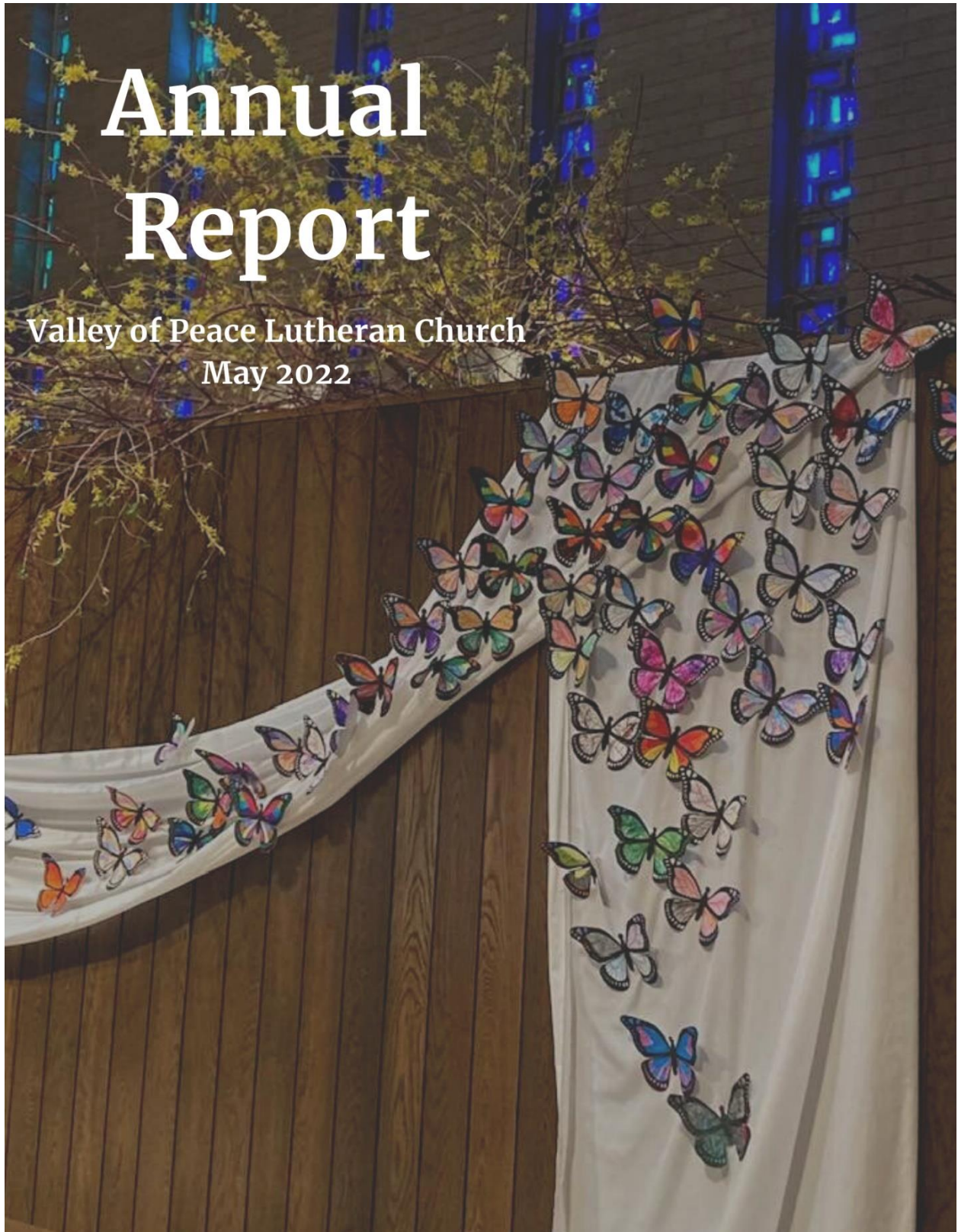


Annual Report

Valley of Peace Lutheran Church
May 2022



THE MINISTRY OF VALLEY OF PEACE

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Annual Report to the Congregation
May 2022

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

May 15, 2022

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MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 15, 2021 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 after the outdoors service and on-line using Zoom technology.

A quorum being present, Congregational President Ruth Larson called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m.

Pastor Ashley led us in prayer.

Secretary's Report. President Ruth Larson assisted the Secretary by reading the minutes from the August 16, 2020 Annual Meeting and the January 31, 2021 Semi-Annual Meeting. Pat Hoyt moved to approve the minutes and Shennon Black seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report. Judy Greeninger assisted the Treasurer by giving an update on the results of the 2021 \$385K budget, including that the Federal stimulus loan of has been forgiven. As of July 31, 2021, contributions are about \$20,000 under budget and expenses are at budget. VOP bank accounts have a balance of \$982,000 due to the recent gift. Ruth opened it up to questions and comments. There were none.

Presidents Report. Ruth thanked the Staff for their flexible and creative ministry, and thanked all of the volunteers for their work.

Pastor's Report. Pastor observed how VOP pulled together with new approaches during the unprecedented Covid challenges. She also noted that Rally Sunday will be inside with masks and will be available on-line.

Social Justice update – Shennon Black reported that the goal of the Social Justice Team is for VOP to work through and approve a Racial Justice Statement for the church. Opportunities are coming for members to discuss and provide input on a draft.

Election of New Officers and Council Members

Jim Crofoot noted that there are two open positions and invited interested members to contact him about serving. He then read aloud the following ballot of officers and council members.

President Elect Tara Kuckkan	1 Year Term (President Year 2)
Secretary Lauren Pockl	2 Year Term (reelect 2nd Term option)
Stewardship Sara Blood	2 Year Term (reelect 2nd Term option)
Children, Youth & Family Kelsey Pierson	2 Year Term - 2 nd Term
Hospitality Julia Madison	2 Year Term – 2 nd Term
Parish Life Open	2 Year Term (reelect 2nd Term option)
Church Council Young Adult Caitlin Enright	1 Year Term
Pastoral Review Shennon Black	2 Year Term (1 term)
Audit Team Pat Hepner	3 Year Term (reelect 2nd Term option)
Financial Secretary Pam Syverson	3 Year Term (reelect 2nd Term option)

Since the positions are not contested, Darcie Rodman made a motion to elect the slate by acclamation which was seconded by Dee Kendell and was passed unanimously. Thereafter, Ruth acknowledged the service of individuals who have completed their terms on Council.

Pastor Ashley then led the Installment of the new members.

Ruth turned the meeting over to newly elected President Jim Crofoot who received a motion from Steve Collin and a second from Kelly Black to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed without objection and the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Secretary Steve Hoge

MINUTES OF JANUARY 30, 2022 SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

Due to continuing concerns regarding the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held in a hybrid format, with members of the congregation attending both in-person and virtually, via the Zoom platform.

Attendance:

In-Person: 50 members

Online: 17 members

Noting that there was a quorum present, President Jim Crofoot called the meeting to order at 11:05 am.

The meeting opened with Pastor Ashley Osborn leading us in prayer.

Jim Crofoot noted that the purpose of the congregational meeting is to vote on the 2022 budget for Valley of Peace. Jim further stated that Nancy and Tom Clemens and family have left Valley of Peace, as Nancy was the Treasurer of the Church Council, and that Judy Greeninger is now the Treasurer of the council for the remainder of the term.

Judy Greeninger was then invited forward to address the congregation by providing financial updates and to present the 2022 budget.

Mortgage

Judy first shared information about the mortgage. There was a communication sent to members of the congregation in mid-January with a recommendation that was approved by the finance team and church council to use the Dorothy Sanford funds to pay off the mortgage. This recommendation was made because for several years, VoP has had a deficit of at least \$30,000 going into fall months. We usually need to issue a “close the gap” appeal and oftentimes we still end the year with a deficit. To avoid having a deficit, we need to either increase income or reduce expenses, or a combination of the two. VoP does not have many options to reduce expenses because the majority of costs are fixed (e.g., utilities, salaries). However, one of our larger expenses is the mortgage, which costs approximately \$30,000 per year.

