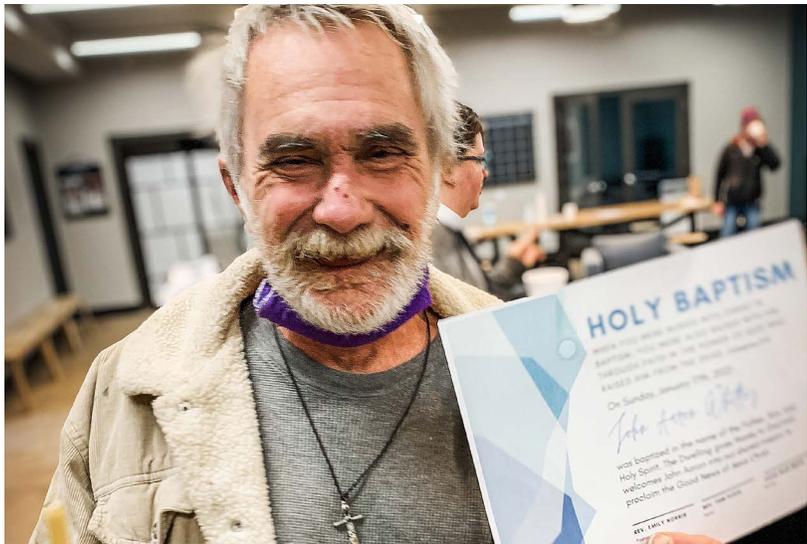


# ANNUAL REPORT

2021



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP

*Elizabeth  
Eaton*

Dear friends in Christ,

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.

*Elizabeth A. Eaton*

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

“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.”

# **Annual Report for 2021**

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# Annual Report for 2021

## Congregational Meeting, January 23, 2022

### AGENDA

- |          |  |                |
|----------|--|----------------|
| 12:15 PM | Zoom Meeting Begins, People Sign In, then Call to Order  |                |
| 12:30 PM | Opening Prayer and a Welcoming Word from Wiese   | Pastor Wiese   |
| 12:40 PM | Quorum/Voting Req/ Video Mtg Etiquette   | Rick Burnett   |
| 12:45 PM | Approve Previous Meeting Minutes   | Rick Burnett   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vote #1 to approve ___6/6/2021 Congregational Mtg Minutes</li><li>• Vote #2 to approve _____CY 2021 Annual Report</li></ul>              |                |
| 12:55 PM | FY 2022 First 6-month Financial Snapshot   | Mark Bunker    |
| 1:05 PM  | Elections  | Rick Burnett   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vote #3 to approve ___3 new Church Council Members</li><li>• Vote #4 to approve ___Election of Synod Assembly</li></ul>                  |                |
| 1:15 PM  | Update on Council and Year in Recap  | Rick Burnett   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Back to Worship Survey</li><li>• Highlights from the Annual Report</li><li>• Staffing – Optimizing for Changing Ministry Needs</li></ul> |                |
| 1:30 PM  | Closing Prayer   | Pastor Beecher |



## Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting Minutes Sunday January 24, 2021

The semi-annual COS Congregational Meeting was held via Zoom video conference. The COS constitution states that a 10% quorum of COS members must be present in order to conduct any congregational votes. Current active COS membership is 513 people, meaning that at least 51 members must be present to conduct votes. Meeting attendance was determined to be 70.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Don Livingston.

Senior Pastor Fritz Wiese provided the opening prayer.

Don explained the meeting agenda, Roberts Rules of Order, and Zoom best practices.

Pastor Fritz offered the following opening comments:

- He was grateful for all the various people within COS that Jesus calls to lead His ministry.
- He thanked the staff for their diligent efforts throughout the ongoing pandemic.
- He talked about the Apple Tree Society, and noted the sizable contribution that Mechtild Vogt had designated to COS for the enrichment of both the traditional and contemporary worship experiences.
- He thanked Don Livingston and Bernice Huie (outgoing COS Council members) and Keenan Anderson (outgoing Personnel Committee leader) for their dedicated service to COS.

Don presented each ministry's annual report to the congregation and made a motion that the reports would be accepted. Molly Breckling seconded. **The congregation unanimously approved.**

### **Finance Report:** Mark Bunker

Mark gave the following assessment of COS's current financial operations:

- Mark stated that current giving through the first half of the fiscal year was down 16% from the budget. Expenses, however, were also below budget by 12%.
  - He noted that income tends to be higher the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the year, and expenses higher 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - If needed, unrealized investment income of approximately \$40k (rise in value of investments) could be realized through the sale of some investments.
  - He discussed the \$109.5k PPP loan that COS applied for and received last year. New guidelines from the federal government would allow for the entire loan to be forgiven, meaning that COS would not have to pay any of it back. The PPP money, designated specifically towards personnel and mortgage costs, has been fully used.
  - He predicted that current trends indicate that COS would finish the fiscal year with a \$45k shortfall.
- \*\*Question from James Callison—He asked about the number of members who pre-pandemic gave their offerings in the offering plate have updated their giving plan to automatic e-giving.
- \*\*Comment from Paul Talbout—Paul pointed out the PPP forgiveness is not a gift from the government, but rather from us, our kids and grandkids.



### **Nominations:** Don

Don presented Brad Harris, Carol Jensen-Linton, and Scott Bosecker to be installed on the COS Council.

A motion was made by Don, and seconded by Bernice Huie to accept these nominations. **The motion passed the congregation unanimously.**

Don then presented Linda Volckmann and Eli Anderson to represent COS at the Synod assembly in June 2021. Motion by Don, seconded by Sue Byers. **The congregation voted 69-1 in favor.**

### **Updates from Council and Yearly Recap:** Don

-A preliminary report was made to the congregation about the recent congregational survey. Several questions bore additional highlight:

-When asked if they would recommend COS to others, the responses were:

-2018: 53% yes

-2019: 48% yes

-2020: 33% yes

This indicates a growing group of members with concerns about the church. If this is a reality, it was asked for members to approach a member of council or staff with their concerns, or to volunteer in areas that would help COS alleviate the concern.

-Good things noted by the survey included: special music and communion.

-Priorities for the congregation included: worship experiences, serve people in need, and creating and Evangelism plan.

-Highlights from the past year include:

-3 rounds of volunteer call-trees reaching out to all members to determine any pastoral care needs.

-The return of in-person worship, and the great work of the Moving Forward team.

-How COS was finding a way to continue social services and continue improvements at Palmetto Road.

-That COS was committed to providing the resources, facilities and staffing to care for our congregation throughout the pandemic and beyond.

-The development of a communications plan to reach external audiences, bolstered by a \$116k online ad grant from Google (up to \$10k per month).

### **COS Governing Documents:** Don

-It has been a long number of years since COS updated its governing documents (Constitution, By-Laws and Continuing Resolutions). Through the very diligent efforts of Bob Spruck to parse through over a decades-worth of updates from the Synod, a comprehensive list of potential updates was considered by the Council.

-Definitions:

-Constitution: Overarching governance document for the form and function of the church. Specific wording in the constitution is dictated by the ELCA.

-By Laws: Measures approved by the congregation to amend or clarify the constitution, or explain specific local church functions.

-Continuing Resolutions: Similar to By-Laws, but may be approved by the church council.

-Motion: A motion was made by Don Livingston and seconded by Molly Breckling to institute a total of nine (9) proposed changes to COS's governing documents.

-Discussion:

-Karl Dietmeyer spoke against BL 13.06.01, which would eliminate the Worship and Music Committee. Karl made a motion to amend BL13.06.01, CR13.06.A11 and CR 13.06.I11 to remove language that would eliminate the Worship and Music committee. The motion was seconded by Sue Byers and **the congregation passed the motion by hand vote.**

-Jonie Siebert asked about a proposed update to BL 8.03, which would change a procedure governing the removal of inactive members from the roles from using the word “shall” to using “may” be removed. Pastor Fritz clarified that the update gave the staff some latitude to handle each case individually, rather than having to follow a blanket requirement. When asked what the removal process was, Pastor Fritz responded that in practice it “wasn’t hard and fast,” and that the staff tried to look at all the variables of each individual situation. Pastor Miriam concurred. Don L. added that in practice COS was not complying with the language of the original by-law, so this update would bring COS’s governing documents in-line with its actual practices. Pastor Miriam stated that the goal was to ensure connections with people, not to purge people from our ranks.

-Vote. With discussion complete, **the motion** to accept the amended By-Laws and Continuing Resolutions made by Don, and seconded by Eric Jakubowski, **was passed by the congregation 56-7.**

### **Two Sparrows Village Update**

-Don presented an update from Two Sparrows Village that they had begun a partnership with Christian City to build housing at that location. TSV would still like to partner with COS in some reduced capacity at the COS Palmetto Road location, but plans were currently not developed.

-Motion: Don made a motion, seconded by Molly Breckling to extend TSV’s Option to Lease agreement with COS for one more year due to time lost during the COVID pandemic.

-Discussion: Buddy Troy asked if the extended Option to Lease would allow COS to develop the property. Eric Jakubowski noted that the Option would only mean that COS would not be able to lease the property to any other entity, but it wouldn’t preclude our own use or development of it.

-Vote: **The congregation voted 60-4 in favor of the motion.**

### **Admin**

-James Callison mentioned that we needed some way to differentiate church business versus regular weekly Constant Contact correspondence. Using separate stand-alone emails or mailing announcement postcards were suggested as potential solutions.

The regular Congregational Meeting was drawn to a close.

## Endowment Fund

Scott Bosecker

-Scott spoke to the congregation as part of the requirement to provide an annual report and to gain congregational approval for the allotment of endowment funds.

