



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

2021 Annual Report



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Leadership

We are grateful for all who share their gifts in various ways to be God's hands and feet on this earth. To our Band and Choir members, our Kids Connect and His Kids teachers, our devotions writers and Confirmation mentors... to our property and technology experts and every one of you who generously give your time, heart or resources: **we thank you for blessing our congregation, school families and surrounding community.**

"All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." – 1Corinthians 12:27



Chris McKinstry, Pastor



Bobbie Hoffman, Dir., Discipling



Eve Keane, Dir., Worship Music



Janet Hilsmier, Dir., Family Ministries



Nicole Lewis, Dir., His Kids C. P.



Lei Mellon, President, Church Council



Stepping Out in Faith

“...when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” –Isaiah 43

Introduction

Last year as 2020 came to a close and we began a new year, many of us hoped that 2021 would be a different year – that it would mean a change from the difficulties of 2020, a return to normalcy, an end to this global pandemic.

THE YEAR 2021 WAS IN MANY WAYS A CONTINUATION OF THE JOURNEY THAT WE STARTED IN 2020.

We continued to move through a world filled with uncertainty, the global COVID-19 pandemic continued to be an ever-changing reality that required us to be flexible and adaptable throughout the entire year.

It seems that if the theme of 2020 was **SURVIVING** in the midst of unforeseen challenges, then the 2021 theme, despite all of the uncertainty, is **THRIVING** in the midst of challenge.

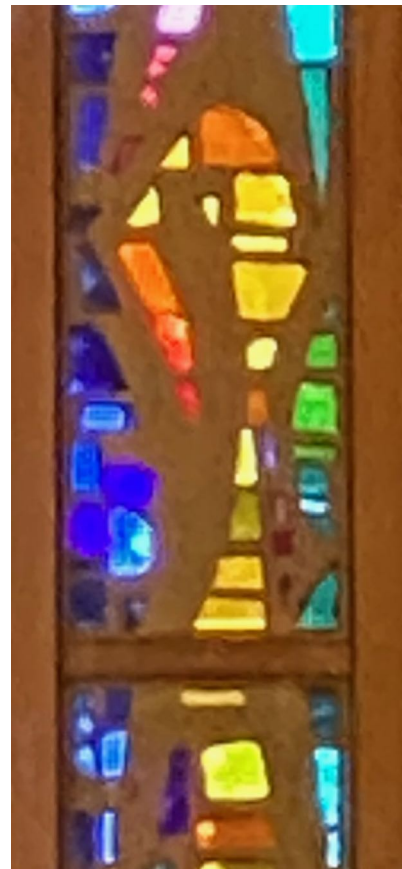
Our year was filled with progression, moving forward even though we weren't sure what the future would hold.

We started the year worshipping virtually, having just celebrated Christmas *in our homes* rather than gathered together at St. James. We finished 2021 worshipping together, on our previous worship schedule, and celebrating Christmas together as a community *in-person as well as online*.

There is a passage in Isaiah chapter 43 that reminds us of God's faithful presence with us through each and every moment of life, especially our most difficult moments. The passage reads:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” – Isaiah 43:1-3

As you look through the memories, stories and pictures in this document, you will see how God has continued to be present with us and to bless our community. We continued to work together as a community and to step out in faith over and over again not knowing what the outcome would be, but only knowing that God would lead us and guide us forward. That was true yesterday, today, and it will be true tomorrow as well.



Worship 2021



Worship continued to be an area of growth and innovation for St. James in 2021 as it had been in 2020. In the previous year we had learned how to take our services online, prerecorded at first and then later live-streamed, and in 2021 we continued to refine that process.

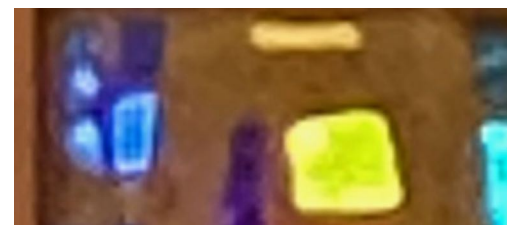
We started the year doing a **VIRTUAL-ONLY WORSHIP** service on Sunday mornings due to a rise in concerns about COVID and we maintained that schedule till the end of March. During that time we entered the season of Lent and held mid-week worship services over Zoom which included Holden Evening prayer and small group discussion.