If the mortgage were paid off, we would make significant progress in having a more balanced budget going forward, where hopefully our income would cover our expenses and VoP would not have a large deficit. In terms of funding the mortgage payoff, VoP has received over \$800,000 so far from the Dorothy Sanford estate, and will be receiving an additional \$400,000 once the estate is finalized. The mortgage payoff is approximately \$172,000. We are also recommending a reimbursement of the January/February mortgage payments of \$5,000; therefore, the total payoff cost would be approximately \$177,000.

Steve Hoge moved for approval to pay off the mortgage; Christy Flikke seconded. All in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

Rooftop Units

Judy next shared information regarding expenses related to the replacement of the rooftop units. There was an expense of over \$36,000 to replace the rooftop units that supply A/C and secondary heating to All God's Children, and is also the only heat to the Fellowship Hall. While the Church Constitution states that the congregation needs to approve that cost because it was over five percent of the annual budget, the Church Council approved the repair due to the urgency and impact to All God's Children (i.e., they had to close early several days due to lack of heat). Judy stated that the Church Council is recommending that the rooftop units be paid out of the Dorothy Sanford proceeds.

Ruth Larson moved for approval; seconded by Christy Flikke. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed.

2021 Budget

Judy then addressed the 2021 budget results. Member contributions increased by 5.7%, though VoP did end the year with a \$34,600 deficit. Most expenses were in line with the budget. In 2021, VoP had approximately \$15,000 in boiler repair costs that were paid out of the operations budget; some grounds maintenance bills from 2020 were paid in 2021; and insurance and electricity were over budget. Overall, even though we ended the year with a deficit, VoP is in great shape financially, with over \$900,000 at the end of December between the bank and the money invested in Thrivent funds.

Proposed 2022 Budget

Judy addressed the proposed budget for 2022, which is an 8.3% decrease from 2021 actuals. This budget assumes that the mortgage payoff would be approved, so

\$30,000 of the decrease is due to the mortgage. Additionally, the costs that were shared between All God's Children and VoP were reevaluated, which resulted in \$5,000 of costs shifting from VoP to All God's Children. The building repair budget was also decreased from 2021 actuals as there were large bills in 2021 that we do not anticipate occurring in 2022. The proposed budget also includes a three percent merit increase for VoP staff.

The total budget for 2022 is \$365,222, which also means that VoP's income needs to be \$365,222. Judy stated that if contributions in 2022 are at least the same as 2021, and if VoP does not have any large surprise expenses, VoP is optimistic that we will have a balanced budget (i.e., no deficit).

Pat Hepner moved to approve the 2022 budget; seconded by Sally Daniels Herron. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed.

Stewardship Team

Sara Blood presented an update from the Stewardship Team. Sara stated that the VoP congregation hit it out of the park and thanked the congregation for the support of VoP this year. She thanked the congregation for the creativity and other gifts given to VoP this year and stated that we are hoping that we do not have to do a "Mind the Gap" campaign this year or others. Stewardship is continuing to provide monthly updates about budgeting and spending.

Racial Justice Team

Ken Schneider began by introducing the Racial Justice Team. The team followed a rigorous process and researched how other churches were approaching racial justice issues. In creating a racial justice statement, many iterations of the proposed draft were developed and considered. The first draft was provided to council and the Racial Justice Team met with council to address questions and feedback regarding the draft statement. The next round of feedback was provided by individuals and committees at VoP to gather insight into the statement. After another round of editing, the Racial Justice Statement was then resubmitted to the council and it was asked if it could be brought before the congregation for a vote.

Jim called for a vote for approval of the racial justice statement, which was taken by paper ballot. The ballot stated:

I support the adoption of the Racial Justice Statement as a guiding commitment for Valley of Peace Lutheran Church.

Paper ballots were collected.

Diane Hinderlie moved to approve voting on the Racial Justice statement; Steve Hoge seconded. All in favor; none opposed. Votes were taken by paper ballots.

Adjournment

Steve Hoge moved to adjourn; seconded by Jim Jasper. Meeting was adjourned at 11:28 am.

REPORT FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL PRESIDENT

Looking back on my term as Council President, I think I envisioned it feeling differently than it would have compared to other years, but even with the differences we continued to grow as a congregation. With Covid playing an integral part in everything that we did and how we needed to do things to keep everyone safe, Valley of Peace was able to work through them and continue to be an active community. I would like to thank our dedicated staff who worked to continue making services and programs available – Pastor Ashley, Sally, Emilie, Zack, and Beth – you are very appreciated for everything that you bring to Valley of Peace!

One of the benefits as worshipping in person became unsafe, Valley of Peace staff and volunteers worked to put our services online. This can help our congregation grow in so many ways. Those that are homebound can now attend church and the snowbirds & travelers can stay connected while away. Potential new members can see what we offer, and we can expand our reach including younger people who search for churches online in even greater numbers.

Another measure of growth from this year was when we approved the Racial Justice Statement as a congregation. We had a team that worked for a year and a half to craft a statement that we can now use to guide us forward in addressing racial injustices in our congregation. The Racial Justice Statement along with being a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation makes me very proud to be member of Valley of Peace.

Looking forward, there is even more growth coming here to Valley of Peace. This year a new committee was created to have us look at using alternative energy here at Valley of Peace. They are looking at possibly using solar, wind or even geothermal energy instead of relying on fossil fuel energy like we are today, so we can be better stewards to our community and to our planet. Additionally, the Lower-Level Task Force has started to meet again, we will be talking as a congregation to see how we can improve our building which will help us continue to grow in the community. I see a lot of positives in our future here at Valley of Peace.

Our last Council President closed last year's report with a statement that I am going to past forward again – 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.

Thank You for the opportunity to serve as Valley of Peace Council President,

Jim Crofoot

REPORT FROM THE PASTOR

Just a few weeks ago on Easter Sunday, every worshiper received a rock with a unique and handwritten expression of the word 'joy' (if you did not receive a rock, please let me know). The intent of these rocks was to capture how joy is present in unexpected places in the wilderness seasons of our lives.

As I hold my joy rock close, I remember hearing once how the word 'joy' can stand for Jesus, Others, and Yourself. These words are an initiation to reflect on the priorities of our life. How do our lives reflect the love of Jesus and the love we offer to others and ourselves?

In many ways, this is the central question asked by every church and it is one that I reflect on often for our beloved Valley of Peace Lutheran Church. How are we as a community of faith proclaiming the love of Jesus and sharing that love with others and ourselves?

First and foremost, I am proud that in all we do we proclaim the love of God through Jesus Christ. This is the very foundation of who we are as a church. When we gather we gather in prayer reminding ourselves of God's presence and guidance. When we worship we worship around words of scripture and sacraments reminding us of the grace and forgiveness of God. When we move outside of our church building we are equipped to have practices of faith that shape words and actions as disciples of God working for healing, justice, and peace.

We know that Jesus, and the Triune God, are the foundation of who we are and the heart of our proclamation as a church declaring God's love for all people. And so what does it look like to proclaim the love of God for others and for ourselves? How do we do this as a community of faith made up of individual members but untied as a greater community of members in the body of Christ?

This has always been part of our discernment as a church, caring for individuals and caring for the greater community of members. But I believe that in many ways this has been made more difficult by the realities of the COVID pandemic. How do we both care for the whole community of faith and also acknowledge that individual members are making different decisions based on health and comfort levels? How do we hold up what may be needed for the whole community is different than what individuals need, or vice versa?

Our church prides itself on being a welcoming and inclusive space for all, and the reality of the pandemic is that no matter what our COVID policy and practices are, there are always some who will not feel welcome in our space. These are the concerns that weigh on my heart and that I turn to God in prayer for and invite you to reflect on.

How do we acknowledge that as a church community we need worship, we need gatherings, we need building care, and financial stability, we need the routines and the rituals of church. I affirm that as a community of members there are needs that we need to address as a community.