-A motion was made by Scott and seconded by Pastor Miriam for 4 COS members (Scott Bosecker, Bob Spruck, Bob Blackburn and Kevin Hawkins) to serve on the Board of Directors of the COS Mission Endowment Fund. **The congregation unanimously approved the motion.**

-Scott then provided an update of the fund's assets. Assets at the end of 2020 equaled \$60,829.66. Of that, \$4,157.24 would be available for distributions. Scott suggested that the congregation allocate the available money as follows:

-40% local: Joshua's Gift and the COS Preschool

-30% Regional: Midwest Food Bank

-30% National: Hope for Justice (Human Trafficking awareness and prevention)

-Scott made a motion, seconded by Karl Dietmeyer, to distribute the funds as noted above. **The congregation approved the motion via a hand vote.**

Pastor Miriam thanked all COS members that have stepped up to serve over the past year, and offered the closing prayer.

The next scheduled Congregational Meeting will be held in June 2021 to approve the FY2021-22 annual budget.

## **Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church**

### **Congregational Meeting Minutes Sunday June 6, 2021**

The semi-annual COS Congregational Meeting was held both in person and via Zoom video conference. The COS constitution states that a 10% quorum of COS members must be present in order to conduct any congregational votes. Current active COS membership is 519 members, meaning that at least 52 members must be present to conduct votes. Meeting attendance was determined to be 73 – 42 in person and 31 via zoom. Eric Jakubowski welcomed zoom members and explained the video process. The meeting was called to order by Council President Rick Burnett. Senior Pastor Fritz Wiese provided the opening prayer.

#### **Quorum/Voting Req/ Video Mtg Etiquette**

Rick explained the meeting agenda, Roberts Rules of Order, voting requirements and Zoom best practices. Eric Jakubowski went over online voting procedures. Sue Byers and Eric will handle online voting.

#### **Vote to approve 1/24/2021 Congregational Mtg Minutes**

1<sup>st</sup> order of business was the approval of the minutes from the January 24, 2021 congregational meeting. Rick made the following motion: the congregation approves the January 24, 2021 Congregational Meeting minutes as submitted. Scott Bosecker seconded the motion. After no further discussion the congregation unanimously approved the minutes.

#### **Vote to ratify Constitution changes approved 1/24/2021**

Rick then explained the 4 step process for updating the COS governing documents. During the January 24 congregational meeting, the congregation approved by a vote of 56-7 various changes to Governance documents as recommended by the church council. After being approved during the meeting, those changes were submitted by Brad Harris, the council secretary, to the synod's constitutional expert, Pastor Chilton. Rick reported that confirmation had been received the previous week that all changes were approved without any modifications. At this point Rick made the following motion.

Move, for the congregation to ratify the changes made and approved to our Constitution at the January 24, 2021 Congregational Meeting and approved by the Synod without any modifications required.

Scott Bosecker seconded the motion. After no further discussion, the congregation unanimously approved the motion to ratify COS constitution.

Buddy Troy then asked the congregation to recognize Bob Spruck on his extensive work and time spent on the recording and researching of the COS governing documents.

#### **FY 2021 Financial Snapshot**

##### **Finance Report: Mark Bunker**

Mark first recognized the finance team and the work that they do.

Mark gave the following assessment of COS's current financial operations:

Mark stated that the revenue forecast for the year is 872k, a 15% decline from previous year. Expenses are estimated at 907k 11% down from last year. The biggest savings in expenses were the absence of the mortgage and lower facility costs due to the pandemic. A loss of 35k is predicted for the fiscal year. However, with the PPP cares act loan of 109,500 being fully forgiven thus reducing expenses, we are predicted to have a surplus

of 74k at the end of June. The cumulative gain/loss from the past 6 years is 61k with the PPP loan forgiveness

Mark presented the balance sheet with total assets at 3.7 million. This number includes dedicated funds of 541k that are separate from the operating budget and include call to action funds, reserves for various ministries as worship and music and special gifts. The net equity after the restricted funds is 3 million. He mentioned that the land/building assets are valued at purchased cost. He once again mentioned that the PPP loan was fully forgiven.

Don Livingston then mentioned that with the loan we were able to keep 100% of personnel engaged.

In comparing the predicted income to the budget, the 872k in revenue is 13% less than budget and the 906k in expenses is 10% less than budget. The savings in the budget is mainly due to personnel as we budget each year for having a full team throughout the year, but with turnover throughout the year, the personnel expenses are reduced. Also, due to the pandemic, facility costs are lower since we had discontinued in person activities at the church.

### **FY 2022 Proposed Budget Review and Vote**

Mark then explained the budget process with Finance Team working with the pastors and staff and council starting in February.

This year's revenue is budgeted at 932 which assumes a 6.9% increase. Mark mentioned that this is still fairly conservative on the revenue side.

The expenses are budgeted at 1 million and was derived from looking at the 2019 numbers (pre-pandemic). This leaves a deficit of 75k for the year. After the FY21 forecast carry over surplus of 45k (which includes the PPP loan), the projected FY22 ending carry over deficit is 29k.

Key changes from 2020 to 2021 are as follows, the assumption that COS will be fully staffed throughout the year and that the facility will be open.

Mark then mentioned the new IT committee and recognized the savings that have occurred through their research and actions that have kept our expenses within our budget.

Key projects were also mentioned, mainly the painting and repair of the steeple, the costs spanning over current fiscal year and next. (5k this year and 12k budgeted for next). Another project is the ongoing replacement of the HVAC units. The replacement of 2 units is included in the budget.

Mark then made the following motion:

Christ Our Shephard Congregation Council moves that the fiscal year 2022 budget be approved as presented. Chip Beard seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Update on this Year's Objectives and Plans**

#### **FMT Update on Palmetto Road**

Rick then turned the meeting over to Lisa Manthey for an update of Facilities Management committee. She acknowledged the work that the committee has done this past year. Some improvements she highlighted on the palmetto Road property are as follows:

The new wooden fence has been completed.

The camp store has been refurbished with a space for the cross ministry. Well has been drilled and water found. The septic system at the property was looked at and deemed not useable. At this time, that issue is at a stop – not sure what the next steps will be with the question of bathroom facilities. They are still checking on what we can do.

### Sanctuary Improvement Project

With no questions, the meeting was turned over to Mike Oliver on the sanctuary improvement project. Mike mentioned there is a team of around 21 people that meet to dream/vision of what can be done to enhance the sanctuary. Some items they have discussed are to improve the music quadrant, altar configuration and positioning of the cross above the alter, stain glass windows, new flooring etc. Currently there is 59k still in restricted funds remaining from the previous year gift designated for worship and music along with 19k in the budget for worship and music projects. One project is for the lighting to be updated in the sanctuary. The plan is to replace the lighting with different bulbs and cans to diffuse and improve the lighting. They will first replace 4 to see if there is an improvement, then if lighting is improved, the rest will be replaced. At this time, the lighting and hiring of an acoustical consultant is in the budget. Other vision ideas will be presented to council for funding.

Don Livingston asked if the thought process is to stay within the funds given and budgeted. The answer is no but that any ideas that come up will be presented to council for approval and funding.

Mike then thanked David Beecher for all his hard work.

### Two Sparrows Village Status Report

With no further questions, the meeting was turned over to Chip Beard with an update on TSV. Chip mentioned that TSV has partnered with Christian City to create 4 apartments for disabled adults. At this time, COS has provided support by providing \$3000 for televisions for these apartments. As far as TSV and Palmetto Road property, the option to lease with TSV still exists, but there has been strong disapproval from the neighbors at Palmetto Road. COS and TSV will still pursue possible ways to utilize the palmetto property.

Buddy Troy mentioned that COS has worked with Christian City in the past to help and wondered if we can assist them in any way. Chip mentioned that they are contracting out groups to renovate the apartments and Delta has been a great resource. They do not really need help at this time, but if these 4 apartments work out, then there is more land at Christian City for them to expand and we could possibly help then.

With no other questions the meeting was turned back over to Rick.

### **Revisiting Survey Results to Judge Ongoing Progress**

Rick talked about the survey. Council has been reviewing and passing on to the pastors and staff the many points members made in the survey. Rick mentioned that the survey is good, but in the future will look at the possibility of better ways to get feedback. Perhaps with a smaller and more focused surveys next year.

### **Closing remarks**

In closing Rick recognized Jane Troy and the summer sack lunch program and how great it is. He also thanked Mary Brunso on her updates and data on the State and Fayette and Coweta counties COVID related statistics to the Staff and Council in order for them to make informed decisions throughout the year. At this time Fayette county is at .4% and Coweta county is at 2.7%.

He also recognized Brad Milburn in replacing Bill Porter as COS Director of Technology.

With no further business Rick turned the meeting over to Pastor Miriam. Pastor Miriam then closed the meeting with prayer.

## SENIOR PASTOR'S REPORT 2021

Pastor Fritz Wiese

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” John 1.5*

**Darkness is real.** John's gospel is true. We began and ended the year in the darkness of two different strains of Covid causing culture-wide cancellations. The darkness of Covid disconnected us from each other, dampened the resources equipping Jesus' ministry, stressed leaders and lay alike, decreased worship attendance, and on and on.



Yet, John's gospel declares the truth emphasizing that **THERE IS A LIGHT** which shines in the darkness, offering life and hope. The Light of Christ!

**Willingness to adapt** is woven into our faith DNA. Mary and Joseph expected lodging in the inn; they adapted and found lodging in the stable. The magi expected to connect with royalty in the capital Jerusalem; they adapted and found the savior in a barn. Jesus's parents anticipated returning to their hometown; they adapted as emigrating refugees "isolating" in Egypt until the virus of Herod's hatred abated. So, too, COS adapted and thrived in 2021.