As the weather turned warmer in Spring, we were grateful to return to in-person worship services just in time for Holy Week and Easter. To celebrate Easter in a safe and festive way, we held two **OUTDOOR WORSHIP** services on Easter Sunday morning and even managed to figure out how to livestream the service from the parking lot for those who were at home.



Warm Spring weather gave us the opportunity to gather for worship outdoors and was live-streamed for friends & family at-home.

Our simple candlelit altar for prayer intentions set up for Good Friday service.



Later in the year, we confirmed our 2020 and 2021 Confirmation Classes with two Services held outside in the parking lot. The services were a wonderful celebration for our confirmands, their families, and our community! (Though one of them was extremely hot!)

At the end of 2021, we gratefully restored our contemporary and traditional services. (Opening Kids Connect Children's Ministry was an added bonus!) We were also grateful to be able to gather **IN-PERSON** for our Christmas services which included our youth-led service once again.

At every turn, the **MUSIC MINISTRY** adapted and provided a most necessary component to meaningful worship experience. Whether we were pre-recording, singing outdoors or back on stage our hearts were filled with the love of God and His mercies through their music.

Though 2021 was certainly not without its challenges, fears and concerns, we are grateful that God has continued to journey with us, allowing us to step out in faith and knowing that God is with us every step of the way.



Sr. High Youth rehearse their lines for the youth-led Christmas Eve Service.

Nine of our young friends affirmed their baptism celebrated at 2 outdoor services.





Following Jesus,

We love God and Neighbor

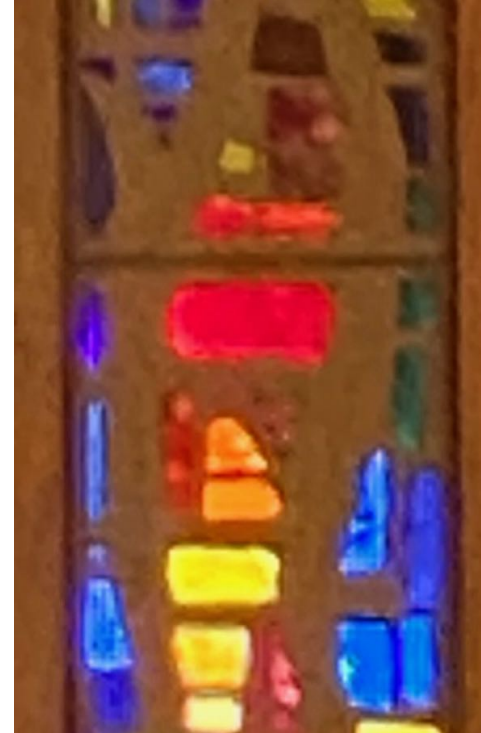
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." – Mark 12:30-31

FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD – AND WE LOVE TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO SEEK HIS WORD BY OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT ALL AGES.

Bible Study, Pub Theology & Small Groups

Bible studies provide us a way to explore the scriptures and discuss how they impacts and changes our daily lives. We have two **BIBLE STUDY** small groups which meet virtually throughout the year.

At the start of 2021 some of our **SMALL GROUPS** had suspended their meetings due to the pandemic hoping to meet again when things were safer. Throughout this year, these groups have formed once again and brought back a sense of normalcy, connection and community that we had missed the previous year. A few have continued to meet and enjoy fellowship online, while others like our **PUB THEOLOGY** have found creative ways to gather and connect in person.



Confirmation & Kids Connect

OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS WERE MODIFIED OR ON HOLD FOR MUCH OF THE EARLY MONTHS OF 2021.

By presenting a weekly children's message, covering a Bible story and practical application in the Sunday live-streamed worship, we reached families at home. Confirmation classes were hosted in a hybrid of online and in-person classes.

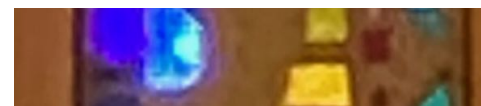
At the start of the '21-22 public school year, we returned to in-person worship. As such, both Kids Connect and Confirmation classes resumed gathering in person. With rising comfort in meeting together, we welcomed 5 mentors to participate in Confirmation discussions with our confirmands. Thank you Lynne Frantz, Sheri Barberini, Kate McKinstry, Tom Mellon and Rick Phillips!