And in the same breath, I also acknowledge that the needs are great for individual members as well. We have some in our congregation whose daily lives have not been impacted in the last two years. And then there are many households who are still very much dealing with the realities of the pandemic, whether that be job loss, relationship transition, mental health care, or questions of faith, just to name a few. I recognize that we have many households who are holding so much in their lives right now that it is hard for them to be physically present for the church.

So what does this mean for Valley of Peace? It means that we are in a season of discernment. It means that we are in a season of trying new things and longing for the traditions that ground us. It means that we are in a balancing act of making opportunities available for community members and also reaching out to individuals. Valley of Peace has always been a church that cares deeply about people, and this may mean that the care looks different in this season.

I wish that I had the answers, as I think many church leaders do because our congregation is not alone in these wonderings. But what I do know is that we have hope. Hope in a God who proclaims new life and hope in our community members. Valley of Peace has always been good at relationships and so this work of relationships continues, both in community and for individuals.

As you read reports this year you will see how every leader and every team at Valley of Peace has intentionally cared for the wider community of members and individual members.

Thank you to our church council members who have worked with volunteers and teams in living out our mission as the church. The church council has had to make some difficult decisions this year and I am grateful for the prayerful and faithful ways they have entered into these conversations. Thank you to the Valley of Peace staff who have worked hard to both dream of new ministries and find ways to continue with beloved and valued ministries. Thank you to all of the volunteers who have stepped up in new and existing ways to help with worship, technology, building care and

maintenance, and working with our collaborative Wildfire Internship Program, and thank you to all who serve in the Synod and our greater community.

I know that this is not an easy time to be the church, and we all hold cares and concerns for the community and for individual members. I appreciate the ways that so many members at Valley of Peace have shared of themselves. Thank you for your partnership, leadership, and prayers.

As your pastor, my prayer is that you both feel cared for as an individual and that you know how loved and valued you are in this community of faith, no matter how/when/where you are present. As I think again to the joy rocks and the words Jesus, others, and yourself, I am struck by how Jesus is again always the first, the beginning of our ministry and faith. Our faith in Jesus transforms our individual lives and relationships. As a church I know we will continue to discern the best ways to be the church right now, the best ways to proclaim the love of God to all people, the best ways to give care and support and to receive care and support. My hope is that we will not ignore the wilderness that we have been in and continue to be in as a church. This is a time of new learnings where we discover more about who God is and who we are. May we make space to share these learnings and to share the ways joy shows up for us as we discover more about Jesus' love and the love that we receive as individuals and share in this community of faith.

Thank you for being part of this wilderness journey.

Peace be with you,

Pastor Ashley

REPORT FROM INTERN PASTOR RAUL GARCIA III AND INTERNSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In September 2021 Valley of Peace was approached by Luther Seminary to consider supporting a full-time one-year intern with other Wildfire Congregations. The Valley of Peace Church Council prayerfully discerned this invitation and approved moving forward with a collaborative internship in November 2021. Valley of Peace has partnered with First Lutheran Church of Crystal in Brooklyn Park and Elim Lutheran Church in Robbinsdale to sponsor Intern Pastor Raul Garcia III. Intern Pastor Raul started his internship in early December 2021 and will complete the internship in late November 2022. Valley of Peace financially supported the internship with money from the Dorothy Sanford Memorial Fund. Intern Pastor Raul is also being supported by congregational prayers and a joint internship committee. Internship committee members from Valley of Peace include Diane Hinderlie and Dan Weatherman.

The following are reflections on the internship by Intern Pastor Raul Garcia III.

I can't believe that it has been close to 6 months that I have been on internship. I have learned so much from all three pastors that I have been serving with side by side. I have attended church council, arts and music, worship and music meetings and other ministry meetings within the three congregations. I have learned so much from Valley of Peace's congregation, Church council and from the pastoral leadership of Pastor Ashley. Pastor Ashley's leadership in helping lead Valley of Peace has been authentic, affirming, and phenomenal. These are some of the things I have learned from Pastor Ashley so far but looking forward to many more opportunities: leading worship, preaching, planning worship, planning Advent and Lent seasons, church council discernments, music and arts planning just to name a few opportunities that I have been a part.

As you know I have been sharing my time here at Valley of Peace and two other congregations. Just to give you an idea this is what my schedule looks like on Sundays for the next few weeks.

April 24 - Valley of Peace - Preach
May 1 - Elim Lutheran - assist in worship
May 8 - Elim Lutheran - Preach
May 15 - First Lutheran - assist in worship
May 22 - First Lutheran - Preach

May 29 - Valley of Peace - assist in worship
June 5 - Valley of Peace - Preach

During the week, Monday - Friday, I am either at one church for a day or sometimes all three in one day for various events like staff meetings, bible studies, church council meetings, etc...

I am excited for what lies ahead and how much more I can learn from Pastor Ashley and from Valley of Peace. Y'all are helping shape me into a pastoral leader that will be able to lead a congregation after internship. Thank you so much from deep in my heart.

Respectfully submitted,

Raul Garcia III, Intern Pastor
Elim Lutheran, Robbinsdale
First Lutheran of Crystal, Brooklyn Park
Valley of Peace, Golden Valley

Reflections on the Internship Committee

The Internship Committee, which consisted of two representatives from all three congregations, meets every once a month along with Intern Pastor Raul. Diane Hinderlie and Dan Weatherman are the VoP representatives. At these meetings, they discuss any issues or difficulties that Raul was experiencing as well as positive aspects of the internship. Having had a fair amount of experience on a church staff, he indicated that he was comfortable navigating his duties although keeping track of schedules and differences between services (such as when to stand versus sit, for instance) keeps him on his toes. Diane and Dan have been, and still are, recruiting volunteers to take sermon notes (just like confirmation instruction, except criticism of the delivery is welcome!) in order to give Raul feedback. Please let them know if you, too, are interested in reliving your sermon note-taking years on his on May 29 and June 5 sermons.

It has been a joy and a blessing to serve on the internship committee for Pastor Raul. He is enthusiastic, open to taking on new responsibility with joy and enthusiasm. He already has several years of working in a church as a Children Youth and Family Director but has not worked at that next level of administration. We meet monthly as a group and observe Pastor Raul when he is at Valley of Peace every six

weeks as he rotates through the three churches he serves. He has also been working closely with Pastor Ashley in honing his ministerial skills. Blessings to you, Pastor Raul.

In addition to the more formal aspects of the committee, it has been great fun to get to know people from other local Lutheran churches and a little bit about how things vary from one to the other. Likewise, it has been good to get to know more about Intern Pastor Raul; his strong commitment to the church, love of coaching women's soccer, and dedication to his family.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Hinderlie and Dan Weatherman

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

The 2021 expense budget approved by the congregation was \$385,714. We ended the year with a \$34,614 deficit.

Income for the year totaled \$363,757. Member contributions were up 5.7% compared to 2020. Especially with COVID and all the changes that have happened over the last two years, we are grateful for all the gifts shared with the church.

Expenses for the year totaled \$398,371. Most expenses were in line with the budget. We did have about \$15k of boiler repair costs, and there were some grounds maintenance bills from 2020 that hit 2021. Insurance and electricity were also over what was budgeted.

In the dedicated accounts, we spent over \$2,500 in dishwasher repairs from the Building Project Fund account. Out of the Memorials account, we spent over \$6,300 for streaming technology, \$900 for the Tom Untiedt memorial table, \$1,100 for computer equipment for the church office, and \$3,000 in organ repairs.

Also at the end of 2021, Valley of Peace had over \$800k invested with Thrivent from the Dorothy Sanford estate.

Many thanks to the finance team, which includes Dave Gilyard, Paul Mikelson, Chrys Johnson, Pam Syverson, Pastor Ashley, and Mariana Duffney, for their guidance and expertise. And an extra special thanks to Mariana who pays our bills, keeps accurate financial records, and overall takes care of the day-to-day finances for Valley of Peace.

