

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF HIGHLAND**



**ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
REPORT OF 2020**

A REVIEW OF THE PAST 12 MONTHS

INCLUDING A VISION FOR 2021 AND BEYOND

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEADERSHIP

REPORT OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PASTOR
REPORT OF THE ORGANIST AND DIRECTOR OF CHOIRS
REPORT OF ST. JOHN'S PRESCHOOL
REPORT OF MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY/STATISTICAL SUMMARY

STANDING COMMITTEES

REPORT OF THE EVANGELISM COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRIES COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE CEMETERY TRUST COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

INTERNAL COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

REPORT OF THE PRISCILLA GUILD
REPORT OF THE SOMEWHERE INBETWEENER'S
REPORT OF THE GARDENING GROUP
REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OUTREACH
REPORT OF CUMBERLAND KIDS
REPORT OF W.E.L.C.A.
- WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
REPORT OF HEALTHY START CAFÉ/HAVING FUN STAYING YOUNG
REPORT OF THE YOUNG FAMILIES
REPORT OF THE CHURCH LIBRARY

ADHOC COMMITTEES

REPORT OF GRACE'S CLOSET AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

VISION STATEMENT FOR ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND

LEADERSHIP

REPORT OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Erik Roth, President

Members: Pastor Kari Smail, Senior Pastor, Kim Gettemy, Vice President, Emmett Brown, treasurer, Amy Kennedy, secretary, Abby Bauer, Joumana Driscoll, Jim Robertson, John Angel, Denise Rudar, Ellen Skirpan, Scott Celin, Jamie Davis.

The beginning of a new year is a time of reflection on the past year and on the year to come.

In the year that has passed, we have been visited by sadness, loss, and disappointment. Following our call as servants of the world, we cannot help but see the conditions of the world: separation from friends and family, and loss of life, health, and livelihood.

Even so, through the gifts of generosity, persistence, creativity, time, and talent, our members have adapted and continued the work of the church:

- Worship has been adapted in online, outdoors, and in-person forms, thanks to our church musicians and technicians both in front of the camera and behind the scenes.
- Through contactless delivery, the ministries of Blessed Bundles, Healthy Pantry Bags, Christmas Gifts for Children continued St. John's tradition of charity.
- Through our Major Maintenance fund and our Preschool, St. John's was able to adapt the building for safer use with the Needlepoint Bi-Polar Ionization system.
- Through the generosity of memorial gifts replaced the projector and screen setup to continue to provide clear instruction and videos from volunteers to in-person worshipers.
- The St. John's Pre-school, through the efforts of Jenn Bolinda, the staff and board of the preschool, and St. John's maintenance staff, have adapted the programming with distancing, masks, and frequent cleaning to allow for safer in-person learning.
- St. John's sewing ministry meets the needs of current times by sewing masks.
- Using the available streaming and meeting tools and curricula, Pastor Smail and our Christian Education volunteers coordinated and taught Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, and Bible studies.
- Through virtual meeting tools, our Visioning Team came to express a better understanding of our church and its mission, members of our church enjoyed times of fellowship, and our church council continued to meet, discuss, and decide.
- Through the generous giving through a combination of digital and traditional means by our members, the church has met and maintained its financial obligations and commitments, including the continued reduction of the remaining balance of our building loan.

In all these ways and more, the members of St. John's have met these difficult and uncertain times with the spirit of service to our neighbors and stewardship of the gifts entrusted to us.

As true as it has ever been, the ministry of St. John's continues, and adapts to the needs of the community and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over, but our call and dedication to God's work will never be over.

continued...

We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord;
Trusting in his holy word, He's never failed us yet.
Oh, can't turn around, We've come this far by faith.
-Albert A. Goodson

The thanks of St. John's Church Council go to members and friends of St. John's for your patience, perseverance and kind attention.

Yours in Christ,
Erik Roth, Church Council President

REPORT OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

Pastor Kari Smail

*"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."
Jeremiah 29:11*

This annual report for our congregation, as well as every congregation, will be one for the history books, because it has been a year like no other. What began like any other year, quickly changed into something none of us would have ever imagined. And yet, here we are today, reflecting on this past year as a congregation. While it has not been easy, God journeyed with us through it all, we journeyed together as a family of faith. And once again I stand in gratitude at the faithfulness, support, strength, and resilience of our congregation. I am so very thankful for our family of faith.

When everything initially shut down in March, I don't think our congregation anticipated the pandemic going on for as long as it has. But despite its longevity, we learned to adapt so that ministry could still take place. While the first week of our shutdown we had to email folks a worship reflection with a Bible reading, sermon, and prayer, by the next weekend we had a stream up and running thanks to the efforts of Nick Ross and his parents, Jim and Laurie. As we started to stream Tony Ruffolo also reached out and lent his expertise in camera work and has been a part of the stream team ever since. And Joe Tuttle was ready to go with providing wonderful music. It was such a tremendous relief to get this set up so quickly so that we could stay connected with our congregation in a live way and we have been so blessed through it all to have people in our congregation with these gifts to make it possible.

While streaming services were not on our radar for 2020, we have found that it is a new ministry for us. We have been able to engage our members in numbers many times higher than we do in person, we have been able to stay connected to snow birds from the congregation that would not have otherwise been able to participate, we have reached people tied to our congregation around the country and even world. As a result, the council moved to use a bequest given in memory of Bob McDermot to put in a permanent streaming system with the help of Nick Ross, who was able to design the system and come and put it in with the help of his family. We are grateful to both the McDermot family and the Ross family for making this happen so that this new ministry can continue to be a blessing for us even after the pandemic is over.

continued...

Streaming services continued to evolve over the year to include not only reading recordings from various members, as well as recordings from our contemporary band and chancel choir and bell choir. Countless hours were put in by members of our congregation and staff to make this happen. Thank you to all those who helped with this.

At the same time, we wanted to make sure that we had opportunity for contemporary worship as well, since that has been an integral part of our congregation for many years. As a result, when the weather was conducive and number of cases were lower, we started our outdoor Saturday worship services this past summer. Ron and Sam Baling, along with Gene Kesner and Cliff Blashford, as well as Lori Elgin, made the music and sound possible for these gatherings which quickly became a popular means of worship. It was also a great means of evangelism, as we gathered in the front parking lot for those going by on Cumberland Road to see. And once the weather turned, the contemporary crew started to include a hymn each week for our stream to allow that style of worship to continue. Thank you to our contemporary ensemble for their dedication and flexibility through this year!

The opportunity to gather in-person also led to the use of a website called “Book A Pew”. This was an invaluable tool, as it allowed us to assess each week how many folks were coming and whether we needed to add an additional service based on gathering restrictions. It also allowed for contact tracing if needed.

As you all know, we also got to a place where we were able to acquire supplies to allow folks to start to safely gather with some restrictions in our building. We were blessed to install a needlepoint bipolar ionization system to help clean the air, along with purchasing electrostatic sprayers to help with disinfecting the space. And while precautions still need to take place, it helped to make it possible for our preschool to begin and for worship and ministry groups to start back in the building while numbers were not as high. These tools will continue to benefit us beyond the pandemic, as the air system will help to clean the air in our building during flu season as well as help to filter other things such as mold. Thank you to Jenn Bolinda for bringing this idea to our church and to Rich Volpe for all the ways he worked on this and other property projects during the year.

In addition to these supplies, we also were able to find supplies to have a touch free communion experience, as many were longing for the sacrament. We even had communion available for folks to participate from home. Thanks to Joe Tuttle for making our communion trays to fit our new supplies!

We also were able to increase our online presence in other ways. We had a reflection series that considered photos from our building, the small catechism, and then highlights from the Bible. We had gifts of music videos from the Galbraiths to edify our congregation. We had weekly children’s sermons posted each week, as well as other reflection videos. We had midweek Advent studies and worship online. And Sunday School continued virtually for all ages with the help of our various teachers. Thanks to all who helped with these things and engaged with our posts online.

In addition, our committees and groups began meeting online as well. Many of us who have never used Zoom before have become quite familiar with it now. As a result, committees and groups were able to plan for ministry. This allowed for things such as the Thanksgiving food drive and the Christmas gift drive to continue to take place. It also led to the creation of new ministry opportunities such as the sewing of masks for those who needed them and the collection of baby items for the synod’s WELCA campaign.

continued...

