project together and talked about baptism and Pentecost.
- **Summer Children's Faith Formation** Starting on Sunday, May 30 Emilie has been providing a weekly opportunity for Pre K - 5th grade students to connect briefly before worship this summer with an activity that connects to our summer theme, "Fruit of the Spirit."

We look forward to continued growth and development for these young people in the year to come.

Emilie Moravec, CYF Director and Kelsey Pierson, CYF Chair

## Report from Adult Faith Formation Team

Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. --Proverbs 4:13 (NIV)

Despite the challenges and social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, Valley of Peace did not turn away opportunities for adult education; we adapted. Our learning communities – Rebecca’s Circle, Exploring the Word, Wednesday Night Book Club, and Adult Faith Formation – continued to connect and learn online via Zoom.

Our Sunday Adult Faith Formation community followed a 4-week rotation focusing on Bible Study, a “potluck” topic, our Mission of the Month, and Racial Justice. Highlights from these included the following:

### Bible Study

- Ruth and Jon Larson led us through studies of the Beatitudes and the Gospel of John.

### “Potluck”

- Bob Hoyt and Skip Humphrey led us in conversation about the ELCA Social Statement, “Discipleship in a Democracy.”
- Sara Blood helped us explore the connection between spirituality, mental health, and nature.
- Pastor Ashley led us in a time of discussion and prayer following the election.
- Darcie Rodman guided us in understanding feelings of grief during the pandemic and holidays.
- Cherrish Holland from Lutheran Social Services gave us tips on how to scam proof our finances.
- Ann and Andy Dybvig took us on a virtual trip to Tanzania and shared stories from their time serving as missionaries.
- Perry Jacobson from Thrivent taught us how to have a heart-to-heart conversation with aging parents about their future wishes.

### Mission of the Month

- Paul Mikelson shared the history of VoP’s involvement in Habitat for Humanity.
- Kevin Lytle from Prism shared an update from Prism and how demand has increased during the pandemic.
- Joy McElroy from Cherish All Children spoke about internet safety for children and youth.
- Shannon Black and youth representatives discussed how we can expand VoP’s ministry through Reconciling in Christ.
- Catherine Martignacco shared African experiences of the pandemic and an update from Global Health Ministries.



- Lisa Fernelius and Christy Michelli shared an update about water and mission work in Honduras.
- Principal Mike Rieckenberg and Social Worker Melissa Stalowski from Noble Elementary spoke about how the school community has pressed on through the pandemic.
- Craig Freeman from Beacon Interfaith Housing spoke about the need for affordable housing in the Twin Cities and the work of his organization.

### Racial Justice

This year, VoP explored the role of the church in racial justice, and committed to learning and action that awakens, engages, and equips our church community.

- Nancy Rogness led us in listening to and discussing the NPR broadcast, “White Christians Grapple with Their Faith’s Racist Past and Present.”
- Rev. Bill Smith shared his historical knowledge and experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- Bob Hoyt facilitated a study of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”
- Members of VoP’s Racial Justice Team introduced the proposed draft of a Racial Justice Statement to guide our congregation.
- Otis Zanders, CEO of Ujamaa Place, spoke about the work of his organization in providing holistic transformation for African American men experiencing racial inequity and poverty.

Additionally, the Wednesday Night Book Club focused almost exclusively on this issue, reading and discussing books such as *White Fragility*, *White Too Long*, *How to Be an Antiracist*, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, and *A Good Time for the Truth – Race in Minnesota*.

Finally, members of our congregation shared in the monthly VOICE newsletter recommended resources for reading and listening that they found to be helpful for them in understanding racism.

As we look forward to a new season and a new normal following all that we’ve been through this past year, our committee will continue to seek out ways we can engage our community in the lifelong journey of learning, growing in relationship with God, and living out our faith as disciples in mission to the world. We pray the Holy Spirit will guide you in this lifelong journey.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Dybvig  
Adult Faith Formation Committee Chair

## **Report from Hospitality Team**

It has been a year of lots of changes, questions, wondering what will be and when will things go back to some form of normal for the Hospitality and Evangelism team and everyone else.

We started to make some changes to the Narthex and rearranging some furniture to make it more friendly and welcoming to our younger visitors and their small children. Things were put on hold and we will start to continue to work the changes now that things are starting to get back to some form of normal.

We continue to send cards to our shut ins so that they continue to feel included in small ways with the church. We made cards with a beautiful picture of our windows in the church with the sun shining through.

I want to thank my committee members, Sally Daniels Herron, Lona Froyum, Chrys Johnson, Margaret Wallace, Sandy Resick, and Carol Johannes for the wonderful help they have given me.

I also wish to thank my writers of the cards, Sally Daniels Herron, Chrys Johnson, Grace Belsaas, Catherine Martignacco, Sara Hoge and Nancy Rogness.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julia Madison

## Report from Property Team

Due to the Covid issues the Valley of Church congregation has not met in the building since March 2020. All God's Children Learning Center did continue to be open but initially had lower attendance as families and staff worked out Covid safety options. In September 2020 Jim Jasper took over as Property Chair again following two years under Sten Pearson. Given these circumstances the Property Team and the Fix it Crew have only communicated via emails and responded to requests from AGC for repairs. Jim has worked with Pastor Ashley on some VoP issues but again via email.

Listed below are actions that have taken place over the last 12 months.