Judy Greeninger, 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, 2021 through December 31, 2021

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 discrepancies.

Due to the Covid Pandemic, the Audit Team was unable to review the 2020 books. The 2021 books were audited, and we feel confident that the books and records of the congregation,

youth checking account and trust account continue to be materially accurate in all respects.

Due to the pandemic, the 2020 Audit Team was unable to resolve the minor recommendations from the prior year listed below. The Audit Team has resolved these issues during the 2021 audit. All requested documentation was provided to the audit team and the trust was audited and appeared to be materially accurate.

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, Becca Anderson, Pat Hepner

TEAM REPORTS

REPORT FROM CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY TEAM

This program year provided more opportunities to re-envision, re-create, re-invent, and re-imagine children, youth, and family ministry at Valley of Peace. All of our programs this year were offered hybrid, both in person and online simultaneously, to allow families to participate in a way that was comfortable for them as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact our community. 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.

Some highlights from this year in CYF programming include:

- Relationships with All God's Children Learning Center - Being back in the office allowed Pastor Ashley and Emilie Moravec to re-build relationships with All God's Children Learning Center families, students, and staff. Emilie and Pastor Ashley visited the classrooms weekly with bible stories and lessons and offered monthly Children's Church. Families were also invited to participate in Valley of Peace caregiver conversations over Zoom multiple times this year as well as other VoP events.
- Outdoor Summer Worship Activities - While we weren't able to offer Vacation Bible School in the summer of 2021, we did offer weekly activities prior to and during outdoor worship for our children related to the Fruit of the Spirit theme.
- "Let's Talk Race and Inclusion" Book Club - This was a new program for Valley of Peace. This family book club met monthly throughout the summer and fall (in-person or online) with curated books and activities that met children developmentally and fostered important conversations about race and inclusion through a faith lens. Valley of Peace gifted each family the books needed for participation from local booksellers and Kelsey Pierson created age-specific bookmarks with scripture and activities printed on them to accompany each book.
- Pop up Christmas Program - We gathered the morning of Sunday, December 12th in worship as a community of believers and made the Christmas story come to life. Anyone present during worship was invited forward to act out the Christmas story while it is told through a narrator. This intergenerational program was a hit and our Children's Faith Formation students worked hard prior to the program creating set pieces, writing the script, and creating bulletin images.

- Confirmation- Valley of Peace Jr. High confirmation students joined Pastor Ashley and Emilie Moravec on Wednesday evenings throughout the program year in person and online. This year we delved into the biblical narrative from Creation to the early church through storytelling, creative reflection, and dialogue. We also provided service opportunities, mentor conversations, and Wildfire connection throughout the year.
- Youth Group - The Valley of Peace Youth Group, 8th-12th grade, gathered for multiple game nights and fire pit nights this year. These gatherings provided a monthly opportunity to check in with students and continue to build relationships. ELCA National Youth Gathering scheduled for Minneapolis in the summer of 2022 was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Emilie worked with the CYF Team to come up with alternative programming for these students.

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

June 2021

- **Summer Faith Formation:** Children's Faith Formation preschool and elementary school children, gathered prior (and during) 9:30 am worship outside for informal faith formation activities, games, and crafts. Emilie provided weekly opportunities for students to connect briefly throughout the summer.
- **Strong Community Bingo** This intergenerational BINGO event helped us identify strengths in our own community and allowed us to get outside and see our community through a new lens.

August 2021

- The CYF Team hosted a Noble School Supply Drive...In Movie in August. We collected school supplies for Noble school and enjoyed a movie on the front lawn with popcorn and candy.

September 2021: Children's Faith Formation, Confirmation, and Valley of Peace Youth Group were up and running as of Rally Sunday, September 12, 2021

- **Blessing of the Backpacks** - We celebrated and prayed for our Kindergarten students and all returning to school in worship. Students received backpacks tags and a devotional letter prior to worship.

October 2021:

- **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** The CYF Team hosted the 2nd annual 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, answered riddles at each stop, and collected prizes throughout the hunt. The hunt ended at Valley of Peace around the fire pits for a hymn sign.
- **Movie Night** The CYF team hosted the second movie night of the fall. We watched “Coco” and collected winter clothes for Noble school.

December 2021:

- **Pop- Up Christmas Pageant** We gathered the morning of Sunday, December 12th in worship as a community of believers and made the Christmas story come to life. Anyone present during worship was invited forward to act out the Christmas story while it is told through a narrator. Children’s Faith formation created the sets, bulletin images, and helped to write the script.

January 2022:

- **3rd Grade Bibles** In this Milestone event, parents and congregation members as well as children were brought together around God’s Word as they read and studied the Bible. 3rd graders received their new Bibles in worship on Sunday, January 9, 2022.

February 2022:

- **Prayer Milestone** We celebrated a Prayer Milestone event with 1st and 4th grade families on Sunday, February 13th. 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.

March 2022

- **Intergenerational Lenten Art and Prayer Event** Pastor Ashley and Emilie Moravec hosted an intergenerational art and prayer event before worship on Sunday, March 6th, 2022 as we began our Lenten journey this year. This event included the opportunity to create a visual piece of art, pray together, hear poetry, and reflect on God’s call in the wilderness.

April 2022:

- **Holy Week Hunt** The CYF Team hosted a Holy Week egg hunt in conjunction with the Palm Sunday brunch following worship. Participants hunted for eggs and collected images from the Holy Week story to redeem a special prize bag. It was a lovely community event.

- **First Communion** We celebrated First Communion with six students this Maundy Thursday. Families baked their own bread at home and came forward individually during the service to receive the sacrament.

May 2022:

- **Confirmation Spring Projects** All confirmation students will be asked to complete an End of the Year Project. This year, students have been studying the biblical narrative from Creation to the early church. Each student will be asked to depict or display their understanding of how God is working in the world. These projects will be put together and shared with the Valley of Peace community in mid May.
- **Welcoming Young Children Milestone** On Sunday, May 29th Emilie Moravec will host an event especially for young children and their families. We will be kicking off the “Diapers and Donuts” new summer ministry program and also introducing our young children and the adults who care for them, to worship and the worship space. Children will have the opportunity to explore the sanctuary and surrounding church areas on their level and even crawl and jump around in their own time and space.

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

Emilie Moravec, CYF Director

Kelsey Pierson, CYF Chair

REPORT FROM ADULT FAITH FORMATION TEAM

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good, and acceptable, and perfect. –Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Themes of reconnection, renewal, and transformation were foremost in Adult Faith Formation this year as we continued to discern how to live as people of faith in a tumultuous world and a post-pandemic, “new normal.” Some groups remained online while others returned to in-person gatherings; however, it quickly became apparent that a hybrid approach was needed to be inclusive of all members of our VoP family. After a few months of trial and error with old technology in Sunday Adult Forum, we approached the church council to fund a new tv, laptop, camera, and speaker to improve the experience for those participating online. Thanks to generous donations, we now use a new setup that allows for in-person and online participants to interact more freely in learning and discussion.

Adult Forum

Our Sunday Adult Forum learning community followed a 4-week rotation including Bible study, “Reconnect” – a topic focusing on reconnecting with one another and our own thoughts and feelings, Racial Justice, and “Potluck” – a variety of topics. Highlights from each of these included the following:

Bible Study

- Ann Dybvig, Ruth and Jon Larson, Paul Mikelson, Bob Hoyt, and Wes Syverson led us through the six-session Bible Study series, *Transformed Community: Freed and Empowered for Radical Welcome*.
- Pastor Ashley, in a study of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, explored how themes of joy and suffering provide us with a new perspective and enable us to rejoice, even in difficult circumstances.

Reconnect

- Nancy Rogness and Shennon Black facilitated a four-week series of small group discussions around the theme, “I’ve Been Meaning to Ask...” Intended to help us reconnect after months of pandemic social isolation, these discussions explored where we come from, the pain we carry, what we need, and how we move forward.
- Nancy Rogness guided us in conversation and healing exercises from the book, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, to help us improve awareness and self-regulation of our own mind-body connection and the initial cognitive, emotional, and physical reactions we may have toward others.

