

2020-2021 Annual Report



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

**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 6, 2021

Coordinating Council

Officers

Moderator..... Doug Bowen-Bailey
Vice Moderator..... Hope David
Secretary/Recorder..... Diane Swanoski
Treasurer Dick Goese
Past Moderator Susan Isernhagen

Council Representatives

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

Members at Large

Mary Adams
Tom Hystead
Bud Trnka
Matt Ryan

Staff

Lead Pastor..... Rev. Kathryn Nelson/Rev. Greg Briggs
Minister for Faith Formation Nathan Holst
Children's Ministry Coordinator Sharon Dawson
Pastoral Care Chaplain Gudrun Witrak
Music Director Jim Pospisil
Pianist..... Wendy Durrwachter
Bookkeeper..... Toni Kasell/Rose Feriancek
Office Coordinator..... Janell Kohls
Office Coordinator..... Nancy Nelson
Custodian..... Dan Shepard
Building Use Coordinator Tim Peters
Newsletter Editor..... Elise Courtright

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Peace United Church of Christ
Duluth, Minnesota

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ANNUAL REPORTS

Coordinating Council – Moderator

By Doug Bowen-Bailey (with input from the entire council)

Unprecedented. It was perhaps the most overused word this past year and yet one so fitting. We have lived through a year of a global pandemic that is now easing for our congregation but still impacts so many of our brothers and sisters around the world. We said good-bye Pastor Kathy who ministered with us for 30 years and who we hold in our hearts wishing her the best in her retirement. We also began the work of being Peace Church without Kathy as our leader. While the year has been much more than that, I am going to devote my moderator's report to this time of transition because it has led to so many legitimate questions and concerns among the congregation.

First of all, I want to share a behavioral covenant the council adopted as part of the Situational Support Consultation (SSC) process which has been a touch stone for me as I have served as moderator the past few months:

As seekers and servants growing in God's transforming love, we will speak the truth in love, celebrate each other's gifts and perspectives, and choose the good of the whole church over individual preferences and comforts.

I write this report less than one week after Pastor Greg spent his final Sunday with us. Many of you are rightfully confused, concerned, and even angry about his departure. You have expressed that you feel left on the outside—that there are some with information and some without. All of those feelings and perspectives are valid.

By nature, I am a very transparent person and would like to share my detailed perspective on what has taken place. However, I have been counseled by the team that led the SSC that for the good of the whole church, we should focus on the path forward rather than dwelling on the path we trod. In this report, I am deferring to their wisdom and experience in dealing with churches struggling to manage conflict. So, I am keeping the explanation brief. This may not be satisfying to you individually, but I ask you to consider the behavioral covenant of putting the good of the whole church over our own individual preferences and comforts and see where this approach takes us.

Why is Pastor Greg no longer here?

How do we find ourselves without an interim pastor who started with us less than five months ago? For the first two months, the council and Greg did not form effective working relationships to share with each other our expectations and how things run as a church. We also didn't have good structures in place to be checking in with staff.

This failing on our part as leaders contributed to tensions with pastoral-staff relations and differences of opinions regarding which of the legitimate concerns from all sides to address first. Our inability to agree on a path forward led us to request the Minnesota Conference conduct an SSC.

After we received the SSC report, the council and Pastor Greg mutually agreed that it was the best thing for the good of the whole church that he move on and that we move into the next phase of the transition without him as our minister.

What lessons have we learned?

- The congregation needs to prepare and be ready to welcome our next pastor.
- Congregational leadership, including the Coordinating Council and Pastoral Relations Committee, needs to extend themselves to and orient the next pastor to life at Peace Church so that working relationships are developed from the beginning.
- We need to acknowledge that disagreement is a healthy part of change and be prepared to address it by spending some time as a congregation discussing our styles of approaching differences of perspectives and what will serve the good of the whole church most effectively.
- We need to know and follow our by-laws and be open to re-imagining our governance structure.
- The Minnesota Conference is here to support us in focusing on the health of our congregation and is an important covenantal partner for us.
- We need more clear communication with the congregation.

- It is critical to develop a realistic work life balance for the Lead Pastor
- We recognize the importance of trust, respect and grace during this time of transition.

As a final part of this report, I want to celebrate others who have shared their gifts and perspectives this past year. First, I want to thank all members of our staff who have worked so diligently to keep the church running through the pandemic and all of our transitions. I also want to thank the HR committee (Leanne Ventrella, Marsha Hystead, Laurie Berner, Sue Isernhagen, and Hope David) for the many hours they have dedicated to their work. On the council, thank you to Sue Isernhagen, our past moderator, who has spent countless hours demonstrating her passion and care for the church. And to John Doberstein who served as representative for the Acting for Justice Hub and Gudrun Witrak who has served as representative for Spiritual Life. My gratitude to Hope David who served as vice-moderator and is stepping off the council on June 6. Hope will continue to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee along with Cindy Macaulay, Gary Boelhower, Patty Beech-Dziuk, and Warren Post. Our thanks to all of them who led an exit interview with Pastor Greg and will help us be more prepared in welcoming our next pastor.

I know that this report will probably be unsatisfying to many of you as it is to me. Yet I hope that it is a sufficient attempt to “speak the truth in love, celebrate other’s perspectives and gifts, and choose the good of the whole church over individual preferences and comforts.”

Doug Bowen-Bailey, Moderator

Coordinating Council – Finance Committee

The finance committee is composed of Doug Bowen-Bailey, chair, Dick Goese, Betty Greene, John Ameel and Kirby Wood. We meet monthly with our bookkeeper Rosemary Feriancek. Our primary job is to review the monthly financial statement and to pass along to the council any concerns or questions that we might identify. We play a role in the development of the annual budget each fall. We also discuss and make recommendations concerning any other issues related to the finances or policies for the church.

At this point our financial position is quite strong as donations have remained a bit ahead of budget with expenses below budget. Donations to the Gabriel Fund have remained strong as well. As we slowly emerge from the Covid-19 restrictions, we have every reason to believe that our current strong position will only improve.

Submitted by Dick Goese, Finance Committee Chair

Coordinating Council – Human Resources Committee

With the change in leadership, HR worked with Pastors Kathy and Greg and all staff to assist in the transition. Transition activities included talking with staff to learn their hopes and concerns for transition; working with Pastor Kathy on her retirement “punch list”; facilitating the hiring of a local IT Service company to provide tech support beginning January 2021 to replace the work Tim Carpenter performed pro bono for Peace Church for many years; and bringing Pastor Greg onboard with the staff.

Work was done on Covid related processes such as preparing for any potential Covid positive employee situations and working with the pastor on staff work schedules during the pandemic. Thanks to our conscientious staff, we were able to continue functioning well throughout the pandemic. We were pleased to recruit a bookkeeper as a new member of the Peace Team.

