

2019-2020 Annual Report



Peace United Church of Christ
1111 North 11th Avenue East
Duluth, Minnesota 55805

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**ANNUAL REPORT
OF
PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1111 North 11th Ave East, Duluth MN 55805

Presented at the Annual Meeting
of the Congregation
June 7, 2020

Coordinating Council

Officers

Moderator..... Susan Isernhagen
Vice Moderator..... Doug Bowen-Bailey
Secretary/Recorder..... Diane Swanoski
Treasurer Kirby Wood
Past Moderator Gary Boelhower

Council Representatives

Christian Education..... Penny Cragun
Acting for Justice..... John Doberstein
Christian Spiritual Life Gudrun Witrak
Christian Stewardship Dave Courtright

Members at Large

Hope David
Patty Beech-Dziuk
Andy Fena
Matt Ryan

Staff

Lead Pastor..... Rev. Kathryn A. Nelson
Minister for Faith Formation Nathan Holst
Children's Ministry Coordinator Sharon Dawson
Visitation Minister..... Cheryl Walsh
Music Director Jim Pospisil
Pianist..... Wendy Durrwachter
Bookkeeper..... Toni Kasell
Office Coordinator..... Janell Kohls
Office Coordinator..... Nancy Nelson
Custodian..... Dan Shepard
Building Use Coordinator Tim Peters

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Peace United Church of Christ
Duluth, Minnesota

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ANNUAL REPORTS

Rev. Kathryn A. Nelson, Lead Pastor

What a year it has been. I find myself writing my very last of twenty-nine annual reports in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. So much has changed since the middle of March, and yet we are still very much the church. The building is closed, but the community of Peace Church has remained very much open. Together we have been open to new ways of worship, open to zoom meetings, zoom bible studies, zoom confirmation, Sunday School and youth group. And most importantly open to compassion and caring for the folks who are part of this congregation and caring for our neighbors in the wider community.

On March 15th we began live streaming all of our worship services. It has been a huge effort and required lots of time and energy. I give thanks to Doug Bowen Bailey who has done much of the heavy lifting on the live stream, along with Tim Carpenter on audio and Alex Dean on scenes. It does take all three of them to pull off a Sunday service, along with help from Sylvie Bowen-Bailey on camera. Thanks also to Jim Pospisil for incredible music each Sunday. He has done it with the help of our minimalist choir of Mark Hakes, Frost Bowen-Bailey, and Maddie Carpenter. We have also been blessed by all the guest musicians who have recorded music for inclusion in the worship services. Special thanks also to Nancy Nelson for being willing to come into the office and do so much including creating the worship slides.

On Easter Sunday over 260 devices watched live and stayed on for the whole service. Given that many families were watching on one device I think this puts us well over our usual Easter attendance. I have found it an even greater challenge to preach in this time, knowing that folks are truly listening and seeking a centering moment in the midst of pandemic. Thanks also to Nathan Holst for running the virtual coffee hour; folks have found that a very meaningful way to connect. Sharon Dawson has done an amazing job with our Sunday School families and created the cardboard kids that make the Story For All Ages feel so much more real. Kids have written to tell me which of the kids they are. She decorates them to meet the theme of each week.

In this time of pandemic we have also been able to offer financial and spiritual assistance to many folks. There have been lots of calling trees, and Pamela Mittlefehldt has coordinated a beautiful card writing group. We have been able to give over \$14,000 through our Gabriel Fund to members of our community and the larger community to help mostly with food needs. We have worked with our community partners AICHO, the NAACP, Chum, Homeless Outreach, Life House, the YWCA and Safe Haven. It has truly been a blessing to be able to reach out to the community with real help.

We have had to re-think so much of what we do, but this has allowed us to really, truly build on our mission statement—"Praising God, Living the Way of Jesus and Building the Beloved Community".

Praising God

Worship continues to be the most important way we gather together each week, even now when it is virtual. The Spirit is powerfully present through the eclectic music and singing, prayers, laughter, tears and shared word. Until the pandemic we continued to have two worship options on Sunday morning. Our early communion service was at 8:30. This service always had the same sermon and scriptures as the 10:30 service and ended with the breaking of bread and sharing the cup of blessing. The fourth Sunday of each month our early service we offered a Taizé service, which is a time of singing chants, the reading of scriptures and times of silence. A Taizé service is now on our website for those who want to worship in this way. They can do it anytime.

Our second service at 10:30 is now our only service. We continue to follow the lectionary readings for each Sunday. I really miss our choir which sang each Sunday and for our many special services such as Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Ash Wednesday. The choir Cantata is always a highlight of the year. What a wonderful community our choir is! The Choir and congregational singing is expected to be one of the last things we are able to return to in this time of pandemic. I do hope folks are singing at home. It is such a central part of the worship experience.

The music of our congregation is eclectic, expressive of the variety of people and ways we worship our God together. Jim Pospisil is so good at inviting musicians in and working with them to enhance our worship. We are now holding recording sessions in order to continue to have this wonderful diversity in worship. Thanks to all the different folks that regularly play—Melanie Sever, Eli Bissonett, Jane Aas, Dave Winchester, Leon Rohrbaugh, Ron Deters, and of course other members of the Band Called Truman.

Not only our ears but our eyes too have been engaged in worship through art. Amanda Hunter has taken over curating our art. As we went through the building together I was amazed by how much original art we have. Amanda created a virtual art gallery for us of Tim Larson's amazing paintings. You can find this on our website. We have also used her art and the art of others on slides during our live stream of worship. This has added so much.

Worship and sermon preparation takes a large part of my time each week. I am grateful for the work of our Worship and Arts Team which has moved to longer meetings to plan worship for 6–8 weeks ahead. Together we have picked themes for each season and built the music, movement, and liturgies around these themes. We were also blessed to have Gudrun Witrak and Beth Bartlett lead Prayers around the Cradle/Cross Wednesday evenings in Advent and Lent. These special services give us a time to pause and reflect in the midst of our work weeks and a wonderful way to offer new forms of prayer to the confirmation and youth group. When I asked the confirmands what they liked about the class, the candle lighting prayer time was often mentioned.

Each week I also meet on Thursday mornings with eight other local clergy for bible study, I now host this group virtually. Until the pandemic I would go on Thursdays to the St. Louis County Jail to do Bible study with the women using Sunday's texts. Naomi Christensen (Tim Peters) has joined me at the jail and I am grateful for the ways she continued to reach out to the women after they are released. I look forward to the day when I can return to this ministry at the jail. All these groups help me to hear the good news in new ways. I am grateful for the opportunities you give me to be active in our community. This sharing of the Gospel has been enriching for me and I hope for the people I have shared with and learned from.

Living the Way of Jesus

Each week another large portion of my time is preparing for and leading out two confirmation classes, we have over 30 high school youth involved between these two groups. Our entire first year is spent studying the Gospel of Mark so that they might really know what it means to live the way of Jesus.

The second year class focuses on talking about what others believe about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and then they write/ create what they believe. We are waiting to have Confirmation Sunday at a time when we can gather together again, both for a retreat and worship. This may have to wait until September.

The adults of our congregation also learned much through our adult formation offerings both, on Sunday mornings and through the many small groups. See the adult education report for greater detail.

We also had Lectio Divina bible studies every Wednesday evening. This is a great way to study and pray together each week. We continue to meet through Zoom and because of this have been able to include folks not living in Duluth, even Annette Strom in Singapore. I also lead the women's monthly brown bag bible study. What a great group of wise women gather each month. And Nancy Carlson was hosting an On -Being Podcast lunch that met each month.

Building the Beloved Community of God

I am so grateful for all the teams and committees that work so hard to truly build the beloved community. The Acting for Justice hub meets each month to coordinate efforts of the various outreach efforts that our congregation's members are engaged in. We have our Dismantling Racism Team, Migrant Justice Team, Beyond Violence Team, our Open and Affirming Team, Global Ministries Team and our Climate Justice Team. It is incredible all the ways this people of God are working for justice here in our neighborhood and in the wider world.

Much of my work in building the beloved community is through pastoral care in preparing for baptisms, pre-marital counseling, hospital visitation and being with people in times of grief. This year I worked with families as we remembered the lives of Joe Machones, Charles Olson, Chazz Smith, Xavier Bell, Gus Gustofson, Helen Wessberg and Earl Rosenwinkel. I am grateful for all who are a part of our funeral/memorial service team led by Nettie Bothwell that helps with the luncheons following services led. It is such an important ministry to families in times of loss and our outreach is not only for members but others in our community. We certainly saw this at Chaplain X's service where over 300 community members were present.

We continue to reach out to the many people who come through our doors in need of prayer, food, bus tickets, clothing and more. The Gabriel Project in coordination with Chum is one way we can meet some of these needs. We have also helped at Chum every other Wednesday by preparing breakfast for the guests at the Drop In Center, and dinner one Thursday a month, thanks to Cathy Carlson. Thanks to all the generous, caring, and incredibly faithful volunteers who provide food and help cook and serve these meals. Chum continues to be one of the areas we generously financially support also. In the pandemic we are making bag breakfasts for over 100 folks in our church kitchen that we then take to the drop in center.

Our doors were open to so many community groups and Tim Peters has done an amazing job as our building use coordinator. We hope to someday be open to our Girl Scout troops, music lessons, SA, AA, GA, NA, Yoga Classes and many one-time events. Currently our Tuesday AA group is meeting outside in our parking lot with lawn chairs. They have found it crucial to continue to support one another.

I am especially grateful for all the staff I get to work with at Peace Church. They are an amazing group of folks. Jim Pospisil has been leading worship through music for over 23 years. Janell Kohls has been our office coordinator for over 19 years and she does so much ministry with the vast variety of folks who walk through our doors each day. Nancy Nelson shares the office coordination with Janell. Nancy has continued to come into the office, keeping things going and responding to whatever comes up during this time of great change. She is great at the detail work I often miss and is also very good with the constant changes that happen day to day. Dan keeps our building clean, which is especially important at this time with the daycare still open. We are working hard to make sure he stays well. Nadine Hubert and family have also been cooking our Wednesday meals for over 17 years and I look forward to the time we can gather again in this way. Toni Kasell has done a great job as our bookkeeper and her positive attitude is infectious. We will miss her so much as she retires this June. Thank you, Toni, for all you have done even during this pandemic to keep us afloat.

Nathan Holst continues to work with our youth and adult faith formation. He is licensed by the Minnesota Conference of the UCC so that he can help lead communion and officiate at weddings and funerals. Much of his time he is leading small groups, bible studies and working with our youth so well. Kelli Farrell took a full time teaching position this past summer, we thank her for her many years of wonderful care to our kids. We have been so fortunate to have Sharon Dawson join us as our children's ministry coordinator. She has found new ways and such creative ways to lead virtual Sunday school and Kids Club. Wendy Durrwachter has been wonderful as our accompanist. We are so blessed by all our staff. I am grateful for each of them and the ministry we share. We work so well together and help the members and friends to carry out our vision of Praising God, Living the Way of Jesus and Building the Beloved Community.