1. Fireside Room kitchenette was remodeled with a donation from Katherine M and Wes S doing all the work.
2. Required safety and licensing inspections all met with no issues causing delays in issuance of necessary operating paperwork for either VoP or AGC.
3. Tom Untied's family is paying for and outside accessible picnic table and VoP would like to create a patio area on the north side of the lower level just off the parking lot.
4. AGC funded the removal of the half wall in the infant room for better onsite supervision and as a response to a previous licensing concern.
5. AGC funded the addition of new flooring in several rooms.
6. Jim purchased a small electric snowblower that can be used by all staff as necessary to keep the lower level sidewalk clear during the day. It can also be used on Sundays when VoP resumes services in the building. Electric was chosen so that the machine can be stored in the building as no oil or gas are used.
7. We are finalizing installation of a security door in the lower entrance that can be locked and opened remotely in response to safety concerns for the building. AGC will e funding this project with some small additional cost by VoP for added security.
8. Several Fix it Crew members came in to add shelving in several AGC rooms and two toilets. This is especially difficult as it involves concreted block walls.
9. Boiler had several issues that required repair and two pumps being replaced as well as the fan unit for the VoP/Fireside Lounge areas needing to be replaced.
10. Finance Team requested and Jim has secured the bids for both a parking lot resurfacing as well as replacing the boiler. I felt that both were reasonable bids and will now await the results from further Finance Team discussions.
11. Chair racks that were purchased pre-pandemic to handle the folding chairs in the Narthex will not fit in the storage area across from Fellowship Hall so one is upstairs in the Narthex and one is currently in the choir room for AA to use now that they have returned.
12. AED has new batteries so should be good for two more years.

13. We continue to have a roof leak in the choir loft area but to this date I have not been able to locate a company willing to climb to fix it.
14. New lawn service was found after previous vendor declined to continue our services in 2021 due to a miscommunication over past billing. New service communicates well and does a good job so this ended well.
15. Emily ordered a large tented gazebo to be used for meeting area and Fix it Crew assembled it over two days. Currently used on the lawn next to the outdoor services area.
16. Due to the very hot and dry summer the outdoor areas have not gotten as much attention as planned but several members have donated and put in new plants in the terraced garden area near the prospective patio area as well as several pots near entrances. Weeding has also been slow given the weather conditions we have experienced this summer. This is a group that could use more members and when we return to being in the building we should make a request for help.
17. We still need some tree work in removal and replanting but better in the fall and after we determine funding sources. Previously the VoP Trust stated they could be approached when we had the costs and needs figured out.

I again cannot say enough about the guys on the Property Team and the Fix-it Crew. They give a lot of time and Valley of Peace is very blessed to have such a great group. Please take the time to thank:

Property Team: **Paul Hovde, Tom Clemens, Steve Collin, Pat McGraw** and the  
Fix It Crew: **Craig Franz, Dave Gilyard, Neil Peterson, Paul Mikelson, Wes Severson, Joe Cherra**

## **Report from Racial Justice Team**

The Racial Justice Team formed in the spring and summer of 2020 and has been actively meeting for a year. The team is wrestling with how Valley of Peace is called to respond to racial injustice that has been at the root of the pain in our local and global communities.

The team includes:

Ann Dbivig, Shennon Black, Bob Hoyt, Ken Schneider, Pastor Ashley Osborn, Barb Mikelson, Jim Jasper, Nancy Rogness

We have gathered many educational resources and continue conversations with others doing this work, including potential formal partnerships. This is being done with a goal of becoming an anti-racists church. While that is likely a concept that is both new and ever changing, it speaks to both individual behaviors and a community commitment to building institutions and systems without racial prejudices common in current systems of power. The goal with partnerships is to build relationships that grow all individuals and communities involved.

The team has been working to share resources via the electronic communications available to us during this time. There have been virtual events, books, podcasts, and discussion opportunities shared. Look for more of these chances to learn a history and understanding of this world that we were sorely lacking before.

Most notably the team has created a Racial Justice Statement which we hope to have adopted by the congregation. Much like our Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Welcome Statement of LGBTQIA+ individuals, it is our goal for this statement to be adopted both formally, in each member's heart, and in our daily life together. The statement is considered a draft as there may be changes discovered as we discuss it as a community. The statement has been mailed out to all households and there have been discussions with the council, the adult education time, and after church meetings. We plan several more gatherings of various sizes and formats to hopefully include everyone in a conversation around this statement and how we might implement the principles outlined within. If you have not been part of a conversation around the statement, please join us or contact us if one on one conversation is preferable. We want to hear your thoughts!

As we work toward full adoption of the statement the team continues to look for ways Valley of Peace and our community can live into this work to walk alongside the larger community with humility. There is not an easy step by step path to do this work well. As we move into this work we appreciate the partnership of the full Valley of Peace community and the grace of those around us.

## **Report from Social Ministry Team**

Social Ministry continues to be a vibrant, multi-faceted part of life at Valley of Peace, demonstrating the generosity and community involvement of so many of our members. Each month throughout the year we invite congregation support and participation with a designated ministry. Here is a sampling of what has been accomplished in the past year, despite the limitations of the COVID19 pandemic.

### **Noble Elementary School**

Valley of Peace has had a long-standing relationship with our neighboring school. During the past year, we adapted our support to fit with the school needs in time of pandemic.

We held a school supply and winter clothing drive in October. Many school supplies were donated and over \$1300 in contributions made possible the purchase of many pairs of mittens, boots and snow pants.

A book drive was held in April, combined with the drive-by Palm Sunday Mini Brunch. Eleven bags and two boxed of books were collected, as well as funds for a \$600 donation to the school for the purchase of classroom and summer reading books.

The school principal Mike Rieckenberg and social worker, Melissa Stalowski spoke at Adult Faith Formation via Zoom in April. The school is very grateful for this partnership with VOP.