We continue to focus our efforts on our employees, including working closely with the Council to ensure they are given what they need to be able to perform their jobs. They are a dedicated team of professionals who are always working hard for Peace Church and its members – we’re fortunate to have them!

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.

In 2021, we are supporting the St. Mark Giving Garden/Food Access Project which is using a communal gardening model to grow resilience in the Duluth Hillside Neighborhood. The Project aims to improve health and well-being by targeting health disparities created by generations of systemic racism. Access to healthy, culturally-relevant food; rebuilding cultural identity, food sovereignty skills and history; growing community connections, arts, and other programming will provide empowerment and continued redress of historical and current injustices. The focus of this project is to engage African Heritage community members in envisioning, developing, and enjoying a communal space which will provide healthy food, employment, connection, and economic and healing opportunities. The Jubilee Fund contributed \$5000 as part of an \$85,100 budget that includes cash and in-kind donations from UMD School of Engineering, SURJ Northland, Echoes of Peace, UMD Land Lab, St. Mark’s AME, Healthy Alliances Matter for All, Duluth Community Garden Program, Family Freedom Center and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

The Jubilee Fund committee has consisted of Sarah Holst, Gail Blum, Tim Peters, Jim McLean, and Doug Bowen-Bailey. During this time of transition, we are reviewing how all of our funds are managed; new people will be needed to assist in the oversight of this fund.

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

Nathan Holst, Minister for Faith Formation

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose. ~ Romans 8:28*

Even in the challenges of Covid and our church transition, I see Spirit working among us, calling us to our collective purpose. There is no sugar coating this year—lots of people are tired, anxious, or trying to find their way again. But in many ways this year has been about finding out who we are as a people when we are faced with many challenges, when we are not at our best. I have been sustained many days by Indigenous and Christian elder Steven Charleston, who writes daily spiritual reflections that always connect the difficult reality in our lives with the incredible strength and hope that always exists in us and in front of us. As he shared in a recent reflection, we “close our eyes each night believing that no matter what happens we will see the light again.” This has often felt like a year of closing our eyes, of being in the uncertainty of darkness, but knowing and believing that we will see the light again. May we hold on to that belief as we continue our collective journey.

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 Climate Justice Team. 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. In 2021, I agreed to do two weddings and have done premarital counseling for one couple so far, which I enjoyed very much.

While much of my work with retreats that happened pre-pandemic could not be done again this year, I did create a weekly space for a call/spiritual journey group that continued throughout this year over zoom. Some of the members of that group came for a time and because of the discernment they did in the group, got a new job and were no longer able to attend. While we missed having them, it was always a delight to know the group was helping them move on their own journeys and find support when they needed it.

Beloved Community Events/Small Groups

Much of my small group work and events was limited by the pandemic. The two main places I helped create deeper community were in the call/spiritual journey group that met every Wednesday at 12:30 (see above) and the white men's reflection group that came out of a reflection in response to the murder of George Floyd.

The white men's reflection group started when Tom Liddle noticed that there were only a couple white men in a group of 20 of us that were reflecting on the racial tension that existed. After a couple conversations, we decided to put out a call to white men to come and reflect on the fact that we didn't seem to be showing up in larger numbers. What started as a group of 3-4 grew over the months into a group of almost 10 that continues to share deeply with each other, reflecting on the particular ways we as white men can show up in our justice movements.

The last major work around events and small groups was in our monthly gatherings in person. Because we couldn't have retreats, children's ministry and I went back and forth in planning monthly events/gatherings that we could all do together outside. In the fall, we had a Halloween Carnival. In the winter, we went snow tubing at Mont du Lac. Our hope is that more and more we'll be able to gather in small group and have events with fewer restrictions, and we will see how things unfold in the coming months.

Middle School Youth Group

We had another great year in middle school youth group; we consistently had about 20 kids in the fall (especially when we were able to meet in person) and about 10 kids in the spring (on zoom).

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.

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 and Sharon Dawson this year with their faithful help each week with youth group.

While we had none of our usual overnights this year because of the pandemic, we did have a lot of gatherings outside. We kayaked in the summer, hiked in the fall, went snow tubing in the winter, and we will finish out the spring by going to Park Point and enjoying some time on the beach. I hope to get to a place later this summer and early fall where we are able to come together for overnights again, which often give the magic of relationship building.

One highlight for me this spring was opening up the zoom space for youth to determine what they wanted to do with our time together. After an initial brainstorming session, the youth eventually came to the decision to work on a children's book that could be shared with the kids of the congregation. It was an amazing time, showing how talented our youth are at telling stories and drawing pictures. We also had a few youth step up and help facilitate the sessions together and it was a joy to watch and support their work.

OWL

Because of the pandemic, we were not able to continue with OWL this year. I have been connecting with the religious director at the Unitarian Universalist congregation to lay plans to start the program again this fall. We hope to offer it to as many 8th graders (and 9th graders who were not able to take it last year) as possible.

High School Youth

This year, I helped Pastor Kathy with the 2nd year confirmands (who were confirmed in December), as well co-teaching the 1st year confirmands with Sara Olson Dean. While it was an ongoing learning process as the first time fully teaching confirmation, I loved regular conversations with our 9th graders about faith and life. I look forward to continuing with that class next fall.

Last summer we had to cancel our trip to Pine Ridge because of the pandemic and instead offered the Eco-Faith Youth Camp, a weeklong day camp for our high school youth that focused on environmental, racial, and economic justice. A big portion of the experience was working with a few high school leaders in their leadership development, helping them understand how to mentor each other and grow as leaders.

Though we again have to cancel the Pine Ridge trip because of Covid, I am still planning to bring some of our high school youth on a white water canoe trip on the Brule River through Camp Amnicon this August. I hope that this next year does allow for more retreats and ways to connect.

Other

Much of my energy this year went into the still unfolding transition here at Peace. I worked with Pastor Kathy to try and capture as much of her institutional knowledge as I could before she left and then tried to share as much relevant information as I could with Pastor Greg as he arrived. Now that we are in a new period of transition without an interim pastor, much of my work has been trying to fill roles as they come up.

In my work with the MN UCC Conference, I shifted from my role on the Faith Formation Team and instead joined the Amos Task Force, which focused on addressing racism and helping the conference work toward both short-term and long-term goals for racial justice.

For my continuing education this year (both formal and informal), I got certified in Prepare/Enrich, a premarital counseling program that I have used with couples in preparation for getting married. I also helped plan and attend the Kinsler Institute, an online program put on by my theology mentors Ched Myers and Elaine Enns. This spring, I am taking a UCC theology/history/polity course, which I hope to utilize in adding some education to new member classes.