- Yes, we held neither of our beloved Moravian Love Feasts in the Sanctuary these last two years. But some raved that last year's pre-recorded hybrid service of dazzling musical ensembles was their favorite feast yet!
- Yes, Covid discouraged giving so our offerings are 8% under projections. But COS gave an eye-popping and heart-swelling \$17,500 in the Hoops for Haiti fundraiser (only to be barely edged out by a church double our size) and we've prudently navigated expenditures.
- Yes, our indoor facility saw less use. But our Palmetto Road property rocked with creative worship events, a sensational Family Oktoberfest, and campfires of song and faith-building.
- Yes, in-person worship attendance was down, but 10 new families sought life enrichment through membership at COS in the last quarter of the year and new out-of-state worshipers join us online.
- Yes, world news discouraged. But in our Lenten "Fruitful Living" series we determinedly embraced via Zoom groups and worship how the Holy Spirit gifts the world through our love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, self-control, gentleness, goodness, and faithfulness.
- Yes, we don't know the status of some COS families despite our best efforts to keep all our precious congregation connected. But over 140 family units offered a faith-giving intent in our Following Jesus to Abundant Waters campaign, the most in recent history!



On and on, we can describe how the darkness dampened areas of ministry. But clearly at COS the light of Christ has not been overcome. Jesus's light is shining for all to see—amid and through us!

Time won't permit you to re-read my weekly Words from Wiese. Time won't permit you to re-listen to all the sermons prepared by your pastors. Time won't permit you to re-view all the pictures capturing the ministry moments of all ages and those throughout our local, regional, and global partners. How deeply we wish to convey moments of encouragement, celebration, and loving challenge.

This annual report will have to suffice, this snapshot of the massive ministry movie God produced and directed this past year on the COS set. I thank each of YOU for playing your role in this God-story, worshipers, singers, lunch-packers, check-writers, bellringers, AV-overseers, ministry-movers, encouragement-launchers, greeters,

and ushers. On and on! God uses YOU, a wonderful cast in a dynamic script in a story of LIGHT shining in DARKNESS.

As happens in congregations, we bid farewell to faithful key actors that God calls to new roles. On Good Friday, Bill Porter accepted a call to return to North Carolina, “head-hunted” for his amazing work launching our technology ministries. In early fall, Director of Contemporary Ministry Sandra Bohlken stepped down to home school both her boys amid Covid concerns. In late 2021, Communications Coordinator Shelley Casey concluded her dynamic run to have more time for parenting and grandparenting, while Director of Youth & Family Melissa Jacobson finished her second COS stint to start serving Jesus kids with autism. COS is richer for each of their wondrous commitments and serving tenures. We pray Godspeed for each of them. We also give thanks to God in sending us new magi with fresh amazing gifts like Brad Milburn as Director of Technologies for Worship and Presentations and Laura Hawkins as Interim Communications Coordinator. Council President Rick Burnett and VP Sue Byers invest hours upon hours as they faithfully steer the council’s oversight with inspiring good humor, effectiveness, and optimism. Additionally, how grateful we are to the dynamic Pastor Miriam and the rest of our top-notch staff. **Words can’t describe their value and contributions.**



In addition to the joy of my pastoral duties at COS and as one of our synod’s deans, it was my delight to be asked to co-chair the ELCA Senior Pastors of Larger Congregations Conference. So, in early May, our COS team helped me host an all-day seminar in Puerto Zoomo, entitled “Gracism.” With the dynamic keynote speaker, Dr. David Anderson, joining us via stream, pastors and church staff nationwide explored how Lutheran churches can maximize Jesus’ inclusion and how with the “G” of God’s grace, challenges like racism can be transformed into opportunities for love. What a timely message that was so powerful for our days. How proud I was of our COS team to execute superbly the first-of-its-kind seminar for the ELCA Senior Pastors Conference!

Some reports from church experts predict we now live in a post-Covid 30-40-30 world where 30% of church-going Americans have left congregational connections and aren’t coming back, 30% of Christians are dedicated to building into this new reality, and 40% are up in the air. We’ll see.

As for this COS Annual Report 2021, you can decide for yourself. I hope you will join me in giving thanks to God for each story and picture! Luke Skywalker and Yoda had their work cut out for them shining light against the dark forces. **In 2021 we experienced real darkness. But there was light at COS!** And you helped Jesus shine it!

Following light amid the darkness,  
Pastor Fritz Wiese  
COS Senior Pastor





## Associate Pastor Annual Report 2021

Miriam Beecher

In the old, but not forgotten, Star Trek Series, it often began with the voice of Captain James T. Kirk speaking a critical entry into his Captain's log. This series made its debut in 1966, more than a decade before most parents of the COS youth and children were even born. Yet, somehow, the Star Trek Series has had staying power and has given us iconic characters to this day, such as the Vulcan Spock, the Iowa-born Captain Kirk, Sulu, Scotty, Bones McCoy, Uhura and so many more. Remember the Captain's log? In the future 2268, 35-year-old Captain Kirk recorded: "*Captain's log. Stardate 4513.3. After having been taken over by an android, the Enterprise has been under way at warp seven for four days. Now we are entering orbit around a planet which has never been charted.*"

Okay, perhaps it's a crazy way to begin an annual report for posterity, but then again, it has been crazy since March 13, 2020. We have been making our way through a world we've never before charted – "doing" ministry in a world [*"planet"*] taken over by a pandemic [*"Android" = Covid?*]. We've adopted words to encourage and challenge ourselves, such as PIVOT, ADAPT, CREATE. We have warp-speed pushed ourselves to take leaps trying new ways to do big things. It has come at a cost, financially, physically, emotionally, and at times spiritually. Yet, here's something beautiful and amazing: by the grace and love of God, the congregation, council, leaders and the pastors/staff have not given up on charting our way through this pandemic life.

I haven't read many future entries Capt Kirk made in his Captain's log, but I do know some of ours at COS. From leaders, staff, and pastors we make our entries into the COS log: "Year 2021, Stardate unknown..." Please take time to read, enjoy, and give thanks for the great reports in this document. You will find many reasons to celebrate!!

*COS Associate Pastor Annual Report Log. Date 2021. What follows are some of the beautiful and amazing things from yet another warp-speed year through the previously uncharted path.*

### **CARING MINISTRIES**

Through these months of less in-person opportunities it is so easy to miss major events in people's lives. It is too easy to not hear about a surgery, death in the family, medical test or treatment, and any number of needs for prayer. Thank God, indeed, thank the Lord that at COS there is a Pastoral Care Team and multiple avenues of prayer and care that are part of the fabric of this church. Do people and their needs "fall through the cracks" sometimes? Yes, they do, but NEVER do we want that to happen. Help us out and let us know how we can all help and pray for each other.

*SPECIAL "CALL-OUTS" OF THANKS TO specific caring ministries...*

### **PASTORAL CARE TEAM**

A team of five plus the pastors. A weekly leader sends cards, prays, and follows up with people included on the weekly prayers. What an amazing compassionate group of women with excellent follow-through and generosity. THANK YOU, Pastoral Care Team!

### **FUNERAL RECEPTION TEAM**

During the first year of the pandemic many memorial services were graveside or a small group, with no reception. In 2021, worship services to celebrate the life of a loved one have taken many forms – graveside, at church in-person in the sanctuary, spread out in the narthex, columbarium, on-line, or perhaps delayed. Some of these celebrations have included a light reception of punch and cookies. Someone from the reception has always stepped in to help offer this act of hospitality and care. THANK YOU, Funeral Reception Team!

### ***SENIOR CONNECTIONS***

A team with perseverance and unceasing joy in their hearts...that's one way I would describe this group of caregivers. This group follows up and keeps following up with folks in the "senior" time of life. In-person, cards, emails, texts, flowers, and recently there have been opportunities to visit with some "seniors" in-person. Haven't we all missed being connected to people? Senior Connections keeps that goal close to heart. THANK YOU, Senior Connections Team!

### ***MEAL TEAM***

Perhaps calling this group a team falls short of the meaning of "team." They don't have meetings or make meal plans together, so to speak, or do they? 😊 This I do know, they are but an email or phone call away. All I have to do is make a request of the coordinator of the "team" and she takes it from there. It fascinates and delights me that there are people who will put together a meal for a person/family at a moment's notice. This is one more indication of the depth and breadth of care that runs through the lifeblood of this congregation. THANK YOU, Meal Team!

### ***PRAYER SHAWL TEAM***

Pre-pandemic a group of ambitious, talented women came together every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month to work on their latest masterpiece of knitting, crocheting, or sewing. Lots of talking and laughing with this bunch and "oh, my," what beautiful work they do!! One powerful thing about the Shawl ministry is that someone can be a part of the group even if the person can't come to the church for whatever reason. This group has remained connected to each other and produced piece after piece to wrap a person with prayer, care and love. THANK YOU, Prayer Shawl Team!

### ***CROSS MINISTRY***

A faithful group of cross makers work throughout the year in their special room at palmetto Road. They forge crosses and crosses and more crosses to share locally and, in some instances, globally. Take one if you need one – NO, TAKE TWO and share!! THANK YOU, Cross Team!

### ***SOCIAL SERVICES MINISTRY***

"Blessed to be a blessing" needs to be the unofficial vision statement of this varied and ever adapting generous faithful group of people. It makes sense to say so, because indirectly the entire congregation IS this ministry – ministry of the month, bread run, and on and on! THANK YOU to the multiple teams of Social Services!!