We usually have some congregation members who volunteer in the classrooms at Noble. However, with COVID19, the classes did not meet in person for most of the school year. It is hoped that our volunteers can be involved again at the school in the 2021-2022 school year. Volunteers are greatly appreciated – please consider participating in the education of our community children in this way!

### **Loaves and Fishes –**

A weekly free community meal is served at Brunswick United Methodist Church, and Valley of Peace is committed to prepping and serving once per month. During the past year a small team from Brunswick has simply prepared take-out suppers, due to the pandemic, so our volunteers have not been needed until recently.

We currently are back on schedule, with two alternating work teams headed by Pat Hepner and Dave Gilyard, and Ken Schneider.

### **PRISM –**

VOP generally supports food drives and holiday toy drives for PRISM, our community social assistance organization. As with other activities, things changed during this past year. It was difficult to collect physical donations, as access to our building and to our Giving Center was limited. But with some drive-by donation events, as well as encouraging financial contributions, we were able to give some support that was much needed during this difficult year.

Many items of food and holiday gifts have been given throughout the year, as well as over \$13,000 in donations!

Thanks to Ken Schneider, who drove a few trunk loads of food to PRISM during the year.

### **Cherish All Children –**

As a founding church for this organization, VOP remains supportive and involved. Nancy Rogness, Kacey Laurent and Leslie Gilyard are organizers for us, including the task to match each child in our congregation with an adult who will pray for them daily.

Of course, the main fundraiser, our Cookie and Lefse Sale, was cancelled as we were not worshipping in person in December. However, throughout the year, \$2200 was given, as well as a \$1700 matching gift.

### **Reconciling in Christ –**

Shennon Black, Jim Jasper, Kari Roll and Bob Hoyt are key players with our status as a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

RIC was a topic at Adult Faith Formation in January, and almost \$250 was raised to support this organization that facilitates the expansion of RIC in our Lutheran congregations.

### **Global Missions –**

Pat Holmstrom serves as the Council member for Global Missions at VOP. She headed up some creative fundraising this year by organizing a Zoom Trivia event, at which \$1400 was raised.

### **Kid Pack –**

Kid Pack is a ministry that serves the children of Noble School during the school year and one month of summer school, by providing bags of food for the weekend. We partner with Valley Presbyterian and Unity Minneapolis to purchase the food items and pack the bags on a rotating basis.

During this year of online instead of in person school, normal food operations were suspended, in lieu of a contribution from VOP to the Sheridan Story. This organization took up some of the slack of local food operations, in providing meals for families with food insecurity.

We plan to get back to our packing of food bags for the children in the fall, when school resumes.

We were also pleased to receive a \$2000 grant from the Golden Valley Human Services Commission. These funds will supplement our food bags in the coming year.

Linda Franz leads this project and welcomes all volunteers!

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Paul Mikelson, Craig Franz and Rudy Martignacco head up our work with Habitat for Humanity.

Last fall we participated with a week of building activity, supplying 8 volunteers per day to help build a new home in North Minneapolis. A contribution of \$4500 was also given from VOP to Habitat.

The “build week” in 2021 is in July, and as of this writing, we are almost filled with volunteers and making progress towards our financial commitment.

### **Exodus Lending –**

Exodus Lending is a nonprofit helping Minneapolis families break their cycle of payday loan debt. During the past year 296 families were assisted by this program, which not only helps them financially, but offers financial counselling so they can break the cycle of debt and extremely high interest.

Nancy Rogness has served as our lead person for Exodus Lending.

You may have noticed through this story of giving by Valley of Peace the many opportunities for volunteerism and financial giving. **Please consider how you can be involved in and supportive of these organization that VOP has chosen to assist!**

Respectfully submitted by,  
Barb Mikelson  
Council Member



## Report from Stewardship Team

In March of 2020, the world changed as we knew it. Our sanctuary closed, our stores closed, our lives shut down. We discovered Zoom and figured out how to do worship on Facebook Live. I personally thought that, ok, all this would pass in a month, and we will be back in church, and life will return to “normal” again. Well, it is now 16 months later, and we are grateful we can worship together outside with masks or in cars. Hopefully, as life begins to open up, we can be back in the sanctuary and return to more normal church life.

Valley of Peace is blessed with members who knew that until church activities resumed, we needed to sustain our resources so that could be able to maintain the missions we support. Our fall 2020 Stewardship drive was based on the basic “Time, Talent and Treasure” focus. Jim Jasper, Barb Mikelson and Sara Blood each gave a Temple Talk on one of the core topics. More members moved to give electronically or Text-To-Give, which helped to stabilize the budget. We are a generous congregation who believes in the work and mission of Valley of Peace with their financial support, volunteering their time, and their talent.

In addition to the fall stewardship drive, we also held a “Balance the Budget” drive this past spring to decrease the year-end budget shortfall. We asked each giving family to increase their gift by pledging an additional \$25 per month. Some raised their monthly pledge, and others gave a special “one-time” gift to help reduce the deficit. This drive brought in a little more than \$10,000 in additional revenue. In addition, we invited two speakers from Thrivent to discuss how to prevent fraud and how to have the difficult conversation with aging parents about making sure plans are in place as their circumstances change.

In April, I turned over Stewardship to Sara Blood, who started her two-year term as Stewardship Chair in May. This summer, Sara and the team began meeting with other committees to review, learn from and update Stewardship roles and responsibilities based on church bylaws. They also started working on a stewardship calendar to outline monthly activities such as campaigns and providing timely Stewardship updates to the congregation. Thank you to Sara, Pat McGraw, Barb Hutson, Sandy Resick, and Pastor Ashley for your time and talent in serving on this committee.