I want to thank you the members and friends of Peace Church. So many folks give so much of their time and energy to this place and people. It is amazing to consider what we can do together with our God. Special thanks to our Coordinating Council who meet monthly to oversee the work of our congregation. My appreciation to Susan Isernhagen, our moderator, whose dedication and wisdom guided us so well in what I must say has been my hardest year ever in ministry. Thanks also to Kirby Wood, our dedicated treasurer, Diane Swanoski, our wonderful secretary, and all those who serve Peace Church in so many ways.

I am so grateful to be in ministry with each of you, I learn so much from you and I am so grateful to share sacred moments with you – baptisms, weddings, memorial services and the many sacred moments we share day to day. It is hard to believe that I only have a few months left with you as your lead pastor. You are in good hands with your Search Committee, led by Leanne Ventrella and Dick Goese. You are a vibrant people of God and I know you will have excellent candidates to choose from.

It has been quite a year. This time of pandemic has given us all pause, time to think about our core values and to remember truly life is precious. On April 7th Earl Rosenwinkel a resident of St Ann's and a friend of our congregation died of Covid-19. Earl often played the bongo drums with the Peace Band and would write Psalm responses for use in our early service. I was grateful I had saved his psalms and could share them with his family. He had a home here in a world that often found him odd. As his ex-wife wrote to me, "Peace was Earl's oasis of kindness". So glad we could be that for him and that we strive to be that for others too. I close with one of his responses to Psalm 139: 18. "How awesome is your vastness and deepness, Gitchi Manitou! Your thoughts and your creations vastly outnumber all the sand grains along the ocean shores, in the deserts and around your lakes. Creator, when we wake up in the morning we know you've been with us all night, and are with us as we start the new day. You are with us in our mother's womb, in our living and when we die."

May you too know the presence of God in this broken and beautiful time.

Peace friends

Kathryn Nelson, Lead Pastor

Nathan Holst, Minister for Faith Formation

“To sing is to pray twice.” ~ St. Augustine

In May of 2019, I went to a workshop with the group Music That Makes Community; it had a significant impact on how I do ministry at Peace, and in some ways has been the theme of what I have added in my role this year. Both grateful for the group’s philosophy of curiosity, learning, and community, as well as a new level of comfort with sharing and teaching song, I worked at incorporating music and song into what I do with faith formation at Peace. Whether it was in small group rituals, youth group, individual pastor care, story for all ages, or even in small group zoom meetings during the pandemic, I believe risking sharing more song has enriched how I lead and the quality of my ministry. I continue to be incredibly grateful for the Peace community and the amazing group of people who make this place what it is. Though we are in an uncertain time of pandemic, as well as church transitions in the next year, I look forward to the opportunities of this coming year to be church together, to celebrate and grieve, to be the beloved community. Let us see what kind of new openings Spirit might lead us to together.

Faith Formation

Like past years, I continued leadership on the Shared Ministry Team, Dismantling Racism Team, Acting for Justice Hub, Spiritual Journey Team, the Worship and Arts Team, Adult Education Team, and the Children’s Ministry Team. This year I also spent energy collaborating with leaders in the Climate Justice Team (formally FEET Team) to set regularly monthly meetings, focus our vision, and recruit new members. I am proud to share that the team has renewed energy and has plans to engage the rest of the congregation in deeper climate justice work. Early in the fall, I helped teams continue to work through their long range plans from the year before (though some of my focus and energy on this was redirected to our staff transition in the children’s minister role). I continued my role in preaching roughly once a quarter. I once again renewed with the MN Conference to be a licensed minister, which allowed me to continue giving communion in the congregation.

Like other staff, my work changed significantly with the beginning of the pandemic. Faith formation is about creating experiences for our congregation that invites faith growth in the context of community. Since we have not been able to gather in person as a community, I shifted all my work online or by phone. This creates higher limits on what kind of faith content can be shared effectively (especially with youth), but it has also been an invitation to prioritize relationship as our ministry and faith formation. Most every group I am a part of on zoom spends the first section of meeting on checking in and letting each other know how we are doing. This has been key in how we hold each other and our spiritual lives in this time, and amplifies how much faith formation is grounded in our relationships with each other.

Beloved Community Events/Small Groups

This last fall I co-led two book studies focused on our adult forum theme, “tending the earth, tending each other.” Each built on the energy created from the adult forum speaker series, and each had a good sense of connection and community to them, drawing in a few people who normally are on the Peace margins.

Then in November, we decided to offer Gary’ Boelhower’s Mountain 10 labyrinth practice and had a great turn out. With lots of good feedback from the group, we hope to host another one next November.

I held an hour-long grieving ritual in December this year, remembering that Christmas time can be a difficult time for many. We had a small group, but the ritual itself seemed to work, so after the pandemic began and we were no longer able to hold funerals, I offered it again to a group of about 10 people, making simple adaptations for the online platform.

We once again held Winter Camp at Wolf Ridge in February, and we had a great turn out and a wonderful time together. After a few years of doing this and good reflection/evaluation, I think we have it down to what works well for individuals and families of all ages. This is one of the events where I think significant faith formation happens and where some of the deepest relationship form.

In light of the pandemic, knowing that many are experiencing job loss or big transitions, I decided to host an online version of my call and purpose series that I did a year and a half ago, and it has been a rich and meaningful group. Leading this kind of group is a great example of where I can offer my deepest passion and love—music, purpose and call, deeper meaning in relationship, experiencing a communal kind of pastoral care—and meet the needs of our community.

Lastly, because we were not able to meet in person for the men's retreat, in May I offered a 2-hour zoom session to connect and reflect together. There were about 10 of us, and it seemed to be a place of meaningful connection, both in a simple check in and in our reflection together on a poem and some questions.

Middle School Youth Group

We had another great year in middle school youth group, drawing significantly more 6th graders this year; we consistently had about 20 kids in the fall and 10-20 kids in the spring.

We once again began the fall with the Peer Ministry program that has become a staple of youth group, giving gratitude for Tom Westrum's continued support in co-leading the program. This is a great way to set the culture of youth group, and I believe it is a big part of why youth group has continued to develop into a place where youth love to come and feel welcome. Peer Ministry focuses on the good Samaritan story and does a great job of incorporating fun, Bible stories, and experiential learning. I am planning to bring a group of middle school youth to a Peer Ministry training (and have been invited to help lead the training as well!) in November 2020.

We continue to have a great space for youth to be themselves, check in, share in conversation with each other, and be invited into prayer time each week, sharing joys and concerns with the group. Every year seems to get a bit deeper in being open and vulnerable with each other, which is one of my primary goals in youth group. I give thanks for Warren Post this year with his faithful help each week with youth group.

We had three overnights this year (including the Fenske Lake trip in the summer, a lock-in at Peace in the fall, and an overnight in Biwabik for the Giant's Ridge ski trip in the winter), and the youth are always excited to come together to have fun and build relationship. These experiences are important in faith formation and in helping kids build the kinds of relationships that keep them wanting to hang out with each other and feel a sense of safety with sharing more vulnerably together.

After the pandemic hit, I continued to hold Wednesday night youth group over zoom, and based on feedback of what the youth said they wanted, also added a Sunday afternoon zoom hang out, each attended well. Shortly after the shift, I worked with the MN UCC Conference on creating an online permission form for parents, making sure that all parents were on board both with using zoom and any other online apps. I'm in the process of setting up a couple online game formats for youth, and there seems to be a need for it with kid's primary complaint at this time being boredom. I plan to continue at least a weekly point of connection through zoom through the summer, or however long this pandemic goes for.

OWL

We had another great year of OWL (Our Whole Lives) sexuality curriculum for 8th graders this year (until we had to stop because of the pandemic). Two of our facilitators decided to commit again this year, and one facilitator who was trained last year joined them. I again provided administrative (and back up facilitation) support to the facilitators. We once again partnered with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth (UUCD), which provided another facilitator (for a total of four), and continued with Pilgrim UCC as a partner. Between the three congregations, we had a little less than 20 participants, with consistent numbers closer to 12-15. While it was another great year of OWL, it was interrupted by the pandemic, and with the recommendation of the national OWL staff, we decided to stop our program until we can be in person again. We did hold one zoom session just to check in with the youth and talk through potential options for the future. I participated in a webinar with national OWL staff, and it looks like we will likely be waiting until the fall to gather again and complete this year's OWL. It is uncertain if we will begin our new OWL program as scheduled for incoming 8th graders, but I will reach out to parents to start the conversation, as well as check in with UUCD to make a new plan.

High School Youth

I once again helped Pastor Kathy with confirmation this year, sometimes coming up a little late after youth group finished at 7:30pm on Wednesday evenings.

Last summer, I helped lead the trip to Denver, which was a great experience—focusing in particular on economic justice. It is amazing how much of an impact trips like this have on our youth.

I also coordinated an incoming 9th grade overnight at a congregational member's house. This was to help our incoming 9th graders bond with each other coming into confirmation, and it seemed to work really well.

I had coordinated the Urban Immersion trip this year, but we canceled it because it was right at the start of the pandemic. The upside of holding confirmation on zoom is that I was able to join Kathy for each complete confirmation session. We are postponing the confirmation retreat, likely until fall. I had planned to take high school youth to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation this summer, but I canceled that due to the pandemic. I am hoping to do

something more local this summer—using my model of the Ecofaith Youth Camp that I did 4 years ago, adapting it as needed based on recommendations.

Other

One significant piece of work this year was hiring and training the new Children’s Minister, Sharon Dawson. She started her position by joining me at a progressive children and youth ministry conference in the fall, which was a great way to introduce her to her role. Though it is always a lot to train someone in on a job, she has done a fantastic job this year and I am grateful for her work.

I continued with my role on the MN UCC Faith Formation Team (there are about seven of us from different parts of Minnesota), which has continued to be a great help to me in thinking about faith formation in our congregation. This year, there are a lot of shifts with the closing of Pilgrim Point Camp, and I have been a part of a larger conversation about outdoor ministry.

For my continuing education this year (both formal and informal), I joined Black activist/theologian Ruby Sales in Washington DC for a weekend in October to gather a group of white, Christian men to talk about a theology of redemption for white men in this time. In January, I went to a weekend workshop on restorative justice. Then in February, I went to California for a theology institute put on by two of my mentors, which focused on white Christian settler experiences (largely following family ancestry) and relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Another significant part of my year has been my acceptance by the MN Conference as a member in discernment for pursuing ordination. My path is one of “multiple paths”, meaning I am not taking the traditional path of seminary, but instead exploring how my past and current education and experiences have prepared me in discernment for ordination. I have met a number of times with my mentor and my discernment committee, which has been meaningful, hard work, but provides an amazing door to my own growth and leadership.