### ***PRECHOOL***

There is a famous children's book called, "The Little Engine that Could." It shines with the message about the value of optimism, hard work, and the power of encouraging each other and cheering people on. That's the COS Preschool in a nutshell. The staff, families, and most of the children embody optimism and care for one another. THANK YOU COS Preschool!!

### ***CHOIRS, SMALL GROUPS, HIGHS-N-LOWS, STAFF, CONGREGATION, AND WORSHIP***

A "claim" I heard in a lecture provides a statement pointing to the power of caring ministries. Here's the claim: I heard a renowned preacher once say that 75% of the care that most people receive in their lives doesn't come from counselors, professionals, or books, but worship and music, Word and Sacrament, and the life-caring that comes from a congregation. I doubt there has been an actual study rallied to prove or disprove such a claim, but I see the truth of that audacious claim in this congregation! How? Through the caring ministry that happens in *choirs, youth-children-family ministries, small groups, highs-n-lows, staff, congregation, worship, and every social service project, disaster team, mission opportunity, and all.* THANK YOU ALL!!

### ***WEEKLY WORSHIP-LOGISTICS WORSHIP TEAMS- USHERS, GREETERS, ALTAR GUILD, TECH TEAM***

Have you ever been responsible for gathering a team to do something in church? Was it a one-time thing? More than a one-time occasion? What if it is a weekly thing, 52-times-a-year thing? Not so simple, yet two men for years have done just that for traditional worshippers – gathered volunteers on a weekly basis: Greeters to welcome people at the door downstairs and Ushers to care for worshippers upstairs. What about a couple additional 52-times-a-year ministry? the coordinator for Altar Guild. volunteer gathers people to dress and undress the altar and various related details. A different volunteer does the same thing for contemporary worshippers, only when this coordinator is lining up that weekly person, the “ask” is for the volunteer to serve as greeter/usher/altar guild all three. One can imagine how GREATLY difficult and at times, discouraging for these leaders to put together a schedule. I am proud and thankful of these leaders AND those who serve the rest of us in these important ways! THANK YOU, Weekly Worship-Logistics Worship Teams!

### ***WEEKLY WORSHIP-TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY***

I began my report with the whimsical reference to Star Trek and wrote, “We have been making our way through a world we’ve never before charted – “doing” ministry in a world [“planet”] taken over by a pandemic. This is most evident in our worship life, with the vast number of changes, adjustments, and extensive effort on the part of worship staff (and pastors.) I have refrained from mentioning names, but MUST say how GRATEFUL I am, we ALL are, for the faithful ministry of our 2021 worship staff Sandra Bohlken, Bill Porter, David Beecher, Luanne Harms, and Dana Frick.

### ***TEXT TALK BIBLE STUDY GROUP***

This Bible group is a strong, spirited group of people who challenge and care for each other. They excitedly pursue questions and have fun doing so. There’s an old postal oath, Greeks and Persians old, that promises nothing will prevent the completion of their appointed rounds. I that kind of dedication is fitting for this Bible Study group. They take great joy in welcoming others to join the fun.

### ***BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP***

When offered the chance to read the entire Bible in a year and come together weekly to discuss it, people enthusiastically said, “YES.” As my dad might have said, “Well, ain’t that something!?” Yes, it is. It is a wonder to be the back up leader of this group during their discussions. The read-the-Bible-group started in September and will make it through Revelation before the end of May. At the time of this writing, the group has a few weeks before Jesus arrives on the scene.

### ***THE BIBLE PROJECT BIBLE STUDY GROUP***

This group of people began as a Lenten “Fruit Group,” who decided to stay together and head down a path of Bible study. It has evolved into something that none of our group want to miss. AND WE HOPE more people may discover it. A lot of great discussion, learning and a whole lot of laughing!

### ***SOMETHING PERSONAL***

There’s much more to say, but I have to stop at some point. Yet, I would be sorely remiss if I did not include a very personal THANK YOU to this wonderful congregation. Early in 2021, February 4, David and I lost our daughter-in-law Sunny Beecher to cancer. She was a fierce fighter and your prayers throughout the previous months showered Sunny and our son Drew with love and care. Since Sunny’s death, you have continued to ask about our family. From our sons Drew and Matt and from David and me, our hearts are full of gratitude for you.

May the Lord bless you and keep you and shine his love upon you and grant you his peace that passes understanding!

Faithfully Submitted with Love, Miriam E. Beecher

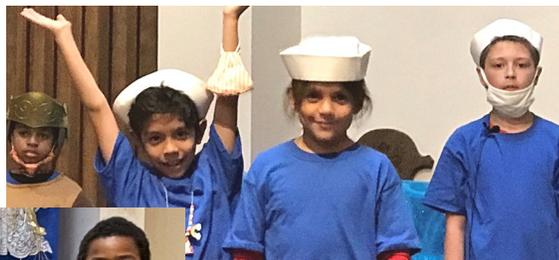
ANNUAL REPORT, Minister of Music

2021 was a “best of times, worst of times” year. Despite our hopes, Covid-19 made decisions for us at every turn. Zoom meetings were the rule. Some groups met or rehearsed outdoors, like **skiddles** here, pictured at the October MusicFest with their ← leader, Barbara Anderson.



Some, like our elementary-age **M&M's**, wore masks. Their spring musical, “The Story of Paul’s Shipwreck,” was videotaped and available online.

[Dante, Marcus, Evangeline, and Benjamin] →



The Christmas musical, “Glory to God in the Lowest,” got in under the wire, just before the Omicron variant took over.



[Marian, Breanna, Erin, Finn, Jack, Morgan, Jonas, Brooks, Dante, Andre]



[Froska and Breanna]



[Jack, Olivia, Brooks]

**Sanctuary Choir** video-recorded anthems for the Good Friday service. Love Feast musicians had planned to offer in-person services, and the final rehearsal was *exciting*. It was after that rehearsal, →

two days before the Love Feast, that essential musicians, including me, were diagnosed with Covid. After first postponing until January, Covid forced yet another delay, until Spring, when an all-season Love Feast is projected.

Mid-year losses of Bill Porter and then Sandra Bohlken, necessitated big changes. Both had contributed in a mighty way to our contemporary worship life. **Brad Milburn** became our tech director, and **Luanne Harms** and **Dana Frick** became the music leadership team. Already they all have proved to be great blessings! ↓[Robbi, Shelly, Eric, Shirley, Brad, Pastor Fritz]



[Dana, Luanne, and Kendra at MusicFest] ↓



So, what will 2022 bring?  
 “Normal” communion?  
 “Sheep” without masks?



Who can say? All I know is, it’s in God’s hands!

Respectfully submitted,

*David Beecher*



## Children and Family Ministry 2021

We had a wonderful year with the children and families of Christ our Shepherd Lutheran Church! Starting in September, we began in-person Sunday School for ages preschool-5<sup>th</sup> grade. We met each week in the Sanctuary at 9:45 am for opening music, offering, and prayers. We then moved to another location, often outside, to listen to our story, complete a craft, and have a snack/fellowship together! This program was made possible only by a wonderful group of volunteers who helped plan and facilitate Sunday School each week!

SKIDdles also continued this year using the parking lot as our new meet-up space! SKIDdles is a musical group for children who are 4 and 5 years old. This group was hosted by our wonderful and talented Barb Anderson. We sang, played, and had fun fellowship together each week. This group of children also participated in our Christmas Pageant this year.

Little Lambs was a new group this fall for parents, babies, toddlers and preschoolers! It was a weekly outdoor meet-up at All Children's Park. Little Lambs was an intergenerational group that met weekly to discuss a simple devotional all while having fellowship time together with our little ones. This group is looking forward to continuing into the winter and spring months ahead!

Children's ministry also called for some fun! In April, we hosted an Egg-stravaganza! The Saturday before Easter, we hosted an event in the parking lot where families could come together and collect candy-filled Easter eggs as well as complete lots of beautiful Easter-inspired crafts. The event concluded with a wonderful outdoor Easter vigil service. We plan to continue this event in 2022!



Summer was a busy time for the children and families for Christ our Shepherd as well! We began the summer hosting Vacation Bible School the first week of June. We had over 30 children in attendance and over 20 volunteers. It was a camping themed VBS with lots of fun music, Bible stories, crafts, games, and snacks! Soon after VBS, families were invited to attend Family Camp at LutherRanch in Tallapoosa, Georgia. It was a fantastic week with families from all over Georgia and beyond! Children and families spent the days in Bible study, crafting, swimming, hiking, and horseback riding. We ended summer fun with LuteRoad Day Camp. This included 4 NovusWay camp counselors coming to our church. They led 32 children in daily

Bible lessons, music, games, and even a water day complete with an 18-foot water slide! It was a great week and one I know many families are looking forward to in 2022!

Children's Ministry was also included in the highly successful Oktoberfest Event. We had a kid-zone complete with inflatable slides, cookie decorating, crafts, and games!

In December, we were able to host our second drive-by breakfast with Santa! Children and families received a to-go style breakfast, Christmas crafts, information on our Christmas Eve services and, of course, a visit with Santa- all from their car! The children also brought canned food items to donate to our local food pantry. It was a wonderful event for children and adults alike!

I look forward to another fantastic year and am so very thankful for the families, volunteers, staff, and precious children of our church and community!



Respectively Submitted,  
Ingrid Hudson, Director of Children and Family Ministry

## Youth and Family Ministry Annual Report 2021

This was a big year for our middle and high school students! Covid was rearing it's ugly head, but our middle and high school students and families stayed the course and did not let it damper their excitement.