Racial Justice

- Vivian Jenkins Nelson joined us to share life stories and experiences growing up as a person of color in the Lutheran church.
- Joan Miltenberger from the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition shared an update on the organization’s interfaith work to promote racial and economic justice in Minnesota.
- Cate Duin from Lutheran Social Services Refugee Services informed us on current refugee resettlement in Minnesota and the effort to welcome Afghan evacuees.
- Bethany Ringdal, a missionary with the International Association for Refugees, educated us on the global crisis of asylum seekers, the local ministry of Jonathan House, and offered ways we can welcome and walk in solidarity with our displaced neighbors.

- Ann Dybvig led a two-session series about the history of redlining and restrictive real estate covenants in the Twin Cities, the consequences of those policies that still plague us today, and the efforts of the Just Deeds and Mapping Prejudice projects.
- Golden Valley Mayor Shep Harris joined us to talk about the city's recent apology for past police discrimination, and current efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Joe Davis shared his spoken word poetry and thoughts on how people of faith can embody God's grace, seek out learning opportunities, and transform our relationships to promote racial healing.

Potluck

- Shennon Black walked us through hundreds of years of church history in a simplified and understandable version.
- Skip Humphrey and Bob Hoyt led a two-session series on the environmental harm of plastics and how we can reduce our dependence on plastics to be faithful stewards of our planet.
- Peter Wattson explained the reapportionment and redistricting process and what that means for Minnesota, consequently helping us to be citizens who are better-informed of our democratic process.

Small Group Bible Study

In addition to Sunday Adult Forum, there were three, small-group Bible study options for women and men this year. Coordinated by Elaine Lofquist, Rebecca's Circle resumed meeting in-person (with an option to participate online). The monthly meetings offered an opportunity for women to socially reconnect and followed the Bible study offered in *Gather* magazine. Exploring the Word Bible study, led twice per month by Catherine Martignacco, continued meeting online and concluded its four-year, deep dive into the book of Luke where participants spent time reflecting on how the stories in Luke are still relevant in our lives today. Finally, Jon Larson started a new, monthly men's Bible study group, following Tony Dungy's *Quiet Strength* and *Dare to be Uncommon* Bible studies.

VoP Book Club

(summary respectfully submitted by Nancy Rogness)

Our Book Club read the following books this year:

- *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, by Isabel Wilkerson

- *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, by Resmaa Menakem
- *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, by Charles Mann
- *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, by Dina Nayeri
- *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, by James W. Loewen

We continued to meet via Zoom, which turned out to be a nice option for many folks. Our books are selected by the group each year, and this year we attempted to broaden our understanding of history, the world we inhabit, and how we can apply what we learn as disciples of Christ.

As I conclude this two-year term as the chair of the Adult Faith Formation committee, I thank God for all the members of this committee who shared the responsibility to welcome guest speakers, lead sessions, set up technology, advertise, and invite participants to join us. I thank God also for this VoP community of believers who are committed to lifelong learning, growing in relationship with God, and living out faith as disciples in mission to the world. May God bless, keep, renew, and transform you as we continue in this faith-filled journey together.

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. As things start to get back to a new normal we continue to look at how things can be changed/rearranged to make our Narthex more accommodating as potential new members join/visit our church. We will also start to have monthly meetings in person once again.

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, Chrys Johnson, Margaret Wallace, 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

While most of the year was spent worshipping online we did resume in person worship on April 3rd. Property did not have a lot to do in regards to the church areas but was very busy with repairs in the lower level areas. Due to Covid and just not a real need to meet in person the Property and Fix It Crew continued to schedule repairs and keep in touch by emails and phones.

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

1. Required safety and licensing inspections all met with no issues causing delays in issuance of necessary operating paperwork for either VoP or AGC. City of Golden Valley is requiring a grease trap to be installed in the kitchen but no final decisions made at this time as to timing or cost. VoP now need to do a short elevator test run each month that Jim will complete when in counting.
2. Tom Untied's family paid for and outside accessible picnic table and VoP will be adding a concrete slab to create a patio area on the north side of the lower level just off the parking lot. We will also have them pour a slab for a bike rack at the same time to be located off the sidewalk by the dumpster area.
3. Security doors were installed in the lower entrance that can be locked and opened remotely in response to safety concerns for the building. We are still waiting on a camera and doorbell system to be added.
4. Solar Committee was created after request by Joe C and currently led by Dan W. They are looking at all aspects of alternative energy as we look to the future needs of the building.
5. Boiler continues to require ongoing repairs and we priced out a new one but are holding off until we look at solar options.

6. Both rooftop heating/air conditioning units were replaced under an emergency basis as we had gas leaks and the units were so old they could not be replaced. We also had updates to the heating system in the office and Fireside Room as several control valves needed to be replaced.
7. We continued to have a roof leak in the choir loft area but ideas that came from our Boy Scoutmaster lead us to replace the gaskets and sealing around the two roof access doors and that appears to have been the solution. Thanks to Paul M for doing the work on that project.
8. We have one bid and Jim to get more for extensive tree trimming and removal around the entire building. We will also look at planting new trees after this work is completed.
9. Due to continued false fire alarm signals we moved our lines from an analog to a computer-based connection and will be able to eliminate two phone lines we paid for.
10. Repairs for AGC included sinks, cabinets, window screens, water fountain, door closures, and pest control.

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; **Steve Collin, Pat McGraw** and the Fix It Crew: **Craig Franz, Dave Gilyard, Paul Mikelson, Wes Severson, Joe Cherra, and Sten Pearson**

Jim Jasper, Chair ~ April 20, 2022

REPORT FROM RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM

The Racial Justice Team continued to meet regularly in 2021. Our main priority was introducing the Racial Justice Statement and inviting feedback from the congregation. We had several conversations with teams and groups at Valley of Peace and scheduled conversations with members after worship. These were fruitful opportunities to engage with members about our shared work for racial equity. At the Semi-Annual Meeting on January 30, 2022, a vote was taken by ballot to approve the Racial Justice Statement for Valley of Peace. The statement was approved by a 97% vote. The statement is included in this report.

Our team continues to meet to discuss opportunities and ways to support the work of this statement for congregation members, teams, and as a whole community of faith. With the statement our goal is to become an Anti-Racist Church that reflects the understanding of Biblical theology that God's love is for all creation and God's expectation of the human behavior is to be loving people in all we do.

With the understanding that the sin of racism is deeply rooted in our society and in white privilege, we at VOP intend to continue practicing behaviors of inclusivity. We know that there is much for us to do as a congregation to truly become anti-racist, and we will be working with all of our committees and groups to witness for justice in our church and in our community.

Thank you to Valley of Peace members for your engagement and support of this work.

Respectfully submitted,

Members of the Racial Justice Team (Pastor Ashley Osborn, Shennon Black, Ann Dybvig, Bob Hoyt, Jim Jasper, Barb Mikelson, Nancy Rogness, Ken Schneider)

REPORT FROM SOCIAL MINISTRY TEAM

Social Ministry is 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 continued limitations of the COVID19 pandemic.

It is important to note, that every one of our Mission of the Month initiatives supports, nourishes, assists and enhances the lives of individuals of color and of many cultures in our community. Our commitment to Racial Justice at work!

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.

- School supply drive in August 2021 138 school items collected
Financial gifts used to purchase \$800 in Target gift cards for the school social worker to use for student and family needs
- Golden Valley Human Services grant... successful application was made by Sara

Blood, Pastor Ashley and Barb Mikelson for a \$2000 grant for Nobel. The funds were used to purchase classroom furniture to enhance reading and activity areas

- Winter clothing drive in October Many items donated as well as funds to purchase nearly \$950 of new winter gear
- Book drive in April 2022..... As of this writing, we anticipate another successful book drive, to allow every child at Noble to go home with a book for summer reading

We usually have some congregation members who volunteer in the classrooms at Noble. With COVID levels easing up, volunteers have started in again with classroom support. These 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 assisting once per month.