Another significant part of my year has been my continuation with the MN Conference in being a member in discernment for pursuing ordination on the “multiple paths to ordination” track. I have met a number of times with the Committee on Ministry to outline the path forward, and in addition to writing reflection papers, I will be taking a few seminary courses and taking a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education this next year.

Nathan Holst, Faith Formation Minister

Sharon Dawson, Children’s Ministry Coordinator

This year Children’s Programming has continued to be affected by the Covid pandemic and has faced other challenges with a Pastoral transition. Thankfully, we were able to adapt and keep connection with our children and their families with very successful online programming and activities that kept people safe and connected. This year has been a time of change and transition that has enabled me to work independently and develop further skill as the Children’s Minister. I have enjoyed this very much. The supervision of the Children’s Ministry Coordinator was changed to the Lead Pastor in September 2020 with an increase in hours, and during this Pastoral transition time I have necessarily worked independently, taking on new responsibilities as they emerged, expanding my skill set. In this way I am able to further my service to the Peace Community. These have all been positive changes in a year that has had many challenges. I am thankful for the positive outcomes and the amazing people I am fortunate to work with that make up Peace staff, volunteers, and the congregation. The amazing teamwork and competency of all staff and volunteers enables each of us to bring our gifts forward and be successful in our service.

Children’s Ministry Team

Elise Courtright, Pat Nelson, Katey Fornear, and I have participated regularly in the Children’s Ministry Team. I coordinate the team which meets monthly, and we have made successful adaptations in programming as needed during the pandemic. Meetings are held online the second Thursday of each month. Holly Bowen-Baily stepped off of the Children’s Ministry team 4/18/21. We are currently reaching out to parents who would be willing to serve on the Team and would enjoy enriching the children’s spiritual development.

Children’s Ministry Activity

Childcare

The childcare services offered for parents during service have been suspended for safety during covid. Looking forward to a time when it is safe to offer them again. The covid task force continues to shift guidelines with changing CDC recommendations.

New Online Programming

Online programming expansion has been a must during the pandemic, and we have added new venues to stay connected, reaching out to families at home. I have developed a private group on social media called Read Aloud

Story Time Group. We connected to a MN State-wide reading project *Because of Winn Dixie*. I read and recorded the book bringing the kids together on a private Face Book page to share thoughts and responses related to the story, as well as giving them opportunities to interact by sharing drawings, their own favorite books and stories. This format was used to connect a reading of Charlotte's Web to VBS and livestream VBS, reaching families that could not attend VBS at the scheduled time. The page has become the venue for a recorded version of Sunday school and a place that holds other stories, books written by Peace Church members and "how to" videos made by our Peace kids. The page is Administered by Elise Courtright and me with 50 members.

Elise Courtright and I also developed and administer a Peace Parenting FB group created April 13/20. This group exists as a space of mutual support for all Peace parents. It is a place to post helpful parenting articles, ask for support, vent about what is hard and to find connection with others. The page has regular usage by 55 members.

These social media pages have been very effective in keeping congregation members connected and getting information out into the community for events at Peace.

Sunday School

We continue with Zoom Sunday School and offer a recorded version of the lesson on the Read Aloud Facebook Group Page (created during covid) every Sunday. Between the livestream and recorded version, we reach between 25 to 45 families most Sundays. There is good attendance at 9:30 Sunday morning zoom lessons. CM team packed and delivered "Bags of Fun" full of art supplies that coordinate with Sunday school lessons in the fall in leu of Rally Sunday. That significantly boosted online attendance and guaranteed that the children had the supplies they needed to be included in craft projects during the lessons. Historically, attendance at Sunday school drops during the warm weather. Last summer we kept the lessons going all summer with good attendance as isolation and lock down was in effect. Summer 2021 we will continue with the online Sunday School through the summer but drop the live zoom which will begin again in the Fall because things are opening up a bit with a vaccine being available. I teach the multi-grade lesson, developing curriculum based on the Sunday scripture, sermon and coordinate with the Story for All Ages. I enjoy developing the curriculum and find the kids connect to this type of curriculum much better than the one previously used. During Sunday school, time is always made for the children to think, ask their own questions, and express themselves verbally or creatively. Diane Swanoski and Pat Nelson have been regular volunteers, and Diane steps in to lead if I cannot be there. Both Diane and Pat add wonderful depth to our lessons. I am so thankful for their participation. Susan Larson Kidd began the year with us bringing her wonderful music abilities to share with the kids but has since then been called to provide tech support and music in the Sunday livestream service. It will be challenging for the CM Team and the Covid Team to adapt and move into in person programing in the Fall as things open further and we make safety decisions.

Story for All Ages

For Sunday service the Pastor, Faith Formation Minister, and I normally rotate the Story for all Ages at the 10:30 service. Due to disruption and scheduling changes, I now do the Story much more often and love it. I have made cardboard figures to represent our "kids" and painted them bright colors so we can sit by them for Story Time and keep the sanctuary warm and visually interesting for the live stream service by "decorating the kids" to coordinate with the service theme. The cardboard "kids" have been successful as a visual form of connection with the children, 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 during the livestream virtual service. It works well and we have gotten very positive feedback from adults as well as the children.

Christmas Pageant

We had a very successful recorded version of "**A Tale of Covid Christmas**" that was written by John Pokrzywinski. The Christmas Pageant was shown during live stream service at 10:30 the week before Christmas. Fourth and fifth graders had narrative parts as they normally do, with clips from past pageants included that enabled us to include a larger number of our children singing songs that were from previous years of performances. This was very sweet as the children and families were able to look into the past and see the children at younger ages. It was super nice to work with the cast even though all practices were on zoom. The zoom practices did enable a closer connection between me and the cast members. We learned quite a bit as we adapted to the new platform. Never underestimate how much the costumes mean to the kids! I was out on a cold winter night in the dark delivering them because the kids were so excited to wear them! We did learn that the tech demands were perhaps too much in what is already a busy season. The children involved developed self confidence in their abilities and built self-esteem from a job well done. They got rave reviews from family and friends. Outstanding

were the credits made from bloopers at the end of the Pageant. Doug Bowen-Baily really did a good job with the editing, and a Big Thank you goes out to John for a great zoom script and Holly for stepping in last-minute to direct the recording!

Easter

Again this year, we adapted the children's Easter festivities as we did the year before to be safe during the pandemic. We packed up Easter bags full of goodies and a fantastic team including Janell Kohls, Cindy Macaulay, Pat Nelson, Elise Courtright, and others helped me pack and deliver them all. Last year we ran out after delivering 65 bags. Even after packing 75 bags, we still needed well over 80 to include all of the children. So, I bought goodies locally, packed more bags and delivered last minute to many families. Next year we will have to remember to increase the ordering! So thankful for all the delivery help from volunteers. I received lots of emails and thank-yous from parents telling us how fun the Easter bags were for the kids.