We made the decision early on to not run middle and high school Sunday school this year. Most of our families that come are engaging and helping in other capacities within the church. I was excited to encourage them to continue helping in those ways but decided to not start Sunday School. After a few months I asked the families if they would like to bring it back and the majority response was that they make the commitment to come on Wednesday, but they were fine holding off for a while. Instead of having weekly Sunday School I had a monthly pancake breakfast the first Sunday of each month. This started out with high attendance and slowly fizzled out, but I did continue to do them each month.

This summer we were able to go back to summer camp for our middle schoolers and on a retreat for our high school students. Our middle school students would have gone back to Lutherock, but I had such an issue registering them for our usual week that I chose a different camp. This camp was MUCH different than Lutherock in good and not so good ways. The most important part was that our students had fun. They all asked to come back to that camp again this summer so we knew that they had tons of fun. I did not plan on going back to that summer camp. I intended to tackle the registration issues again at Lutherock.

Our high school students went on a retreat to Awanita Valley Retreat Center and that experience was FANTASTIC!!! It went so well that I tried to find a long weekend to go back during the school year, but the school calendars didn't allow that to happen. The kids loved the weekend and the events they had to offer and registration was a breeze. We totally would have been going back this summer if I was still there.

The start of the school year brought middle and high schoolers together for a party on the front lawn again! This has not happened in a few years. We had a blast! I had rented a foam machine and it was way more fun than I had thought it would be. People driving by were slowing down to watch us because we were having so much fun. Both pastors were there and got in the foam pit with us. The kids loved that too. We had games, food, and lots of foam!

This year for Logos and Loft was a New Testament year. We loved meeting inside the fellowship hall. It had a definite youth group feeling to it. We were able to get up and play games as well as meet together as a group. Then we were easily able to break into small groups. This has been a great year for meeting in the fellowship hall.

Some events were not able to be planned due to covid. This has been a problem that we all have dealt with, so I know you understand what they were going through. Even with Covid I was able to get in some fun and well attended youth events. I was always nervous to have group events inside, but I did my best to keep them socially distant while still having fun.

December came and I put in my month notice to move on to doing therapy for kids that have Autism. This was an extremely difficult decision and one that I didn't take lightly. I absolutely adored all the time I have been able to spend with our students and I would like to say thank you to the staff and congregation for helping me grow in this position.

Respectfully Submitted, Melissa Jacobson – *Director of Youth and Family Ministry*

*THANK YOU, MELISSA*





## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD

*You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. Galatians 3:26-27*

On January 6, 2021, the baptism of Ella Mancil was celebrated. She is the daughter of Kristen and Matthew Mancil and the granddaughter of Tom and Barbara Kenny.

On January 10, 2021, the baptism of Hudson Easterbrook, son of Kristen and Vincent Easterbrook and grandson of Bernice and Bob Huie.

On March 14, 2021, the baptisms of infant cousins, Emerson and Lucy. Parents are Brianna & \_\_ and Sarah & Daniel. The grandparents are Bill and Karen Baraty.

On March 27, 2021, the baptism of Kennedy Anne Koukis was celebrated. She is the daughter of Keaton and Andrew Koukis and the sister of Camden. Kennedy is the granddaughter of Tom and Cricket Hannon and the niece of Brandon Hannon.

On July 31, 2021, the baptism of Paige Emma Johnson was celebrated. Paige is the daughter of Michael and Michelle Johnson and sister of Caroline. Her grandparents are Gary and Christie Pederson.

On October 17, 2021, three baptisms were celebrated: Julian Bennett McCumber, Harper Anne McCumber, and Bradford Emerson McCumber. Jay, Harper, and Brad are the children of Ben and Alison McCumber.

On October 24, 2021, the baptism of Caroline (Callie) Wagner was celebrated. She is the daughter of Mike and Erin Wagner.



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## THANKS BE TO GOD. FOR CONFIRMATION!

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9-10*

**IN 2021, five 8th graders confirmed their baptism into Christ.**

Xavier Lee, Ethan Hoellrich, Ava O'Clair, Justin Jakubowski, and William Lugo



## Operations

The operations area of Christ Our Shepherd involves all areas that are not under specific Ministries.

**Office Administration:** It is with pleasure that I oversee the Office Administration at Christ Our Shepherd. I could not do so without the tremendous assistance I receive daily help from my Volunteers. Jean Dohany works closely with me in keeping ACS, the church database, updated. As any changes, additions, or deletions are received, Jean updates them into the system. They are then uploaded into Access ACS where members of the congregation can find directories, their financial resources, etc. Jean also assists me with special projects. When my position changed 18 months ago, it became necessary to have “special help” in doing the job. Jean has willingly taken on that role. My front desk volunteers, Kim Mashburn, Dannee Barkow, Judy Owens and Kathy Manes fill in at the front desk Tuesdays through Thursdays, greeting visitors and answering the phone. This allows me to concentrate on the work required in my position. Again, I could not do my job without them. If you have a desire to help in this way, please give me a call.

Office Administration oversees all insurances, both properties, (101 N. Peachtree Pkwy, and Palmetto Rd) and benefits for staff members. In addition, I handle all P.O.’s for services done at Christ Our Shepherd and payment for same. All supplies are also ordered through the office and mailings of all kinds (Stewardship, communication mailings, etc.) are done here. Following the first several months of Covid when the building was closed, we reopened Tuesdays through Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. However, I work from home on Mondays for the same hours and am available to anyone who needs me. As with all Staff at Christ Our Shepherd, I am available over the weekends by cell phone at 770-883-7409.

**Facility Management Team:** The most active and vitally necessary team in Operations is the Facility Management Team. Team members are: Lisa Manthey (Council Liaison), Eileen and Tom Conrad, Ethan Williams (Teen representative) Wes Saunders (Staff Sexton), Mark Barbour, Kurt O’Clair, and me (Staff Chair). This team is responsible for the upkeep of both of our properties. This includes their appearance, their safety, and their availability to both our members and outside groups. This is a tremendous responsibility for this group. We are so pleased that Scott Bosecker joined FMT in the middle of 2021. He has been invaluable especially with assisting Mark Barbour in investigating issues with the County on the Palmetto Property. And we will now be welcoming Eric Jakubowski as a new member of the team.

In His Name,

Linda Volckmann, Office Administrator

Following is the report from Council Liaison Lisa Manthey discussing this past year’s FMT work:

Our Facilities Maintenance Team has had an excitingly productive year. We continue to work diligently caring for the properties at 101 Peachtree Parkway North and Palmetto Road. Many projects have come to fruition while plans and projects are on the agenda for the future.

The Peachtree Parkway structure was pressure washed and received a much needed exterior painting and repair of the steeple. Minor repairs have been noted and are planned for 2022.

Volunteers at Palmetto Road completed the fence along the front of the property to help provide security while providing an aesthetically pleasing continuation of the existing fence line.

We were thrilled to find water upon completion of drilling a well. This addition opens up the possibility for endless activities and events to be held on the property. Concrete pads and walkways were poured allowing access between the camp-store, pavilion and newly upgraded portable ADA restroom. A concrete pad poured on the front of the camp-store named "Nora's Porch" in memory of Nora Robinson, is enhanced with wooden flower pots. Tree roots around the pavilion have been eliminated. Trees and bushes trimmed and removed enhanced the beauty of this piece of property. A circular walking path around the property perimeter has been cut. Two bridges were built across the creek along with 2 sitting benches.

Investigations continue regarding variance issues to existing pavilion, camp-store building and the adjacent landowners as well as the possibility of a septic system and improved rest rooms. These unresolved issues impact our ability to make changes to or add to what we currently have onsite.

An Eagle Scout gifted the camp-store with several shelving units to accommodate dishware/supplies to be used for future events. Cleaning and organization of the camp-store closets is ongoing. Goals include a possible small kitchenette.

The Team hopes to be able to stock the healthy pond with fish for catch and release.

Security cameras with the ability to record activity surrounding the camp-store were installed.

This past December we were proud to participate in the Rivers Alive campaign. Rivers Alive is a state-sponsored waterway cleanup held through Georgia. The objective is to remove garbage and trash from areas surrounding waterways ultimately keeping it from reaching and polluting rivers, streams and creeks. These volunteers clean the road in front of the Palmetto Road property.

I am thankful to be a part of the hard-working team whose members have volunteered countless hours in the effort to keep our church properties safe and beautiful. They are an invaluable asset to our church.

In His Name, Lisa Manthey  
Council Liaison to FMT

## **Communications**

Main responsibility has been to lead and improve all communication efforts internal and external for COS and if necessary “pulling” information from the worship teams, social service teams and stewardship team in an effort to keep the congregation and the community informed.

If one looks back at the previous year’s Communications Annual Report, one finds a report chock-full of innovation and powerful responses to deal with communication in a COVID world. Those processes were refined and expanded in 2021.

### **COS Website**

New features and updates continued to be added to the COS Website this year as we strived to make communications to our Congregation and Visitors easily accessible and up to date. We continued to work with ReachRight Studios, our website host, with all of the website projects.

In 2020 ReachRight Studios helped us fill out a Google Ad grant that allowed COS to utilize up to \$10k a month in grant money for advertisements with Google. These advertisements are targeted to reach people on the internet within 35 miles of COS. These advertisements were geared towards COS opportunities and programming. Our goal was to grow visitor traffic and bring visitors in to COS.

In 2021 ReachRight continued to maintain our Google Ad grant and we meet every other month with ReachRight to go over data. Recommendations for online content, website updates/pages and ad directions are discussed at these bimonthly Zoom meetings.