In addition, Kim Gettemy through her work with Cumberland Kids and supporting North Hills Community Outreach found that there was a need for healthy snack bags for the food pantry, along with toiletry items. She has faithfully continued this ministry with donations from members through this time.

And our preschool has been working hard to make this unusual school year work. The teachers were dedicated to their students and were willing to do whatever it took to make their education possible. They taught their children how to keep a mask on and socially distance, as well as taking extra time to help to keep their rooms clean, and they adapted to when they had to go virtual for a time. Their love for their students and the school is quite evident and we are so thankful for them.

And our Vision Team continued the process that had just begun before the building shut down in March. They worked hard this past fall, meeting two times a month to create the draft vision statement that was shared with the congregation at the end of December. There are many exciting ministry ideas within it, and I encourage you to take a look at the document to see if there is something that you might be able to get involved with in the days ahead. Thank you to the Vision Team for all they did to bring this document together.

I would be remiss not to mention a group that has gone above and beyond. Our church council has served so faithfully through all of this, and I am so thankful for their partnership in ministry. They have had multiple meetings in a month that have gone for three and four hours at a time, as they take every decision they make seriously, weighing all the facts and options, and wanting to care for all of our members, from the youngest to the oldest alike. It has not been an easy year for them to serve in this leadership role, knowing that our church family has a spectrum of comfort levels and opinions on how things should be handled, and yet they did their best each and every time to be faithful to their calling. I know that they have been thankful for the grace of the congregation this year and their continued support as we journey together in hopes of better times to come.

In addition, I am so thankful for the staff at St. John's of Highland. They too have been flexible through this year, and continued to work together to make ministry happen. A special welcome to Tom Mazza, our new assistant custodian, who is a recent new member of our congregation as well. He joined our staff this fall and we are so glad to have him on board to work with Gene Kesner.

I know that there are even more things that have taken place this year, and as a result, more people to thank, but that is the case with every year. Please know that I am grateful for it all, and for all of you. Thank you for helping us to not only get through this trying year but for all the ways that you helped us to "Make Christ Known." This congregation never ceases to amaze me.

As we look forward in faith to the year ahead, I am hopeful for all that is to come. I am eager for us to begin to live into our Vision Statement and all the new plans for ministry, including the call of an associate pastor. I look forward to nearing the end of our mortgage at the end of 2021 which will allow for our budget to be more readily balanced in 2022. We do have a future with hope – thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria!
(To God alone be the glory!)
Pastor Kari Smail

REPORT OF THE ORGANIST AND DIRECTOR OF CHOIRS Joseph Tuttle, Director

Happy 2021! What a year 2020 turned out to be. To say the apple cart was majorly upset is an understatement for all of us, and the music ministry at St. John's was no exception. The need to stay safely apart these last 9-1/2 months has meant that all musical ensembles have had to shift to a whole new medium: at-home recording. Since in-person choir rehearsals could no longer be safely held, and virtual rehearsals were impractical due to internet lag, we had to get creative. Accompaniment recordings were sent out to the choirs, against which the individual members recorded their voice or instrumental parts and sent the files back to be edited and blended together as cohesive works. This is very time consuming and difficult work for all parties involved. I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to the members of all of our musical ensembles for their good work and dedication in such stressful and unusual circumstances, and for helping to ensure that our ministry could continue despite being physically separate from each other. I would also like to thank Erik Roth for teaching me how to use the editing software, as well as for the countless hours he has himself dedicated to arranging and editing pieces for our Handbell Choir, Youth choirs, and Chancel Choir.

Since we were limited to a single streamed service on Sunday morning, the Worship and Music committee put our heads together to figure out how to give a balanced musical offering to the congregation. We have alternated anthem offerings between the Chancel Choir and the Contemporary Ensemble, with the latter also been recording a hymn every week. Erik Roth has continued to work with our Handbell Choir at a distance, even distributing bells to its members so they can record their parts at home.

As the year came to a close, I was again reminded of how incredibly fortunate I am as a sacred musician to be surrounded by such a vibrant, generous, and dedicated group of people in our St. John's family. Christmas Eve was probably the most unusual for me in the 20 years I have been involved with church music, however the contributions of so many people across the congregation helped us to celebrate the coming of Christ without losing the spirit of the season. From the preludes, to the choir anthems, to the congregational hymns, people contributed nearly 100 vocal and instrumental recordings. They say it takes a village. Little did the originator of that saying know! I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

As we look forward to better times in the year to come we will continue to strive to perfect our praises here, and always seek to spread the Gospel through music. May the Holy Spirit inspire us and lead us to a yet more glorious day.

Soli Deo Gloria

-Joe-

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ST. JOHN'S PRESCHOOL Jenn Bolinda, Director

Preschool Board Members: Marie Bosco, Winter Mariotti, Gloria Knezovich, Greg Gapinski, and Laura Coombs (Preschool Financial Secretary) John Angel (member and Council liaison)

Preschool Teachers: Jenn Bolinda, Eileen Coran, Cindy Roberts, and Dana Schott

Preschool Teacher Assistants: Linda Claypool, Dena Solman, Laurie Ross, and DeAnne Sayers

Preschool Financial Secretary: Laura Coombs

Since 1983, St. John's Preschool continues to nurture and educate young children in a loving, caring environment. This past year (2020) has been quite difficult for us to navigate as the pandemic struck in March. Never did we think the preschool would close for the rest of the school year which ended in May. Although shocked and heart-broken, the staff and I did the best we could to provide the preschool families with closure. Many tough decisions were made, but taking care of our staff and preschool families were top priority.

The summer months were full of emotions and decision making as the preschool board, staff, and I began to figure out how we can re-open our doors safely to continue nurturing and educating our young children.

We entered the summer with 150 students enrolled for the 2020/ 2021 school year which was scheduled to start in September. We set out to love our preschool families and try to secure the future of St. John's Preschool while keeping everyone safe in the process. Many plans were created, lots of guidelines were studied, other preschools were consulted, many conversations took place, and LOTS of changes occurred to the preschool program. We lost about 80 students over the summer as the preschool families decided not to send their child to St. John's Preschool during the Covid-19 pandemic. They also did not see the value in a virtual preschool learning environment as these young children need the social interaction of their peers. Despite this significant loss in enrollment, we created a plan that followed the guidelines issued by the CDC, Department of Education, and the DOH. We purchased 4 air filtration units containing the iWave Needlepoint Ionization System for each preschool classroom. The Church purchased 2 electrostatic sprayers to help with the cleaning and disinfecting of the building. With all of these changes the Church Council granted us permission to open the doors of St. John's Preschool in September. We started our school year with 70 eager preschoolers!

Once the new school year began, no one knew what to expect, but we prayed for the safety of our preschoolers, their families, and the entire preschool and church staff. Our school year was quite successful and operating smoothly due to our safety plan. While the preschool looks very different and many changes have occurred, these little kids are loved, they are learning, they are socializing with their peers, and they are enjoying their time in our school. Most importantly they wear a face mask and have adapted extremely well to all of our changes. We couldn't be prouder of these wonderful children. The parents have been amazing at communicating with us and keeping their children home when they are not feeling well. So far, we have not had one positive Covid case within our preschool families and staff. We are working very hard to provide these children with what they need developmentally while keeping them safe and healthy.

Since Thanksgiving (the end of November), the preschool has been shut down due to the increase in Covid cases within the community. The teachers and I have kept the preschool program going using remote/ virtual learning. For the short term, this method is working; however, this method is not preferred in moving forward long-term by our preschool families and teachers.

Teaching preschool virtually is difficult and requires a great deal of work from the parents. Preschoolers benefit the most from in-person preschool. We hope to return to in-person learning very soon and continue thriving in our safe environment we worked so hard to create.

continued...

St. John’s Preschool is a warm, loving place where children are able to grow and learn in a safe environment. Families come to the school and entrust us with their precious treasures. We are always making changes and improvements to the preschool, so we can continue to offer an excellent program within our community. This year has been a HUGE bump in the road and keeping our entire St. John’s community safe has been our top priority. The preschool staff and I look forward to our continued partnership with St. John’s Church in maintaining the future of St. John’s Preschool as a ministry of the church. Together we can continue to nurture the little minds of our preschoolers. Whether we are in a pandemic or not, the preschool classrooms are filled with smiles (although hidden behind a mask), friendships blossoming, kindness filling the air, learning, creativity, nurturing and caring teachers, and lots of love!