Daily Devotions

Started in 2020, "God's Encouraging Word" daily devotions continued to be a way for us to reach out and provide God's inspiration and wisdom.

One of our readers recently shared, *"I have never read a daily devotional before and now I look forward to receiving God's Encouraging Word every day."*

The Small Group Bible Study experience is a blessing for us. The group has helped us to develop real friendships in Christ and it offers a safe place to discover real life application knowledge from God's Word. It's great to be on a shared journey toward God! –Rick Phillips



Vacation Bible School

A LONG-STANDING FAVORITE COMMUNITY EVENT, VBS PROVIDES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH THE LOVE OF JESUS TO CHILDREN FROM SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

St James Family Ministry and His Kids joined together to host a mostly outdoor VBS experience. The educational theme was “Jesus Power Pulls us Through” all of life’s ups and downs. This year we invited preschoolers to attend in our evening program with the older elementary school children. Scheduled to follow the His Kids Summer Camp series, we saw an increase in attendance from preschool-enrolled families and their neighbors. In all, we celebrated Jesus’ power with more than 50 children and an equal number of adult and teenage volunteers.



Most of the VBS stations were held outdoors (above).

While inside, children sat with their small “crews” in socially-distanced rows (below).

(Left) Celebrating the 15 young friends who modeled Christ’s love by leading, sharing and making VBS a fun experience.



TEACHING



MISSION

His Kids Christian Preschool's vision is to become the leader in faith based education that provides emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive development to every child. We will do this by creating a safe, nurturing environment in which children cultivate lifelong relationships between families, communities and God.

13

Teachers/Aids
Employed

61

Children attended
Summer Camp 2021

85

Current Enrollment
2021-2022 school year

“Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” – Matthew 19:14

HIS KIDS CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL HAS BEEN PROVIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TO AREA FAMILIES FOR 18 YEARS.

What an incredible year it has been at His Kids Christian Preschool. We increased our enrollment from 56 to 85 students this year. This is the largest number of students that His Kids has ever had in its 18 year history!

Word of mouth testimonials are our best advertisement and our HK Families have blessed us greatly by sharing our program with neighbors and friends. We also believe the greater Limerick community saw a preschool that was open and thriving during the pandemic. We truly believe that God is at work within our walls!

His Kids Board ‘21-22

- Lynne Frantz: President
- Janet Hilsmier: Vice President
- Jeff Williams: Treasurer
- Alyssa Van Alstine: Secretary
- Bobbie Hoffman
- Sue Trimble
- Michael Johnson
- Stephanie Sundermeier





We have continued our commitment to a safe, clean and sanitized environment at all times during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we recorded our Christmas Program again and shared it with our families via a private YouTube link. Our families were so thankful to be able to enjoy this at home. Our HK families have continued to support us in everything we do.

Our cross-ministry partnership with His Kids and the Family Ministry at St James provides a wonderful faith-based, unique and well-rounded educational program to our community.

Preschool Staff

2021-22

Teachers

Nora Capron

Terri McGrath

Lisa Stauffer

Marianne Williams

Carisa Wowak

Assistant Teachers

Elizabeth Battistini

Jill Guider

Christine Lark

Jennifer Turney

Jennifer Valente

"We are thankful for everything you and the staff have been doing! It was a little scary having to find a new school for [our son] this year when we moved because we wanted to find a really good program, but also one that continued to take COVID concerns seriously. Having worked in a Pre-K setting right as things reopened and through last year, I am aware that it is difficult to keep up with changing things and people do not always agree with decision you make, but we are so grateful we found this school and are thankful for all you are doing to educate Graham and keep the kids (and staff) safe!"
— Elizabeth Hassett, parent



