

2021
Annual Report

ST. LUKE'S EVANGELICAL

LUTHERAN CHURCH 2021

ANNUAL REPORT



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ANNUAL MEETING January 30, 2022 AGENDA

Opening Devotions
Declaration of Quorum
Minutes of 2021 Meetings
Acceptance of Agenda
Committees and Organizations
Concerns and Interests of Congregation
Treasurer's Report
2022 Budget Presentation
Budget Approval
Old Business
New Business
Closing Devotions

Congregational Meeting 2/7/21

Pastor Ortega led the meeting with a prayer. Council President Ellen Lindemann called the meeting to order at 10:47 AM.

The number of members present totaled above the required 10% of total voting membership. As per bylaws of the church, a quorum was established.

Craig Busch made a motion to accept the meeting agenda. Bernie Lindemann seconded the motion; it was voted on and passed unanimously.

After the review of the Congregational minutes from January 26, 2020 and August 2, 2020, Craig Busch made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Jane Busch seconded the motion; it was voted on and passed unanimously.

A moment was taken to remember those who passed in 2020 – may they rest in peace.

Pastor's Report – see submitted report.

President's Report – see submitted report.

WELCA – see submitted report.

Men's Club – see submitted report.

Diakonia – see submitted report.

Friendship Circle – no submitted report.

Parish Life – see submitted report.

Footprints – see submitted report.

Finance – see submitted report.

Evangelism – see submitted report.

Stewardship – see submitted report.

Christian Education – see submitted report.

Social Ministry – see submitted report.

Worship and Music Report – see submitted report.

Property – see submitted report.

Parish Statistical Report – see submitted report.

Average Worship Attendance – 20
Sunday School Attendance – 5

Craig Busch made a motion to accept all committee reports. Eleanore Lukacs seconded the motion; it was voted on and passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – see submitted report.

Budget for 2021

The proposed budget for 2021 was presented and discussed. There is presently a deficit. There will be no raises for the church staff.

Craig Busch made a motion to accept the treasurer's report and the 2021 budget. Mary Mauriello seconded the motion; it was voted on and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Eleanore Lukacs asked Pastor Ortega to talk about church vitality training.

Council elections were held as follows with a secretary (Maggie Drouaillet) and tellers (Maggie Drouaillet and Gwen DeMenna) designated. Ruth Muzik and Michelle Bennett are up for re-election, and Eleanore Lukacs and Mary Mauriello agreed to run for a third term if the restriction were lifted by special election.

1 Craig Busch made a motion to suspend the two-term limit for this meeting, seconded by Michelle Bennett, so carried.

Craig Busch made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for the four persons nominated. It was seconded by Michelle Bennett. So carried. Terms began on January 1, 2021.

Craig Busch made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Michelle Bennett, and we ended with the Lord's Prayer at 11:34 am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maggie Drouaillet

Blessed Are They Who Die in the Lord

Blessed to our memory are the following persons who entered the Church Victorious in 2021:

Mary Ann Portik, Doris Igoe

St. Luke’s Card Ministry Report
For the year 2021

Get Well Cards	10
Sympathy Cards	4
Birthday Cards	1
Congratulations Cards	1
Christmas Cards	11
Total	27

Pastor’s Message

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! May you have blessings of health, peace and joy in this New Year.

Today we are still struggling with COVID-19 and its different emerging variants. Who would have known that we would be in a pandemic for two years now. This has brought us new opportunities for ministry and also many challenges, as we have not been able to worship in person with many of our beloved members who are vulnerable for various reasons.

We began the year 2021 worshipping virtually only. Over the summer, we were able to come back to hybrid worship with in-person and virtual via zoom for those who are vulnerable or immune-compromised. Again, we never thought that we would need to go back to virtual gatherings because of rising COVID cases with the new and more easily transmissible variants.

During this year we continued with our midweek Wednesday prayer service virtually at 7:00 pm with crochet circle gatherings after service to teach crochet to people that have never crocheted before. We were so happy to see folks learn and make some exciting projects, including a crochet Christmas tree for Dunellen’s Municipal Building. We will do this again in December 2022 to have our own crochet Christmas tree for the church building. Our vision is to continue with the crochet circle to make prayer shawls for the sick and scarves, hats, and gloves for people in need. From October 2020 to the end of January 2021 we participated as a congregation in Church

Vitality training provided by the ELCA via Zoom. This training exposed us to many ideas and various ways to do ministry “out of the box.” We learned about how some congregations are finding new ways to be relevant to their communities and their communities’ needs. This has provided new vitality and growth to congregations, which have found that getting involved in social issues in their immediate community speaks to them and engages newcomers. I was blessed to participate in this training with Ellen Lindemann and Ruth Muzik. My gratitude to both of them for giving of their time to this training.