I finish my report for this year by once again saying how grateful I am to be in this role. I continue to love my work in this community and look forward to years to come.

Nathan Holst, Faith Formation Minister

Sharon Dawson, Children’s Ministry Coordinator

I began as Children’s Minister in mid October with a three-day Progressive Christian Ministry Conference for orientation to the Peace UCC ministry and as an introduction to the wider supportive circle of UCC community. My position began at a busy time of year and I hit the ground running into the holiday season. By mid March all church programming went online due to the Covid–19 outbreak. All staff learned how to zoom to get programming online, create new systems for handling the congregation’s special needs demanded by the times. The first few weeks of our learning curve were complicated and very demanding for all staff and the entire Church community. Each day more information came out on safety measures and we all adapted as things shifted day to day, working hard to keep the Church programming functioning efficiently with the building closed for public use and staff members working from home. I was thankful for Pastor Kathy’s amazing ability to organize and lead in a very demanding situation.

Children’s Ministry Team:

Holly Bowen-Bailey, Elise Courtright, Pat Nelson, Katey Fornear, and I have participated regularly in the Children’s Ministry Team, as well as Nathan Holst my direct supervisor. I coordinate the team, which meets monthly. Meetings are now held online.

Children’s Ministry Activity

Childcare:

Sunday morning childcare during both services as well as Wednesday evening programming (6:00-7:30pm) has run smoothly with a responsible, caring staff. Staff members include Crystal Kaczmarczyk, Claire Barlass, River Fena, Natalie St. Marie, Crystal Sjelin, Rainy Orazem and occasional youth volunteers. Staff alternates Sunday mornings and we include an adult volunteer from our community during the 10:30 service, which is the busiest. An extra staff person was needed on evenings that Circles of Support met in the building due to an increase in the number of children in the Nursery. We decrease staff when Circles of support does not meet. The nursery was closed mid March due to health issues and CDC guidelines. (College campuses closed, and we lost some collage staff because of this even before the Church had to close for public safety.)

Sunday school

Curriculum:

Sunday school curriculum continues with the behavior based A Joyful Path, Inner Wisdom Series. Each week I have put together the lesson in an easy to read e-mail format including scripture, story and crafts or games that help the teachers identify and the children learn the heart of the lesson. Crafts/games teach through activity and are recommended for the differing grade levels. The teachers preferred the e-mail guidance for lesson plans over the mp3 information that had been distributed before I became minister. Often I adapt lessons or supplement them with books from the library under Pastor Kathy's supervision to suit our children's needs and to coordinate them with the sermon and scripture for that week. The adaptations of lessons have been very successful.

By mid March Sunday school went online, as did all of our programming due to the Covid-19 outbreak. I learned how to zoom for the first time and the first few weeks were complicated and very demanding technically for all staff. Each day more information came out on safety measures and we all shifted day to day working hard to keep the Church programming functioning and the community centered and grounded.

We have had good attendance at 9:30 Sunday mornings and have decided to run Sunday school through the summer for continuity of relationship and community for our children. I myself have taught the multi grade lesson, often developing our own curriculum and content under Kathy's supervision. I have experience in curriculum development and really enjoy this aspect. Realizing that our inability to meet in groups will continue for some time, I have begun using volunteers to enrich the children's experience. Susan Larson Kidd is providing music and other Sunday school teachers have been invited to join in with lessons and keep contact with their students.

Opening:

All Sunday school ages gather together in the Sanctuary at 9:30 and I lead a festive 15-20 minutes of educational story telling or inclusionary play-acting of the main educational point of the lesson. We celebrate birthdays, make an offering and join in song. Susan Larson Kidd volunteers to lead song and we are lucky to have her join us. The children's offerings this year will go toward the purchase of an animal through the International HEIFER Project instead of Clifford Flores because Clifford has aged out of his program.

Our online zoom Sunday school has followed this format; I have been teaching the multi-level grades an hour of lesson and related activity since mid-March.

Story for All Ages:

For Sunday service Pastor Kathy, Nathan and I were to rotate the Story for all Ages at the 10:30 service. But by my second turn we had gone to an online format and only ten people could be in the sanctuary at a time. We now wear our masks and take them off as we each come on camera, maintaining a six-foot distance and disinfecting our microphones. I have made cardboard figures to represent our "kids" and painted them bright colors so we can sit by them for Story time. They have become a highlight for the service, and I decorate them to go with each Sunday's theme and scripture. The cardboard "kids" have been successful as a visual form of connection with the kids, helping them feel acknowledged as an important part of our community even though we are not together in person. I find Story for All Ages very meaningful and put quite a bit of effort into making a connection with the children through the story time at our 10:30 virtual service. It works well and we have gotten very positive feedback from adults as well as the children.

Teachers:

Each class has 2-3 teachers that rotate Sundays, which helps distribute the workload. They set their schedule for their grade and this process has run smoothly. I fill in if need be due to illness or unexpected circumstance. We tried a combined all age group lesson and group art project that I led with teacher assistance that was very successful and was going to be a monthly event to raise excitement and generate interest after the holiday time when attendance dropped a bit. However, due to "shelter in place guidelines" this was not implemented on a regular basis. Sunday school teachers are now being asked if they would like to participate in the ongoing online Sunday school format.

Kids Club:

Kids club on Wednesday evening has had regular attendance of 8-12 children and extra children rotating through when Circles of Support meets in the building. There is a core group that come every week and a few children that rotate through. Pat Nelson has continued to volunteer and support the club on Wednesdays and is extremely helpful. We have developed a routine that includes a physical activity rotated with crafts and games that coordinate meaningful content with current events, Sunday school lessons and Sunday service themes. We have

more structure to keep busy bodies happy and the group cohesive and under control. It had gotten a bit wild due to staff changes when I had started my position.

Mid March we went online. Our online Kids Club started out strong and it helped to ground the children as their daily lives changed dramatically with distance learning at home. But the time of the club had to be changed to 3pm. Most children are doing their distance learning in the morning and by that time need to be active and outdoors in the warm spring to play. As the weather warmed up we saw a decline in the numbers. Kids Club will end at its scheduled time at the end of May. We are setting up an alternative interactive story time for the children online.

Christmas Pageant:

The Christmas Pageant was The Little Star. It was done in 2013 and was adapted slightly for the pageant this year. It tells the story of Christ's birth from the perspective of the Star of Bethlehem. About thirty children participated with 15 volunteers, and most Sunday school teachers stepped in to help. Holly Bowen Bailey, Diane Swanoski and Nathan Holst were foundational in assisting me in learning the ropes and helping the children to be confident and successful leading them through a great experience. The pageant was successful, and the children had the traditional Birthday Cake for Jesus in the Fellowship Hall afterward in celebration with family and Church members.

Easter:

The usual Easter activities for the children had to be cancelled. We decided to deliver Surprise Easter bags to the kids at their homes. Volunteers and Pastor Kathy stuffed bags and delivered them two days before Easter. (We gave time for the bags to be safe for the kids to open Easter morning.) Of course the children were thrilled but the parents also appreciated it very much. One parent said she was so thankful for the sidewalk chalk because stores were all sold out. Stores were at that time selling out of more than toilet paper due to a wave of fear and hoarding.)

Halloween Carnival:

All went well at my first major event two weeks after I was hired. I feel comfortable now with events and like to organize. I was so impressed with the community involvement. Our CM team worked well together and about 15 youth and parent volunteers came together for a great event. The Children's Ministry team did a great job working together and the fundraiser was successful with monies raised going to children living at the Steve O'Neil apartments.

Advent Wreath event:

The event was well attended even after changing the date due to a snowstorm. We combined the event with coffee hour and that combination was so successful we have decided that other events would benefit from being scheduled at that time.

Children's Choir:

The children's choir at 5pm on Wednesdays slowly lost attendance. We then begun offering choir practice as a five week segment with sing along at the beginning of Kids Club and after the 10:30 service hoping that a change in time and ease of attendance for our parents would help build attendance numbers and the children's choir would sing at the Palm Sunday Service. However, we were not able to meet due to health regulations and this did not come to fruition. By Palm Sunday groups of no larger than ten were allowed to meet due to health concerns.

New Online Programming

Online programming expansion has been a must. In addition to virtual Kids Club and Sunday school, Children's Ministry has created a private Peace Church Parenting Page to help parents connect and support each other through these changing stress-producing times. What is good for the parents is good for the children. This has been well received and has 48 members. Elise Courtright and I manage the Page and there is regular community participation.

I am developing a virtual book club for the Peace Church Read Aloud Story Time Group, connected to the MN State-wide read *Because of Winn Dixie*. I am recording the reading of the book, and then bringing the kids together on a private Face Book page to share thoughts and responses related to the story, as well as opportunities for the children to interact by sharing drawings, their own favorite books and stories.

Vacation Bible School:

We had purchased a weeklong curriculum "Big Beautiful World" based on the creation story and our environment in expectation of a normal summer and VBS being held in June. We will save this for next year in

hopes of being able to come together as a group in person again and adapt our programming to work with the current pandemic health guidelines.

Holly Bowen-Bailey developed a Google survey that has been sent to all parents to help us collect their thoughts and their family's needs concerning VBS this summer. Our goal for this summer is to stay connected and have programming that is fun for the kids and their parents with as little stress as possible.

We have chosen the second week of August (10-14) to provide Vacation Bible School Programming that will have an environmental theme. A final decision on exact programming will be made at the beginning of July and we will inform the parents. What the programming looks like will be based on safety and current information from the CDC and state government. If there is a group event, it will be a one-day, short get-together outdoors at the church with safety measures in place. However, a probable scenario will be a group project outdoors at the Church where families can come one or two at a time and contribute. Such as a mural, or scavenger hunt, or a "Box of Fun" will be given to take home with supplies that the kids can use for a zoom meet up, held in consecutive days where we will connect as a group and work on a themed project. Our June CM meeting will solidify plans for this scenario. Sarah Holst is also joining the VBS planning team.

Summary

While there have been dramatic changes in programming and how my job is performed, and those changes have been demanding, I have found I work well independently and enjoy the creative process used in developing new routes for programming and community building with our children and their families. I continue to be grateful for Pastor Kathy's presence, strong support and calm leadership in a time of unprecedented change. So many thanks to the office staff who weathered all the technical issues and supported my efforts as CM and to the Sunday tech team who continue to keep us all unified and keep this faith community going. I can't forget all the amazing volunteers! This is a congregation that truly practices what it preaches. I am grateful to be part of it.