We currently are back on schedule, with two alternating work teams headed by Pat

Hepner and Dave Gilyard, and Ken Schneider. Donations of \$300 also supported this work.

PRISM

VOP supports food drives and holiday toy drives for PRISM, our community social assistance organization.

- All year long Food items are collected in our Giving Center for the PRISM food shelf
- Toy and Gift Drive in December..... Many toys and \$245 in funds sent to PRISM
- Minnesota Food Share Food, as well as \$250 in funds sent to PRISM
(month of March)

Taste of the Burbs in May 2022..... VOP signed on as an event sponsor to support this fundraiser

Thanks to Ken and Lynn Schneider, who drove a many car loads of food to PRISM during the year!

Cherish All Children

As a founding church for this organization, VOP remains supportive and involved in keeping children safe from exploitation.

- Cookie and Lefse Sale in December - \$995 was raised for CAC

Reconciling in Christ

Shennon Black, Jim Jasper, Kari Roll and Bob Hoyt are key players with our status as a Reconciling in Christ congregation. We remain grateful for this status of true welcome for all.

Global Missions

Pat Holmstrom serves as the Council member for Global Missions at VOP.

- A congregation ask in August resulted in nearly \$1400 to help cover university fees for our Nigerian Lutheran contact pastor

Every Meal

Every Meal (formerly Kid Pack) a ministry that serves the children of Noble School by providing bags of food for the weekend. We partner with Valley Presbyterian and Unity Minneapolis in our support of Noble with this program.

In January 2022..... Contribution of \$2000 to the program sent from VOP

Fall 2022..... Anticipate a return to volunteerism for the food packing process

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.

VoP Build Week in July, 2021.....	We supplied at least 8 volunteers per day
Fundraising goal of \$4500	We raised \$5135 to support the Habitat work and mission

Exodus Lending

Exodus Lending is a nonprofit helping Minneapolis families break their cycle of payday loan debt. During the past year nearly 300 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.

- VoP contributions to this mission were \$85

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

What a tale of generosity and commitment to social justice and equity at Valley of Peace! In addition to piles of winter clothing, school supplies, books and groceries, our congregation members have made possible **\$14,160 in contributions** to our Mission of the Month organizations, from June 2021 to April 2022! In this time of pandemic, we have not flagged in our efforts to help others in our community and around the world

You may have noticed throughout 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

This year, the Stewardship Team was blessed with a Council-approved and congregation-wide vote to use a portion of the Dorothy Sanford Fund funds to pay off the church's mortgage and balance the budget. For the first time in many years, the church did not need to hold a "Mind the Gap" campaign to raise funds to meet budget commitments. Thanks be to God!

In Fall 2021, we held our first-ever online stewardship drive that included mailing and emailing members to consider pledges for 2022. In addition, we also encouraged members to sign up for recurring donations. While turnout for Stewardship Drives is historically low at Valley of Peace, we knew that the church also experiences an exceptionally high open rate for emails. We received one printed response to our drive and 16 online responses.

We've also started a regular newsletter column, "I've Been Meaning to Ask," where we interview different Teams on how members' times, talents, and treasures are used in church and the greater community.

Sara also submitted and secured a \$2,000 grant from the Golden Valley Human Services Commission to go to Noble Elementary School to buy and replace comfy seating options for students. An Open Doors Grant submitted by Sara to the ELCA for a community labyrinth was not accepted.

Thank you to Pat McGraw, Barb Hutson, Pastor Ashley, and Intern Pastor Raoul for your time and talent in serving on this committee.

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

Sara N. Blood

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 wellattended 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, altar care, worship arts, and a wide variety of music opportunities. We are incredibly blessed to have such a wonderful staff and gifted volunteers.

As the pandemic changed so also, we adapted in how we worship. Our volunteers and staff graciously continued to share 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 grateful 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 of all the volunteers that share their gifts and talents with our community.

Worship was held outdoors from May 30 through September 5, 2021, online worship also continued. On days of inclement weather only online worship was offered. This was an evolving time as we learned what worked and what was not meeting our needs as a worshipping community.

A great deal of time was spent preparing for our first indoor worship during the pandemic. In preparation for this we followed the recommendations of the CDC, MN Department of Health, the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA and our COVID Task Force. On Rally Sunday, September 12, we had our first indoor worship service in 18 months! Due to the pandemic and in keeping with the above-mentioned recommendations the following steps were taken for indoor worship.

- the service was shortened to 30 minutes;
- masks were required for all persons two years and older;
- hymns were sung with fewer verses;
- the choir sang while masked;
- Holy Communion was offered once a month using prefilled communion elements containing a gluten-free wafer and grape juice;
- offering plates were placed at entrance to sanctuary, rather than being passed;
- social distancing by family units was recommended with ushers offering guidance where needed; and
- a notice would be placed in the bulletin each week in the event that anyone tested positive for COVID-19, with steps to follow.

Many changes took place in worship this past year. On November 28, we began singing all, (up to four), verses of our two hymns. Beginning December 5, in-person worshippers came forward to receive the prefilled communion elements from the pastor and then returned to their seats to partake of them. The offering plate was passed within the congregation on Christmas Eve and Easter services. On March 6, we moved to an hour-long service which included sung liturgy, Faith Moment (formerly Children's message) and a closing hymn. As a result of the Mask Survey taken on line by the congregation and the vote taken by council, in response to the survey results, it was decided that masks would be recommended, not required, for worship at Valley of Peace. This took effect on Sunday, April 3.

The "I've Been Meaning to Ask" resource, from A Sanctified Art, worship series began Rally Sunday and was used through Christ the King Sunday. On September 19 a Healing service was held outdoors at 6:30pm. Blessing of the Animals also took place outdoors on October 3, at 1pm. Another outdoor opportunity was the Hymn Sing on October 29, at 6:30pm. Fire pits and snacks were provided. Folks were encouraged to bring their own beverage.

Confirmation service for six youth was held on Reformation Sunday October 31, at the 10:15am service. November 7 was All Saints' Sunday. The Valley Carillon shared their

music using the refurbished bells. The 7pm Thanksgiving Eve Service on November 24, was held in the fellowship hall and purchased slices of pie were shared with those in attendance.

In December we welcomed our new Pastoral Intern, Raul Garcia III. This Internship is shared with two other Wildfire Congregations, Elim Lutheran Church in Robbinsdale and First Lutheran Church of Crystal. Intern Raul rotates between congregations on Sunday mornings and for various activities at each congregation. Valley of Peace members Diane Hinderlie and Dan Weatherman serve on the Internship Committee with the other two congregations.

The Advent 2021 theme focused on “Hope, Love, Joy & Peace”. On December 12, at the 10:15am service Children’s “Pop-Up” Pageant took place. It included many willing volunteers who enthusiastically acted out the story of Jesus’ birth. Special thanks to Emilie Moravec for her creativity and flexibility in bringing this worship opportunity to us. The following Sunday the musical service included a cantata with the Chancel Choir, Valley Carillon and guest vocalists. Special thanks to Zack Carlson and Beth Brandt for the gifts they shared and to all the ringers and singers! The Longest Night Service was December 21, at 7pm. This moving service gave participants the opportunity to be silent, sing, light candles, write and reflect. Christmas Eve was celebrated at 4pm. Glow sticks shaped like candles were available for the children to use during the singing of Silent Night. Adults used battery operated tea lights which were loaned to us from Buffalo High School. During communion there was an opportunity to light individual candles at the front of the sanctuary.

The season of Lent began with Ash Wednesday on March 2, 2022. Times for personal reflection were provided throughout the day and at a 7pm worship service. These included the imposition of ashes. Lenten theme, “Wilderness”, from a Sanctified Art focused on Wilderness texts each Sunday. Wednesday worship was held each week 6:45-7:30pm. The first part of worship offered a time for congregation members to answer questions of faith, followed by Holden Evening Prayer. A Lenten intergenerational event was offered on Sunday, March 6, at 9am.