TEACHING



Following Jesus, We love God and Neighbor

“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

HAVING ENDURED TOO MUCH ISOLATION IN 2020, WE SOUGHT NEW WAYS TO CONNECT WITH OUR NEIGHBORS IN 2021



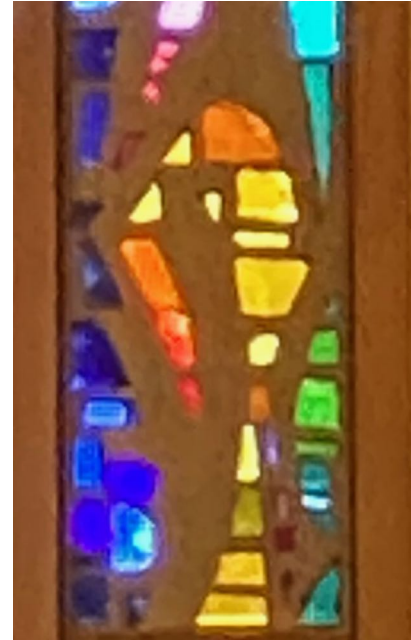
Lenten Drive-Thru

Pulling from our 2020 playbook in which our youth hosted a Christmas Drive-Thru, we reached out in similar fashion for Lent. We invited the community to drive by and pick up *fasnachts* and devotional supplies to carry them through the Lenten season while we hosted Holden Worship over Zoom.

Limerick Community Day

Hosting a table at this annual summer festival allowed us another opportunity to say hello to even more neighbors and invite them to discover Jesus, St James and His Kids.

LOVING



Members from two Small Groups, the Empty Nesters and the Tuesday Bible Study, came together to bless a family facing extreme difficulties with Christmas gifts and food.





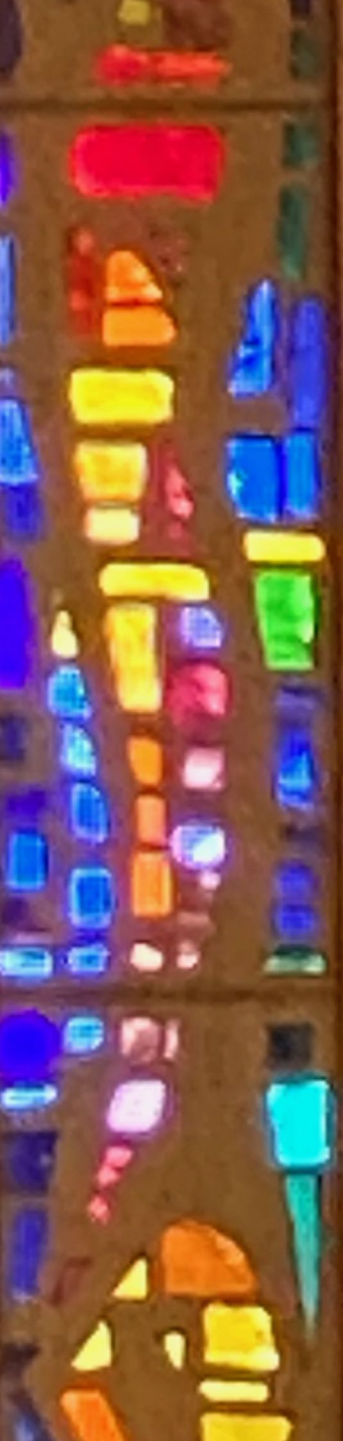
Easter Egg Hunt @ Home

It started with a simple idea... if we can't invite them to an onsite Easter Egg Hunt, maybe we can deliver one to each family?

Enlisting the enthusiastic energy of our Sr. High Youth Group and Confirmands, we reached out to St James and His Kids families to let us bring the fun to them.

More than 20 youth and parents delivered and hid eggs at the homes of church and preschool families: 25 families (55 kids) were blessed by the personal egg hunts.





Trunk or Treat

Moving into the later part of 2021, we were able to reintroduce our Fall themed Trunk or Treat event which pulled an astounding larger crowd than past years – perhaps indicating that our community families were ready to engage in outdoor memory making events.



Hosted outdoors, Vacation Bible School and Trunk or Treat provided ways for us to connect with our families in the community with care.

Our annual **ADVENT CRAFT EXPO** was turned into a month-long event as we hosted small groups for only an hour every Sunday during Advent.