Thank you to Valley of Peace for your continued support and generosity.

Diane Hinderlie

## **Report from World Missions Team**

The global Missions Team has focused on health this year. Thanks to the hard work of team members and the generous donations by the Congregation we accomplished the following:

An immediate \$500.00 donation to Global Health Ministries for Covid Relief.

A \$3,000/00 donation to Global Health Ministries to build a well in Africa. A great time was had by all players of the famous, (infamous?), game of Zoom Trivial Pursuit that made this donation possible! Adult Faith Formation offered an eye-opening Zoom slide show on how much perseverance and effort it takes to build even a simple well in areas of rural poverty.

A \$1,231.00 donation to Not for Sale, (a non-profit 501-c organization) to provide water filters to provide safe drinking water in Yoro, Honduras after the hurricane. A donation of used and purged cell phones with their chargers. was also made to allow families to have better access to resources and opportunities. Adult Faith Formation offered a well-attended Zoom meeting on the work of Not For Sale in Yoro, Honduras.

The team has also continued to explore our relationship with our sister church in Nigeria. Due to Covid 19 and other issues this will be a continuing work.

Without the help and generosity of the congregation, family, and friends these gifts would not have happened. We thank you for making it possible and being the active hands doing God's work to feed the hungry, take care of the sick, relieve the poor, and work toward a better world. Thank you.

Submitted by Patti Holmstrom

## **Report from Worship and Music Team**

The Worship and Music Team serves to bring together the Valley of Peace congregation and wider community for renewal in faith, strength, mission and purpose, by hearing the Word of the Lord, receiving the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and rejoicing in the gifts given by our Triune God.

Together with the pastoral and music staff, the team assumes responsibility for worship planning, preparation and participation, including altar care, worship arts, and a wide variety of music opportunities. We are incredibly blessed to have such a wonderful staff and gifted volunteers.

During the pandemic we learned how to worship in new ways. Our volunteers and staff shared their gifts with our community in creative ways. We are thankful for our Altar Care team for their oversight of communion elements, paraments, flowers, holiday plants and other worship needs. We are thankful for our Worship Arts team and all they do to decorate our church and keep the arts alive and thriving at Valley of Peace. We are appreciative for all the volunteers as well as those who have shared special music with us this year.

We are grateful for Leslie Gilyard as she served as our Volunteer Coordinator. Leslie organized, assigned, and notified volunteers for various Sunday morning tasks (communion assistants, readers, ushers, greeters, and refreshment coordinators). In June Leslie decided to step down after eight years of faithfully serving on the team.

In September a commitment was made to make available on-line the weekly bulletin. Our Fall theme was "VoP in Place". This included "Worship in Place" on Sundays led by Pastor Ashley Osborn, "Music in Place" on Wednesday evenings led by Zack Carlson and "Faith in Place" for our children and youth led by Emilie Moravec. In October we made the sanctuary available for those who wanted time for personal devotion. This was a scheduled and masked opportunity. On November 25, 2020 at 7pm we offered a time for on-line worship before our 7:15pm Thanksgiving Eve Service. It was an interactive service led by Pastor Ashley. In November we also began discussing what "in-person" worship would look like in accordance with our COVID-19 policy. Many ideas and logistics were shared.

"Those Who Dream" by A Sanctified Art was the theme chosen for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The first Sunday of Advent was November 29, 2020. A pre-recording was done by a VoP family each of the four Sundays of Advent. Each read a devotion and lit their own Advent candle. This was shared during on-line worship. On Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> the children and youth shared a recorded Christmas Program entitled "Do Not Be Afraid". It was an incredible undertaking for each family and was greatly appreciated by all who viewed it. A special thanks to Emilie Moravec for coordinating and editing such a beautiful story. The week of December 14<sup>th</sup> the Longest Night Service was made available on-line. Christmas Eve worship was held on Facebook Live on Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup> at 4pm with a fellowship time beginning at 3:30pm. We

were asked to light candles in our own homes as we viewed photos of members and their loved ones.

On Sunday January 17, 2021 we celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr by using resources from Church Anew. Reconciling In Christ (RIC) Sunday was held on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Resources from Reconciling Works were used for this service. Our Lenten season began on February 17<sup>th</sup> with Ash Wednesday on-line worship at 7pm. Lenten midweek worship with Holden Evening Prayer began February 24<sup>th</sup>. Beth Brandt and Zack Carlson recorded music to be used for these services.

Zack also began researching where the hand bells could be refurbished. He found a very reputable restorer in Custer, South Dakota "Ringing Restorations". Owner and restorer Monica McGowan was willing to do the much-needed work. In March Zack drove to South Dakota to deliver the bells for repair. In June, the refurbishment of the handbells was completed.

Holy Week began on Palm Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. The Worship Arts Team created a stunning Palm Branch display in the sanctuary. A twist on the annual Palm Sunday brunch took place. An inspired volunteer team created and distributed 72 bags for "Brunch-to-go". Maundy Thursday service at 7pm took place with the generous help of our Altar Care team as they stripped the altar in preparation for Good Friday. Our Wildfire Congregations pre-recorded our Good Friday worship service this year with a theme of stations of the cross. On Easter Sunday there were two opportunities for worship. Facebook Live Sunrise Service at 7am and 10:15am traditional service with the Children's Easter Pageant. A community butterfly art work decorated the sanctuary.