We are pleased to report that these efforts are paying off as we now are “higher up” on Google Search results.

ReachRight’s tweaking of Google Ads continues to drive traffic to specific pages on the website. The Home Page, Prayer Page, Live Page, Serve Page, Christmas Page, etc. all benefited from these efforts.

### **Streaming & Video**

Due to COVID closures, we began streaming our Live Worship services mid-March 2020 so as to continue to reach our members and friends of COS. Initially one service was streamed using a cell phone on Facebook Live in Pastor Wiese’s office. The worship leaders then began working towards a more professional platform by adding a streaming service using Vimeo that could help with casting our worship onto YouTube and our Website Live. Vimeo also holds and stores all of our videos.

Contemporary & traditional services are streamed each weekend. The amount of work done by volunteers and staff to accomplish this is simply amazing!

## **Constant Contact Emails**

We continued with our weekly COS Updates sent out each Thursday. Updates from Pastors and Council were sent out as separate emails as needed.

Lenten and Advent Devotions were sent out with Constant Contact.

Word from Wiese – A weekly email from Pastor Wiese

Sunday Congregational Guide with Video Links – This email contained the links for worship guides, Sunday worship services, Midweek worship services, Storytime, Friday Fellowship and Hymns of Hope. Our goal was to create a one stop source of content to reach those who

- a:)* Could not access Facebook or have a Facebook account or
- b:)* Wanted to share our programming with others or
- c:)* Wanted to watch our videos at a later time. You do not need to have any account memberships to access the links in the Sunday email.

In late October Shelley Casey, our Communications Coordinator, let us know she would be leaving that position. Shelley's amazing dedication to her job was a big reason we were able to navigate the incredible task of communicating with the congregation during the on-going COVID pandemic; Thank you Shelley!

In the meantime, Laura Hawkins has volunteered to be the Interim Communications Coordinator. Many, many thanks to Laura for shouldering this burden as we search for a new Communications Coordinator.

***\*\*Once again, a big thank you to our volunteer, Jean Dohany, for editing and scheduling our Constant Contact emails each week after they have been created and formatted. Jean was also instrumental in publishing the daily Advent Devotions. She is truly a blessing to COS.***

**Submitted by,**

**Scott Bosecker**

**CHURCH COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS LIAISON**

## Connecting Ministries

Continuing to “connect to Jesus’s pathway of joy and life” at Christ Our Shepherd has been an exciting ride during 2021, as we continued to learn to thrive in this year of global pandemic. The following are some accomplishments from this year:

In **JANUARY**, I worked with Pastor Fritz to coordinate and host a New Member class held via Zoom. This class consisted of 5 family units.

I helped facilitate Parking Lot services which were ongoing until the end of May.

In **FEBRUARY**, I hosted (with Pastor Fritz) a Small Group Powwow to thank and brainstorm with all COS leaders.

I held a fun Valentine Event via Zoom.

I helped to plan and facilitate Fruitful Living devotionals and Fruit Groups during the season of Lent.

In **MARCH**, I began initial discussions for Octoberfest event. These plans were ongoing until the event.

In **MAY**, I hosted another Small Group Leader meeting via Zoom.

In **JUNE**, I worked with Sara Turk regarding signage at the corner of property.

In **JULY**, as Covid waned, I hosted the Daytrippers “field trip” to Atlanta Botanical Gardens.

I worked with staff and others to identify missing COS attendees and began a phone-calling effort.

I worked with Robbi Martin and Shirley Brown to revamp the Service Coordinator job description and identify hosts for Contemporary Worship.

In **SEPTEMBER**, COS hosted Servant Sunday.

In **OCTOBER**, I worked with Pastor Fritz to coordinate two New Member Classes, some via Zoom, some in person, to add a total of 11 new family units.

I celebrated Pastor Appreciation Day.

I hosted Palmetto Road Family Octoberfest; over 250 attendees, 3 hours music, food, beer/wine, Kidzone, arts and crafts vendors.

In **NOVEMBER**, I coordinated with contributors to provide devotionals which were emailed Monday-Friday during the season of Advent. These were in the form of writings, videos and musical contributions.

*The biggest takeaway from this year* is that COS welcomed 16 new family units this year. This is an amazing fact!! I hold Pastors and leaders at COS in high esteem for their hard work and positive attitude as they have faced and continue to face incredible challenges and changes.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Anderson, Director of Connecting Ministries



## Technology for Worship & Presentations Ministries



My year started in May with huge shoes to fill after the departure of Bill Porter. I spent the next few months learning how to steer the amazing ship Bill and countless others before him helped to build. In a year without constants, mask wearing and distance rules were relaxed only to be reinstated a few months later. The COS Tech team has been able to keep our at-home viewers connected with unwavering reliability. Of course, we couldn't do it without the numerous volunteers who are the backbone of the team.

By the fall, our team was ready to "take the show on the road" as we hosted the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Palmetto Worship Service and Oktoberfest! Both were huge successes, but I couldn't have



pulled it off without the help of Jack Gordy. Jack came to us as a drummer for the contemporary service. Though his talents on stage were beneficial, it was his work behind the scenes that truly went above and beyond. Jack helped me run CAT cables throughout the



building, and with his help, we have networked our audio through the entire building.



in yet another

Covid wave, and this one hit the Love Feast in full force. The COS Tech team chose to brighten that bit of darkness by releasing the first of what we hope will become the Annual COS Yule Log – a compilation of great music pieces created right here at COS set to the hearths of members of the COS congregation.

We look forward to an exciting year in 2022!

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Milburn

Director of Technology for Worship & Presentation Ministries

## **Christ Our Shepherd Church Council President**

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of gratitude that I submit this annual report from your Church Council President. It has been nothing but a pleasure working with this year's Council as we have together tackled the challenges that we, as a congregation, have faced in 2021. I am also full of gratitude that you as a congregation have trusted me to provide the leadership that you expect from your Council President.

We as a Council focused on twelve (12) priorities this year, priorities suggested to us by you the congregation as a result of last year's survey. Because we were also blessed with an incredibly strong and dedicated staff and lay leadership, we took the approach to team a Council member with a staff and/or lay person representing a specific COS ministry or focus area and it is along these lines that I will provide this report.

In a year that saw a number of peaks and valleys associated with the virus, we, as a congregation, gradually came back to in-person worship and other in-door events. It was imperative that we find a way to stay in communication with our congregation. Thanks to Scott Bosecker and Shelley Casey for all the work they did to a) improve our website, b) draw people's attention to Christ Our Shepherd through Google Ads and the work they did with our webmaster ReachRight and, c) produce the multiple weekly communication "blasts" through Constant Contact. This Communications team meets bi-monthly with our ReachRight representative to make certain that we are always improving when it comes to keeping our congregation informed.

Along with the theme of staying in contact with our Church Family members, thanks to Carol Jensen-Linton for working so closely with Barb Anderson and Connecting Ministries. It was also very important to this year's Church Council to make certain that our children were not forgotten during this pandemic year and again, thanks to Carol for working to see that Ingrid Hudson and Melissa Jacobson had all the support from Council that they needed to effectively run their Children and Youth & Family Ministries respectively.

There were two areas of focus where the improvements and progress made to enhance a worship experience are visually obvious. First, the work that Robbi Martin did with Sandra Bohlken, Bill Porter and the technology team to enhance the Fellowship Hall and all aspects of the Contemporary Worship service moves to the top of my list of improvements made over the past year. Secondly, the work that Lisa Manthey, Linda Volckmann and Facility Management Team did this year to improve the Palmetto Road property enhances worship and fellowship events at that location and also needs to be held up as a job well done. The Facilities Management Team should also be thanked for the work that was performed on the exterior of our 101 Peachtree Parkway facility, which included new paint and repairs being made to the Cross and Steeple.

As we gradually, over the course of the year, came back to in-person worship, it was clear that many of our members remained more comfortable worshipping from home via our live-stream capabilities. To this point a huge thank-you needs to go out to Eric Jakobowski, Richard King, Brad Milburn and the Technology Team for the continuous improvements that we have made over the year in our use of technology. Not only has their work brought worship to our members here in the greater Peachtree City area, but they have helped bring Christ Our Shepherd into the homes of people all over the country and even around the world.

As you have heard me say on many occasions, my soft spot will always be helping those who are in need. Along these lines, the work that Jayne Troy and her Social Service and Outreach Ministry have done this year should pull at everyone's heart strings. Her ministries of the months (MOM) have brought needed services to many in our community from the Summer Lunch Program, to working with the Real-Life Food Bank, to providing Thanksgiving dinners for the needy and much, much more. All are great examples of God's work, our hands. Finally, we must call out the support we provide to the children of Haiti through the Timoun Foundation and the work our Congregation has provided to the rebuilding of the Newnan house that was damaged by last year's tornado that swept through the area. Families will be positively affected by the work we have done.

Activities that we focused on this year that have made progress but will have a continued focus from the 2022 Church Council will be the Sanctuary Enhancement Project. The team that has been assembled by David Beecher and Mike Oliver has made significant strides this year with much momentum being carried forward into 2022. Additionally, although more administrative in nature, there were several items that were highlighted during the Audit that was conducted in 2021 that will require Council's continued focus as we move into 2022.

I believe our biggest challenge this year has been staff turnover. We have lost Bill Porter and Sandra Bohlken, Shelley Casey and most recently Melissa Jacobson. Council also had to say goodbye to Molly Breckling as she and Jason left for excellent job opportunities in Florida. A shout-out to Karl Dietmeyer who leads our Personnel Committee and the Pastors for addressing these challenges head on and working to keep everything running as we look to fill these positions.