Please continue spreading the word to become part of our “preschool family”. We couldn’t make this a wonderful school without all of you and your continued support of our program. Many, many thanks for making this challenging year possible for us. We are looking forward to a successful 2021!

REPORT OF MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY/STATISTICAL SUMMARY CALENDAR YEAR 2020 Mary Lynne Martin, Office Administrator

NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED THROUGH TRANSFER OR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:
Postponed due to the global pandemic

NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED THROUGH BAPTISM:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Jane Elizabeth Badger | Clara Ann Hartwell | Kinsley Elizabeth Marbella |
| Owen Lord Burdwood | Maple Elsa Heckman | |

TOTAL MEMBERS RECEIVED: (5 BAPTISMS + NEW MEMBERS) + 5

FUNERALS FOR MEMBERS: (NON-MEMBERS NOTED)

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Anna Mae ‘Bunny’ Bertini | Bernhard Griwatz (NM) | Kathryn Margaret Roehlich |
| Ellen Piper Caulkins | Marilyn LeDonne | Raymond Schieck |
| Linda Cowan | Alice W. Martin | Helen Stein |
| Sandra Falkner | Jack Martz (NM) | Leona E. Sunday |
| Mildred Friday | Ruth Musser | Lois M. Vita |
| Lawrence Joseph Fries (NM) | Robert G. McDermot | |
| Mary Theresa Fries (NM) | June Reinbold | |

TRANSFER OUT:

- John, Kathy, Madeline and Patrick Birmingham
Harvey and Sue LeDonne

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP REMOVED FROM ROLLS: (16 MEMBER FUNERALS + 6 TRANSFERS OUT) - 22

NET GAIN/LOSS IN MEMBERSHIP IN 2020: - 17

CEREMONIES: CONFIRMATIONS	<i>Postponed due to global pandemic</i>
WEDDINGS	<i>Postponed due to global pandemic</i>

STANDING COMMITTEES

REPORT OF THE EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

Rev. Kari B. Smail, Chairperson

Committee Members: Suzanne Harlan, Debbie Brown, Marilyn Whitten, Nancy Swanhart, Jennifer Mance, Nancy Sheleheda, Joumana Driscoll (Council Liaison first half of 2020), Ellen Skirpan (Council Liaison second half of 2020).

As with all of our ministries, 2020 presented traditional as well as new opportunities for the work of the Evangelism Committee as it worked to find creative ways to invite folks to "come and see!"

We began the year with our annual "Hula Hallelujah" where we served tropical fare and had the Ambridge Steel Drum Band perform as our entertainment. This is always a well-attended event, with various people from our congregation and community participating. Unfortunately our annual Strawberry Festival with the NA Fiddlers, as well as the Animal Blessing in August had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

We also continued our "Edifying Art Series" at the beginning of 2020 with the theme of "Love Incarnate" which was based on Luke 2:1-20. The art was displayed in Highland Hall with signs that indicated the artist, the title of the piece, and a reflection on it. Unfortunately the pandemic hindered us from continuing this in the spring with our next theme. We are looking into ways in which we might be able to do a virtual series while things are limited, and we hope that sometime in 2021 we can resume our regular series. Whatever the venue, please consider adding your artistic talents to our series when the opportunities present themselves, as we want expressions of art from many people to serve as a means of edification for all.

The committee also continues to look at ways to utilize social media to invite people to engage our congregation through various means, in order that we might make the love of God in Christ Jesus known through a welcoming church. This year caused our congregation to expand our ministry online greatly, and while we would never want a pandemic as the reason, we do give thanks for this blessing in the midst of the struggles we have encountered in 2020.

The work that took place online was not the result of the Evangelism Committee itself this year, but certainly was evangelical in nature, therefore it is mentioned in this report. Thanks to Nick, Jim, and Laurie Ross for getting us streaming worship so quickly and for not only managing our online presence but creating a permanent setup for us to continue this new ministry in the future. Thanks to a bequest from Bob McDermot that was given by his family which allowed for the resources to make this happen. Thanks to Tony Ruffolo for providing great camera work each week to connect our members in a visual way. Thanks to Joe Tuttle, as well as Ron Baling and the contemporary band, along with our various choirs and Erik Roth who helped to bring much of the music together for our streams. Thanks to the various readers who contributed recordings. We have had remarkable numbers watch our streaming services and we have had people from all over the country and even world tune in to worship with us, thanks be to God.

Thanks to our Contemporary Band as well for their dedication to our outdoor worship services which were seen by many on Cumberland Road and was another form of evangelism for the church.

Over the course of the pandemic we have also had various things posted on our Facebook site. We began with daily reflections on images from our congregation. Then we had daily reflections on the Small Catechism. This was then followed by daily reflections on major stories in the Old and New Testaments. In addition, a children's sermon video has been posted each week, and during Advent a midweek study as well a midweek service was also shared. We also were blessed with music videos from Nancy and Matthew Galbraith - thank you! As a result, the Good News was shared in many and various ways this year to many different people, and this is at the heart of what it means to evangelize.

The Evangelism Committee is always talking about ways to further enhance its ministry, and would welcome anyone who would like to join them in this endeavor. We look forward to continue to promote this important ministry in the year ahead! Thanks to all who presently serve in the church in this way!

REPORT OF THE MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND

Tom Beilstein, Chairperson

Treasurer: Charlie Steinmetz, Secretary: Betsy Fackler,
Committee Members: Mark Trauman and Eric Kofmehl

The Mission Endowment Fund ended 2020 higher than where it started, despite making several disbursements. The fund began 2020 with a balance of \$120,241.94. At the end of 2020, the value of the account had risen to \$141,010.93. The Mission Endowment fund received contributions totaling \$1,485 and made disbursements totaling \$2,725 in 2020. The Endowment Fund's investments had a rate of return of 14.10% in 2020. The fund was fully invested throughout the year in several low-cost, Vanguard index funds (Statements are available upon request). Most of the Endowment Fund's assets are invested for long-term growth as the goal of the fund is to last in perpetuity. Therefore, the fund's balance was positively affected by the robust market returns in the second half of 2020.

In 2017, the Endowment Fund reached the \$50,000 threshold and made its first disbursements. According to the fund's resolution, funds will be distributed annually for outreach in the community, missions of the ELCA, and needs of the church. In 2020, the Endowment Fund made three disbursements as follows:

1. \$1,000 to Anchorpoint Counseling Ministry
2. \$1,000 to Orchardview Stables
3. \$725 to New Start Furniture Ministry

In 2020, despite not being able to meet in person, our committee has been closely monitoring the fund's investments as well as following up on distribution requests. We expect this to continue in 2021 as distributions requests continue to come in. Based on a formula in the Mission Endowment Fund's charter, there will be \$6,009.25 available for distribution in 2021.

The Mission Endowment Fund is meant to be a financial blessing to our church in perpetuity. The purpose of the fund is to enhance the mission outreach of the congregation beyond our annual budget allocation. We look forward to accepting more requests for distributions in 2021. Forms are available in the office. We also encourage all members to consider the Mission Endowment Fund, both when gifting during your lifetime or as an honorarium or memorial.

REPORT OF THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE **Linda Nardina, Chairperson**

Committee Members: Barb Eback, Linda Meyerdierks, Andrea Miller, Tom Nardina, Rich Volpe, Abby Bauer (Council Liaison)

With the restrictions that needed to be followed for our Church in 2020, the Fellowship Committee had very few events. We were able to have our coffee and conversation the Sunday mornings in January and February. We also prepared and delivered the Pleasant Valley Shelter meal in October.

Our prayer is that 2021 will allow us to be able to gather together again and enjoy true Fellowship as we have in the past.

REPORT OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRIES COMMITTEE **Dr. Brian Miller, Chairperson**

Committee Members: Linda Falck, Steven Hrvoich, Gloria Knezovich, Jody Removchik, Scott Celin (Council Liaison)

Each year members of the committee are involved in the following tasks:

- Annually review employee job descriptions and develop and maintain a personnel practice policy
- Serve on call and search committees.
- Oversee the annual job reviews of the St. John's staff. Reviews are conducted by the Senior Pastor with members attending the review for the upcoming year.
- Assist the Senior Pastor and/or employees with any job related issues. This would include participating in exit interviews with departing employees.
- Make salary recommendations for the annual budget.
- Have members available to assist the Finance Committee and Council in the preparation of the annual budget.