Submitted by Sharon Dawson, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Jim Pospisil, Music Director

The music at Peace has been quite exciting, meaningful, and challenging this year. Most of the year, we have enjoyed many known groups provide special music at our services. The Peace Band has played at the 10:30 service the first Sunday of each month. The members include Jane Aas, Ron Deters, Tim Carpenter, John Erickson, Dave Winchester, and Ian Connell. The group has evolved a bit, with Jane stepping aside, which gave the other members a bit more responsibility. Dave, Ian, and especially Ron have led the band in tunes of their own choosing.

On the third Sunday of each month, "Leon and Friends" has been providing music. This group is particularly fluid; personnel differs from month to month, making it challenging, but quite exciting. Members include Kelli Hallsten, Jessica Olson, Kirby Wood, Dale Shimmin, Ian Connell, Leon Rohrbaugh, John Erickson, Dave Winchester, and at times Wendy Durrwachter and Sam Marks. This is a high energy band, with a funky approach, which often becomes a platform for prelude and postlude jamming. Styles are varied, from rock, jazz, funk, country, and improvised who knows what.

There are literally dozens of other musicians who provide special music throughout the year. Notable people include Nathan Holst, Melanie Sever, Eli Bissonett, Mia Kraker, Lydia Kraker, Buzz Munns, Jim Larson, and Lencie Westrik. These folks provide for music for the 8:30 and 10:30 services on Sunday, including special services during Advent, Holy Week, and throughout the year. Many styles are present, appreciated by me and the congregation for the diversity.

The choir has been the staple for me at Peace. This talented, hard working group provides the anthem for each Sunday. We are accompanied by the talented Wendy Durrwachter on piano, also a composer who often writes for our choir, and other notable musicians in the area. The choir assists helping the congregation with unfamiliar tunes that come up, broadening their role as not just an anthem group, but musicians to enhance worship. Also, many soloists come from the choir, always ready and willing to provide music when needed. Soloists include Gudrun Witrak, Susan Larson Kidd, Cathy Ameel, Kirby Wood, Jennifer Boyle, Mary Pat Renaud. A notable performance was Handel's "Messiah," sung in December. This was extraordinary, with a large choir and orchestra, and soloists from the choir.

Everything changed once we began to stream the services amidst the pandemic. We paired down to three singers, Maddie Carpenter, Frost Bowen-Bailey, and Mark Hakes, accompanied only by piano, and sometimes

Frost playing horn. Special music was either provided by one of the four musicians present, or by pre-recorded music by other musicians, either their own recordings, or from a session done at Peace. Although the planning is quite similar, regarding themes along with scripture, the feel of the worship service is totally different. The sanctuary has now become not so much a sanctuary, but a recording studio due to no congregation, no amplification, and many technical workers making it all happen. Kathy has dedicated herself to making the worship as normal as possible, with the services live on the web site and YouTube. We hope to make the experience rich and meaningful in this difficult time, while keeping us healthy and safe.

My experience as Music Director is a rich and fulfilling one, full of profound moments and excitement. I am blessed to be able to continue this for Peace, the congregation, my family, and myself. This is an incredible experience, and I am grateful.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Pospisil, Music Director

Coordinating Council – Moderator

We end this church year in a way that clarifies our Peace Church foundation and shows us that we are made of deep faith, abilities, and imagination. The Covid Pandemic is full upon us, and citizens are being isolated from one another in a way unbelievable even three months ago. For posterity, the record can show that all in-person church services, church meetings, youth activities and other justice works have been cancelled since the end of March. The killer virus has made social contact very dangerous and put us all in a state of solitude that is unnatural. However, the joyous note is that Pastor Kathy and our team of talented staff and volunteers have created ways for us to continue our spiritual life in new formats. We now “zoom” instead of meeting at church. We smile onscreen instead of shaking hands or hugging. But we are together. We are Peace Church. We are united in spirit. And we are highly appreciative of Pastor Kathy, Nathan, Nancy, Janell, Jim, Sharon, Toni, Elise, Dan, and Tim. We are all very sad to not be with each other in person but we have become an even stronger church because we adapt and keep true to our beliefs and missions. An opportunity to rejoice!

Our church continuity is facilitated by staff and volunteers who produce in-church streamed services on Sunday, run coffee hours, meetings, educational forums, and music offerings which seem effortless and meaningful on the receiving end. Thank you for making this so. It is not easy.

And the larger work of the church this year is also moving forward. We are in our last year of being graced by the leadership and care of Pastor Kathy. The church council and the congregation undertook a thorough process to determine the ongoing needs of our church. The well-discussed plan going forward is to have an “intentional” interim join us in 2021 to assist our continuation of the essence of Peace that has developed over the years and also inspire opportunities to vision again.

Your coordinating council would like to take this opportunity to thank Pastor Kathy for her brilliant, inspiring, caring leadership over the last 30 years. We are forever changed and personally touched. And we know that Peace’s staff, committees, volunteers, and wonderful congregation will be together in spirit and strength going forward. Thank you all.

Sue Isernhagen, Moderator

Coordinating Council – Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is composed of Doug Bowen-Bailey (vice-moderator of Coordinating Council), Gary Boelhower (past moderator) Kirby Wood (church treasurer), Dick Goese, Betty Greene, Leon Rohrbaugh, and John Ameel.

This report is being written in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which may end up having an impact on our finances and budget and represents our best understanding as of April 30, 2020.

We meet monthly with our bookkeeper, Toni Kasell. Our primary job is to review the monthly financial statements and to pass any recommendations, concerns or questions along to Council. We also discuss and make recommendations concerning any other matter related to the financial status and policies of our church.

For calendar year 2020, our church’s annual budget is \$556,773. This budget reflects realistic income and expenses in all areas. In 2019, we had a carry over of \$906,570 of this income, 470,000 is from pledges. Because a large percentage of our congregation uses electronic giving, our pledges have continued to be relatively stable during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are not sure what the long-term effects of this will be but

the finance committee continues to monitor this. We suspect that both our income and expenses will decrease over the course of 2020.

The Gabriel Fund has also been an important part of our congregational finances. Donations to the fund have been significant as some congregational members who are in the position to do so have donated all or portions of their stimulus checks to this fund so that it can be used to address emergent needs within our congregation and community.

As a committee, we are grateful that in the midst of this time of uncertainty we are still able live out our commitment to a faith in God's abundance and that there is enough for all if we do our part in sharing the bounty of God's creation.

Doug Bowen-Bailey, Finance Committee Chair

Coordinating Council – Human Resources Committee

Peace Church continues to be well-served by dedicated and talented employees. Their dedication and talent has really shown brightly during the pandemic and the changes it has brought to their work. We owe a debt of gratitude to each of them.

We were pleased to be able to provide a Simple IRA retirement plan for our employees beginning January 2020. Peace will make a contribution each year to all eligible employees.

As part of the transition planning for Pastor Kathy's upcoming retirement, we updated the job descriptions for the Pastor and all employees. This work was done in conjunction with their annual performance evaluations.

Successful recruitments were done for our Children's Ministry Coordinator and our Bookkeeper. We have also begun the work to find a vendor to provide our IT Support beginning in January 2021.

Submitted by Leanne Ventrella, HR Committee Chair

Coordinating Council – Jubilee Fund

The Jubilee Fund was created in 2009, funded by a tithe from the Haller bequest. Its intentions are to "build the beloved community," as it gives our congregation a concrete way to make connections with the wider community. Like the oil lamps that are celebrated during the Jewish festival, the fund has continued beyond our original projections. What we thought would be a 5-year process of spending out the money has instead been sustained by the generosity of the estate of Peggy and George Maske and by Peace Church members who continue to support our commitment that Peace Church does not exist only within these walls but will always spill out into the community.

This year, the Jubilee Fund contributed \$4,500 to support Jessica Olson, Andy Fena, and Jill Pospisil visiting our missionaries, Monica and Tom Liddle, in East Timor. They were able to travel and see the Liddles in context and return to share what they learned and experienced with the congregation.

Additionally, we provided \$2000 for a Peace Church building fund spearheaded by Jim McLean. A group of Peace members responded to the needs of members and neighbors for housing repairs.

Finally, we approved the allocation of \$4200 for Peace Church's placement fee for having Sarah Holst do a Community Justice Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as part of her seminary education.

The Jubilee Fund committee consists of Sarah Holst, Gail Blum, Tim Peters, Jim McLean, and Doug Bowen-Bailey. (Note that Jim McLean and Sarah Holst were both involved in projects that were funded. They recused themselves from discussion and voting on these requests.) We invite you to get involved with an activity supported by the fund or come up with an idea that you can bring forward as a way for us to continue to build the beloved community. And there will be continuing opportunities for you to donate to this fund. We currently have over \$45,000 in the account—a sign that it truly is possible to be generous and live with a sense of abundance and that our lamps burning for justice will continue on into the nights to come.

For more information on the Jubilee Fund and the application process, please visit:
<http://www.peaceucc.org/acting-for-justice-hub/jubilee-fund/>

Submitted by Doug Bowen-Bailey

Christian Education – Children’s Ministry Team

Team members: Karen Sheldon (first half of year), Holly Bowen-Bailey, Elise Courtright, Pat Nelson, and Katey Fornear have participated in the Children’s Ministry Team. Kelli Farell was our Children’s Ministry Coordinator during most of 2019; she resigned and took a different job in August. We hired Sharon Dawson, starting in October, to fill the position. Nathan Holst, our Faith Formation Minister, is the direct supervisor of the Children’s Minister.

Vacation Bible School is the first big event in the new calendar year. Kelli was the organizer; it was held in mid-June. About 45 children attended, 15 youth volunteered as helpers. The theme was Aslan is on the Move, based on The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Sunday School overview: We continue with The Joyful Path curriculum. Our Children’s Library continues to supplement weekly lessons and Kids Club activities.

Wednesday Night Programming: The fall started off without a Children’s Minister on staff. A variety of volunteers from the Children’s ministry team and other involved parents took turns leading the activities until Sharon was able to begin her work at Peace Church. Since that time, she has developed a good routine that includes some yoga, singing, and various activities and crafts. Pat Nelson is there most weeks to provide support. Eight to twelve kids attended regularly, and other kids joined in occasionally.

Annual CM Events: The Halloween Fundraising carnival was Sharon’s first big event, and it went smoothly. Proceeds went to the children living at the Steve O’Neil apartments to support them joining programs in the community they may not be able to afford. The Advent Workshop in early December was also organized by the CM team; it went well. The Christmas Pageant involved about 30 children. The story this year was called The Little Star; the script, which was first used in approximately 2013, was slightly revised.

Corona Virus Interruptions: The established routines and programs for kids in the congregation came to a halt with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-March. Nathan, Sharon, and Pastor Kathy worked together to put most things online in the form of Zoom meetings. Sunday School went virtual, so did the Wednesday night programming, which had to be moved to Wednesday afternoons because of the Zoom conflicts with other programs for Peace adults. The Sunday School attendance increased with the online meetings, which Sharon organized and facilitated mostly by herself. The Kids’ Club did not increase, and as the spring weather got nicer, attendance declined quite a bit. Sharon is working on the development of a virtual book club, connected to the MN Statewide read: Because of Winn Dixie. She will be recording the reading of the book, and then bringing the kids together to share thoughts and responses related to the story, as well as opportunities for the children to share their own favorite books and stories.