Per the Constitution, your Executive Committee met every month this past year. A special thanks to Sue Byer for being our Council Vice-President this year and to Pastor Fritz for always being available for this important monthly meeting that always proceeds the monthly Council Meeting and helps to set direction for the meetings agenda. A special thanks to Brad Harris for being Council's Secretary this year and, among other things, working with the Synod to update Christ Our Shepherd's governance documents. Thanks to John Musil and the finance team for keeping us financially responsible and to Mark Bunker and Steve Profeta for their work as Council Treasurer and Accountant respectively. And finally, a special thanks to Kevin Hawkins and Andrea Fischer for running a highly successful stewardship campaign.

Finally, I want to thank Pastor Fritz and Pastor Miriam for the leadership, guidance and friendship that they provided to me and to the Council over this past year. They were always there for us when we needed them and words cannot express our gratitude for this.

I have agreed to serve as your Council President for another year and I hope this upcoming year's Council can bring another momentous year of accomplishments to the Christ Our Shepherd family.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Barnett

## COS Book Club

The COS Book Club has been meeting continuously since May 1999 on the second Thursday of every month except during the summer. Due to Covid, we have met intermittently; however, we hope to resume our schedule in the near future. Our club is open to all members and includes several who attend other churches in the community. Members select book titles several months ahead and read books from a wide variety of genres. Details about our meetings are published in the church newsletter. We have an average of 8-10 attendees each month.

Leslie Klein, Facilitator

## COS Canvas

The Canvas gatherings are always fun, upbeat, welcoming, and for everyone!! It is an opportunity to express yourself creatively, even if you don't consider yourself creative.

It meets on the first Monday of most months. Bring whatever you want to work on OR just come and work with the supplies provided.



Pictured above are a few of the Canvas regulars.

Come and meet them and the others who come!

## COS Camping Ministry

The Christ Our Shepherd Camping Ministry gathers together twice a year (Spring & Fall) for fun and fellowship in the beautiful outdoors! We meet up at a gathering campsite Saturday and Sunday morning for breakfast, Saturday afternoon for worship followed by games and later that evening a themed potluck dinner.

Our group is made up of newlyweds, young families, empty nesters, retirees, and everyone in between. Everyone is welcome! It doesn't matter if you are in a tent or a motorhome. COS Camping Ministry first timers get "one night of free camping" (reimbursement) courtesy of the COS Camping Ministry.

For more information or questions, contact COS's Camping Ministry Coordinator, Sara Turk at [sarakahley@gmail.com](mailto:sarakahley@gmail.com)

In the Spring of 2021 we had 33 campers, who enjoyed a Saturday sunset worship following some Christmas trivia and a Christmas themed potluck dinner.



The Fall 2021 camping trip had 22 in attendance at worship and was a Halloween-themed potluck dinner.



### Spring 2022 Camping Details

- April 29-May 1st at [R. Shaefer Heard](#)
- Gathering site 89
- Saturday worship (time TBD)
- Birthday party theme (bring your favorite dish)



Sara Turk

COS's Camping Ministry Coordinator

## **COLUMBARIUM MINISTRY BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Christ Our Shepherd Columbarium provides a peaceful and reverent location for the inurned remains of church members and their extended family. The Columbarium is located just off the Narthex and provides a private and tasteful environment with numerous Vault and Niche configurations for the preservation of remains in a convenient and secure location. Numerous opportunities for annual, periodic, or permanent memorialization of a deceased loved one can be designated for use in the Columbarium, in other locations in our main facility, or at our Palmetto Road location.

The Columbarium contains a total of 210 Niches in two Bronze Vaults and three Marble Vaults. Rights of Inurnment for 135 of the Niches have been purchased leaving 75 Niches still available. In 2021, no Rights of Inurnment were purchased and five Committal (interment) Services were conducted.

Please consider purchasing a niche for yourself and/or a family member as part of your estate planning or when the need arises.

Application Packets are available in the Church Office. You may also contact Bob Spruck, Chairman of the Columbarium Board of Directors, for an Application Packet or for more information.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Spruck

## **COS Disaster Ministry 2021 Report**

In March 2021, an EF-4 tornado struck Coweta County. Several church members assisted in the immediate response by coordinating with the Synod on how to respond and do damage assessment. The church also assisted as specific goods were needed and through donations to Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) and to the Southeastern Synod.

COS also reached out with the Long-Term Recovery Group's Volunteer Coordinator to offer our services long-term recovery rebuilding. Because we didn't have to worry about housing and transportation to the site, we could take a project from beginning to end. This is a huge undertaking. After several coordination meetings, we paired with Hope Global in Newnan to work on a project that will allow Hope Global to provide transition housing to their clients. This home suffered storm damage, but also had much different maintenance.

This project has truly been a total congregation effort as Social Services Ministry assisted by designating it as a Ministry of the Month and collected gift cards to assist with buying supplies for the project and gift cards for Hope Global's after school program snacks. Other members have donated a washer, dryer and stove for the project. Prayer partners have also been vital. Pastor Fritz began our project with a blessing on our first Saturday. Since the beginning of September, over 20 people have provided over 400 volunteer hours. We hope to have the project completed in early 2022. Watch for details on a final blessing and open house.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Brunso

## Sarah Circle 2021

Sarah Circle celebrated 30 years with a lovely party in the Fellowship Hall on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Susan Wright, who held the first meeting in her home in 1991 spoke to the group, along with Pastors Fritz and Miriam. Benya Spruck shared many highlights from 30 years of fellowship, fun and friendship. Gerri Thatcher surprised us and regaled us with stories from past events. Sue Kunig updated our treasury information and provided a list of all the contributions Sarah Circle had made over the years.

For several reasons and after discussions with Pastor Miriam and Pastor Fritz, this event was the last gathering of Sarah Circle. We have faith that another group will emerge in the future to provide a similar fellowship opportunity for the women of COS. The funds remaining in the SC treasury will be used to purchase an item for COS.

Leslie Klein, President



### *A note from Pastor Miriam Sarah Circle*

In 1991, a new member to COS looked around for a women's group that fit her schedule. She wanted to get to know people as a new member, to plug in, to laugh, learn, and do ministry together – big emphasis on laughter! Susan Wright was that person. She tossed the idea out in the newsletter, set a date and time, and some women showed up. It did not take long before a group of amazing women became Sarah Circle. Through the years, the group has supported many mission and service projects, showed care and love to shut-ins, the youth and children, and other ministries in the church, and given gifts back to the church. Sarah Circle sponsored teas, fashion shows, women's retreats, and on and on. Thirty years of amazing women, amazing, generous leaders, and laughter!!

THANK YOU, Sarah Circle!! Remember, blessed be the tie that binds our hearts and will continue to guide us in our care, love, and laughter with each other!!

With love and gratitude, Pastor Miriam



## **The 2021 Social Services Ministry Report**

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS: This IS the Social Services Ministry at COS. Detailed below, you will find an overview of the many programs that have touched lives. A sincere and genuine thank you to Christ Our Shepherd members for making a difference!

January/February – There were no ministries during these months.

March/April – Easter/Children's Village at Christian City

Due to the pandemic, the Social Services Ministry handled Easter a bit differently at the Children's Village this year. Children between ages 2 and 12 were given an Easter Basket filled with all types of goodies and teenagers between 13 and 19 found such things as: headphones, earphones, wired earbuds with microphone, bath sponges and more in their Easter Bags! Every child was given a \$10.00 Chick Fil A Gift Card and the teenagers received a \$10.00 Starbucks Gift Card as well. Twenty-three children were blessed with an extra special Easter.

May, June and July – Summer Lunch Program

The Summer Lunch Program was all about reconnecting; hugs, smiles, constant chatter and prayer, yet our purpose was never forgotten...to make sure all our families received their lunches. An average of 208 children were fed every Monday, 1245 lunches were made, 1558 sandwiches were provided (high school children receive two sandwiches) and 16 drivers with 20 assistants drove nine routes for six weeks. There are many groups to thank: 40-45 volunteers showed up Monday mornings to make, pack and deliver lunches, church members who donated food items or money, kitchen cookie bakers who provided 2,932 delicious chocolate chip cookies, Thrivent and Publix who donated \$250 gift cards to help purchase turkey, cheese and bread and Pearson Farms who gave us fresh peaches weekly. In addition, our neighbors and friends, The Church of Latter-Day Saints and St. Andrews in the Pines Episcopal Church brought chips, drinks and energy working alongside COS members every Monday!

August – Piedmont Fayette Hospital

A donation of \$300.00 was given through the Social Services Ministry to help the hospital in various ways.

September/October – Tornado Recovery in Newnan

The congregation donated \$560.00 to help purchase supplies for our church workers (approximately 20) as they continue to make Helping House a home for two families. Also, monies were collected to help Hope Global, an After School Program that serves many of the children who were impacted by tornado damage.

### November – Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Bags were assembled for Summer Lunch Program Families as well as families served by the Real Life Center. Thanks to the generous support from our church family, 33 bags of food were delivered as well as 30 \$10 gift cards to the Real Life Center and 14 bags of food including turkeys, were delivered to Summer Lunch Program Families.

### December - STAR TREE

This marvelous ministry is undertaken with a sincere, genuine caring for human hurt, need and Hope! The STAR TREE supported seven families/twelve children with \$3,270 worth of gift cards this Christmas Season.

### Other Projects

Joshua's Gift is an ongoing ministry at COS that exists to feed under-resourced school children by providing backpacks filled with food for the weekend. This is our ninth year working with three Fayette County Elementary Schools: Fayetteville, Huddleston and Peachtree City. We are presently only assisting one of the schools with hope that, during the second semester, we will help resource the other two. The reason for this is that the Federal Government is providing breakfast and lunch to all children every day. This is a great help to families, so we wait patiently.