Fall Fest

This year we combined our traditional Halloween Carnival and Advent Wreath event into a Fall Fest so that we could have it outdoors while the weather was still nice and allow the Peace community to get together in a safe way. The pandemic was getting really old at this time and people were feeling isolated. Children's Ministry, Fellowship Team, and volunteers from the Youth Group with others joined in to bring people together for outdoor games, music, and fun for the kids and families. Halloween was not the usual for the kids, so most chose to come in costume and received treat bags to take home. (Again, never underestimate how much the kids love costumes!) We charged a small fee to help support costs. It was so successful and community members were so thankful to be together that Pastor Kathy, Nathan, and I decided to begin an all-generation event outdoors once a month after the Holiday season through the pandemic. It was evident that people were feeling isolated and that these events were important not only to stay connected to community but also for the mental health benefits of simply having fun. This has turned out to be very successful programming.

Vacation Bible School

The CM team and volunteers did a wonderful job as we created our own curriculum and facilitated **Weaving Our Web Together, VBS 2020 on zoom**. Holly Bowen-Bailey developed a Google survey that was sent to all parents to help us collect their thoughts and their family's needs concerning VBS during a pandemic. We decided to do most lessons remotely over zoom for safety. A "Box of Fun" was packed with the art supplies for each of three lessons and parents picked them up from church. We had an environmental theme for each project and Tee shirts that the kids could paint on from local artist Monica Ihrke. Sarah Holst and I each developed lesson plans based on scripture chosen by Kathy.

Three Lesson plans were made with an in-person (covid measures in place) coming together in the lower lot under the tent as the children brought and assembled their individual painted pieces of the **Web of Life Mural** that now hangs in the Fellowship Hall in dedication to Pastor Kathy. The mural was dedicated to Kathy by the CM Team as a surprise during a Sunday service and brought many smiles and tears in her last year before retirement.

We are projecting in-person VBS 2021 outdoors under the tent. Again, I will develop, with the Team, our own curriculum. It will be environmentally based and focus on God as an artist of Creation. It will be the third week of August, in the mornings for four days, following the format we developed last summer. The goal is to connect, learn have fun with as little stress on all involved as possible. This year we hope to include the youth group as volunteer assistants. 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.

Our goal for this summer 2021 is to stay connected and have programming that is in-person with as little stress as possible, meeting under the tent. CM team will meet this month to begin planning for the third week of August.

Children's Choir

Susan Larson Kidd did a wonderful job coordinating a Christmas choir that was recorded and edited in at the end of "A Tale of Covid Christmas" pageant. She and I also coordinated a Fourth and Fifth grade girls' choir during the Easter week. At that time "pods" of people that are in "bubbles" could sit together six feet apart in the church and the Girls' Choir was able to sing in person. Susan and I hope to Keep this Girls' Choir going into the future and are scheduling something for the summer.

New Monthly Intergenerational Events

One of the most well received programming additions during covid has been the monthly intergenerational events that Kathy, Nathan, and I decided on during our Fall planning session. Nathan and I rotate every other month planning an event. I began by planning the Full Moon Bonfire and Skating event at Bayfront in February 2021. Even though the ice melted, and we scrambled to set up outdoor games for the kids instead of skating, we had attendance of over 65 people. It was a warm night for February, and the warming house was open for Hot Chocolate. It again showed how much people wanted to get together and simply have fun. Parks and rec were fantastic to work with and provided games; the kids could also use the playground at the park. It was a great venue!

CM Team coordinated with Bud Trnka, the Fellowship Team, and others for an Earth Day Festival on April 25. The event brought 80 community members together to clean up and care for the Peace land. Dave Courtright hand-built bird houses for the kids to paint and take home while an amazing new pumpkin patch garden was created by Ben Fornear and other volunteers where the kids will plant pumpkins for Fall Fest. A local art project was available to participate in as well as information on native plants and music to dance around the Maypole. This collaboration was perfect. It was so fun and incorporated so many people, bringing diverse gifts of service everyone agreed to do it AGAIN NEXT YEAR!

New Responsibilities as CM

Altar Guild

I now currently assist Gail Blum when she is out of town in coordinating the sanctuary banners and décor with the seasons of worship. Gail has recently stepped away from her position as our Altar Guild, and I have been asked to step into the position, attending to the sacristy until a volunteer comes forward.

Mom's Play Group, Parent Group, Youth Group

As Pastor Kathy transitioned out of her role as Pastor, she asked me to facilitate the monthly Mom's Play Group. This group meets once a month, and the children play as the mothers have the opportunity to listen to and support each other. We meet Friday afternoons once a month, outdoors at a park, weather permitting.

A Parent group began mid-winter with waning interest as the weather warmed and covid restrictions started to open up with schools reopening in person. It was a stressful time and served its purpose during the transition. We have ended the zoom venue, but the suggestion was put forth to meet once a month outdoors to walk and talk. Other suggestions were to meet under the tent outdoors in the fall when the kids are back in school. Zoom fatigue was a factor at the time. This group is a work in progress, and we are open to experimenting with ideas that bring the parents together without the screen fatigue. Fall would be the time to begin with a different format.

Pastor Kathy decided in August 2020 that I would co-facilitate the Youth Group with the Faith Formation Minister. It had been decided that two staff members, which should include a female, was needed as the group began in the fall with over 21 youth. Because I have 17 years of experience leading adolescent groups at the Arrowhead Juvenile Center, which had been put on hiatus during Covid, I was excited for the opportunity to participate and to bring a wealth of creative activities to share during the weekly Wednesday meetings. I have been offering calming breath exercises and Yogic stretching at the beginning of each meeting and would like to expand the activities that I could offer. I am looking forward to the group becoming more active by integrating service projects, outdoor physical activities, and art projects as covid restrictions are eased up and we can meet outdoors.

Summary

While there have been dramatic issues in leadership, and the Pastoral transition has been challenging in ways no one would have expected, I am looking forward with the CM Team to the future and all the possibilities we have to develop meaningful programming for our children. While challenges have been demanding, I have found I work well independently and enjoy the creative process used in developing new programming and community building with our children and their families. My goal is to have the children interface with the congregation as much as possible through inter-generational events and service projects, by having them participate more directly in Sunday services, and by exhibiting their creative work throughout the building. I feel strongly that children should be seen and heard and encouraged to be curious about life and spirituality. So many thanks to the CM Team members, to office staff and all volunteers who are strong and truthful and supported my efforts in ensuring a safe, healthy environment for our children's programming. I believe that the last year has taught us all so much and we at Peace will carry forward wisdom into the future, reestablishing the strong, just community that has been built in the last thirty years.