Nursery: Our childcare on Sunday mornings during both services and Wednesday evenings has been a success. We have great nursery staff, Crystal Kaczmarczyk, Claire Barlass, River Fena, Natalie St. Marie, Crystal Sjelin, Rainy Orazem. They are fantastic. They rotate on Sunday mornings. On Wednesday evenings, childcare is available from 6-7:30 p.m. for kids 1st grade and under. Generally, a few kids attend, with the exception of Wednesdays when there is an Inquirers Class; we often see increased numbers in the nursery on these evenings.

Youth Programming: This past year, youth group met weekly, with anywhere from 10-20 middle school students participating, depending on the time of year. Nathan, our Faith Formation Minister, plans the activities and involves parent volunteers weekly to assist with snacks. There were four lock-ins and a number of events, and over the summer there will be one event each month to keep the youth connected. In the fall, there will once again be a peer ministry program, as well as a continuation of the OWL (our whole lives) program offered for 8th graders. We trained three new facilitators this spring and hope to have a pool of OWL facilitators moving forward as we continue to partner with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation and Pilgrim UCC.

Numbers: According to our database, there are 290 “children” in the church between 0 and 18 years old, breaking down as follows: 0-3 years old: 28; 4 years old through 5th grade: 117; Youth Group (6th–8th): 65; Confirmation (9th–10th): 28; Senior High (11th–12th): 52

Submitted by Holly Bowen-Bailey, Children’s Ministry Team Member

Christian Education – Adult Education Team

The Adult Education Team plans the Sunday morning forums that happen each week and coordinates a wide variety of other learning events.

Adult Forums: This year's theme was "Tending the Earth, Tending Each Other".

- Sept 8—Artist Sharon Wichman—Photography as a spiritual contemplation practice
- Sept 15—Eric Enberg—Framing climate crisis
- Sept 22—Alison Hoxie—Framing energy crisis
- Sept 29—Jodi Slick—Taking in the big picture and making it local
- Oct 6—Leanne Littlewolf—Indigenous stories, AICHO, and climate change
- Oct 13— Matt Doyle, Geof Witrak, and Bret Pence—solar panels and carbon calculators
- Oct 20—Johanna Bernu—Effect of climate crisis on Indigenous culture
- Oct 27—Brandon Vantassel and Jesse Schomberg—Stream Corps, Community Action Duluth and landscape and water quality
- Nov 3—Lyz Jaakola—Water Walkers
- Nov 10— JT Haines and John Doberstein—Duluth for Clean Water
- Nov 17—Brett Cease—Citizen's Climate Lobby
- Dec 8—Kaitlyn McKechnie and Aaron Crowell—Love, play, and reflection through Anji play
- Dec 15—Paul Hlina and Judy Gibbs—Superior Hiking Trail
- Jan 5—Michelle Naar-Obed and Charlotte Frantz—Refugees and stories from the border
- Jan 12—Greg Gilbert—The importance of having a will
- Jan 19—Health and Wellness Team—Mental health 101
- Jan 26—Health and Wellness Team—Mental health: what can we do to be an inclusive community?
- Feb 2—Moiria Villiard—Sharing art and building community
- Feb 9—Gary Boelhower—Building Better Boys
- Feb 16—Serrano Robinson—Men as Peace Makers
- Feb 23—Gabe Mayfield—Sharing the work of Lifehouse
- March 1—Jordon and Terresa Moses—Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial
- March 8—Helen Davis—Family Freedom Center
- March 15—Regina Laroche—Land, farming and the roots of repair
- March 22 through April 12—Break because of Pandemic
- April 19—Janet Kennedy interview—a zoom conversation facilitated by Nathan Holst
- April 26—Daniel Oyinloye—a zoom conversation on reparations, creativity, and community building
- May 3—Lyz Jaakola—House concert through Facebook Live
- May 7—Tom and Monica Liddle—Sharing the experience of East Timor
- May 10—Mary Adams—Braver Angels documentary introduction
- May 17—Mary Adams—Follow up conversation on Braver Angels

Other Activities: The Adult Education Team also sponsored the following activities:

- Women's Brown Bag Study Group meets on the fourth Wednesdays at noon in the Fireside Room. Pastor Kathy facilitated this time to share lunch, conversation and devotions. (Shifted to Zoom.)
- "On Being" podcast and lunch meets on the third Tuesday of each month at noon in the conference room. The group listens to great speakers online, followed by good conversation. Facilitated by Nancy Carlson, who also brings a delicious lunch. (Cancelled during the pandemic.)
- Soma Yoga Class meets on Mondays 9:00-10:15am in the Fireside Room. The class is taught by Robin Davidson of our congregation. This safe and gentle yoga involves a combination of chair, standing, and mat poses and is suited for all levels of ability. (Shifted to Zoom.)
- Centering Prayer meets in the Chapel Wednesdays at 5pm, led by Jackie Falk. Centering Prayer is a method of silent, contemplative prayer, in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself.
- Wednesday Evening Bible Study meets at 6pm in the Fireside Room. Participants read the Gospel lesson for the coming Sunday using the Lectio Divina method. Lectio Divina is listening for the still, small voice of God that speaks to us. We read the passage three times to hear what it is touching in each of our lives. (Shifted to Zoom.)
- Retreats: Winter Camp on the second weekend in February for all ages at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. Both men's and women's retreats were canceled because of the pandemic. There was a mini-men's retreat over zoom in May for men to gather, connect, and reflect together.

Submitted by Nathan Holst for the Adult Education Team

Christian Education – Library Team

Members and Workers: Sharon Crosby, Janell Kohls, Marlis Cran, Denise Perry, Lynn Watson and Kathy Wood

Our Mission Statement begins with the Peace Church Vision Statement and continues as follows: "The purpose of the church library is to support the ministry of the congregation in accordance with the above vision statement. We seek to provide print and non-print material for all ages, which strengthens the educational work of the church, increases our knowledge of our own faith and others, enriches our worship life, provides information on social and economic issues, fosters an appreciation of good literature and nurtures spiritual growth."

The statistics for the past year are down as the church has been closed. We also have some DVDs available for check out and we will be adding more in the next few months. We are seeing a number of books leaving the shelves without being checked out, some of which have not returned. This is a concern, and we ask that you take time to write your name on the card in the book and place it in the file box, either on the card catalog or on the display shelves in the entry. There is also a box in the children's area.

Work continues on a card catalogue for the Children's Library, where many books were removed to make space for the new ones that were added. This means that the card sets for the removed books need to be removed and card sets for the new books must be added.

An Alzheimer's disease/dementia caregivers support group that meets in the church, has donated a number of books on subjects of dementia and caregiving. They have been added to the Adult Library and may be checked out by anyone interested in them.

We are happy to receive donated books as this helps us to stretch our budget. Sharon Crosby has been working most Wednesdays to accession books, enter information into the database and print and file the new catalog cards. She continues to update the Adult Library catalog and database as new books are added to the library. We welcome anyone who has the interest and time to help out in the library to come in at their convenience—you do not need to be a member of the team. No knowledge of processing or covering books is necessary. We can give you direction. We would also welcome reviews of books in the library and suggestions for new books. Call Sharon Crosby at 624-5582 if you are interested in helping.

We appreciate your help and your donations and hope that you will visit the Peace Church Libraries and use the materials available there.

Submitted by Sharon Crosby

Christian Education – Historical Team

Members: Bill Kehtel, Bill Kohlts, Marge Anderson, Marg Paulson, Marlis Cran, Joan Severson, Joan Hatlestad and Sharon Crosby

The team has been meeting monthly to organize the records, photos and newspaper clippings. We still have many pictures that need to have names and dates recorded and need to be organized into albums. This is an ongoing project.

A letter and current photos must be sent each year, in June, to the Department of the Navy regarding the bell from the USS ASCELLA that has been on loan to us since 1959. As requested by the Navy, we had a plaque made stating that the “Ascella” bell is on indefinite loan. It was placed on the bell tower.

We continue to organize the “New Member Photos.”

Bill Kohlts Helped Rhonda Weiler and Connie Jacobson search through the old records for any of their Weiler, Voltze, and White ancestors, after which they made a donation to the church.

We are still trying to collect a copy of each cookbook the church has compiled over the years. We have the most current ones (1956, 1976, 1989, 2006 and 2017) but we continue to look for the older ones. Please watch for them at rummage sales and as older members pare down their possessions.

We still do not have pictures of some of our more recent Confirmation Classes, if anyone has pictures of these classes please let us know. We can get copies made and return the originals to you. We will be compiling a list of the specific years that are missing and will publish it in the Peace Bell.

We continue to index the archives, photo albums and scrapbooks. Most of these indexes have been entered into the computer so that they may be more easily searched.

Marge Anderson has been taking Peace Bells and making summaries of each year and thus creating a history of Peace Church.

Bill Kohlts started working on a new picture display of all the pastors who have served this church. He has received several additional photos from the Eden Theological Seminary archive in Missouri.

If anyone has a memory, old photograph, or a document about an event or happening related to the church, the committee would be interested in hearing about it. We are always looking for additional committee members who recognize the value of “remembering the past”. Please contact team member, if you are interested in being on the Historical Team and helping to organize and archive the important documents from our past.

Submitted by Sharon Crosby

Acting for Justice – Acting for Justice Hub

“... and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

The Acting for Justice Hub provides a focus for Peace Church’s commitment to justice in both the local and global community. The Hub meets monthly and serves as the umbrella for the action teams: Dismantling Racism, Climate Justice, Global Ministries, Open and Affirming (ONA), CHUM Involvement, Beyond Violence, and Migrant Justice. The Hub submits regular columns to the Peace Bell, including Voices for Justice, which highlights the justice efforts of a different member of the congregation each month. This year the Hub also started the Steps for Justice column which lifts up many different ways Peace people can make a difference. Thanks to Pamela Mittlefehldt for coordinating both of these efforts.

Peace Church volunteers provide meals for Loaves and Fishes, Damiano Soup Kitchen, and CHUM Drop In Center. The congregation provides Christmas gifts to Hildegard House, Life House, and Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker Houses. Peace Church members sign petitions, comment on potential regulations, and send emails to legislators to advocate on issues such as gun violence, immigration, and climate justice.

We celebrated 30 years of being a Just Peace Church on Sunday, June 9, 2019. Jack Nelson Pallmeyer was our preacher, and Office Coordinator Nancy Nelson helped us to compile an extensive history of our work in peacemaking and justice efforts over the last 30 years.