The Bread Run Team, Buddy Troy, Heidi Byerly, Judy Owen and Bill and Jim Volckmann, as well as many substitute drivers, deliver day-old bread and pastries to Redeemer Soup Kitchen and The Mission four days a week. Publix at Starr's Mill and Publix in Tyrone donate the items. This team has been vigilant in making sure this food gets to where it needs to go!!! Never a week is missed!

Redeemer Soup Kitchen – Has just opened again. Christ Our Shepherd will begin again assisting at the Kitchen the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayne Troy,

Social Services Coordinator

# STEWARDSHIP TEAM REPORT

## “Following Jesus to Abundant Waters”

After Eric Jakubowski’s heroic efforts in 2019 and 2020, veteran Kevin Hawkins joined 26-year-old new member Andrea Fisher and Pastor Fritz to serve on the 2021 COS Stewardship Team. We had a lot of fun working together and creating our pathway forward for COS. Our first move was to commit to participating in the synod-sponsored BCG (Building a Culture of Generosity) process with Lutherans around the country interested in “best practices” of stewardship.

a. We read the book, Abundance: Creating a Culture of Generosity.

b. b. We watched nine different videos about best practices on the BCG website.

c. We participated in six live Zoom calls with leader Mike Ward and church leaders around the country about how to best invite God’s people into a life of generosity.



All three of us really grew as Christian disciples in this process. It was fun and energizing to talk about God’s blessings with Lutherans from around the country! We were reminded about the joy of the Bible’s teaching on giving, the power of congregations, and the difference we make in God’s world. Two big take-aways

among others:

1. Christians should use “testimonies/positive impact stories.” Inspiration always trumps information. Maybe that’s why Jesus taught with parables and not facts and figures.
2. Four key parts to build any healthy organization/congregation: inspire, inform, ask, thank. We spent a lot of time analyzing how COS currently tends to each of these important functions and how we can improve in the future.

We established our theme for the 2021 campaign, “**Following Jesus to Abundant Waters.**” Based on Luke 4.5. Key Sundays: November 7, 14, 21. Sermons and testimonies shared our conviction that, just as Jesus led the disciples to teeming waters of fish, so too God has already blessed us with plenty of resources and joy in our lives. Just as it was up to the disciples to use their own efforts to bring the fish into the boat, so it’s up to us to bring resources to COS so that we can feed our neighbors locally, regionally, and globally with the good news of Jesus. Below are some highlights of the Abundant Waters process:



We drove a maximum number of “faith intent cards.”

a. Everyone can participate and feel good about a sense of momentum!

**An anonymous council member/family offered a \$4000 challenge if we could get 140 faith giving intents. We met and surpassed this aggressive goal! Council also agreed to offer a celebration breakfast which we’ll do at our congregational meeting on January 23. (Unless we need to delay with Covid). As of this writing, faith intents are still coming in.**

- b. We all want our lives to make a difference, have impact. Those who are intentional about giving with faith intents will give 8 times more over lifetime. Helps them attain real impact and life satisfaction! (Source: Video #7)

- c. In Passing the Plate, Lutherans who pledge give 45% more annually than non-pledgers.
- d. COS history with faith giving intents: 2020-135 pledges (which included intents plus those who didn't offer intent but give automatically online). 2019—120. 2018—132. We want to keep doing a better job in being aware of statistics. Quality record-keeping and analysis will help us with the four duties of quality organizations: inspire, inform, thank, and ask.
- e. We informed the congregation with a Progress Pole at the entryway so folks could have fun tracking our congregational progress to our 140 goal.

We applied the recommendation of increasing motivation through inspiration over information throughout our culture. (Acknowledging that four components are essential: Inspire, inform, ask, and thank.)

- a. Staff shifted from devotions each week to staff members sharing “ministry impact stories”.
- b. Council shifted from devotions each monthly meeting to sharing “ministry impact stories”.
- c. We identified speakers who filmed their own testimonies about how the COS ministry has made a difference in their lives and ran these for 3 weeks: Andrea Fisher why youth ministry is so important, Phil Carson, Scoutmaster, why he appreciates COS hosting Troop 181 for over two decades., Andy and Mira Kipker, who shared thanks for COS efforts to stream services (new technology, equipment, and people) since they are one of our FOCOS folks (Friends Of COS) who watch from Ohio and other places.

We executed the BCG philosophy for follow up and saying thanks (inspire, inform, ask, thank).

- a. We sent several follow-up emails to the whole congregation.
- b. Council members helped with follow-up phone calls to members from whom we had not heard. They didn't call everyone, but the top 90 folks we thought would respond.

Andrea sent thank you cards, which were a combination printed and hand-written comments. BCG suggests handwritten notes from pastors or leaders. (Eric did great job with this two years ago). We learned it's critical to say thanks to those increasing gifts and turning in commitments.

We prayed that the Abundant Waters series would be a long-lasting blessing to everyone who experienced the series, regarding their life outlook about God's wonderful abundance, which in turn would lead to empowering blessings for our congregational ministry together at COS!

Respectfully submitted,  
Kevin Hawkins, Andrea Fisher, and Pastor Fritz Wiese

# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OPENING LITURGY

## Litany

Today our congregation gathers in prayer and hope to begin another year of ministry. We bring with us the memory of a year like no other, even as we move into a future that we cannot yet imagine. Yet even now, as in every age, God is our refuge and strength. In times of plenty and want, in times of conflict and peace, in times of growing and pruning, we remember:

**God has called us for such a time as this.**

We remember the past year with lament and gratitude. We have lost so much, and so much still feels uncertain. We have also witnessed God's hand at work in new and unexpected ways. We delight at hidden seeds bearing surprising and wonderful fruit. When our own resources fail, when we cannot predict the future, when we must rely on God alone, we remember:

**God has called us for such a time as this.**

We celebrate this moment and the many ways God has held us together as a community. We give thanks for the gift of our church building and the welcome it provides, even as we bless God for the marvel of technology and the new bonds of connection it makes possible. When our bodies need sanctuary, when our minds need expanding, when your grace must transcend our limitations, we remember:

**God has called us for such a time as this.**

We look ahead to the road we will travel together this year. We anticipate and receive with joy the new gifts God's love has planned. We pray for the grace to let go of what has served its holy purpose. When we are trailblazers or followers, when we are seekers or visionaries, when we must walk by faith and not by sight, we remember:

**God has called us for such a time as this.**

And so we pray: Grace our meeting, O God, with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the Spirit who has guided the church from the beginning, the Spirit of our risen Lord Jesus, the Spirit who sends us as healers and restorers of your beloved world. You are the source of our life together. You are the rock and cornerstone.

**You have called us for such a time as this.**

## God of the Fertile Fields

1 God of the fer - tile fields, sha - per of  
2 We would be stew - ards true, hold - ing in  
3 As grows the hid - den seed to fruit that  
4 God of the coun - try - side, dear to the

earth that yields our dai - ly bread: forth from your  
trust from you all that you give; help us in  
serves our need, so your reign grows. Let all our  
Christ who died to make us one: we pledge our

boun - teous hand come gifts your love has planned,  
love to share, teach us like you to care  
toil be used, no gift of yours a - bused,  
lives a - new in faith - ful love to you.

that all in ev - 'ry land be clothed and fed.  
for peo - ple ev - 'ry - where, that all may live.  
no hum - ble task re - fused your love be - stows.  
Guide all we say and do. Your will be done.

*All Creation Sings* #1063

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**O God,  
you have called your servants  
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,  
by paths as yet untrodden,  
through perils unknown.  
Give us faith to go out with good courage,  
not knowing where we go,  
but only that your hand is leading us  
and your love supporting us;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen. (ELW, p. 317)**

Change and the need for creativity have become constants over the last year and a half in many aspects of life, including the church. This was the case for **Living Christ Lutheran Church** in Flagstaff, Ariz., even before a global pandemic caused many of us to rethink what it means to be church. Generosity from all three expressions of the ELCA (the churchwide organization, the Grand Canyon Synod and members of Living Christ) helped turn a congregation “on the road out of town, near the mall” into an online presence reaching over 500 people a week from Phoenix to the Philippines. (Read more about Living Christ in the current issue of “**Stories of Faith in Action**” at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).)

Many other congregations have found new ways to connect both when in-person worship was impossible and when congregations began to return to their sanctuaries. Generosity, especially through Mission Support, helped us find and support these new ways of being connected. Early in the pandemic, ELCA Worship launched the “Worship in the Home” webpage, with Scripture, hymn links, prayers and reflections for each

Sunday. These resources were and continue to be used in congregations across the ELCA—even at **Sitka Lutheran Church** in Alaska, whose members printed and hand-delivered “Worship in the Home” resources to fellow members without internet access.

Change and creativity have taught us many things. As Pastor Sandra Rudd of Sitka Lutheran Church noted, “The pandemic was a stark illustration of the fact that the church is not a building. A lot of people say that, but we didn’t fully know it until we didn’t have a building to use. We learned that there are many ways to be connected as the church.” Throughout the pandemic, the ELCA has changed and adapted, doing ministry in new and creative ways, because of the generosity of its members. Even now, you may be gathering in a new way for your annual meeting, to discern how you will steward the gifts shared generously with your congregation to do ministry in your community and beyond. As you have these important conversations, remember that your gifts of time, talent and resources have helped create new spaces beyond our walls and buildings where we continue to worship, serve and love God and each other.

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021