Historically, the Mutual Ministries Committee at St. John's has functioned as a Personnel Committee. Based on synod training and professional development, Mutual Ministries is gradually shifting focus to development and implementation of a broader vision for ministry and the support necessary to realize that mission. In the past year, the Volunteer Ministry position was shifted to Building Use Coordinator. The new position is now in place. Unfortunately, COVID-19 disrupted much of the regular operations. This position will be critical when normal facility use resumes. A part-time custodian was also hired in the last year. In the upcoming year, the Mutual Ministries Committee anticipates increased responsibility to provide assistance for the Call Process for Associate Pastor.

SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE **Janet Schmitt, Jean Martz Co-Chairpersons**

Committee Members: Dianne Barbin, Marge Davis, Howard and Shirley McIlvried, Joy Bovan, Janice Bukambu & Joumana Driscoll (Council Liaison).

The function of the Social Ministry Committee is to assist the congregation in advocating for, and ministering to, people in need in the local community, throughout our nation, and around the world, as an expression of God's love for all people. Due to the Pandemic the committee's normal activities were restricted. The committee was involved in the following activities during 2020.

continued...

PLEASANT VALLEY SHELTER - Our groups were not permitted into the shelter to serve the meal. Volunteers prepared the meals and delivered the meal to the shelter which was served by the residents living there. Congregational committees, groups, individuals, and families prepared a full evening meal for approximately 35 homeless men on the fourth Wednesday of each month. The coordinator of this project was Dianne Barbin. The meals were prepared by the following: Church council, Kofmehl and Harlan Families, Christian Education Committee, Youth Group, 9th Grade Confirmation Class, Diane Hamley and Friends, Cathy Coudriet and Friends, Social Ministry Committee, Choir, Fellowship Committee, WELCA, Ruffolo Family.

FOOD COLLECTIONS -In November a food collection for North Side Common Ministries was conducted. The congregation was notified of our food drive via weekly email announcements as well as reminders at our weekly Zoom church service. Members were asked to provide non-perishable food to be placed in the back entry of the church. We collected about 30 bags of groceries. North Side Common Ministries services (NSCM) 600 families in the area needing assistance.

We were unable to do our monthly piggy bank collections for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank the first Sunday of each month.

CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS – We were able to collect gifts for infants through age 14 that will be distributed through North Side Common Ministries to less fortunate families. Our goal was to collect 100 gifts which we far surpassed with a final count of over 170 donations. We want to thank our congregation for your generous hearts especially in this time of a global pandemic!

CENTRAL BLOOD BANK DRIVE - In November, Social Ministry sponsored St. John's Blood Drive in conjunction with our local Central Blood Bank. This project was done with communication as our other projects. Unfortunately, we did not yield the amount of donations we had hoped for. We have scheduled a blood drive for 2021.

MONTHLY MEETINGS – Monthly Social Ministry meetings were conducted via Zoom which was coordinated by Joumana Driscoll.

MONTHLY CARDS – We started a new project this year of sending monthly greeting cards to the shut-ins of our congregation. Letting them know we are thinking and praying for them. Joy Bovan oversees this project.

The following projects conducted by social ministry were not done this year: We are looking forward to resuming all of our projects in 2021. Clothing collections - north hills community outreach (NHCO) - lenten collection - mother's and father's day projects - pamphlet ministry – CPR/first aid training - AARP Driver Safety Course

Social Ministry wants to thank the congregation for their support of these functions throughout this trying year. We look forward to resuming our ministry in 2021.

Committee Members: Jim Cislou, Bill Danklefsen, Sam Falck, Gene Kesner, Eric Kofmehl, Bob & Margie Miller, Denise Rudar (council liaison)

For the 2020 calendar year the general property budget was reduced to a total of \$67,000 which is \$7,000 below the 2019 total of \$74,000. Budgeted items include utility bills, insurance, service contracts, snow plowing and supplies for the church such as paper, lighting and cleaning products. As with most things in 2020, COVID was a major factor and had a positive impact on expenses and our ability to come in under 2020 budget projections. With 70% of the total property expenses being for utility bills and insurance premiums, we were able to come in at \$54,300 which is \$12,700 under our 2020 budgeted goal of \$67,000 - the restricted use of our building due to COVID drove our day to day expenses below projections.

Our committee also has a Major Maintenance fund which is used when large projects such as purchasing new HVAC systems, repaving the parking lot, or if major roof repairs are required. A portion of the monies in this fund are generated by donations from estates which we are greatly thankful for. In contrast to our general property budget, COVID took an unexpected toll on the Major Maintenance budget with the purchase of the Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization systems that are used to reduce contaminants in the air throughout our building.

Projects completed in 2020

1. Electrical panel box replaced in the parking lot to repair one of our parking lot lights and the illuminated announcement sign.
2. Installed throughout our building were Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization systems which are used to reduce contaminants in the air.
3. Electrical work completed to repair outlets in lower west wing.
4. Jim Cislou fabricated a storage room in the Highland Hall hallway near the bathrooms.
5. Scott Celin assisted in cleaning and painting the outside stairway leading out of the Fireside classroom. New lighting was also added in the stairwell.
6. Per code all hand held fire extinguishers in our building were replaced as the original ones were 12 years old and required reconditioning.
7. Admiral Tree Service and Jim Cislou & friends tree service removed 2 large dead trees from our property
8. C&R Roofing completed repairs and maintenance on church's tile roof which has eliminated multiple leaks in the Nave, Highland Hall and Fellowship Hall. Most of the damaged areas have been repaired and repainted
9. Installed an additional entrance gate and locks in the preschool playground
10. A member of our congregation donated funds to mulch all flower and shrub areas on church property
11. Margie & Bob Miller, Scott Celin and Drew Leister maintained the flower beds and trimming of shrubs around the church

Projects for 2021 include painting in the church and preschool along with tree/shrub trimming throughout our property. The parking lot markings also need to be repainted in addition to general cleaning in the church and Highland Hall.

continued...

We will try again in early spring to have a meeting to review projects and brainstorm how to meet our 2021 project list and budget goals. Since a vast majority of our budget is taken up by fixed costs, there is very little room in the budget for mechanical items that need to be repaired or replaced. Where we can get ahead of the game is in labor. We are fortunate to have members of our congregation donate their time and talents to assist in keeping our property maintained. We can always use a volunteers, please contact the church office or email me at richvolpe22@yahoo.com if you would like to lend a helping hand.

I would also like to thank the following volunteers:

- Jim Ross & Nick Ross as they provided their talents to upgrade our video and streaming capabilities allowing all of us the opportunity to virtually attend church services in 2020 and beyond.
- Ron Seidel and company for their efforts in maintaining the Memorial Garden in the cemetery.
- Kent Bruggeman, Jim Bruggeman and Paul Krepps our lawn mowing team for the past two years

I apologize if I may have missed some others who have also contributed to maintaining our facility.

Thank you to all,
Rich Volpe

REPORT OF THE CEMETERY TRUST COMMITTEE

Walt Treser, Chairperson

Members: Sharon Bailing, Barb Eback, Mary Lynne Martin, Cheryl Schmiedel, Nancy Swanhart, (Denise Rudar council liaison)

The Cemetery Trust Committee has the following duties:

1. To perform as the Trustee of the Cemetery and Cemetery Trust Fund.
2. To develop and maintain a set of Cemetery Regulations to govern all aspects of the operation of the Cemetery.
3. To oversee the Cemetery Endowment Fund.
4. To approve and arrange for the sale or resale of lots and/or deed transfers to congregational members in good standing. This includes niches for cremation.

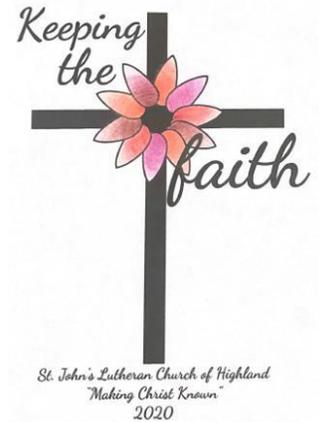
We are able to offer burial options to members and nonmembers as well. We own several plots in the Allegheny Memorial Cemetery and these are available at a reduced cost to members and nonmembers. Nonmembers also have the opportunity to use the area of the memorial garden designated for the common disposition of cremated remains. James Setzenfand continues to serve as our cemetery contractor.