Submitted by Sharon Dawson, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Jim Pospisil, Music Director

The past year has been a challenging one to say the least. With Covid, much needed to be altered to ensure a safe place to provide the music for Worship Services.

In March of 2020, we reduced the number of musicians to myself on piano, and only a handful of singers. We kept the people to as few “bubbles” as possible. The services were streamed with usually three people on the tech team creating a rich experience online. There was great effort to keep the content similar to pre covid worship. Each service had three hymns and one or two moments of special music, sung by the small “choir”, or an instrumental selection. We are blessed to have so many musicians who stepped up to provide special music every Sunday. The steadfast effort of all who provided music is greatly appreciated.

There was a concerted effort to use familiar hymns during the services to provide comfort, especially due to Covid. Even though there wasn't a large congregation in person, worship was meaningful.

As the year went on, various musicians began to be involved in the special music. Covid protocols proved a challenge. We used masks, plastic barriers, and distancing to protect the musicians and congregants. Currently, protocols are relaxing, with greater opportunities for the number of musicians in the allowed space.

In addition to the above issues, seeing Pastor Kathy leave was difficult. Over the past 23 years, I have enjoyed the collaborations with Kathy Nelson. Her compassion, intelligence, thoughtfulness, and encouragement will be greatly missed. She was truly special. There were challenges with the interim pastor in regards to the music program, but we got through while keeping the quality consistent. I have realized how the culture at Peace promotes positive music creation. Kathy's gift of supporting those around her to succeed included space for me to do what I felt was necessary to create meaningful music.

I look forward to the future of music at Peace. The work ethic, talent, and passion of the musicians keep me hopeful.

Submitted by Jim Pospisil, Music Director

Christian Education – Children's Ministry Team

Please see Sharon Dawson's Children's Ministry Report

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 opportunities. The forums moved to a new time and place: 11:30 after the morning worship service via Zoom, beginning with a focus on loving our neighbors.

September 13th: Rally Sunday (no forum)

September 20th: Conversation on Community Safety led by Nathan Holst

September 27th: Community Safety and the Citizen Review Board: Archie Davis and Ricky Defoe

October 4th: Gary Anderson and Terese Tomanek: Elected Officials on Community Safety

October 11th: Fall Carnival (no forum)

October 18th: Gayle Kelly: The Children's Defense Fund

October 25th: Student Petition Organizers on Defunding School Resource Officers

November 1st: School Administrators on school and community safety

November 8th: Peace Family Event

November 15th: Education and Children: Elementary School Teachers

November 22nd: Education and Children: Secondary School Teachers

November 29th: Thanksgiving break (no forum)
December 6th: Giving Thanks: Peace and Hope candles
December 13th: Peace Family Event
December 20th: Reflections on Joy and Love
December 27th: Christmas break (no forum)
January 3rd: Reflections with Pastor Kathy
January 10th: Family Fun Drive by with Pastor Kathy and family
January 17th: Lisa Fitzgerald on the Climate Emergency
January 24th: Getting to know Pastor Greg
January 31st: Congregational meeting (no forum)
February 7th: Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ): What is SURJ?
February 14th: SURJ: Digging Deeper
February 21st: Ted Lewis: Restorative Justice Church Principles
February 28th: Ted Lewis: Restorative Justice Church: Hope and Transformation
March 7th: Meeting our Neighbors in El Paso by Judy Gibbs, Penny and Rodger Cragun
March 14th: Charlotte Franz: Update on Immigration Issues
March 21st: Renee Van Nett: The Duluth American Indian Movement and its Yurt Project
March 28th: Colleen Bernu: Digital Blanket Exercise
April 4: Easter (no forum)
April 11: Sean Hayes: Trans Plus
April 18: Law Enforcement Accountability Network (LEAN Duluth): Its Formation and Purpose
April 25: Earth Day with the Climate Justice Team
May 2: Monica Liddle and Gudrun Witrak: Spiritual and Body Self Care
May 9: Parent Self Care in the Context of Anti-Racist Parenting: Andy Fena, Jessica Olson, and Lori Seele
May 16: Gary Anderson: Self Care through Yoga
Other Activities:
-Virtual Bible Study Wednesday evenings at 5:00 pm
-Centering Prayer Wednesdays at 5:00 pm
-Women's Brown Bag Study Group on Wednesdays at 12:00 pm via Zoom
-Monday Women's Book Group held first and third Mondays at 4:00 via Zoom
-Daytime Book Club on Thursdays at 10:00 am via Zoom
-Weekly Call/Spiritual Journey gatherings on Wednesdays at 12:30

Submitted by Penny Cragun, Adult Education Team

Christian Education – Library Team

Members and Workers: Sharon Crosby, Janell Kohls, Marlis Cran, Denise Perry, and Cathy 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 check-outs for the past year have been minimal as the church has been closed much of the time. We also have some DVDs available for check-out. 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 the 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.

There have many books donated in the past year as people have downsized or spent time cleaning house.

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 Kohlts, Marge Anderson, Marg Paulson, Marlis Cran, Joan Severson, Joan Hatlestad, Sharon Crosby

The team has not been meeting monthly due to COVID 19 restrictions. We still have many pictures that need to have names and dates recorded and need to be organized into albums. We will work on this as soon as we can.

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.”

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 using Peace Bells to compile summaries of each year and thus creating a history of Peace Church.

Bill Kohlts is 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.

In the past year Bill Kohlts, Marge Anderson, and Sharon Crosby worked with historical records to help with the celebration of Pastor Kathy's Retirement Celebration. This was a big project, and we will need to keep thinking along these lines as we look forward to the celebration of Peace Church's 150th Anniversary.

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 a 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 Immigrant Welcoming. 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, and 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 (suspended during Covid), 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.

In addition to action, the team gave financial support for the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, NAACP and AICHO events, Our Church's Wider Mission (UCC), CHUM, Campus Ministry, Gabriel Project, Habitat for Humanity, St Mark AME Church, One Roof, Loaves & Fishes, 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 have given generously to help people and agencies dealing with food scarcity and other needs. 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 – Shana Aue
- Global Ministries –Tom and Monica Liddle
- Dismantling Racism – Betty Greene
- Open and Affirming – Nathan Holst
- Immigrant Welcoming– Charlotte Frantz
- Beyond Violence – Joan Peterson

Acting for Justice – Climate Justice Team

This year the Climate Justice team met regularly on the third Monday of each month via Zoom.