Box City Snack Drive

Our Box City events have been hosted for synod area youth for a decade. Each event raises money to provide to homeless shelter organizers in the Pottstown area, but also raises awareness and educates youth about the challenges of living displaced. Having to put our traditional outdoor campout on hold, Carly Hampton (Spring-Ford class of '21) suggested hosting a snack food and fund drive. The event provided over 100 snack bags for God's Kitchen and raised funds to support additional giving opportunities to the soup kitchen.

LOVING



Following Jesus,

We love God and Neighbor

*“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others.” –
Matthew 20:28*

WE SERVE BEST WHEN WE SERVE WITH OTHERS.

The Women of St James

With our funds from the sale of Boscov’s passes, blessings bag collection and Repperts candy sale we were able to donate \$1300 the following: Shining Star, Operation Holiday, Project Outreach, ELCA for Haiti Relief, Prader Willi Syndrome, Lutheran Disaster Response for victims of tornados in the South.

Operation Shining Star

This year, by God’s grace and your generosity, we provided 200 Giant food gift cards to people in need throughout the surrounding communities. A wide variety of community organizations and people within our congregation provided us with opportunities to distribute these gift cards to whom they were most needed. Our referral agencies included: Spring-Ford School District, Rupert, Lincoln, Edgewood and Franklin Elementary Schools in Pottstown, Gemma Services, The Salvation Army, Pottstown, Perkiomen Valley School District, the Penn Foundation, Pottstown Cluster, Pottsgrove School District, Community Health and Dental, Project Outreach and Daily Bread Food Bank.

Lutheran Disaster Response

Through seasonal campaigns like our Lenten Offering Plate collection and the work of the Women of St. James, we are able to send love, hope and recovery support to communities whose lives are disrupted by disasters like floods, hurricanes and tornados.

Spring-Ford

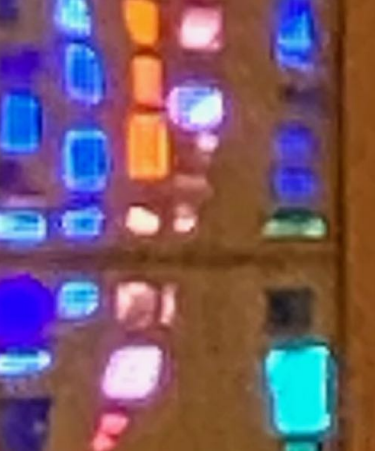
Project Outreach

By encouraging year-round food collection and “fun-drives” like our VBS dinner collection and the Youth-sponsored Christmas stocking stuffers, we remain committed to supporting residents in the Spring-Ford area by supporting **Spring-Ford Project Outreach** food bank.

God’s Kitchen

While the ability to gather and serve hot meals became more challenging, volunteers at the God’s Kitchen Soup Kitchen in Pottstown pivoted to provide fast meals, delivered outdoors.

Our Youth hosted snack food drives and the Vacation Bible School mission collected non-perishable dinner foods from attendees to answer “*What’s for Dinner?*”.



Project Outreach food pantry donations get picked up regularly and delivered to the Royersford food bank. (Anita Petrich, pictured)



At VBS, we loaded our “coal cars” in the entryway with canned and boxed goods that to be shared through God’s Kitchen.

\$4900
Contributions to Shining Star
enabled us to bless many families in the greater Limerick/Pottstown area with Giant gift cards at Christmas.

“As project outreach coordinator I want to thank the congregation for your overwhelming support. We are one of 26 churches who regularly participate, serving the needy families weekly in our area. Your support and donations are greatly appreciated. You are truly filling a real need. Thank you. We all benefit when we come together in Christ.”
— Anita Petrich

A thank you email from Michele Krech, LSW, School Social Worker, included this - Many of the families in the Spring-Ford Area School District benefited from your generosity. While delivering the gift cards I heard statements such as “I can’t thank you enough” and “you don’t know what this means to our family”. Many of the gift cards went to grandparents, who are on a fixed income and raising their grandchildren. They were all very grateful for the help. Some families lost everything due to Hurricane Ida and job loss due to the pandemic. Knowing that there are members of the community that care helps to brighten what can be dark times. Perhaps demonstrating kindness is more important now than ever.

On behalf of the Spring-Ford School District families, please accept our heartfelt gratitude.

20
Giant Gift Cards
were also donated by families from His Kids Preschool and New Hanover Evangelical Lutheran Church.

\$3100
Cash Raised
...by the Women of St. James through the sale of candy and Boscov’s shoppers discount cards.