On April 18, 2021 we upgraded our on-line worship to Facebook live stream. An enormous thank you to Matt Dellwo for sharing his time and talent with Valley of Peace as we navigated new technology. The team worked very hard in April and May planning outdoor summer worship with the theme of "Fruits of the Spirit". There were many logistics to work out so that we could offer a safe place for all to worship. On Sunday May 30, 2021 we had our first in-person worship in fourteen months! Due to the pandemic and in keeping with our COVID-19 church policy the following steps were taken for outdoor worship.

- Masks were required for everyone ages 3 years and older
- Social distance of 6 feet was asked between families
- Ushers directed people where to park
- Ushers hand out all-inclusive bulletins
- Holy Communion elements are pre-filled & sealed elements of grape juice & gluten free wafer.
- Worship service is transmitted on FM radio for those who choose to remain in their vehicles
- Live stream service is available for those who choose to not worship in person
- Outdoor faith formation opportunity is available with resources before & during the service

- Restrooms are available in the church building for one masked person to use at a time
- A notice is in the bulletin each week if anyone would test positive for COVID-19 with steps to follow.

New Member Sunday was June 6, 2021. Five people joined Valley of Peace that day. After worship training took place for those volunteering with the technical aspects of worship, including live streaming.

Navigating how to live out our mission while living in the midst of a pandemic has been a challenge. We are grateful for our gifted staff, amazing volunteers and our accommodating Valley of Peace community. Each decision we make we do so with the reminder that we are an inclusive and welcoming community.

Worship & Music Team: Beth Brandt, Zack Carlson, Linda Franz, Leslie Gilyard, Pastor Ashley Osborn, Darcie Rodman, Barb Mikelson & Emilie Moravec

## Report from Worship Arts Team

The Valley of Peace Worship Arts committee has completed its fifth year of creative work for our church. Our goal is to explore all the possibilities of worship, art, visuals and creativity for our church spaces and for our congregation members.

- Throughout this past year, we have adapted to the worship needs for Valley of Peace, as we have continued to stream our worship services and, in the summer, to worship outdoors.  
Minimal **Advent and Christmas decoration** was done, with a focus on the altar area, which is the main area visible in our streamed services.  
The **Lent and Easter décor** also was mainly in the altar area.  
With **summer** outdoor worship, we used our rustic Lenten cross, draped with green for the church liturgical season. We tried also using two of our banners, but had some troubles with wind and rain!
- The congregational **art exhibit**, which was installed in the fall of 2020, focuses on the theme of “Church”. The exhibit has been in the Fireside Room and available for the very few people who have used the building this past year, due to the pandemic. As we anticipate returning to worship in the Sanctuary in the fall, we invite everyone to stop by the Fireside Room and to enjoy the creativity of our VOP members!
- Matt Dellwo, from our team, has been singularly instrumental in bringing VOP up to speed on **visual and audio technology**. We found that to continue to offer a quality worship experience, we needed a bit of equipment and expertise! Thanks to Matt, as well as Melissa Dellwo, Kelly and Shennon Black, and Chuck Rudolph for working on this project.
- Our group has off and on discussed the display of some additional Christian art that is either by artists of color or that depicts God/Jesus/Bible stories with people of a variety of ethnicities. The need for diverse art, as part of our welcome to everyone, seems even more important given the events of the past year impacting racial justice in our cities. As our team is soon able to meet again in person, it is hoped that this discussion can continue, hopefully resulting in the acquisition of art.
- We have worked with both the Worship and Music Committee, and the Altar Care team in our efforts this year, and appreciate their collaboration, as well as the support from Pastor Ashley. **Thank you to all on our team!!**

Our group consists of Ben Brandt, Anna Campbell, Kristy Collin, Melissa Dellwo, Matt Dellwo, Barb Mikelson, Emilie Moravec, Erin Voss and Dan Weatherman. **We would love to have more people to join our group! Please consider this ministry for our church, whether you need an outlet for your creative energies, or just like to help others make things look beautiful! Just talk with any of us for more information.**

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Mikelson

## **Report from COVID Task Force**

The Valley of Peace COVID Task Force has been meeting regularly since May 2020.

Much of our work has been focused on creating a thoughtful plan for caring for our church community and one another during the COVID pandemic. We continue to be guided by the mission of Valley of Peace, our Reconciling in Christ statement, the safety and well-being of our congregation and community, and our theology of the work of the Spirit in every part of our lives.

We closely follow information from the Minnesota Department of Health, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA.

We also remain flexible and open to the movement of the Spirit and needs in our church.

We were in level one of our COVID Response Plan until May 2021. This means that the church building was closed except for All God's Children Learning Center (AGCLC) remained open. AGCLC has remained open and operational because its services are deemed essential. The AGCLC Board has a plan and policy for its operations.

During the fall of 2020 the COVID Task Force continued to monitor COVID cases in the seven counties surrounding Valley of Peace. These counties include: Hennepin, Washington, Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey, Wright, and Scott. In September 2020 we communicated our plan with our building users. In November 2020 we met with one AA group and at that time decided that the increase in COVID cases made it unsafe for any groups who use our building to gather inside.

During the Fall of 2020 and Spring of 2021 we had several volunteers who worked closely with staff and leaders to help improve online worship and plan for long term live streaming needs. In particular, thank you to Matt Dellwo.

In March 2021 the COVID Team met to begin discussing needs for our community and worship ideas. At this time we moved forward recommending that we begin summer worship outside. Thank you to the Trust who purchased equipment for outdoor worship.

In May 2021 the COVID team decided to allow building users to use the building space if they desired and followed safety practices. We also met with staff to discuss needs and considerations for outdoor worship.