In addition to action, the team gave financial support for the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, NAACP and AICHO events, U.S. Peace Memorial, Our Church's Wider Mission (UCC), CHUM, Campus Ministry, Gabriel Project, Habitat for Humanity, St Mark AME Church, One Roof, Loaves & Fishes, The Liddles (missionaries in East Timor), UTS Seminary, Seafarer's Ministry, Damiano Soup Kitchen, and Witness for Peace. On top of budgeted giving, members of the congregation give to four UCC mission offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and Veterans of the Cross (Christmas Fund).

Also in the wake of Covid-19 and the financial impact on many families of our community and congregation, Peace members gave over \$14,000 in a month to help people and agencies dealing with food scarcity. Through our Gabriel Fund we gave \$4,000 to the NAACP, \$4,000 to AICHO, \$3,000 to the YWCA, and smaller amounts to Chum, Safehaven, Lifehouse, Together for Youth, as well as individual members and families. The generosity has been overwhelming.

To learn more about specific activities in the past year, please read the summaries from our Action Teams:

- Climate Justice – Bill Mittlefehldt and Lisa Fitzpatrick
- Global Ministries – Jessica Olson and Tom Liddle
- Open and Affirming – Kathryn Nelson, Nathan Holst and others
- CHUM Involvement – Susan Munns, Angie Miller
- Dismantling Racism – Betty Greene, Kevin Skwira Brown, Doug Bowen-Bailey
- Migrant Justice – Charlotte Frantz
- Beyond Violence – Joan Peterson and John Pegg

Submitted by Kathy Nelson

Acting for Justice – Climate Justice Team

During the 2019-2020 year, the Food, Energy, and Environment Team (FEET) changed its name to the Climate Justice Team. We also created an explicit team mission:

Our particular role as the Peace Church Climate Justice Team is to provide spiritual grounding, share stories, educate our church, connect people to secular justice groups doing climate work, and to work on projects related to Peace as they emerge.

We set a regular meeting time on the third Monday of every month at 7:00 pm, and welcomed several new team members.

We began exploring the possibility of participating in the UCC's Creation Justice Church program and looking at what it would mean to make environmental justice a central part of Peace Church's identity. We developed and distributed a survey to help us understand the congregation's interest in becoming a Creation Justice Church, which showed strong support of this work. We also created a list of next steps in this process.

Finally, we created programming for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, 2020. Due to COVID-19, Earth Day programming was delivered through email and social media. It included: personal reminiscences of the first Earth Day written by team members; promoting an Earth Day webinar with African-American environmental activist Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr. (sponsored by MN Interfaith Power and Light), and organizing a Peace follow-up discussion in Zoom; promoting a free film screening of the "Human Element" (sponsored by MN Interfaith Power and Light); and highlighting Earth Day in the live-stream Sunday service on April 26.

Submitted by Shana Aue

Acting for Justice – Global Ministries Team

After living as mission co-workers in the community of Lospalos in East Timor since 2016, Tom, Monica, Hannah, and Simon Liddle returned to the United States in March 2020. Tom and Monica shared with the Peace congregation their "Story of Mission, Journey of Faith" during a zoom presentation on May 7. A link to the presentation is on the Peace church website.

The Liddles' relationship with the people of East Timor began in 2003, when Tom and Monica spent two and a half months there as part of Monica's midwifery and naturopathy training at Bastyr University in Seattle, Washington. This early introduction proved to be the beginning of a deep connection that would bring them back to

the country multiple times, including twice for multi-year stays as mission co-workers with the people in the community of Lospalos.

During their most recent stay, Tom worked as a pastor, helping develop pastoral leaders for rural congregations and assisting the Protestant Church of East Timor (IPTL) Ministries with its social outreach program. Monica worked in Clinic Immanuel as a physician, providing primary care at the Clinic Immanuel in Lospalos and working with local staff to implement public health outreach programs, as well as maternity and nutrition programs.

Peace UCC supported the Liddle family with our prayers and financial contributions. We had video calls with them about once a month during their time in East Timor, and learned more about their day-to-day experiences this way, while helping them stay connected to our congregation and the broader Duluth community. In October 2019 Andy Fena, Jill Bowman Pospisil, and Jessica Lilja Olson spent two weeks with the Liddles in East Timor, getting to know the place and people. It was an incredible opportunity to experience some of the realities of Timorese life and to gain a deeper understanding of the country and the Liddles' role there.

Amena Cristovao Cooper grew up in Lospalos and was part of our Peace Church community from 2014 to 2016. She graduated from Lake Superior College as a medical laboratory technician in 2016, and worked alongside Monica at Clinic Immanuel in Lospalos until July 2019, when she returned to the United States with her husband Joel to pursue further schooling.

The Liddles kept an active online blog about their experiences (<https://timorsite.wordpress.com>). The following is Tom's post from February 2020.

Submitted by Jessica Olson

RIP KODAE

When we stepped across the threshold into Kodae's house in Lospalos, I could tell he wasn't breathing. His younger brother was sitting beside him on the dingy mattress he had been on for months, shooing flies away from the pale corpse. The smell in the room was putrid. The boy turned to us with tears in his eyes. Their father appeared from a side room. On seeing us he announced, "He just died." It was 4 in the afternoon, the sun was shining, and it was very quiet.

Kodae had a massive tumor on his lower left jaw. When Monica first went to see him at the request of a mutual friend, the tumor was the size of a volleyball. That was January 11. Two days later the bottom half fell off, leaving a gaping, but painless, massive open wound. Over the next couple weeks we went to visit Kodae often. He was afraid of what was happening to his body. Yet both he and his father were hanging onto hope. Day after day his dad sat with him, lovingly cleaning his wound and repositioning his frail body.

In the last week of January we were there for another visit. This day was different: Kodae was writhing and moaning in pain. Monica suggested medicine to ease the pain, which he was willing to try. Kodae had not taken any pain medicine until now, despite nearly a year of serious illness. I read scripture and prayed with him. A few days later, Kodae's right leg swelled up. The next day his breathing became increasingly labored. As we left that day I pulled Kodae's dad aside and talked to him, encouraging him to invite close family and friends to say goodbye to Kodae.

Kodae's tumor was the size of a marble for maybe a few years, according to stories we have heard from his friends and family. It eventually got bigger and in March 2020 he was referred to Dili, where doctors surgically removed the tumor. The biopsy, sent out of country to a pathology lab, showed cancer; Timor has no pathology lab of its own, and it has no treatment for most cancer patients beyond surgery. Kodae's tumor came back within two months and grew rapidly. The family went back to Dili but doctors told them it was stage four cancer and there was nothing they could do. Kodae's dad was desperate; they were given no treatment and no option but to go home and wait for death.

Kodae's story was on Timor's television news program a couple months ago. In the t.v. interview, Kodae's father expressed outrage. Though he had fought for Timor's independence, he feels ignored, marginalized, oppressed. Helpless to get proper treatment for his 25-year-old son with cancer.

Timor Leste invests less per capita in health care than any country in the world. Basic medicines are often in short supply. The well connected and the elites can go abroad for health care and higher education, and they do. Kodae's dad knows this. It's not fate, bad luck or a shortage of money that prevents some people from receiving decent health care in East Timor. It is the choices that people in power make that have far-reaching impacts on the lives of many.

Acting for Justice – Open and Affirming Team (ONA)

ONA has continued to make small movements, even if without formal monthly meetings. Nathan has continued to help lead and coordinate meetings with UUCD and Gloria Dei, gathering a number of church leaders in the area to talk about LGBTQ issues in our churches and larger community. The group planned to meet this spring, but is on hold because of the pandemic. In one of the meetings this year, an organizer from the Twin Cities came and gave a presentation on a ban on conversion therapy, which prompted action to pressure the Duluth City Council to ban conversation therapy in this area. A number of Peace leaders showed up to express support for the ban.

Pastor Kathy has also been in touch with leadership from First United Methodist (Copper Top) Church about the possibility of holding the Pride service at their church in the fall.

Submitted by Nathan Holst

Acting for Justice – CHUM Involvement

Our church plays a very active role in CHUM, with significant financial support as well as volunteer time and effort. CHUM is quite unique, having now grown to 41 local congregations who have chosen to work together on a goal all agree on—to help those in our community in need of support, be it shelter, food or spiritual. Many thanks to all who support CHUM in so many ways throughout the year! Some specific areas where Peace Church participates include:

- Use of our building once a month for CHUM Church, providing a worship and fellowship experience for those with developmental disabilities. Peace Church takes part in the annual Chum Church Christmas pageant, as well as providing a Christmas meal.
- Peace Church volunteers make breakfast at the CHUM Drop In Center every other Wednesday. There are at least 30 people who are involved and regularly contribute to these meals.
- Peace Church members donate the food for and cook and serve dinner on the third Thursday evening each month at the Drop In Center. Many thanks to Cathy Carlson for cooking, serving and coordinating this, and to our many generous volunteers who keep the food donations coming in, as well as helping to serve the meal at the Drop In Center. A highlight is providing a special Christmas meal, along with giving out gift bags and providing music.
- Volunteers make pies for the annual Rhubarb Festival, CHUM's biggest fundraising effort of the year. For several years Peace Church also has donated three baskets of new and gently read books (many written by our own Peace members) and gift cards to a local bookstore for the silent auction.
- Participation in the Gabriel Project, providing emergency financial help to those in need. Peace Church provides financial support, as well as staff support with banking and check signing.
- Contributing significant financial support to the overall mission of CHUM. Peace Church is the top congregational supporter of CHUM.
- Many individual contributions of time and money by our members.
- Participation by Peace delegates and members in both the CHUM Spring and Fall Assembly.
- Peace Church gardeners raised over 500 pounds of produce in our backyard garden and donated it to the CHUM Food Shelf.

Submitted by Sue Munns, Peace Church CHUM Representative

Acting for Justice – Dismantling Racism Team

The Dismantling Racism team generally meets on the second Tuesday of the month. Our work during the 2019-2020 program year included the following:

- We reviewed our long-range plan, which includes 1) internal work as individuals and community; 2) developing relationships with local partners, and 3) living faith publicly—bringing faith to public action.
- We promoted Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial 2020 events as well as their fundraising efforts.

- We held a book study of Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson during Lent and organized a small group to see the movie in January.
- We supported the work of the NAACP through the Freedom Fund Dinner and participation in MLK events.
- We participated in fundraising for the Foy Scholarship and St Mark AME Church.
- In February we invited the wider community to a showing of the movie Harriet.
- In the fall we co-hosted with the Adult Education Team Adult Forums with Leanne Littlewolf, Johanna Bernu, and Lyz Jaakola as part of the “Tending the Earth, Tending Each Other” series. Over the winter we co-hosted Adult Forums with artist Moira Villiard of AICHO, Serrano Robinson of Men as Peacemakers, Gabe Mayfield of Life House, Jordon & Terresa Moses of Blackbird Revolt, and Helen Davis of the Family Freedom Center. Starting in mid-March, Adult Forums moved online, including an interview of Janet Kennedy and discussion of the impact of Covid-19 on marginalized communities, Daniel Oyinloye’s storytelling work, and a music concert by Lyz Jaakola.
- We began a conversation on reparations and ways to connect both with Shari Prestemon, our Minnesota Conference Minister, and with Velda Love of the national United Church of Christ.