In 2020 the Committee authorized the removal of a storm damaged tree in the Cemetery and renewed the contract of James Setzenfand our Cemetery Contractor. The following items were delayed until 2021: Landscaping the Memorial Garden, Possible expansion of the Memorial Garden, and investment strategies.

REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**Eric Kofmehl, Chairperson**

Jim Robertson (Council Liaison)

This Year's Campaign initiative, entitled "Keeping the Faith" started on October 4th. For four consecutive weeks we heard temple talks by Amy Kennedy, Emmett Brown, Tracy Nardina Brackin, and Finance Committee Co-Chair, Rodney Skirpan. What wonderful stories they shared about their involvement in our church. Special thanks to all of them in addition to Paige Miller's continued gift in designing this year logo, entitled "Keeping the Faith."



On Saturday, October 31st and Sunday, November 1st we celebrated commitment weekend. Estimate of giving cards were distributed this year by mail. Those pledging made their voluntary estimate of financial giving as an Act of Giving. After a couple weeks, we received the formal pledges of 142 families (compared to 157 families in 2019). Those estimates are so vital in helping our congregation plan our mission and ministry for 2021, especially during these times of Coronavirus.

At this date, 142 families (or giving units) have made a financial commitment of \$568,848 to support the congregation's ministry and mission for 2021. This is compared to 2020 commitments of \$565,121. In addition, \$70,090 has been committed to supporting the building fund for 2021. This is an outstanding commitment by our congregation considering the donations made on Miracle Sunday, March 3, 2019, to help eliminate our church building debt.

Update on Miracle Sunday: 135 families made pledges of \$626,640.24 on March 3, 2019. We have sent to the Mission Investment office \$639,683.17 to apply to reducing the principal owed. We have collected \$24,092.93 more than pledged. There are outstanding pledges of \$11,050.00. As of January 7, 2021, \$106,064.50 is owed on our building loan. Members are still able to make additional donations. Thank you to all who have participated and continue to participate! This is such a tremendous collective gift for our congregation and our financial preparedness for future ministry!

Through our church member's generosity and love, this is an exciting time to be part of the St. John's family! Even during these difficult times of pandemic, we will continue to have St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland be a place for everyone to be part of our ministry, our mission, and our community of believers. We look forward to our congregation's continue support in planning God's work. What an opportunity we have as individuals and families to be part of spreading the Word, sharing the faith, and giving love to Make Christ Known!

REPORT OF THE WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE**Bryan Abbott, Chairperson**

Committee Members: Pastor Kari Smail; Joe Tuttle, Organist & Choir Director; Ron Baling, Contemporary Service Music Director; Sharon Baling, Altar Guild representative; Marie Bosco, Note Taker; Margie Miller; Pat Green, Carletta Nichols, John Angel, Erik Roth, and Kim Gettemy.

Focus: St. John's Worship and Music Committee oversees and helps to plan all aspects of the worship life of St. John's, including the music programs and the Altar Guild.

continued...

The year in review: In 2020, we started the year very differently than how we finished it.

At the start of the year, we continued to have a Saturday service at 5:30PM and Sunday services at 8:15 AM and 10:45 AM with Sunday School at 9:30 AM. Plans were made for the Lenten season, but as most of you are aware, things were about to change. With Covid-19 arriving shortly into the Lenten season, we closed the physical doors to the church on March 14th and went a weekend without any services. With the technical help of Nick Ross, his parents, and camera man Tony Ruffolo, we produced a Virtual streaming service on Sunday, March 21st and every Sunday thereafter. All services were also streamed during Holy Week. While Pastor Kari and Joseph Tuttle continued to provide live music and leadership at the services, Musicians and Choir members began the learning process of recording anthems at home. With the editing help of Erik Roth, the choir was able to come together virtually, one part at a time, and continue to provide musical anthems almost every other Sunday. Other members of the congregation and choirs provided pre-recorded anthems and musical selections throughout the year. Lectors also recorded the lessons and reading from their homes to be a part of the virtual service.

Once we were able to, outdoor worship services began on Saturday evenings at 5:30 PM in the parking lot on August 15th and ran through October every Saturday. Erik Roth trained Joseph Tuttle on editing for the Choir Anthems. The Contemporary Ensemble provided music on the Saturday services as well as recording hymns for the streamed services on Sundays. Communion was eventually added to the Saturday services using prefilled communion vessels. The Saturday service moved to 4:00 PM due to earlier sunsets and cooler weather. Consecrated prefilled communion also became available for pick-up on Fridays and Saturdays in the office vestibule. Eventually we also began indoor services with social distanced seating, masks were required, and humming was encouraged instead of singing. Anthems for the Sunday services began to rotate each week with either the Chancel Choir or Contemporary Ensemble providing the Anthems. Special thanks to Erik Roth for handling the youth recordings of preludes and anthems for the services as well.

Plans were made in the fall for Christmas Eve services, however things changed again in November, and we went back to virtual only services from that point. The Priscilla Guild was able to continue to change the banners in the church throughout the year. For Advent, the doors of the church were decorated with wreaths. A Virtual midweek study was held on Wednesdays presented by Pastor Kari as well as the Holden Evening Prayer presented by the Smail Family. Advent Sunday services were held at 10:00 AM on Sundays. The Priscilla Guild decorated the church for Christmas with poinsettia trees and we were able to provide two streamed services for Christmas Eve. The Family service was streamed at 5:00 PM and the Traditional service was streamed at 7:00 PM. The entire congregation was invited to pre-record two Hymns for the service as well as participate in recording anthems for both services. The Chancel Choir and Contemporary Ensemble pre-recorded several anthems and preludes for the Christmas Eve service. Many thanks to the Ross Family and Tony Ruffolo for handling the technical aspects of the virtual services.

The Future: Virtual services will continue into the new year. Once we return to in person services, we encourage members of the congregation to volunteer as lectors, deacons and ushers for the services they attend as well as choir members for the adult choral, and bell choirs. Young people are welcome for our Youth Choir as well as the Chime and "Boom-whacker" Choirs. We are always looking for new committee members with fresh ideas.

REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE Linda Meyerdierks, Youth Ministry Chairperson

Committee Members: Pastor Kari Smail, Anna Marie Christian, Amy Kennedy (Council Liaison)

The God Squad, grades 1st-5th and The Holy K.O.W.S, grades 6th -8th, continued to have monthly activities, even though 2019/2020 school year got cut short I want to give thanks to the planning of the God Squad/Holy K.O.W.S leaders and parents. The activities included bowling, popcorn and a Halloween Party and laser tag.

When we are ready to meet again for 2021, Please Contact Linda Meyerdierks if you are interested in planning an activity for either group.

Teen Game Night 1st Saturday of the Month- (Open to youth & friends in grades 6th -12th) - Hosted by Joumana & Thalia Driscoll. The youth and their friends meet once a month on a **Saturday** evening 6:30pm - 9:30pm for board games, arena sports, pizza/snacks and fellowship. **So come check it out and bring a friend or two!**

Both the Holy K.O.W.S. and Sr. High Youth participate in Virtual Youth Sunday. The Youth still provided the August shelter meal at the Pleasant Valley Shelter on the Northside even though they could not serve the meal.

The ELCA YOUTH GATHERING: Boundless - GOD BEYOND MEASURE has been **postponed to JULY 14, 2022**. The Gathering is opened to Youth currently in grades 7th - 11th.

A huge thank you goes out to the members of our congregation, parents of the youth and our youth committee for the continued support of our Youth.

Stay Safe and Healthy! I hope to see everyone in 2021! God Bless
Linda Meyerdierks - Youth Ministry Coordinator

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE Rodney Skirpan and Mark Trauman, Co-Chairs

Committee Members: Laura Coombs, Lee Fischer, Eric Kofmehl, and Charlie Steinmetz
Emmett Brown (Council Liaison)

The Finance Committee is submitting a deficit budget for fiscal year 2021 to be approved by Church Council and ultimately by the congregation at the annual meeting. Our projected revenues for 2021 are \$667,493 including mortgage donations of \$70,213; and, expenses for 2021 are \$679,758 which includes mortgage payments. The projected budget deficit of expenses over revenue is \$12,265.