In June 2021 the COVID team decided that masks were no longer required for vaccinated people for outside worship.



In July 2021 a congregational survey was prepared for the congregation. This information will help the COVID Team and Council make decisions for fall worship and programming.

Thank you to the congregation for your communication, flexibility, and patience during this time. We are grateful for your understanding and partnership in this time of being church together.

Respectfully Submitted,

COVID Task Force

Pastor Ashley Osborn, Ruth Larson, Jim Jasper, Darcie Rodman, Paul Mikelson, Sally Daniels Herron, and Zack Carlson

## Report from Lower Level Task Force

When COVID-19 virtually shut down everything in March of 2020, no additional activity has taken place by the Task Force.

At the time of the shut-down, our Team had made an initial presentation to the Congregation Executive Team, which was well received. Our intent was then to present to the Congregation Council, and then COVID-19 hit and it never happened! It was felt not appropriate to pursue during the Pandemic.

A brief review ...

Priorities looked at ...

- Kitchen Renovation
- Adding an ADA Unisex compliant restroom to the lower level
- Fellowship Hall enhancements

We engaged the architectural firm Miller Dunwidde Architecture Inc. for a preliminary study phase.

Agreement with the architects outlined the following scope of work ...

- Meetings with the VoP Task Force 12/2020 thru 2/2021
- Develop electronic floorplan of lower level
- Develop level of magnitude cost estimate using floor plan graphics and materials narrative
- Deliverables include colored floor plan, colored imagery, materials narrative, cost estimate, in both physical and electronic format
- Participate in the project presentation at a Sunday Congregational meeting at VoP

Our next step is to reconvene our Task Force and meet with the architects for an update on project status and preliminary construction estimates.

We will plan to meet with the Congregation Executive Team and the VoP Congregation Council to present the final rendering/schematics and preliminary construction cost estimates.

With Council guidance and approval we would anticipate presenting the preliminary project plans to the Congregation later this Fall.

We thank you for your patience and stay tuned for further updates and developments.

Dave Gilyard, Convenor                      Team Members – Tom Clemens, Sally Daniels  
Herron, Pete Mikelson, Pr Ashley Osborn, Sten Pearson, and Dan Weatherman

## Report from Safety and Security Task Force

Task Force Member:

- Craig Franz VOP

The Task Force was formed in 2018 to investigate safety and security needs of Valley of Peace and All God's Children.

The following activities were undertaken in 2020 - 2021.

- The VOP Council & AGCLC asked the SSTF to have the inner sliding door system from 12/06/20 quote updated. Tom Gleason from ROY C Inc. updated the subject quote.
- On 4/13/21 AGCLC Board approved the updated quote and pledged \$12,000 to the project.
- The final cost of the project for the sliding door system amounted to \$9,537.00 plus the cost of an audio / visual system. The audio / visual system will be the responsibility of AGCLC with the help of SSTF Team.
- The VOP Council approved moving forward with the project at their Council Meeting in April 2021.
- Jim Jasper & Craig Franz will assist AGCLC and investigate the cost of the Visual / Audio system to complete the Sliding Door Security Door System.
- The next step in the process is to issue a PO to Roy C, Inc. to start installation of the inner sliding door system.

Respectfully Submitted, Craig Franz

## Report from Personnel Committee

The VOP Personnel Committee works to assure consistent, professional, and fair employment practices for our church staff members.

The committee includes elected members Tara Kuckkan and Sara Hoge, Pastor Ashley, and Council Past-President Tom Ewald. Membership is defined by VOP Bylaws. Meetings are typically held quarterly or as needed for urgent personnel concerns. Due to the pandemic, meetings were held only as relevant topics arose and took place remotely.

Discussion topics this year included:

- Supporting VOP staff through covid. Pastor Ashley and VOP staff were asked to lead and support the congregation during extraordinary circumstances, and the Personnel Committee wanted to be sure their needs were being met as well. This included encouraging staff to take time off, finding ways to support their training and use of new technology, and expressing the gratitude of the committee and the congregation.
- Staff annual reviews and how best to complete them when everyone's job duties were so different this past year.
- Tracking the use and availability of vacation/sick time.
- Bringing the VOP parental leave policy in line with our synod guidelines. A draft policy was created for submission to the Council for approval.
- Leave for other medical reasons. An interim policy was drafted for guidelines should the need for medical leave arise before a policy could be finalized. The committee is exploring options for providing short-term disability assistance, and will meet again to discuss options and make a recommendation.

The personnel committee wishes to express our appreciation to the staff of Valley of Peace for their willingness to adapt to the challenges of worshipping and ministering remotely over the past year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tara Kuckkan, Committee Chair

### **Report from Altar Care**

Due to COVID 19, there was no Altar Care activity this year.

Linda Franz, Chair

### **Report from Kid Pack**

Due to COVID 19, there was no Kid Pack this year. In the Fall, we applied for and received a grant from the city of Golden Valley and we donated some of our funds to The Food Group and Robbinsdale District 281 for their food programs that benefit 281 families.

Linda Franz, Coordinator

## Report from the Endowment and Memorial Trust

### **Members of the Committee**

Bob Hoyt - chair

Robert Gullick - investment officer

Christy Flikke - manages the grant requests

Mary Hovden – treasurer

Annett Balkenende – secretary

Jon Larson - communications director

Pastor Ashley - liaison to the Church Council

The value of the Valley of Peace Endowment and Memorial Trust as of December 31, 2020 was \$354,421. We use UBS as the manager of our investments.