Over the summer the team did some visioning for the coming year, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Priorities included:

1. Launching a research project to learn more about food pathways and community agriculture in Duluth
2. Asking the Peace Church council to support a petition for the Duluth City Council to declare a climate emergency
3. Sharing the story of the Peace Church garden, the roots of the team
4. Continue the process of becoming a UCC Creation Justice Church

In early fall, we developed a list of organizations and individuals in Duluth and the surrounding area who are involved in food pathways and food justice, and a list of questions to start discussions. Members of the team made contact by phone and email. Notes from these many conversations became a document outlining the various groups working with food pathways in our area, and their priorities and concerns around this issue. In the coming year we will look at this data and discuss how the Climate Justice Team might become involved in this work.

In October we sent a proposal to the Peace Church Council asking them to support a petition encouraging the Duluth City Council to declare a climate emergency. Council asked us to provide some educational resources for the congregation, and on January 17 Lisa Fitzpatrick did an adult forum on the topic. A congregational vote was held at the January 31 annual meeting, and the following proposal was passed: *Our Peace Church Climate Justice Team proposes that we, as the Peace Church congregation, urge the Duluth City Council to declare a climate emergency.* In April, the Duluth City Council declared a climate emergency.

We did some planning to create a series of video interviews with Peace Church members who have been instrumental in the Peace Garden, but ultimately this project was tabled until next year.

With the leadership transitions at Peace Church, we also decided to postpone next steps for becoming a Creation Justice Church until next year.

Finally, for Earth Day we partnered with the Property Committee and Food & Fellowship Team to organize an Earth Day Festival on April 25, which included a clean up event. The Climate Justice Team also had a table at the event.

Submitted by Shana Aue

Acting for Justice – Global Ministries Team

Monica and Tom Liddle continue to guide Peace Church's global engagement. They will continue to keep the congregation informed about Global Ministries of the national UCC setting, following their seven years of service as mission co-workers in East Timor. They are also engaging the congregation with the work of an indigenous Timorese non-governmental organization, The Good Crocodile Foundation. Monica and Tom have created a 3-minute video that is available on the church website to describe these relationships.

Special offerings were taken up at Peace for two global disasters this spring 2021: first, for East Timor, which was ravaged by an Easter cyclone; and second for India, which has been devastated by the coronavirus.

Submitted by Tom and Monica Liddle

Acting for Justice – Open and Affirming Team (ONA)

ONA remained largely on sabbath again this year. One highlight for the year was having Sean Hayes from Trans Plus come and share about their work locally. Sean shared much of his story as a trans man and spoke of the visioning work that Trans Plus is currently doing, living into the world they want, rather than simply surviving. We hope to continue to be in conversation with Sean and Trans Plus about ways our church can support the work they are doing.

Submitted by Nathan Holst

Acting for Justice – CHUM Involvement

CHUM is “People of faith working together to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives, and organize for a just and compassionate community.”

A year ago the pandemic was raging and in-person volunteer opportunities restricted. Nevertheless, Peace members found ways to continue providing support for CHUM and its outreach. Twice a month Peace volunteers prepared breakfasts in Peace’s kitchen and delivered them to CHUM. Our monthly Thursday evening meal was handled the same way.

Peace gardeners tended the plots behind the church and provided CHUM with more than 450 pounds of fresh, organic vegetables.

Individuals from Peace increased their direct giving to CHUM when the usual fundraising efforts were cancelled due to Covid.

CHUM’s efforts to protect Duluth’s homeless from Covid resulted in very few cases close to the end of the pandemic. Vulnerable persons were housed at the Duluth Inn. Other hotels made space available for CHUM clients who needed to be quarantined. CARES funds and Tom Hansen of the Duluth Grill provided on-site meals. The Food Shelf continued to distribute food. While spaces such as the Food Shelf and Drop In Center kitchen were closed to volunteers, CHUM undertook some major remodeling.

Lee Stuart, Executive Director of CHUM delayed her retirement to see us through. CHUM’s new Executive Director, John Cole, began work on June 1, 2021.

Thank you, Peace volunteers and donors for your continuing support of CHUM’s outreach. Thank you, too, Elise Courtright, for consistently listing CHUM needs and opportunities in the newsletter. You help us know how to give!

CHUM delegates: Charlotte Frantz and Angie Miller

Breakfast and Dinner Volunteers: You are too many to name, but so very generous and appreciated! Special thanks to Cathy Carlson’s cooking skills for the monthly dinner, and the breakfast crew who make 100 sandwiches every other week.

Peace Gardeners: Thanks to Elise Courtright for coordinating this, and to the many volunteers who plant, weed, water, harvest, and deliver food to Chum.

Submitted by Charlotte Frantz, Peace Church CHUM Representative

Acting for Justice – Dismantling Racism Team

The Dismantling Racism team generally meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 3:30 p.m. through Zoom. Our 2020-21 work included the following:

- We welcomed eight new members to our team.
- 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 offered “Justice in August,” an online course for Peace Church to deepen understanding of racial justice and move towards action.
- In the fall we held two book study groups of *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* edited by Sun Yung Shin.
- In October we supported Stephan and Solomon Witherspoon, who provided a drive-through meal in the Peace Church parking lot after worship in preparation for opening their own restaurant (Spoon’s Bar and Grill, now open in Lincoln Park - 2113 W. Superior St.).
- We supported the work of the NAACP through promotion of the MLK event held online from Peace’s sanctuary.
- We participated in fundraising for the Foy Scholarship as well as updating the application process.

- We learned about and supported the efforts of AIM Twin Ports (American Indian Movement) to create a yurt community for people experiencing homelessness. This included drafting a letter to the mayor and city council which was co-signed by the Church Council.
- During Lent some of our members participated in The Damascus Project, a daily discipline practice to build emotional resiliency. This was made available through the Damascus Project, a ministry of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Conferences of the UCC.
- We sent a letter to the Minnesota Conference Committee on Ministry supporting their new continuing education requirement regarding anti-racism.
- We promoted Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial events.
- As part of the series on resiliency, in February we co-hosted with the Adult Education Team Adult Forums featuring SURJ Northland (Showing Up for Racial Justice). In March we co-hosted Adult Forums introducing AIM Twin Ports and doing a digital blanket exercise.

Submitted by Betty Greene

Acting for Justice – Immigrant Welcoming Team

In January 2020, Peace voted to become an “immigrant welcoming” congregation. This year we had the opportunity to live up to our designation! In mid-December we helped host Zhou Zhiheng, aka “Joe.” He is an asylum seeker from Shanghai, China. He came to Duluth following 10 months of detention in California. His sponsor, Dorothy Rappel, is a friend of Peace and we agreed to help with Zhiheng’s stay in Duluth. While he was our guest, members of Peace provided meals and companionship as well as some clothing and other necessities. Joe’s request for a change of venue from California to Minnesota was greatly delayed by the holidays. By mid-January he decided it would be best to return to California. Friends who had been released from detention about the same time were able to provide him housing and a supportive community. While he was our guest, Zhiheng participated in Bible study and was baptized during a zoom Bible study session.