On Palm Sunday April 10, a Midrash reading provided various perspectives from people Jesus encountered during his last week of life. After worship the children hunted for Easter eggs outdoors while adults and older youth participated in an informal brunch. The Maundy Thursday service, 7pm April 14, included the celebration of First Communion. Each of the families celebrating first communion baked their own communion bread and partook of it during communion. The rest of the congregation used the prefilled elements. The service concluded with the stripping of the altar. Our Good Friday Service, 7pm April 15, included a processional of the cross, music from the Chancel Choir and Valley Carillon and time to place a rock at the foot of the cross.

Easter offered two worship services: a meditative sunrise service at 7am, and traditional 10:15am service with the procession of the cross and butterfly banners. The rocks from

Good Friday were transformed with the word “Joy” and available for all. Special music was provided by the Chancel Choir, Valley Carillon and guest instrumentalists.

The 2022 Worship budget received \$3,414. We are grateful for the increase in our budget. This past year’s generous donations have helped us be able to do the following:

- refurbish the bells;
- fix the organ computer and speakers;
- purchase 50 new chairs for the choir room and elsewhere;
- purchase new music for our now smaller musical ensembles: Valley Carillon, Chancel Choir, and Joyful Noise;
- return to in-person worship while maintaining an online worship option;
- hold summer worship services outside;
- bring in additional musicians for special services such as the Christmas cantata and Easter; and
- replace the ground isolator for the sanctuary microphones to better ensure online worship quality.

Navigating how to live out our mission while living in the midst of an ever-changing 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, Pastoral Intern Raul Garcia, Pat Hoyt, Barb Mikelson, Emilie Moravec, Pastor Ashley Osborn & Darcie Rodman.

REPORT FROM WORSHIP ARTS TEAM

The Valley of Peace Worship Arts committee has completed its sixth 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.
For the major church seasons and Sundays, we focused our sanctuary enhancement on larger, visible things that could be seen online, as well as in person.
With **summer** outdoor worship, we used our rustic Lenten cross, draped with green for the church liturgical season.

- The congregational **art installation**, which was put in place in February 2022, focuses on the theme of images of Jesus from a global viewpoint. We have about 15 prints of artworks from around the world, along with two original artworks from our church collection. Each artist has depicted Jesus through the lens of their own culture and identity. It is eye-opening to view the holiness of Jesus, no matter the surroundings, the skin tone or the clothing in all of the images. Please stop by the Fireside Room and enjoy this collection 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, Caitlin Enright, 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

TASK FORCE REPORTS

REPORT FROM COVID TASK FORCE

The Valley of Peace COVID Task Force was formed in May 2020 and has been meeting regularly to make recommendations to the Valley of Peace Church Council for policies and safety recommendations for our church in response to the COVID pandemic. We are 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.

In September 2021 the congregation moved to indoor worship and gatherings. This decision was made based on congregational feedback from a July 2021 survey. Masks were required for all people and there were no coffee hours or congregational meals. We continued to use hybrid meetings as a way for people to gather in-person and online for small groups and worship services. The Task Force did not meet on a regular basis during the fall of 2021, but only as needed.

The Task Force continued to closely follow information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Minneapolis Area Synod the ELCA. The Task Force listened to feedback from members and input from neighboring churches. The Task Force was available to assist staff and teams in making decisions for their areas of ministry.

In February 2022, the Task Force invited congregation members to share feedback on the requirement of masks for gatherings at Valley of Peace. Based on this feedback, the Task Force and the Church Council recommended that masks no longer be required but recommended for our church. With this change, we also started to share in congregational meals and coffee hours. Members of the church council will follow the CDC Community Levels tool to help decide when masks will be recommended or required at Valley of Peace. The Task Force members decided in March 2022 that they will only meet on an as-needed basis moving forward.

Respectfully submitted, COVID Task Force Members: Pastor Ashley Osborn, Zack Carlson, Jim Crofoot, Sally Daniels Herron, Jim Jasper, Ruth Larson, Paul Mikelson, and Darcie Rodman

REPORT FROM LOWER LEVEL TASK FORCE

In March 2020, our Team made an initial presentation of suggested Lower Level Improvements to the Congregation Executive Team which was well received. Our intent at the time was to then present to the Council. COVID-19 hit and that presentation never occurred! It was felt that it was not an appropriate time to pursue a capital improvement project during the Pandemic, so the Project was placed on hold.

A number of COVID-19 restrictions have now been lifted, and our Team recently presented the Project to the Congregation Executive Team (a different team than was in place in 2020). The significant change since the presentation in 2020 was a pricing increase due to inflation, labor costs, and supply availability.

With about 1/3 of the Congregation Council changing due to the elections occurring at the Annual Meeting (May 2022), it was decided not to present the Project at this time. After the newly elected council and executive team members have been seated, we will meet with them to present the renderings/schematics with preliminary construction cost estimates in June or July.

With guidance from the Council, the Team, along with the Architects, plan to make an initial presentation of the schematics, project plans and costs to the congregation in the Fall 2022.

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 12/2019 thru 2/2020
- 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

- Architect to participate in the project presentation at a Sunday Meeting of the Congregation

We thank you for your patience and look forward to moving ahead this year on preliminary plans for suggested improvements to VoP's Lower Level.

Many thanks for the Lower Level Improvement Team members – Tom Clemens, Sally Daniels Herron, Pete Mikelson, Pr Ashley Osborn, Sten Pearson, and Dan Weatherman who have faithfully served this past year.

Dave Gilyard, Convenor

STANDING COMMITTEES

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 Ruth Larson. Membership is defined by VoP Bylaws. Due to the pandemic, meetings have been held only as relevant topics arose and took place remotely. The committee has only met once since the last congregational meeting, but did have some additional discussion via email.

Discussion topics included:

- Continuing to support VOP staff through covid.
- Staff annual reviews and how best to complete them.
- Finalizing staff medical leave policy.
- Quarantine and masking policies for staff who have been exposed to or tested positive for covid-19.
- Short-term disability coverage – unfortunately, we were unable to find an insurer who was willing to write a policy for church staff, due to the size of the staff. We checked with other congregations, and that doesn't seem to be something that other congregations are able to offer either.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Kuckkan, Committee Chair

REPORT FROM ALTAR CARE

Altar Care was able to resume some of our preparation for worship this year with in-person worship. We are each serving a month lighting candles and setting out flowers. We are only having communion on the first Sunday of the month and we are using the pre-filled juice cups with gluten-free wafers. We continue to use Best Wishes florists for our Sunday flowers.

Linda Franz, Chair

REPORT FROM EVERY MEAL (FORMERLY KID PACK)

During COVID, District 281 and Noble School went to distance learning and we were unable to deliver Kid Packs. At this time, a Minneapolis group called Every Meal was able to step in and deliver food supplies to the district. When in-person learning resumed, it was decided that Noble School would continue with the Every Meal program because it offered culturally diverse meal choices to the families. Now, Valley of Peace and our partner churches participate at Noble by handing out the Every Meal bags to students on Fridays and giving monetary donations to Every Meal to defray their costs for Noble families.

Noble School and Every Meal continue to be an important ministry for Valley of Peace.

Linda Franz, Coordinator

INTEGRATED AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

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
Pastor Ashley - liaison to the Church Council

The Valley of Peace Endowment and Memorial Trust balance as of December 31, 2021 was \$377,956.

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 prime role of the trust is as a source of regular and increasing funds for Christian out-reach projects not possible through normal stewardship channels. These can include items beyond the operational budget of this congregation, social outreach, scholarship for Christian education, special foreign, or domestic mission work.

Along with our normal duties, the trust committee spent a lot of time this year discussing and meeting with a lawyer about our original documents and bylaws.