This Trust was made possible by generous gifts over the years. The income from these investments provides the congregation with funds for items outside the regular budget. The principal stays in the trust and continues to grow. Valley of Peace is one of the few congregations with this type of financial arrangement.

The Trust is the focus for perpetual gifts and bequests. Donors are thereby assured that their gifts will continue to give as the principal is preserved and only the earnings from the trust will be expended, thus becoming “Living Memorials” or perpetual gifts. The trust receives gifts through memorials, cash donations, real estate, securities, wills, and bequests.

Despite its low profile, it is the intent of the trust to be a continuing extension of one’s stewardship, beyond the days of his or her life’s work. The principal never dies but continues to work into the future, in memory of the giver in the past. We encourage every member to consider gifts to the Trust in memory of loved ones and to consider a commitment to include the Trust in their wills. This is a great way to make a lasting gift of support to the ministry of Valley of Peace.

**Valley of Peace Endowment and Memorial Trust**  
**December 31, 2020**

**INCOME AND EXPENSE**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Contributions	\$ 1,065	\$ 10,025
Interest/Dividends	\$ 7,241	\$ 7,994
Market Value changes	\$ 33,540	\$ 35,454
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 41,846</b>	<b>\$ 53,473</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Grants approved from Trust	\$ 6,612	\$ 10,765
Investment Management Fees	\$ 1,209	\$ 3,308
Other Trust expenses	\$ 200	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 8,021</b>	<b>\$ 14,073</b>
<b>Net Increase (Decrease) to Trust</b>	<b>\$ 33,824</b>	<b>\$ 39,400</b>
<b>TRUST BALANCE</b>	<b>\$ 354,421</b>	<b>\$ 320,597</b>

**2020 Contributions:**

In Memory of Pauline

Johnson: Sandra  
& Kevin Olson  
Essentia Health Nurses, Doctors & Friends of Sandi Olson  
Our saviors Luth Church  
memorial Sue & Ossie  
Schock  
Mike & Jill  
Klapatch Roy &  
Nadine Berg Mitch  
& Sharon Cook  
Pete & Judy  
Olson Dick &  
kathy Anderson  
Barbara wojciak  
Marvin & Elaine Lofquist  
Rebecca Circle

In Memory of Daniel

Larson: Pat & Bob  
Hoyt AGCLC  
Board

Rebecca Circle

Bob Hoyt

**2020 Grants Approved from Trust:**

Chair Carts	\$	562
Habitat for Humanity	\$	1,000
All God's Children Security Door	\$	4,000
VOP Music from their designated funds	\$	700
VOP Youth from their designated funds	\$	350

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\$ 6,612



## Report from All God's Children Learning Center

The past year for AGCLC was a challenging one with the coronavirus and some unexpected staff changes. Many safety protocols which were started in March 2020 continue. To mitigate possible spread of the virus, children at the center stay with their own classroom throughout the day. All snacks and lunches are eaten in individual classrooms instead of the fellowship hall with other center children. This way exposure is more limited to the classroom versus the whole center. Remarkably at this point in the pandemic, AGCLC has had only two short-term shutdowns due to the virus.

AGCLC experienced another director change this past year. Former director Michelle Schumann moved on in March. Ashley Brown started as our new director on June 28. Ashley is a well-loved former teacher and assistant director at AGCLC and we are excited to welcome her back.

The finances for AGCLC look good. Enrollment at AGCLC is near capacity. Additionally, we have received state grants that have helped us weather shutdown costs as well as other additional pandemic costs. (As an example of these costs, when we shut down the center or individual rooms, no tuition is charged but we continue to pay staff.)

Here are a few other facility changes of note:

- A wall in the infant 1 room was removed to improve safety and supervision.
- There is new paint in most classrooms and some old furniture was replaced this past year.
- The inside lower level entry door will become a security door sometime this fall. Thanks to Craig Franz and team for sticking with this long term project through its various phases. Funding for the door comes from AGCLC budgeted funds, AGCLC/VOP fundraisers, and a donation from the VOP memorial trust.

I would like to extend my thanks to the wonderful staff at AGCLC who have been so professional and dependable through the many challenges that they have faced this past year. They are devoted to safe center operation and continuing to make the children's days both fun and educational. AGCLC remains a great place for children.

I would also like to thank the AGCLC board of directors and financial consultant, Mariana Duffney. The board continues to meet monthly dividing up various tasks between meetings with the goal of supporting teachers and families and continuing smooth operation of the center. Even with the pandemic challenges and staff changes, those goals have been met and we feel good about AGCLC's future.

Lastly, thank you to the congregation members of Valley of Peace for your dedication to AGCLC. Your support and prayers for the center and its families are much appreciated!

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Larson  
On behalf of the AGCLC board

AGCLC Board of Directors

Ruth Larson -Co-Chair/VOP Council President  
Jamie Williams- Co-Chair/AGCLC Parent  
Rich Higgins -Secretary/AGCLC Parent  
Judy Greeninger -Treasurer/VOP Member  
Mary Hovden-VOP Member  
Jim Jasper -VOP Member  
Shennon Black-VOP Member  
Geordie Diener -AGCLC Parent  
Marc Vacquier-AGCLC Parent

Mission Statement

All God's Children Learning Center extends the ministry of Valley of Peace Lutheran Church in offering families a loving, caring environment where their children can grow and learn, pray and worship.

Who are we?

All God's Children Learning Center (AGCLC) is an incorporated, non-profit, Early Childhood Education Program. We are licensed for 72 children by the Minnesota Department of Health and operated with Valley of Peace Lutheran Church. Our program was founded in 1997 by the members of Valley of Peace Lutheran Church. We are committed to teaching children about Jesus, the Gospel and Christian values.