At this time last year, we were projecting a budget surplus of \$11,754 for 2020 (made up of projected revenues of \$691,911 and projected expenses of \$680,157). We finished the year with an even greater surplus of \$108,231. This was due to total actual revenues coming into the church of \$677,959 versus actual expenses of \$569,728. As you can see, the revenues were very close to what was expected; however, many of the expenses that were anticipated largely didn't happen due to our building closure. Despite an unprecedented year of global pandemic and economic hardship, the congregation still managed to graciously provide to the church. Thank you!

continued...

We anticipate the call process for an Associate Pastor to start in the next month or so and hope it yields a pastor at the mid-year point. Our plan is to pay off the mortgage in early 2022. Although 2021 still holds many uncertainties, our strength as a congregation is enduring and unwavering. We are truly blessed – Thank you for your many generous gifts!

We graciously ask that you keep up your thoughtful giving. Many thanks to Pastor Smail for her efforts in this regard as well.

REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

John Miller, Chairperson

Committee Members: Linda Meyerdierks and Linda Nardina.
John Angel (Council Liaison)

Curriculum and Administration – *“Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors.” Deuteronomy 11:19-21*

We currently utilize a variety of curricula within our program. Age 2 through Grade 2 are using the **Group** materials. The **Witness** curriculum published by Augsburg Fortress is still taught in grades 3 through 6. Seventh and Eighth grade students receive their confirmation class through weekly meetings on Sunday mornings. The 7th and 8th grade confirmation classes use a variety of resources including the NIV Bible and the Luther Small Catechism. The 7th and 8th grade Confirmation classes are combined and complete a 2-year program to study the Bible, Luther’s Small Catechism and Lutheran Church topics and processes. Our high school students discuss a variety of topics and served in a leadership role with many activities. Two adult classes are offered each Sunday morning for Christian Living and Social Concerns. On average, 140 youth students, 45 adults, and 20 teachers meet for Sunday School each week. This is approximately 50% of the worshipping members involved in some form of Christian Education. The Christian Education Committee will be looking for ways to increase attendance across all classes and possible offer other education opportunities. We anticipate expanding our Christian Education offerings as a part of the new Visioning and Goals for St. John’s Lutheran Church. More to come on this initiative.

Current Teaching Staff – *“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles...” 1 Corinthians 12:28*

Class	Teachers
2-3 Year Old	Kathy Kofmehl, Laura Lankes, Kathy Birmingham
4-5 Year Old	Amy Kennedy, Beth Dailey
1-2 nd Grade	Anne Beilstein
3-4 th Grade	Sarah Slegal, Dan Ward
5-6 th Grade	Chad/Erica George, Jen/Paul Krepps
7-8 th Grade	Kari Smail, Linda Meyerdierks
Sr. High	Dan/Elisa Heckert
Christian Living	John Miller
Social Concerns	Cathy Coudriet (team taught)
Vacation Bible School	Linda Meyerdierks and team

continued...

The Christian Education Program would not be possible without the weekly commitment of time, talent, and dedication of our teaching staff. It is a genuine pleasure working with these volunteers that give so much of their time preparing lesson plans and delivering faith-based education to the youth and adults of our congregation. The Christian Education Committee would like to thank Pastor Kari, the Church Council members, and the Worship & Music Committee for assistance in the planning process. And in particular, Pastor Kari for doing such an amazing job of coordinating the Christian Education programs in this time of Covid-19 restrictions. Her online content is excellent.

Special Events - *It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. Psalms 92:1-3*

Our Sunday classes are held from 9:30-10:30am. However, with the restrictions from the Covid-19 lockdown, classes are moved to 9:00am on Sunday, just prior to the 10:00am streaming worship service. Sr. High Youth class is currently held on Sunday evenings at 7:00pm. We are thankful for the emphasis Christian Education receives through a dedicated time slot. It continues to be our hope that we can encourage adults and children to expand their Sunday morning worship routine to include learning opportunities and social interaction. Our goal is to provide a variety of programs to encourage every member of St. John's to attend a faith-based learning class.

Benevolence – *“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” Mark 12:41-43*

The Christian Education Committee continues to be active in benevolence. We deliver an annual meal to the men at the Pleasant Valley Shelter on the North Side on the 4th Wednesday in February each year. CEC continues to organize our annual donation drive for the North Hills Community Outreach. Socks, underwear and other necessities are desperately needed and are donated less than other articles of clothing. We collected over 900 pairs of sock for men, women and children last year. We will facilitate another benevolence project again in 2021.

INTERNAL COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

REPORT OF THE PRISCILLA GUILD

Ellen Fowkes, Chairperson

Committee Members: Sharon Baling, Karen Bauer, Mary Blashford, Marie Bosco, Carol Celin, Beth Fischer, Cathy Heintz, Kim Jusino, Loraine Platt, Jody Removchik, Mary Jean Voigt, Linda Falck, Margie Miller, Linda Nardina, Pastor Kari Smail.

The Priscilla Guild is responsible for preparing the sanctuary for worship services as directed by our Senior Pastor. Our members care for the paraments, which are the cloths on the altar and pulpit, vestments and banners that visualize the church year with their colors and symbolism. We prepare the vessels and linens used during Holy Communion and Holy Baptism.

Our committee would like to thank Ron and Sharon Baling for changing the paraments and baners during the months of lockdown.

The Priscilla Guild also decorates the church at Christmas and Easter. We are grateful for the support from the men in our church who come and help us with the heavy lifting.

We meet the first Thursday of the month for our formal Priscilla Guild meeting with Pastor Kari.

REPORT OF THE SOMEWHERE INBETWEENERS

**Bill Danklefsen,
Suzanne & Dave Harlan, Co-Chairs**

We are an active group of "INBETWEENERS" that get together for fun and fellowship throughout the year, and we always welcome visitors of any age to our good times. Usual activities are game nights, trips to the Sylvan Canoe Club in June and September and field trips to plays and other interesting places. We welcome any new ideas! You can call Suzanne Harlan at (412)366-3010 if you have any suggestions. Please check the bulletin for our next activity, and consider joining us!

REPORT OF THE GARDENING GROUP

Margie Miller, Chairperson

Committee members: Eric and Kathy Kofmehl. Drew Leister, Scott Celin

Our small group keeps digging away trying to maintain and improve our church landscape. This year we especially want to thank Scott and Drew for their extra efforts. Scott is a pruner extraordinaire who spent much time and effort keeping our shrubs and trees in shape. He also was responsible for having all our beds mulched. Drew planned, bought and planted new beds of native pollinator plants so that we can do our part to encourage our insects and butterflies. It will be fun to see how they grow this spring. We also were the recipients of 3 hydrangea bushes and 6 hardy hibiscus plants thanks to the Drew Mathiesen Center in Manchester. Because of the Covid epidemic, they were unable to sell the many beautiful plants they had grown, so they offered them to non-profit groups at no cost.

We definitely could use more interested gardeners who are willing to contribute a couple of hours here and there- no prior experience necessary! We could meet in the spring and talk about how responsibilities can be divided up depending on the amount of time each person is able to give.

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OUTREACH Eric Kofmehl, Facilitator

International Student Outreach (ISO) celebrated its eleventh anniversary this year of our church's outreach ministry to our international brothers and sisters. Since Janice Bukambu appeared at our church in the spring 2009, we have continued to provide transportation, grocery shopping and appointments to LaRoche University international students. A major part of this continuing ministry is providing household goods, furniture and bedding to these students as they seek to live independently in our community. We started partnering with Larry Nugent, who leads the New Start Ministry at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Glenshaw, with helping move and store furniture. We have helped over 90 students representing over 15 African countries. What an unbelievable response our church family has had in responding to the specific needs of these international students.

In 2018, we expanded our ministry to help two young abandoned Tanzania girls, Anita and Joyce, now ages 6 and 15 years old. In 2019 we added a third Tanzanian girl, Edina. "A Need for Joy" has collected additional funds to help pay for boarding school. During 2020 we expensed \$1,265 to pay for a year of boarding school for this coming year for six year old Joyce, and to help with expenses incurred by Anita's guardian. Janice Bukambu, on her recent trip to Tanzania, was able to visit with both girls and will be sharing pictures. We will continue annually to ask the congregation members to help fund this special ministry. Special thanks to Carole Helvig and the Sainly Sewers for reaching out to the three girls and many other young Tanzanian people.