Making Room for Growth

“It’s not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What’s important is that God makes the seed grow.” – 1 Corinthians 3:7

COVID-19 MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE WAY SCHOOLS USE THEIR CLASSROOM AND CAFETERIA SPACES.

In 2020, His Kids adopted a single-classroom format for teaching instead of “traveling rotations.” This means the kids stay in their classroom for all activities except physical exercise. Every classroom needed to be outfitted with similar components. Requests for enrollment increased for the ‘21-22 school year which meant we needed another classroom. Church Council approved the use of Room 4 (aka “the old kitchen”) to use as a preschool classroom for the ‘21-22 school year. Even so, we still needed some elbow room in another classroom.

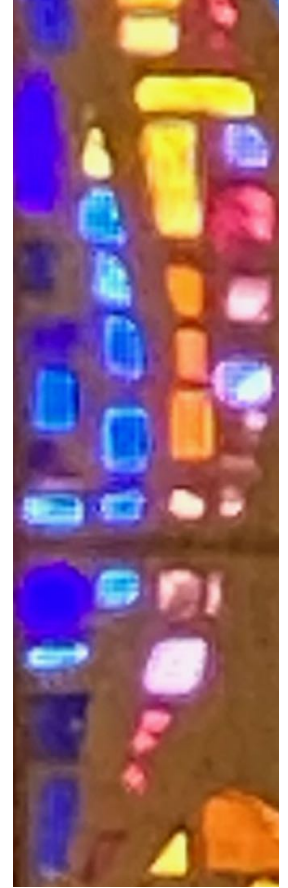
Some of our congregation may recall a time when “Room 7” was divided into 2 rooms: 7a, which was once a library and

meeting space and later, the His Kids Office, and 7b the Preschool’s “Snack Room”.

After reviewing the best use of these 2 spaces, we asked to modify the floor plan to expand the classroom and reduce the size of the HK office.

We launched a fundraising campaign in the Spring and our preschool families helped us cover 50% of the construction costs. Construction was completed in August 2021.

The resulting construction and move into room 4 provided us the opportunity to teach an additional 28 children in our Pre-Kindergarten program.



28

More spaces for children to learn at His Kids!

\$1600

Raised through the His Kids Building Expansion Fundraiser



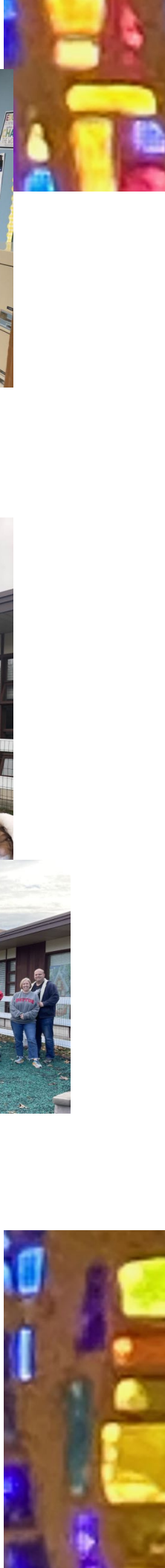
GROWING



The His Kids Office before, during and after construction.

Playground Refresh

This fall, we made improvements to our Sharon Weaver Memorial Playground with an Eagle Scout's help. The Eagle Scout and Troop 231 put bricks into place along the fence line to ensure that our rubber mulch stayed in our playground. With extra bricks leftover, they finished off the garden area near the back of the Fellowship Hall and stones were filled in places to prevent erosion. The lot was refreshed with 1 ton of new rubber mulch. They also installed two new pieces of equipment: a climbing dome and a teeter totter. Overall it was a wonderful project, and our students LOVE all of the changes.






Adapting Spaces for Flexible Meeting and Learning

Changing the use of our classrooms gave us an opportunity to check off some other goals to ensure we are able to provide improved technology for classroom and meeting spaces throughout the church and school. We installed new flatscreen smart TVs in 4 classrooms which are able to be used for Sunday School, Preschool and meetings. We also expanded WiFi capabilities throughout the school building and installed new window screens in several rooms.