In April, Dorothy Rappel welcomed a family into her home and again Peace members are accompanying them as they settle into life here. Ariuna and her 8-year-old son Vova are from Buryatia, a Russian republic in Siberia. Peace members donated clothing, toys, gift cards, and companionship—all important as they made the move to Duluth.

In September, the Sanctuary Fund and individuals from Peace donated much needed rainboots to the Matamoros Encampment where volunteers started a school for asylum seeking children. In December, members of the congregation made holiday cards and sent them to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service for distribution to families in detention facilities.

June 20 is World Refugee Day, and Peace members participated in a community celebration held near the replica of the Statue of Liberty at the DECC. During March, two adult forums focused on immigration: Penny and Rodger Cragun and Judy Gibbs shared information from a pre-pandemic trip to El Paso; Charlotte Frantz presented information on the history of immigration policy in the United States.

Although much of our immigrant welcoming work is carried out in co-operation with the Interfaith Committee for Migrant Justice, Peace members continue to be “on call” for accompaniment, our space is available as sanctuary space, and the Sanctuary Fund has provided help to asylum seekers coming to Duluth. Contact Charlotte Frantz or the office if you are interested in being on an email list so you know when your help would be appreciated!

Submitted by Charlotte Frantz, Immigrant Welcoming Team

Acting for Justice – Beyond Violence Team

The Beyond Violence team has focused on efforts to prevent gun violence. That has included participating in a Zoom vigil on December 14, 2020, to honor the Sandy Hook shooting victims and all victims of gun violence. Because of COVID, there have not been opportunities to have in person meetings with elected representatives or to hand out post cards to send. We have encouraged the congregation to contact members of the legislature and Congress by phone or email to support bills. In addition we have shared facts about gun violence and suggested other ways to get involved. We will continue to support nonviolence in personal relationships, in public places and in national and international relations. Hopefully we will be able to return to some in-person events and provide more opportunities to participate in efforts to keep our community and families safe from violence.

Submitted by Joan Peterson

Christian Spiritual Life – Worship and Arts Team

Because last year's report was introduced so very well by Jerry Cleveland, a long time member of the W & A Team, I will use his words to describe our congregation, because those descriptions still stand and mean more this year than ever. He wrote: "The Peace Church congregation is an eclectic mix of ages, interests, occupations, and backgrounds. This diversity makes for a fascinating and vibrant community. It is our 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 of and expectations of a ministerial authority, but rather attempts to encourage input and participation from a wide base of the congregation."

Worship has remained the same after last year's segue to the COVID-19 Virtual Worship services. We continued to livestream the 10:30 service on Sundays via YouTube or online, aided by our amazing Tech Team: Doug Bowen-Bailey, Alex Dean, Susan Larson Kidd, Tim Carpenter (until Kathy's retirement), Tyler Stark, Nancy Nelson, and Paul O'Brien. Without their expertise, we would not have been able to stream services that enriched our members, plus those people from out of state who could tune in.

Due to COVID, we did not have a joint Thanksgiving service, nor a joint Good Friday service. We filmed two Prayers Around the Cross for Lenten viewing online, but we did not have Prayers Around the Cradle at Christmas. Bible studies continued online via ZOOM. The Maundy Thursday service was an interactive ZOOM worship led by our Interim Minister at the time, Pastor Greg Briggs. Also due to COVID, Amanda Hunter, our Arts curator, has not been able to place new art in our art space, but will do so when we are back in the building safely. Our Music Director, Jim Pospisil, gathered musicians each week to sing and play instruments in a safe manner, distanced and partitioned. As the CDC guidelines allowed, we began to allow "Pods" of members to come to church, worship together, distanced, and refrained from singing during the hymns. We began with 10 pods, expanded to 15, and then went back to 10 pods as the COVID variant caused a spike in cases. The W & A Team continued throughout the year to abide by our own COVID Task Force's guidelines which were and are gleaned from the CDC and our own Minnesota Health Department. We have appreciated our ASL signers who have taken turns signing our Virtual services: Doug Bowen-Bailey, Karen Sheldon, Maggie Fink, and Judy Hlina.

We have been richly blessed by all who have stepped up their involvement so that we could continue these live-streamed worship services. Throughout the year, our W & A Team has met via ZOOM to plan the worship services and aid the ministerial staff in hymn selection and flow of the service. We give thanks to all!

Submitted by Gudrun Witrak

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 with members Molly Watson, Jan Nugent, Cindy McLean, Nina Preheim, Charlotte Frantz, and Janell Kohls.

The gathering of energy you may feel is the Shared Ministry team gearing up to fully resume our chosen tasks within Peace Church! During this past year we were not able to do some of the welcoming and connecting tasks we like to do; welcome bags, Inquirers classes, and greeter and usher training are a few of the things that were sidelined. The most important thing we continued was the abbreviated on-line time and talent form, and we are talking about having another one ready for fall activities. We also continued with birthday cards and tried to recognize new homes (sorry if we missed you...). Though Pamela Mittlefehldt's incredible card ministry is not part of this team, I want to recognize her efforts and the blessings felt by both the senders and the recipients ~ thank you for doing that! Also thanks to Gudrun Witrak who continues to send bereavement cards to our members and friends. We hosted a few 'casual conversations' via Zoom. These are all ways we tried to stay connected during the past year. We look forward to resuming our unofficial motto: a job and a friend to do it with.

Submitted by Cindy Macaulay

Christian Spiritual Life – Food and Fellowship Team

It is difficult to write a piece for the annual report when gathering together is difficult during pandemic precautions. Being a very social group, the Food and Fellowship team members were eager to help whenever there was a chance to do a socially distanced event. Last summer we assisted with a drive by cookout complete with hot dogs (meat and veggie). In the fall we were able to assist with the drive by kick off for the stewardship campaign. Attendees could grab a sandwich and keep on driving, or sit outside and visit from a distance. In November we were blessed with a beautiful day when members and friends could drive by and drop off their pledge envelope for stewardship Sunday. There was also the opportunity to stay and again visit outside. All were treated to a piece of pie from The Rustic Inn, Betty's Pies, or Perkins. This Peace of The Pie event was well received. At all of these events we were able to say hello to Pastor Kathy Nelson who was there to greet everyone. This April of 2021 the Food and Fellowship team served sandwiches, chips and beverages at the Earth Day Festival. It was a beautiful day for the eager workers cleaning up the yard, building trails, painting birdhouses, etc. We hope to be involved again next year. Future events will be planned as permitted (e.g. the summer picnic). This fall we are hoping that we will all be able to gather again and plan to have a great welcome back fellowship time.