REPORT OF CUMBERLAND KIDS

**Pastor Kari Smail
and the Cumberland Kids Team at St. John's of Highland**

Our Cumberland Kids program remained a strong outreach program of our congregation up until March of this past year when things were shut down due to the pandemic. Each week during the beginning of 2020 we met on Wednesdays from 3:45 until 5:45 with a group of first through 8th graders who were a mix of members and friends, along with several volunteer staff. We began our time with a snack after school as students work on homework and adults are resources in that endeavor. We then had what is known as "Circle Time," where we talked about the day and any housekeeping items that might have come up. This was then followed by an opportunity to participate in a service project, whether that was creating a gift for our shut-ins, assembling supply packages for the men at the homeless shelter, creating bookmarks for the library, or some other good cause, and our youth eagerly helped out in service to others. From there we went down to the gym for a time where the kids not only had the chance to burn off some pent up energy from the day, but they also learned valuable athletic skills along the way. We also enjoyed a monthly science time, which our kids loved as well.

Thank you so much to all of our dedicated volunteers who made this program possible this past year when we were able to meet. We are truly blessed with faithful and talented people who are willing to make this program happen for our youth. And thanks as well to our wonderful youth – we are grateful for the joy you bring us every time we gather! We look forward in faith to 2021 in hopes of getting the program up and running once again sometime during the next school year.

**REPORT OF WELCA (Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America)
OF ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HIGHLAND**

Carole Helvig

The Women of St. Johns have continued to meet this year on Zoom and have had an article each meeting to discuss as a study. Most of these came from Gather Magazine. Gather is a magazine for faith and action of the Women of the ELCA.

We are still receiving offerings from our group although they are now sent in to church instead of collecting at our meetings. This gives us funds to continue to support important ministries. We have donated to Blessed Bundles, which is the ministry that our Synod WELCA group has designated to support this year. Three deliveries of diapers, wipes, supplies and handmade quilts were already brought to The Lutheran Church of Our Savior in North Huntingdon, PA. We are so thankful that all members of St. John's have joined with supporting the families that have difficulty finding funds for baby supplies during this pandemic.

Our ladies have also donated items to "stuff" socks. We purchase men's socks and fill them with helpful things for our homeless population in Pittsburgh. Socks are the most requested item asked for at the shelters.

The ladies also donated \$200 to the Honduras medical mission. The need is great and we are thankful to continue to support this fine cause. This is the medical mission that our own Margie Miller has participated in during former years.

Each month we also pray together during our sessions. A few ladies continue to reach out to our at home or in nursing home members. Some send cards or have called to keep them connected to what is going on at St. Johns. If any want to join this support group contact Carole Helvig 845-216-2952.

The Sainly Sewers also spent months making masks and donating them to members who were in need and to Lutheran Senior Life and other organizations. We have also continued to cut and sew quilts and backpacks while quarantining. We have many quilts ready to finish when we are able to meet again. We did send 14 quilts to Lutheran World Relief this September and gave school supplies we had collected to the local children who were in need. We also sent quilts to Anita and Joy in Tanzania. Our latest projects are mission quilts, baby quilts, and backpacks. All continue to be worked on during the quarantine. The Sainly Sewers continue to meet now on zoom. Look for the time in the weekly announcements email. You are welcome to join us.

WELCA groups are thankful to have the technology to zoom while we are only meeting remotely. Many thanks to Cathy Coudriet who has helped us each time to manage the zoom meetings.

All women of the church are members of WELCA. It is the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. We meet on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00. All women are welcome and encouraged to come.

REPORT OF HEALTHY START CAFÉ/HAVING FUN STAYING YOUNG **Carole Helvig**

Having Fun Staying Young had just connected with Silver Sneakers when the pandemic hit. We had a great group of mostly seniors eager to exercise and have fun doing it twice a week. We had a wonderful instructor, Gina Gray, who made exercise fun for all. Before the pandemic hit we enjoyed healthy smoothies and delicious coffee and tea before each class. Occasionally we would have speakers come to talk to us about health related issues. We hope that we can begin this class again whenever it is safe to meet.

REPORT OF THE YOUNG FAMILIES GROUP

Pastor Kari Smail

The St. John's of Highland Young Families' Group is a gathering of young families in a relaxed environment for a time of fellowship with other young families. In the past, some highlights of each year have become the hot dog and s'mores roast at the Kane residence in August, as well as a potluck picnic at Devlin Park in McCandless at the beginning of the summer hosted by the Smails.

Unfortunately however, as a result of the pandemic, both of these gatherings were not able to take place. Other young families in the congregation are welcome to host additional events during the year at church or some other venue.

Feel free to talk to Pastor Kari if you would like to host an additional event for this group in the coming year when restrictions lighten on gathering. Anyone who defines themselves as a young family is welcome to join us, and friends are always welcome too! Activities are usually advertised in the church bulletin or newsletter. We look forward in hope to this new year that we might resume and renew this ministry in 2021.

REPORT OF THE CHURCH LIBRARY

Pastor Kari Smail

Downstairs on our Lower Level, overlooking the arena, is our wonderful library which was dedicated to the memory of Don Eback. There are many resources there waiting to be utilized! A children's corner with books and a reading table greet you as you come in the door. There is also a comfortable couch in which to relax and read. Along the other wall is a desk area for folks to have a place to use laptops or do other work. In the back of the room is a conference table, along with many bookshelves filled with great volumes for you to peruse and take out. They are organized by topic and are borrowed on the honor system.

Last year we had a wonderful addition to our church library with the donation of Bishop Donald McCoid's personal ecumenical library collection. As he settled back into life in Pittsburgh, he was looking for a place to house this amazing resource and we were honored to be that library. His collection is located on the singular bookshelf by the window overlooking the gym. This year he added several more boxes of books to this wonderful collection. Thank you so much Bishop McCoid for entrusting this ecumenical resource to our congregation!

We hope that you come and take advantage of this underutilized asset of the church when our building is fully open again! If you would like to donate any books to the library, feel free to see Pastor Kari.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES: GRACE'S CLOSET, A CLOTHING MINISTRY LOCATED AT GRACE and CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH IN BUTLER, PA, AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Eric Kofmehl, Facilitator

Through our Social Ministry Committee, we have been providing clothing to the free clothing site at Grace @ Calvary Lutheran Church in Butler, PA for many years.

In 2016 we donated over 166 bags of clothing. In 2017 we had 223 bags of clothing. In addition that year, through our partnership with St. John's Preschool we had a Fall Clothing Drive for age's birth to teens. We gathered an additional 146 of clothing for a total of 369 bags in 2017. In 2018, we continued our Fall Clothing Drive with St. John's Preschool and added a new partner in our ministry, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Glenshaw, PA (Pastor Dan Smail's congregation). Our 2018 Fall Clothing collected a combined total of 191 bags. In addition, in 2018 we collected over 306 bags of clothing through our St. John's regular drives during the year, for a 2018 grand total of 497 bags.

In 2019, we collected over 318 bags at St. John's through our donation closet. Our Preschool and Church Fall Clothing Drive, with Bethlehem Lutheran Church, collected an additional 144 bags that year. As a result, 2019's grand total was an amazing 462 bags. We have a cumulative total for 2016-2019 of 1494 bags. Due to the Coronavirus we made just a couple trips to Butler and collected 74 bags. We recently learned that due to the pandemic and the aging of their outstanding ladies involved in Butler, they will not be continuing the clothing ministry. Grace @ Calvary Lutheran Church expressed their "thanks for helping people less fortunate" over the many, many years. What a special partnership we have with these area congregations to share what we have with others!

We recently partnered with Pastor Tony Schneck from Trinity Lutheran Church in Gibsonia in order to connect with a new site for clothing donations. We made one drop off in December 2020 and checked out their facilities. They have a nice area to distribute the clothing and provide opportunities to other non-profit groups like Abiding Ministry, located in a Mt. Oliver area of Pittsburgh.

Blessed Bundles is another new opportunity that we have become involved in through the WELCA benevolence project for the SWPA synod. We had a great initial drive involving diapers and other supplies that are desperately needed by many families in Irwin, Pa. Blessed Bundles is a synod initiative that is located at the Lutheran Church of Our Savior. Carole Helvig, Marge Miller and Kathy Kofmehl each made a trip to Irwin, with filled SUVs . They checked out the facilities and reported that they do an outstanding ministry.