Submitted by Betty Greene

Acting for Justice – Migrant Justice Team

Sanctuary, Migrant Justice and Immigrant Welcoming

Just what is it with the nomenclature we’ve been using? A year ago we used the term “sanctuary” to indicate our congregation’s commitment to make space available should someone in the community seek sanctuary while appealing deportation orders. We raised funds, remodeled space in our building, developed training materials for volunteers, and enlisted supportive commitments from other congregations.

Along the way, we learned a lot. We learned to use the word “migrant justice” because the issues facing immigrants are issues of leaving one place and establishing ties in another. Justice issues and hospitality are related, whether one is a refugee fleeing a war torn homeland, an asylum seeker fleeing gang violence, a economic refugee seeking work to send home remittances, or a native whose people have been displaced by government decree. While our focus has been on issues of justice related to immigrants, we began to use the broader term “migrant justice.”

Then came “Immigrant Welcoming.” In the United Church of Christ, congregations who have intentionally advocated on behalf of and supported immigrants may designate themselves as “Immigrant Welcoming.” This designation allows for more effective networking and resourcing. At the annual meeting on January 26, 2020, Peace declared itself to be an “Immigrant Welcoming” congregation of the United Church of Christ. The designation signifies that the work in which we engage is broader than offering sanctuary; it is advocating for just and compassionate immigration policies and practices, as well as offering support and hospitality to immigrants.

Most of our work this past year has been in co-ordination and response to an Interfaith Committee for Migrant Justice. The group, with ties to about thirty communities of faith in the Twin Ports, formed in June 2019. They sponsored a community interfaith walk and prayer service on June 23. Since then they have hosted at least three community forums, visited with legislators, and supported asylum seekers. Members of Peace have responded to ICMJ’s requests and opportunities.

Charlotte Frantz, Penny Cragun and Judy Gibbs traveled to the southern border this year to learn more about migrant justice issues from those doing hands-on work. At Christmas time, Peace sent requested toys to a shelter for immigrants which Charlotte had visited.

Thanks to the persistence of Michele Naar-Obed, a friend of Peace Church and resident of Hildegard House, Duluth welcomed Bahkrom, an asylum seeker released from detention in Arizona.

Recently Peace provided grocery gift cards to international students who are remaining in Duluth during the stay-at-home order.

Members of Peace have voiced support of a resolution being considered by the St. Louis County Commissioners. The resolution would allow refugee resettlement in St. Louis County. It was drafted in response to an Executive Order that required local counties to consent to resettlement. Because of our location and the

decreasing number of refugees resettled in the United States, the possibility of resettlement here is very slim; nevertheless, the resolution may be indicative of community sentiment. The County Commissioners tabled the resolution for several months, and members of ICMJ have continued to advocate for its passage.

Even though the building is closed, Peace's commitment to migrant justice continues. The lives and future for immigrants living among us remains uncertain. We are waiting for a ruling from the Supreme Court on DACA (Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals, a protection granted to some immigrants brought to the United States as children.) It is unclear whether TPS (Temporary Protected Status, a protection granted to immigrants following specific disasters) will be renewed upon expiration. Changes in criteria and costs make it increasingly difficult to acquire green cards or change immigration status. Asylum seekers still wait at the southern border and refugees still wait in camps for resettlement.

I am grateful for the community partners who have come together to do this work and grateful to Peace for continuing its support.

Submitted by Rev. Charlotte Frantz for the Migrant Justice Team

Acting for Justice – Beyond Violence Team

The Beyond Violence team was formed in response to the epidemic of gun violence to inform and activate members of Peace UCC about gun violence prevention measures. We support gun violence prevention groups in the community and since we are a newly formed team, we have not held events of our own yet. We welcome new members and new ideas about the response to gun violence in our community and also to lend our voices to efforts at the state and federal level as well.

Submitted by Joan Peterson

Christian Spiritual Life – Worship and Arts Team

The Peace Church congregation is an eclectic mix of ages, interests, occupations, and backgrounds. This diversity makes for a fascinating vibrant community. It is Pastor Kathy Nelson's conviction that worship is the most important activity we do as a community; worship is the core that holds us together and provides us with inspiration and sustenance to lead lives of service and discipleship in our everyday lives. Worship is also our witness to the community of who we are and is also an invitation to join us in this fascinating journey of inquiry and faith. This is the vision around which the Worship and Arts Committee and the ministerial staff meet monthly to discuss and plan worship experiences. In accordance with the Congregational principles of Peace Church, worship is very much a collaborative effort. It is not determined by a preset liturgy or the demands and expectations of a ministerial authority, but rather attempts to encourage input and participation from a wide base of the congregation.

Until the changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in March, worship activities included:

- 8:30 and 10:30 am services, which included a once-a-month 8:30am Taizé service.
- Joint Thanksgiving service with other congregations.
- Prayers Around the Cradle on Advent Wednesdays and an Ash Wednesday service beginning Lent.
- Weekly Wednesday 6 p.m. lectio divina style Bible study, usually of the text being used on the succeeding Sunday.
- Weekly Wednesday 4:30 prayer in the downstairs chapel.

The choir, led by Music Director Jim Pospisil, sang in most 10:30 services. This year's Christmas offering was Handel's Messiah, accompanied by extra musicians and added choir singers. We also hosted the funeral service for frequent guest preacher Rev. Xavier Bell upon his untimely passing. In March Xavier's adult children treated us to special music as a thank-you.

Covid-19 forced major adaptations on us. Services had to be live-streamed out of the church into congregants' homes. Other church gatherings took place via Zoom. Worship planning and leading required a crash course in utilizing the necessary technology. The ministerial staff—Pastor Kathy Nelson, Music Director Jim Pospisil, Faith Formation Leader Nathan Holst, and Children's Minister Sharon Dawson—assisted by technology whizzes Doug Bowen-Bailey, Alex Dean, Tim Carpenter, and Sylvie Bowen-Bailey; and accompanied by musicians Mark Hakes, Maddie Carpenter, and Frost Bowen-Bailey, guest speakers and musicians and ASL signers (Doug Bowen-Bailey,

Karen Sheldon, and Maggie Fink) have made it happen. We have been treated/blessed/challenged by unique streamed worship that has brought us together as a congregation. Through this time the Worship and Arts Committee has continued to meet. We hold in awe and admiration those who have led and served us in this challenging time. Also, thanks to Amanda Hunter, curator of Peace Church art displays, for helping the whole congregation to enjoy these works.

Submitted by Jerry Cleveland

Christian Spiritual Life – Shared Ministry Team

It is our goal to receive all who come through our doors as welcomed guests, to provide a path for finding connection and means for sharing unique gifts. We do this remembering that the journey of long-term attendees of Peace may bring them to a place where renewed connectivity is needed

Staffed and led by Nathan Holst. Awesome members: Sue Munns, Molly Watson, Jan Nugent, Cindy McLean, Janell Kohls, Cindy Macaulay

When we were asked by the council to describe what we do in preparation for the pastoral transition we listed the following: Inquirers classes three times a year, welcome bags, birthday and new home cards, shared ministry booklets, mission moments set up monthly during worship to lift up the different teams and committees, usher and greeter training, and recognition of and showing gratitude for all the work the members of teams and committees do.

In addition to the above we are continually working on ways to be more welcoming of visitors. To that end we looked for, read, and discussed several articles recommended by team members (like '50 Ways to Welcome New People') and are in the process of reading Radical Welcome. In the future we would like to find a way to incorporate 'secondary greeters' who would be on the look-out for new-comers and connect them with staff or others in the congregation AND make sure no one sits by themselves during coffee hour.

Then came the quarantine. Currently we are focused on supporting the church staff with needs they are aware of. Pastor Kathy put together a 'buddy system' for callers and Pamela Mittlefehldt organized and is shepherding a card ministry. Instead of the Shared Ministry booklet this year we will send out a brief form to find out ways friends and members of Peace can continue to give gifts of service ~ needed now as much as ever.

It is our pleasure to do this important work and we always welcome new members!

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Macaulay

Christian Spiritual Life – Food and Fellowship Team

The events planned by the Food and Fellowship team for the 2019-2020 church year were certainly curtailed by the Covid-19 precautions. We were able to have a wonderful Stewardship dinner in November. The congregation enjoyed the dinner consisting of baked ham, calico beans, a wild rice squash dish, and cheesy hashbrowns. In January the F & F team supplied the intermission treats for the Cabaret. However, as the year progressed so did the social distancing precautions and restrictions. Our spring potluck in March was downsized to serving cake for the last in-person coffee hour. Preparing and serving the Confirmation breakfast has been postponed, and the August potluck picnic is uncertain at this time. It has been suggested that when we are all able to gather again our first event should be wearing our pajamas and drinking coffee and eating donuts! We hope to see you all in person again soon.

Submitted by Cathy Ameel

Christian Spiritual Life – Health and Wellness Team

The Health & Wellness team generally meets every other month and has welcomed several new members this year. We continue to offer Advance Directive workshops and also are available to meet with people by appointment to assist as needed. The decision was made to discontinue our spring Blood Drive and only have the December drive and extend thanks to Cathy Ameel for continuing to organize and oversee this. Our Loan Closet for durable medical equipment continues to be available and has been utilized. We are able to accept durable equipment, but not items that cannot be sterilized.

Our main area of concern this year was in addressing the topic of Mental Health. Three adult forums were held at the end of January and beginning of February, with excellent attendance.

We had hoped to add at least one or more forums on this topic this spring, but due to the Covid 19 pandemic were unable to meet that goal.

A questionnaire with suggestions for other health and wellness topics was distributed to the congregation with good response, and a strong interest in several topics. This will be the basis of our planning for presentations beginning in the fall of 2020.

New members are always welcome, and we appreciate any suggestions for future educational presentations.

Submitted by Ellen Shelton

Christian Spiritual Life – Prayer Chain Team

The Peace Church Prayer Chain provides a way for joys and concerns to be brought to a group of people who have volunteered to pray specifically for those needs. Being able to pray for others is a gift that honors God and brings hope and encouragement to those for whom we pray. Each person's method of praying is a personal choice. Volunteers for this important Peace Church ministry have three options for sharing prayer concerns: phone calls, text messages, or emails. Our caring and prayers mean a great deal to the many people who contact the Prayer Chain each year.