Submitted by Cathy Ameal

Christian Spiritual Life – Health and Wellness Team

The Health and Wellness team had planned to continue our adult forums regarding Mental Health, but we have not been able to do so due to the changes necessitated by the Covid restrictions, Unfortunately the blood drives planned also needed to be cancelled. The team continues to have contact people available to assist with Health Care Directives, and the Loan Closet remains available for anyone who may need durable medical equipment.

Due to the team members' varied schedules, we have not been able to set up a Zoom team meeting as yet. Future plans will include scheduling adult forums once the team has been able to meet and determine the focus.

Submitted by Ellen Shelton

Christian Spiritual Life – Prayer Chain Team

"Our prayers do make a difference" ~Max Lucado

Praying for those who have concerns and joys is the role of the 45 volunteers of the Peace Church Prayer Chain. Being able to pray for others is a gift and brings hope and encouragement to those for whom we pray. In Fall of 2020, Bob and Kay Stevens, who led the Prayer Chain for many years, retired, and turned coordination efforts over to Linda Goese and Lynn Devlin. From September 2020 to April 2021, we received 86 prayer requests.

Coordinators: Linda Goese, Lynn Devlin

Christian Spiritual Life – Spiritual Journey Team

Our Spiritual Journey Team continued to meet this year, even as the pandemic and church transition made it more difficult for our team to clarify where we could support the spiritual life of the church. Last summer we did record some reflections on the pandemic on zoom and shared them as a podcast. We also offered a series of walks and conversations for our Peace folks to connect in meaningful ways. Starting in early 2021, we mainly brainstormed possible ideas that could help our congregation in reflecting on our spiritual journeys in the transition time. The team sees itself as a resource for supporting our congregation in whatever way is needed moving forward.

Submitted by Nathan Holst

Christian Spiritual Life – The Sunday Special

We are a spiritual and social support group for individuals, families, caregivers and workers who live and work with disabilities, special needs, and mental health concerns.

Due to the pandemic, we have not met this past year. We hope to be meeting in person at some point this year. I have tried to keep in touch with the group via emails, cards, and the Peace Bell.

Submitted by Amy Sullivan

Christian Stewardship – Stewardship Team

The Stewardship Team is pleased to report that the 2020-21 Fall Stewardship Campaign was a success. Pledged support came within 5% of our target - with the difference provided by some end-of-year gifts. At the beginning of the campaign, the uncertainties over Pastor Nelson's imminent departure created concern over members possibly scaling back their support. We regard the successful result as a resounding endorsement of Peace's importance in members' lives—and evidence of their abiding faith in its future.

Submitted by Geof Witrak

Christian Stewardship – Property Team

Thanks to Dan Shepard, Bud Trnka, Tim Peters, Denise Perry, David Courtright, Guy Hubert, Jim McLean, Doug Bowen-Bailey, and Rick Morgan. All played important parts in keeping this facility functioning and running (relatively) smoothly over the past year. Denise Perry has stepped back from her long-time leadership of this team, though she remains very involved as always. Thank you, Denise for many years of outstanding leadership and caring for our building.

A few accomplishments of the last year:

- Exterior updates, including painting, completing the gutters, and improving lot drainage on the upper and lower lots to reduce ice buildup.
- Updating the building for COVID safety, including repairs to the heating system to allow the air exchanger to operate in the sanctuary, shields for the choir, and portable air purifiers. There were also lots of changes to building usage and cleaning routines to keep all users of our building safe.
- Extensive cleanup and adding of a path near the lower lot, culminating in the earth day event where numerous groups came together to work on the church property and surrounding community.
- Upgrades were made to the bell ringing equipment to stop interference with livestreaming.
- 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 one of our meetings. Check out what the ongoing needs are. Then sign up! Help maintain this building, which offers so much to its members and to the broader community.

Submitted by David Courtright, Chairperson

Christian Stewardship – Technology Team

After the church was shut down by the Covid-19 pandemic in March of 2020, we switched to livestreaming the Sunday worship service. Livestreaming continued through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021, consuming most of the attention of the Technology Team. Broadcasting the worship service every week required many hours of effort from volunteers and staff as well as many dollars for additional equipment. Many thanks go to the "Streamteam" of Doug Bowen-Bailey, Alex Dean, Tim Carpenter, Susan Larson Kidd, Tyler Stark, Paul O'Brien, Cindy McLean, and Nancy Nelson for making it work. When the church re-opened at the end of May 2021, we continued to livestream the service, but how long we will continue this is a question that remains unanswered.

Tim Carpenter served as the volunteer IT manager for the church until we reluctantly said goodbye to him at the end of 2020 when Pastor Kathy retired. He did a fantastic job with the technology and gave generously of his time for many years. Thank you, Tim! Dave Courtright took over as our go-to tech support person, and we set up a contract with Downtown Computer for the more serious issues.

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has made our entire society more and more dependent on technology for nearly everything in our daily lives, including church worship. Peace Church has responded well to the changing times, but we need the congregation's continued strong support for technology to keep us connected with our members and the broader Peace community.

Submitted by Nancy Nelson, Office Coordinator

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Statistics: June 2020 – May 2021

New Members

Except for the two confirmation classes, there were no new members received, due to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Confirmands

September 2020 (13)

Noah Beyer
JJ Erickson
Benjamin Fena
Cedar Holden
Kai Hoffman
Simon Davidson
Alex Kinney
Colby Larson
Rowan Lundell
Ruby Nutter
Aiden Olson
Stella Schutz
Elle Westrum

December 2020 (11)

Elliott Dean
Andre Good
Mark Kaczmarczyk
Mary Karstens
Owen Kellner
Ahnnali Lindgren
Anika Pfau
Tyler Stark
Koto Sudoh
Ellie Evenson
Danica Mark

Baptisms (11)

Children

Emery Ann Palmstein
Jensen James Doohen

Older Children/Adults

Stella Schutz
Charles Schutz
Daniel Guite
Cyndy Carlson
Ruby Nutter
Ellise Evenson
Tyler Stark
Andre Notaro Good
Nora Notaro Good
Zhou Zhiheng

Weddings (3)

JT Haines and Maria Corradi
Sara Carlson and Melissa Gerads
Snnahil Tripathi and Clara Borrell

Funerals/Memorial Services/Deaths (9)

Earl Rosenwinkel
Charles House
Thomas Sharkey
Jeff Brown
Cameron Gordon
John Hawley
Joan Mork
John Klein
Bill Kehtel