VISION STATEMENT for St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland

Our Mission:

In short, it is, ***"Making Christ Known."***

Our longer version of our **mission statement** is:

"St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland is a Christ-centered, multi-generational community; welcoming and uniting diverse individuals; helping each to find their place; growing and strengthening one another's faith; supporting each other in times of need; and energizing all for service, witness, and benevolence in our congregation, our community, the greater church, and the world at large."

Our Vision Statement is the specific ways that we seek to live out our mission statement.

While we do many things towards this goal already, when a congregation does a visioning process it is to think of new ways to expand the mission in the days to come.

We were blessed at St. John's of Highland a few years ago to have the **CAT survey** which allowed us to get a sense of where our congregation was at in relation to our ministry. Once again, the three goals that were usually strong for our church were:

1. Expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those who may be underserved in our community. (i.e. homeless, immigrant, transient persons)
2. Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
3. Work as an advocate for social and institutional change so that society might better reflect the values of the Kingdom of God.

These goals were also taken into consideration as we formed our vision, along with the various ministry ideas shared in the CAT survey.

In the following pages you will find a complimentary vision statement that brings life to our mission and how we seek to live it out more fully. We hope that you are as excited as we are about living into the vision in the days to come!

Vision Statement for St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland

St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland feels called within the next five years to more fully live into our mission of "Making Christ Known" in the following ways:

As a **Christ-centered, multi-generational community** we have embraced our call to welcome all just as Christ has welcomed us. At the same time, we acknowledge that there is always room for growth as we seek to **unite diverse individuals** to not only better reflect the beautiful spectrum of people in our community and world, but also to grow in empathy and respect for one another. Therefore, we resolve to **work as advocates for social and institutional change so that we might better reflect the values of the Kingdom of God** by:

Quarterly Sunday School adult event in Highland Hall that help to educate about those who may be underserved in our community

One topic an event, could bring in speakers

Bring both adult classes together, along with High School class

Topics could include people who are food insecure, those who are homeless, immigrant, **people of color**, LGBTQIA+ etc. In addition, a series on other faith traditions, seeking leadership for this from Pastor Don Green, former Christian Associates director

1 year goal

Advertising church, services, and activities through community magazines and papers

Ask Evangelism committee to manage

Inquire about advertising in North Journal, In North Allegheny, and the McCandless Town Crier

Include updating the website and include key words for Google searches

1 year goal

Educate members on the need for evangelism

Temple talks encouraging invitation

1 year goal

Engage senior living communities in our primary service area

Contact senior living communities with streaming information and other resources at St. John's

1 year goal

Find ways to promote Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

Task initially to the Evangelism Committee and Social Ministry Committee

1-3 year goal

Support families with children with special needs/partner with Glade Run

Training for volunteers for Sunday School

Cry room enhancement and childcare at 8:15 am service

Monthly worship service for families with children on the autism spectrum

Add Glade Run Services to resource database

3 year goal

Give space to community support groups as able and add these and others at neighboring ministries to database

Give space as needed and available

3 year goal for creating database

Concert series

Create a faith theme or season theme

Involve Galbraiths with planning

3 year goal

Signage - on exterior of property, and update to an electronic road sign to advertise more effectively

\$20,000-\$25,000 investment

3-5 year goal

As a church whose mission it is to [help each to find their place and to grow and strengthen one another's faith](#), we know that this is a continual process that needs to be considered regularly as individual member's call to ministry can change over time, new members can become a part of the congregation who need to be integrated into the ministry, and everyone's faith continues to grow throughout one's life and therefore needs to be nourished along the way. Therefore, we resolve to work to [energize all for service, witness, and benevolence in our congregation](#) in the following ways:

Help members discern their gifts and how to use them

Move people from passive to active participants
Expand asking specific members to do specific tasks
Get others involved - expand leadership
Ministry fair with gifts assessment
1-3 year goal

Bible studies, social activities, and support groups for various groups of people

i.e. Widows/widowers, people who are divorced, single people, weight loss group, **book group exploring contemporary religious literature to include authors from underserved communities such as authors of color, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, etc...**
Do Survey Monkey or some other survey format to gauge need and interest
Recruit organizer(s) to implement groups that have a critical mass to begin
1 year goal

Create a prayer chain and a corresponding prayer gathering once a month

Mass email system to prayer chain for immediate prayer needs
Prayer gathering once a month to pray for those on prayer list
Include a monthly topic for prayer in addition to prayer list
1 year goal

Combined services a few times a year

Food and fellowship to follow these and perhaps periodically after regular services
1-3 year goal

Reinvigorate Somewhere In Betweeners social group for empty nesters and above

1 year goal

Make the Halos group known to our members (a social group for widows)

1 year goal

Address the challenges of raising children and having family friendly ministries

Reinvigorate the Young Families group
1-3 year goal

Stronger teen ministry (confirmation through high school)

Continue teen game night and build on its strength, adding other activities
Survey teens to see what they want
1-3 year goal

Program for married couples - discussion group to learn from each other and navigate life, 2x a year

Advertise Marriage Encounter weekends or other retreats offered at places like Lutherlyn
1-3 year goal

Mentoring Program

Create a list of individuals from the congregation with various jobs and degrees and hobbies who are willing to share their experience and knowledge with others (i.e. finance, law, architecture, business, insurance, education, the arts ...)
Make the congregation aware of this resource if someone is looking for advice as they discern a career choice, or as they re-invent themselves in a new industry, College students could benefit, as well as international students and families
Could also mentor navigating North Hills to those new to the area
Possible career mentoring fair
1 year goal

Tutoring Service: free tutoring for those who need help but can't afford a private tutor

Involve retirees, current educators, other students

Expand Cumberland Kids - involve more high schoolers as helpers

Technology instruction on mobile devices in general and how to use for church needs

Link page on website for "how to" instruction with technology

Need coordinator for technology and mentoring programs to connect people together

1-3 year goal

As a congregation we are passionate about [supporting each other in times of need as well as finding ways to energize all for service, witness, and benevolence](#) beyond our congregation, [to those in our community, greater church, and the world at large](#). Therefore, we resolve to [develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life's circumstances, as well as expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those who may be underserved in our community](#) in the following ways:

Backpack food ministry for students on free lunch program

Involve youth with making cards or pictures for bags

Involvement not only with donations but with packing bags

1 year goal

Cumberland Kids service projects also done in Sunday School

Build upon projects and add to what is already happening with Sunday School

Find volunteers to manage

1 year goal

Expand "A Need for Joy" ministry

Partner with other congregation(s) to help more children in Tanzania

1 year goal

Service projects in community/family community service opportunities

Partner with the synod's Stay at Home Mission Work Camp

Partner with the Neighborhood Resilience Project to support our neighbors of color and others

1-3 year goal

Increase partnership and relationship with the Lutheran congregation in Tanzania where the Bukambu family are members

3 year goal

Ministry to veterans

Create a database of resources not just for veterans, but including them - link to website

Recruit volunteers to serve as advocates for those who need help accessing resources

3 year goal

Partner with NHCO, NCM, and North Hills Community Baptist Church to support and expand immigrant ministry

Add ministries to resource database

Continue to find ways to partner in ministry with those who may be underserved in our community

Program to help immigrants learn English

Citizenship exam study program

Ride share program

3 year goal

Ministry to some of the homeless tent villages in Pittsburgh

Investigate current ministries to this population

Bring food/resources to the people regularly as a way to engage and support

Share resources for members to have on hand as they interact with the homeless community

3 year goal

Make our current “Adopt a Family” ministry known in discreet ways to the congregation

1 year goal

Consider “adopting an individual or family” outside the congregation

Consult with community ministry organizations for individuals or families who might benefit

Possible 5 year goal

Free quarterly community dinner

Managed like the shelter meal where different committees partner and host

Build community with neighbors and provide food and fellowship for those who are alone

5 year goal

Prison ministry

Help with job mentorship and getting professional clothes for a new start following incarceration.

Check with chaplain for established ministries that could be supported

5 year goal

This vision statement will serve as a guide for us in the next 5 years as we work together at “Making Christ Known” at St. John’s Lutheran Church of Highland. At the same time, we know from recent experience that maintaining an adaptive mindset is a vital thing to do in this process, not knowing what may take place in our world in the days ahead, and at the same time always knowing that the Spirit will continue to guide us in our ministry. May we therefore embrace this Vision Statement in light of the Reformation which formed our denomination, holding fast to our foundation in God’s Word, all while being open to how God is calling us to experience and live out that Word anew.