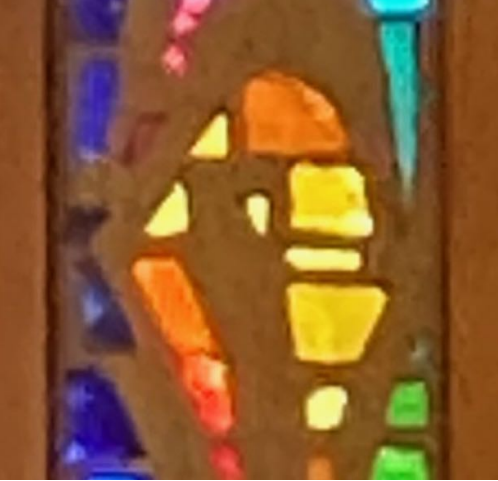
New “Middle Office” Conference Room

With the allocation of our prior meeting space to be used a preschool classroom, we repurposed the church middle office into a small conference room. The room was reorganized and received new flooring, fresh paint, and a new custom-made table.



Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” – Proverbs 3:5-6

It was a year that needed us to continue to put our trust in the Lord and we are grateful for all who have acted as God’s hands and feet with us. We trust God will continue to work through us in the new year.



Financial Report

2021

We planned to spend →

← We paid these

EXPENSES	2021 BUDGET	2021 ACTUAL
Administrative	\$ 24,723	\$ 30,501
Buildings/Property	\$ 42,278	\$ 36,133
Christian Education	\$ 3,870	\$ 3,651
Youth Expenses	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,410
Evangelism/Service	\$ -	\$ 202
Congregational Care	\$ 1,220	\$ -
Worship	\$ 2,450	\$ 2,970
Music	\$ 2,600	\$ 829
Salaries	\$ 194,382	\$ 192,389
Other Staffing	\$ 61,679	\$ 59,550
Benevolence (5% of Projected Income)	\$ 16,110	\$ 17,743
Total Expenses	\$ 350,512	\$ 345,378

We spent less

We received this

INCOME	2021 PROJECTED	2021 ACTUAL
Giving	\$ 386,632	\$ 355,160
Income-Expense	Overage or (Shortage)	
	\$ 36,120	\$ 9,783

A Letter from our Council President

As we begin 2022 and reflect on this past year I am reminded that St. James remains a place where “following Jesus we love God and neighbor”.

At the beginning of 2021, we worshipped online due to pandemic concerns, but we joyfully returned to in-person worship during Holy Week –and continued offering on-line services. Many small groups returned to meeting in person while some elected to remain online. Council continues to encourage small groups to meet in a format which best meets the needs of the group.

This past year Council also reviewed several property needs of the church as presented/recommended by the property committee. Expect to hear more about the proposed projects during the annual meeting.

Mid-year, conversation turned to resuming two Sunday services at pre-COVID times. Recognizing the increasing tech demands placed on Pastor Chris with live streaming, social media demands and other worship prep, Council approved a motion to get contracted paid assistance from November 2021 until decisions are made for the 2022 budget.

Church Council remains grateful to all of the staff and dedicated volunteers who continue to serve St. James. Working together, we are fortunate to be able to provide a place for individuals to develop and nurture a relationship with Christ. We listened to all of the feedback gathered from the congregation throughout the year, and it has informed our every step.

On a personal note, I've witnessed countless examples of Christ's Love manifested in individual actions over the past 2 years. It is difficult to work in a hospital during COVID without sometimes being filled with sadness, frustration, grief or exhaustion. On my very worst days, it has often been a text, email or conversation with one of you that reminds me that God is in the midst.

God Bless,
Lei Mellon

COUNCIL RETREAT TASK FORCE 2021

Mid-summer Pastor Chris led the Church Council through a leadership retreat in which we pondered the question “*Where is God leading us now?*”

After great discussion we also inquired, “*How is our community?*” and “*How are they feeling about returning to worship, engaging in faith formation and making connections with each other and God?*” and “*How can we help?*” and we set out to ask many in our congregation these questions.

Based on the feedback we received, we made decisions in key areas: worship, Christian education and community engagement. We saw value in reopening Kids Connect and returning to 2 worship services. Council supported the formation of 3 teams to help guide St. James into the future God has planned.



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH
FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

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