Mechanics: Coordinators receive a prayer request; they call team leaders; team leaders pass the request on to the next person on their list; that person passes the request on etc., until the last person on each list has been contacted. Volunteer commitment for each request is one phone call, text, or email to the next person on the list as soon as possible.

This past year the 45 members of our chain have prayed for over 132 requests involving Peace members, their families, friends and our wider community.

Coordinators: Bob and Kay Stevens (*Note: After many dedicated years of coordinating the prayer chain, Bob and Kay are moving on to new ways of service and would like someone else to facilitate this important ministry here at Peace Church. Please contact the church office if you could be our new Prayer Chain Coordinator. Call Bob and Kay for more info about this, 724-4865*).

Christian Spiritual Life – Spiritual Journey Team

The Spiritual Journey Team focused largely this year on what was a primary theme in the spiritual journey interviews—meaningful conversations and spiritual reflections. As a way to respond to that need, the Spiritual Journey team drafted a proposal to take the model that council has been using (along with some other teams) to start each meeting with a reflection of some kind, and to invite all teams to use a similar reflection question, so that there is continuity in our reflection as a church.

After drafting the proposal, members of the spiritual journey team came to each team meeting to share the idea and get feedback. Teams responded largely positively, and so the Spiritual Journey Team created a series of questions and shared them each month with team contacts. The team also created table tents to be used on Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings for others to participate in the conversations.

The team lost some momentum after the pandemic, but also responded to the new situation by sharing a loving kindness meditation through the Peace podcast. We hope to continue to focus on the podcast as a way to both share accessible content in this time of pandemic, but also to open up more meaningful conversations and deeper spiritual reflections in the months to come.

Submitted by Nathan Holst

Christian Spiritual Life – The Sunday Special

The Sunday Special is a new ministry formed during the late summer of 2018. The group started as an interest from two Autism Moms: Amy Sullivan and Penny Cragun. Since the first gathering the group has been a thriving, loving ministry at Peace United Church of Christ.

The Sunday Special is a spiritual and social support group for individuals, families, caregivers, and workers who live and work with disabilities and special needs. The name, Sunday Special, is a combination of: we meet on Sundays and we minister to and support people with special needs. We meet once a month after the 10:30 worship service, usually in the Fireside Room. This year the group has welcomed people with mental health issues since we noticed a lot of crossover.

Our first meeting was on Sunday, September 22 or 29. We just had a casual meet and greet; checked in and caught up with each other. Our gathering was small, but those of us who attended had a good time. It was lovely seeing everyone again.

October 13-19, 2019 was designated as Disabilities Awareness Week in the United Church of Christ – a week to honor people with disabilities and to be aware of the challenges they face in the community. The Sunday Special was honored to be able to lead the services on Sunday, October 13 as the start to this advocacy. The group were ushers and greeters, readers; and the message was given by Amy Sullivan. WHAT COLOR ARE YOUR SHOES? As we all have different shapes, sizes, and colors of shoes, we all have different abilities and/or disabilities.

Sunday, October 20: We ended that week with a presentation on THE BRAIN by Susan Larson Kidd. We had a wonderful group participate and learn many facets of the workings of the brain. Lots of great questions were raised. Susan was excellent!

Sunday, November 17: The Sunday Special sponsored a big Resource Fair in the Fellowship Hall after the 10:30 service. Tables were set up with community resources from the Twin Ports area. The response was phenomenal. Special thank you to Jeff Mortimore from Residential Services, Sue Anderson from CHUM Church, and Laurie Berner from ARC Northland for their information and expertise.

January & February 2020 – We fervently tried to get together to watch the movie, FACING THE GIANTS; however, due to illness and people being on trips, it just didn't work out for us.

March 2020 – Oddly enough, Amy Sullivan was going to present on Self Care and Compassion in the midst of Stress when the Coronavirus struck our country and Safe at Home orders were placed in both Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Gatherings for the Sunday Special have been postponed until further notice.

Amy Sullivan is also hoping to start a new support group at Peace Church: COPING & CARING—for people and families, etc. living and dealing with mental health issues and concerns. That group has also been postponed.

Once again, we can't thank you enough for letting us put our energies and our passions into this much needed ministry at Peace UCC. Your love, support, and prayers are an added blessing to The Sunday Special. We look forward to going and growing in new directions in the years to come. God Bless You!

Submitted by Amy Sullivan & Penny Cragun

Christian Stewardship – Stewardship Team

Team Members: Geof Witrak (chair), Leanne Ventrella, Mike and Diane Swanoski, Kirby Wood, Kathy Nelson, and Janell Kohls

The Stewardship Team is pleased to report that the 2019 Journey to Generosity stewardship campaign last Fall resulted in total pledged support of \$455,000 - an increase of 11% compared to 2018. Over the past several years we have settled upon a simple and straightforward approach to stewardship, the success of which is made possible by the many ways our members value their connection to Peace Church. Our message continues to include the request that all members able to do so consider giving a modern tithe: 5% of income to Peace and 5% for general charitable giving. The campaign began with a kick-off luncheon on October 6 and ended with a celebratory luncheon on pledge Sunday, November 10. The intervening Sundays included "mission moments" where individual members highlighted the reasons they joined the Peace family. Following the stewardship campaign, we turned our attention to promoting a Wills initiative: with the goal to encourage all Peace members to have a Will. That effort began with a 9:30 am Sunday forum presented by an attorney detailing the need for a Will - but was subsequently suspended indefinitely with the arrival of the current pandemic. The initiative will be resurrected once overall priorities allow.

Submitted by Geof Witrak

Christian Stewardship – Property Team

Thanks to Doug Bowen-Bailey, David Courtright, Guy Hubert, Jim McLean, Rick Morgan, Denise Perry, Tim Peters, and Dan Shepard. All played important parts in keeping this facility functioning and running (relatively) smoothly over the past year. Bud Trnka has recently joined the Property team and is most welcome. We are so fortunate that Doug, while serving on the Finance Committee, continues to play an active role and regularly attends Property Committee meetings despite a rigorous work schedule.

Accomplishments:

- The triennial Fire Marshal and annual Young Insurance Company inspections were completed resulting in several deficiencies all of which have been addressed. Two important safety concerns were fixed:
 1. Installed plywood wall above elevator pit in lower level chair room removing possibility of someone falling into this area
 2. Removed wooden ladder leading to HVAC system behind sacristy. Our metal ladder is now stored along outer wall for quick access
- Replaced door handles and locks on the three front doors improving the locking system
- Purchased replacement gutters for flat roof above upper level parking lot; plans are moving forward to install these this spring
- Began disassembling and removing the inoperable air exchanger in the mechanical room
- Added “No Parking on Sunday” signs and temporary “handicapped parking” for Sundays only to upper parking lot
- Maintained the church’s heating system by draining and replacing glycol in system and fixed a leaking pipe above the ceiling of the Music Room
- Submitted paperwork related to energy saving purchases (many related to lighting upgrades) to Energy Insights which resulted in a rebate of \$626 from Minnesota Power.

The need for repairs is always prevalent. Some things we can fix ourselves and some need to be contracted out. Additional committee members with ideas and/or skills are important to continuing Property’s mission. Drop by of our meetings. Checkout what the ongoing needs are. Then signup! Help maintain this building which offers so much to its members and to the broader community.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Perry, Chairperson

Christian Stewardship – Technology Team

The Peace Church Technology Team oversees the installation and maintenance of the various types of technology throughout the church, primarily the computer/network system in the office, the sound/light system in the Sanctuary, the sound system in the Fellowship Hall, wi-fi throughout the building, the web site, and the Facebook page.

The Technology Team seldom meets in person. Everyone’s busy schedule makes it difficult to find a suitable meeting time, so team members communicate primarily via email. Faith Formation Minister Nathan Holst and Pastor Kathy Nelson regularly post news on the Facebook page. Our new web site, created by Peace member Hope David, went online in June 2019. Office Coordinator Janell Kohls keeps the web site updated.

The importance of the Technology Team rapidly became clear in March 2020 as Tech Team members Tim Carpenter, Doug Bowen-Bailey, and Alex Dean sprang into action when the church building had to be closed to help contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. These three members, with help from Sylvie Bowen-Bailey, immediately started live streaming of Peace worship services. They made it possible to continue broadcasting Sunday services live from the church sanctuary, led by Pastor Kathy, with ASL interpretation by Doug Bowen-Bailey, and music by Maddie Carpenter, Frost Bowen-Bailey, Mark Hakes, and Jim Pospisil. Other musicians created and submitted videos to be included in the live stream. In a very short period of time (March through May) the live stream team had to learn a great deal about how to best stream the Sunday service, including how to use outside video and music recordings, manage the quality of the audio, broadcast the stream, and more. They did an outstanding job. We have received thank-you notes from many Peace members and visitors who greatly appreciate

being able to stay connected from home. An average of 160 households have logged in to the live stream weekly, and many folks watch the service later, connecting through the archive on our web page.

The equipment used for the first few weeks of live streaming was on loan from Doug, Alex, and Tim. By May the church had purchased some of the necessary equipment. In addition, important improvements were made to the church’s technology infrastructure, including replacing a network switch and adding new wi-fi access points throughout the church. It is likely that we will continue to stream services even after we are able to once again invite the congregation to worship in the Sanctuary. This will require different equipment and an increased financial investment in technology, as well as more trained staff and/or volunteers.

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has made our entire society ever more dependent on technology for nearly everything in our daily lives, including church worship. Peace Church has so far responded well to the changing times, but in coming years we will need the congregation’s continued strong support for technology in order to keep us connected with the community.

Submitted by Nancy Nelson, Office Coordinator

* * * * *

Statistics: June 2019 – May 2020

New Members (19)

- Christine and Curt Ziegler
- Ken Stafford
- Dan and Erin Kraker (Mia, Lydia, Zinnia)
- Sue and Frank (Buzz) Munns
- Nathan Langer
- Aimee Brown
- Rick Caya
- Eric and Angela Evenson (Ellie)
- Amy Prois (Jayber, Soren, Abel)
- Thad Beech-Dziuk
- Cyndi Brown
- Wendy Gustofson
- Fabian and Anne Krafthefer
- Holly Pederson

Weddings (4)

- Charlotte Studden & Garron Torma
- Kathryn Adams & Daniel Rowan
- Abigail Spiese & Deondre Smiles
- Danny Johnson & Matt Schiff

Baptisms (6)

- Ingrid Brandt
- Sawyer Waldoch
- Lyla Deschenes
- Arya Johnson
- Alexander Sorensen
- Jaxson Pluntz-Kinney

Confirmands

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Confirmation will be held at a future date.

Funerals/Memorial Services/Deaths (7)

- Joe Machones
- Charles Olson, Jr.
- Chazz Smith
- Xavier Bell
- Gustof (Gus) Gustofson
- Helen Wessberg
- Earl Rosenwinkel