Valley of Peace Endowment and Memorial Trust
December 31, 2021

INCOME AND EXPENSE

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Income		
Contributions	\$1,545	\$1,065
Interest/Dividends	\$10,788	\$7,241
Market Value changes	\$24,162	\$33,540
Total Income	<u>\$36,495</u>	<u>\$41,846</u>
Expenses		
Grants approved from Trust	\$9,940	\$6,612
Investment Management Fees	\$175	\$1,209
Other Trust expenses	\$2,846	\$200
Total Expenses	<u>\$12,960</u>	<u>\$8,021</u>
Net Increase (Decrease) to Trust	<u>\$23,535</u>	<u>\$33,824</u>
TRUST BALANCE	<u>\$377,956</u>	<u>\$354,421</u>

December 31, 2021

2021 Contributions:

Rebecca Circle - Memory of Delores
Runmark
Robert & Patricia Hoyt - Memory of Bill
Halverson
Mightycause Charitable Foundation (Give
MN)

2021 Grants Approved from Trust:

Gazebo for Youth	\$350
Speakers for Outdoor Worship	\$2,248
Habitat For Humanity	\$1,000
Choir Chairs	\$2,891
Outside Security Door	\$2,000
VOP Music from their designated funds	\$1,100
VOP Youth from their designated funds	\$350

\$9,940

REPORT FROM ALL GOD'S CHILDREN LEARNING CENTER

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.

AGCLC Board of Directors

Jamie Williams- Board Chair & AGC Parent
Geordie Diener- Secretary & AGC Parent
Judy Greeninger- Treasurer & VOP Member
Jim Jasper- VOP Member
Mary Hovden- VOP Member
Marc Vacquier- AGC Parent
Tara Kuckkan- VOP Member
Jonathan Osborn- VOP Member & AGC Parent

A word from the AGCLC Director, Ashley Brown-

As many of you may know, 2021 was filled with questions about how to move safely from the pandemic to a new normal. With the board's guidance, feedback from medical professionals in our community, and through listening to the concerns and frustrations of AGC parents and staff, I believe we have come to a safe, new normal. We are no longer requiring masks of parents (although many still choose to wear one), we have required vaccination of our staff, many of our students who are old enough have received the vaccine, we are following MNDH guidelines for when to get tested and how we should be tested, and we have made sure that expectations and rules have been clearly communicated with the AGC community. I have to say, although it was a difficult period to navigate, I believe AGC has done well.

In other news, staffing and being able to get new employees has been incredibly difficult this past year. Throughout being short staffed however, I am incredibly proud to say that AGC staff have been so flexible and hard-working. We managed to implement a new curriculum, a new conference system, and go through another round of Parent Aware rating. All of the effort of the staff this year has put us in a great position to get 3 or 4 star

rated next year for Parent Aware. I am looking forward to seeing AGC continue to grow and excel in our education and teaching standards.

In regards to the AGC facility, I would like to thank Jim Jasper and the rest of the VOP maintenance team for being so willing and able to help AGC whenever we would have building or maintenance issues. It is a huge blessing to be able to have someone here to go to when issues arise. I am also happy to say that the new doors were installed, and we love them! Our love for them will only continue to increase I am sure when the security system and cameras are installed which should be happening very soon.

In regards to the financial aspect of AGC, we are in a very healthy spot. We are near capacity right now with 66 children out of 72, and we will be even closer to capacity by the end of June. I am so excited for what 2022 and 2023 will hold!

Signed,

Ashley Brown
Director

MINNEAPOLIS AREA SYNOD AND CHURCHWIDE

REPORT FROM BISHOP ANN SVENNUNGSSEN, MINNEAPOLIS AREA SYNOD

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

I begin by sharing my profound gratitude to you – for your faithfulness, perseverance, and compassion revealed in countless ways during this global pandemic, now nearing the start of its third year.

As I reflect on the ministry of our synod in 2021, I am surprised to discover a number of “firsts” – something I did not expect in a pandemic year. In 2021:

- We received an unprecedented \$285,000 gift to provide educational debt relief to synod **rostered** leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Currently, 12 percent of rostered leaders serving synod congregations are BIPOC, a sign of growth which will be strengthened by this gift.
- With our first ever million-dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment, we called Nick Tangen and Maya Bryant to lead our [Faith and Neighboring Practices](#) program, currently working with 13 congregations.
- In October, we set a goal to raise \$500,000 in three months to partner with our global companion synod in launching the first ever [Lutheran University in Nigeria](#). As of this writing, we have \$298,000 in gifts, \$56,000 in pledges, and are awaiting word about a significant gift from the ELCA World Hunger Program!
- We rejoiced with Alleluia! Lutheran Church in St. Michael as they dedicated their brand-new church building. We have celebrated many remodeling projects in our synod, this was the first completely new structure built in more than ten years.
- We welcomed Holy Cross Lutheran Church, originally a Missouri Synod congregation, into the synod.
- Led by VP Felecia Boone and Eric Howard, a task force has been working to apply a racial equity lens to the way our synod distributes funds and utilizes resources.
- We helped launch the [Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement](#) (CLNE) led by Rev. Kelly Chatman. CLNE convened a virtual prayer tent for 77 straight days during the trial of Derek Chauvin. Now, they host “Come Together,” a virtual conversation on the third Thursday evening of each month.
- We held our first [Zoom Synod Assembly](#) with speakers Dr. Drew Hart and Michael Osterholm; offered our first online [Toolkit](#) (to be expanded in 2022); and provided four online worship services to provide respite and build unity across the synod.

- Listening to the weariness of our rostered leaders, we cancelled Bishop’s Theological Conference for the first time and organized the whole staff in a caring process for our leaders, “Tending Weary Souls.”
- We are preparing to host the [ELCA Youth Gathering](#) – the first time it’s ever been held in Minneapolis, July 21-28, 2022.

Though a list of “firsts” can make for an interesting annual report, the ministries that continue day-in and day-out are the work that sustains. We are blessed with over 675 rostered leaders, 307 serving in calls and 370 retired or without call. In 2021, we supported persons preparing to become deacons or pastors. We work hard so the church has the loving, faithful, and theologically well-formed ministers it needs.

Our monthly conference meetings and other synod gatherings continue to reveal a real hunger for leaders to stay connected and discern best practices for ministry in these times. We are honored and humbled by our 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.

A year of firsts. More importantly, we gather around the unique, first-ever, Word made flesh – the Christmas miracle of God becoming human for us and our salvation. And even more, this Word made flesh abides with us – through all our firsts and lasts and everything in between.

With a grateful heart,

Bishop Ann Svennungsen

REPORT FROM BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

The last year has been one of adapting and learning. In many places we have seen vibrant and vital ministry spring forth from changes made due to the pandemic. Digital worship opportunities have introduced to our congregations people who may never have walked into one of our buildings. Many congregations have found new ways to invite people to share their generosity through online giving. And many ministries have found just how vital they are as they continue to serve alongside people in their communities.

The first chapter of James, verse 17, reminds us that “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” Yes, this has been a season of change, but Scripture also reminds us that we serve a generous, steadfast God.

While we stay rooted in God’s enduring, unchanging promise, God also gives us the gifts of creativity and learning. Across all three expressions of the church we have used those gifts to serve God, love our neighbor and share the good news of Jesus Christ. In this time of change, we have opened our arms wider to meet people where they are, living into the reality that we are not defined or confined by the four walls of our buildings.

Through all this, I am so grateful for your generous sharing of creativity, time, talents and resources. All good gifts do come from God, and we are called to share and use those gifts. We have and will continue to answer that call. There is still much change and learning to come, but God’s steadfast love energizes us for the work God is still doing in the world through this church.

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

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS REPORT

Baptized Members, as of May 2022: 286

Confirmed Members, as of May 2022: 237

Average Sunday worship attendance (in person): 53

Average Sunday worship attendance on Facebook Live: 16

Baptized from July 2021-May 2022

Finley Ann Welty

Robin John Welty

Dane Vincent O'Connor

Deaths from July 2021-May 2022

Janice Yanzer

Robert Sigurd Ruud

Winnifred Christenson

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