## **Report from Bishop Ann Svennungsen, Minneapolis Area Synod**

God's grace, peace, and hope be with you through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In a normal year, I would use this report to highlight the many ways the Synod partners with your congregation to bring good news to your communities. 2020 was hardly a normal year.

Like your congregation, the synod needed to adapt quickly due to the threat of COVID-19, to cancel some programs, introduce new events, and modify most everything else. I have been amazed by the innovation and hard work of congregational leaders. I want – and encourage you as well – to speak a word of deep thanks to leaders for all that has been asked of them to hold our communities together and foster their flourishing.

Shortly after lockdown restrictions began in March, synod leaders led training sessions on online worship and pastoral care, as well as conversations on the question of Holy Communion as part of distance worship. In April, our Synod Treasurer and Secretary led two sessions on applying for PPP loans. In May, we were privileged to host Dr. Michael Osterholm for a presentation which drew 400 pastors, bishops, and leaders; as well as 100,000 viewers afterwards. We gave over \$46,000 in Imagination Grants to 25 congregations to strengthen their online worship presence. This fall, we gathered leaders for a well-received conversation on creative ways to celebrate Christmas. The synod staff provided worship services in May, July, and December, giving congregational leaders a much-needed respite.

Yes, 2020 was hardly a normal year. On May 25, 2020, the killing of George Floyd lifted the veil once again on the pandemic of systemic racism that infects our world. Churches near the killing and the uprising turned on a dime to address the immediate needs, supported by partner congregations throughout the synod. Clergy marched in silence led by AME Presiding Elder Stacy Smith. The Minnesota Council of Churches – which includes all six ELCA synods – voted unanimously to support a multi-year process “Dismantling the Structures and Repairing the Damage of Racism in Minnesota.” The synod's new racial justice web page ([mpls-synod.org/outreach/racial-justice](https://mpls-synod.org/outreach/racial-justice)) provides key information for congregations to deepen their work for justice, including the new Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement, led by Rev. Kelly Chatman.

In addition to these efforts, we continue our essential and ongoing work of supporting leaders and fostering congregational vitality. We are blessed with over 700 rostered leaders, 325 serving in calls and 377 retired. We work hard so the church has the loving, faithful, and theologically well-formed ministers it needs. In 2020, we supported 67 persons preparing to become deacons or pastors.

In September, we were honored to receive a Lilly Grant that will support congregational cohorts committed to deepening their faith and neighboring practices. This month, we welcome Rev. Norma Malfatti as Director of Evangelical Mission who will promote our work in starting new congregations and accompanying our strategic ministries.

Our monthly conference meetings and other synod gatherings have revealed a real hunger among leaders to stay connected, learn from each other, and discern best practices for ministry in these times. We are honored and humbled by the calling to serve as convener of such holy conversations.

It is the generosity of congregations like yours that make the synod's work possible. Thank you! We seek to be careful stewards of every gift. With the PPP loan, which we pray will be forgiven, we hope to end our FY2020 year budget without dipping deeply into reserves.

I conclude this annual report with a word of deep gratitude for the privilege of serving as your bishop. And, I look forward to January 2022, when we can once again worship and gather *in person* – with hugs and handshakes and singing.

Bishop Ann Svennungsen

## Report from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

Dear friends in Christ,

This year has been a challenging one! The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the church and society. We have had to shift the ways we engage in ministry from a focus on in-person worship and meetings to livestream worship, virtual meetings and gatherings in the parking lot. We have had to shift to teaching children at home and working from home. We have not been able to travel to see friends or relatives or to celebrate life events. This has also been a time to address economic and social justice issues, to shift our thinking and our way of life.

In times such as this, our baptism in Christ makes a difference and makes us different. Like Christians before us, we recall that God is faithful to God's promises and God's people. We see that God enables us to connect with one another even when we are separated. Shifts in the world invite us to be innovative in how we do God's work and reach out to all ages in making disciples. We see that God is at work not only in our buildings but beyond them as well. We have found new ways to serve our neighbors and reach those in need.

As we experience this time of uncertainty, we sense something new emerging. In many places there are new strategies and renewed energy for ministry, often generated by emerging leaders. We have developed a framework to build on, and now is the time to engage in hard work together. As you do in your congregation, we want our collaborative efforts to be both faithfully thoughtful and sustainable. We want to build up the body of Christ today and for the future.

Looking across the church, I am grateful for your generous giving of time, talents and resources. Yes, God does continue to bless us! God will provide both relief from life's struggles and hope for a stronger church, God's church. We do not need to know how the future will unfold. As members in the body of Christ, we need only trust that God is with us and will provide.

Building up the body of Christ together,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." —Ephesians 4:11-16*

## Membership Statistics Report

Baptized members, as of July 2021: 324

Confirmed members, as of July 2021: 265

Average Sunday worship attendance: *unknown as we worshipped primarily online*

### **Baptisms from August 2020 - July 2021:**

Jacob Thomas Florkowski

Henry Charles Overton

Mattis Paul Overton

### **Deaths from August 2020 – July 2021:**

Daniel Larson

Pauline Johnson

Donald Yanzer

Delores Runmark

William Halvorson

Donald Runmark

Barbara Nelson

### **New Members from August 2020 – July 2021:**

Cheri Haynes

Barry Terras

Erin Voss

Mark & Wendy Wersal

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Election of New Officers and Council Members

Appreciation of Outgoing Officers, Council, and Committee Members

Welcome to New Officers, Council, and Committee Members

Motion to adjourn