On a monthly basis I continued to attend Mission Re-Developers meetings with Pastor Maristela Freiberg and Dunellen Clergy group. Re-Developer group started a book discussion, separate from our monthly meetings, and started the pulpit swap, that will continue during this New year to allow us to rotate through all the churches in re-development. We were also blessed with a retreat at the end of the year at Cross Roads Camp. In addition, Spanish speaking churches and clergy met every two weeks in an initiative led by Pastor Haydee Colon, as part of her internship at St. John Lutheran Church in Passaic. These meetings allowed the Synod’s Latinx community to build networks and create spaces for Dwelling in Scripture, prayers and fellowship, all St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church — Dunellen, NJ done via Zoom because of the pandemic. Further, this year I established a new relationship with Pastor Wendy Abrahamson, as my coach, provided by the Synod. We meet once a month via Zoom.

Our “God’s Work, Our Hands” project was done with the collaboration of city officials and community members like Mayor Jason Cilento, Councilwoman Trina Gonzalez Rios, Councilman Daniel Sigmon, and Pete Albertson. We were able to engage St. Francis Episcopal Church and various merchants in the downtown area in Dunellen. Flower planters are in front of different stores and municipal properties like the municipal building and police parking area. This project allowed us to develop relationships in our community and we are seeing the mutual benefits of it already.

On Good Friday I was honored to be one of the preachers in the ecumenical service alongside

with other churches in Dunellen. This has been given us the blessing of developing working collaboration with other clergy in the area. Juneteenth was a great opportunity to join efforts with Living Waters Lutheran Church in Ringoes, NJ and their pastor, The Rev. JJ Simpson. Mary Beth, our church organist and myself went to Living Waters to participate in this virtual service. My gratitude to Mary Beth Bawarshi for participating in this joint service with me. Also this year, I was honored to be selected to participate in a Church-wide ELCA Coach training. I completed level one of coach training and now I am actively working with the Synod's Coach Initiative and Church-wide coaching activities like the Congregational Lead Initiative, working with three congregations as their coach for a commitment of two years. In addition, in 2021 I served as Vice Pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in New Brunswick, and will continue to do so during this new year. Finally, we were able to launch our Reconciling in Christ (RIC) journey, gathering a committee of dedicated people who have worked together to gather information, and sponsor conversations, workshops, and a movie screening focusing on the inclusion of LGBTQIA individuals in church life. This past Fall, we hosted a virtual workshop covering the basics of SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression), as well as a screening of the film "For the Bible Tells Me So." Both events were well-attended. The RIC committee will be hosting an upcoming Bible study on January 16, which will cover the "Texts of Terror," or the texts in Scripture that have been used to condemn the LGBTQIA community. This conversation will allow us to see and re-interpret these texts in their contexts and understand how they have been misused. Our RIC process will lead us to present a welcoming statement for the congregation to ratify to make us a Reconciling in Christ congregation. To God be the Glory! Lastly, I was invited to be a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Commission in Dunellen. This assignment just started on January 2022, giving us an opportunity to be known in Dunellen and work alongside our elected officials to make our town a better place to live. This new year it is my desire to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit to grow, develop, and promote

relationships among congregation members with activities that promote fellowship. With two years of separation, we need to look at ways that we can build on our fellowship and relationship with each other to make solid bonds among church members. With solid bonds, membership is solidified, work is easier and desired, and we strengthen our sense of belonging among members of all ages and walks of life. Once again, I thank each and every member of this congregation for allowing me to serve you as your pastor, especially during these difficult and unprecedented times. Do not lose faith. We will continue to serve God together in whatever way possible in our community. May God continue to bless and guide us as we bear witness of God's grace, compassion and love for all.

The pastoral care provided was as followed:

◆ **Visitation & Communion**

- ▶ Mary Ann Portik
- ▶ Doris Brome
- ▶ Lois Gorman

◆ **Funerals**

- ▶ Mary Ann Portik (11/5/21)
- ▶ Doris Igoe (12/17/21)

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor D

Congregational Council President

I would like to thank everyone for everything they did in 2021 to help the St. Luke community to continue doing God's work in our community. Although the pandemic has kept us from doing some things, we continue to worship both in person and on Zoom. We were able to collect food and socks for FISH, as well as cleaning supplies for Footprints. We worked with the town of Dunellen to create planters for downtown, participated in the town's Fall Festival and donated both a crocheted Christmas tree as well as a garland for the town tree. We have been going through the Reconciling in Christ process to learn how to be a more welcoming community so that everyone will feel at home at St. Luke. While we may be small, we have had a large impact on our community. We have all been put on this earth to be God's hands and we must help each other out.

The St. Luke community is now in need of all the help it can get. This year is going to be an important year in the life of St. Luke. If we are to survive as a faith community, it is vital that we find new ways to connect with our community so that we can do God’s work and draw in new members. While I do not want to measure our success as a faith community by the number of members we have, there is a practical side to our community that we need to address. Financially, we are running out of time. Our purse is getting emptier, and we need more members so that we can keep going. As you can see, we are trying to keep going, but we need your help. Please invite your friends and family to join us either in person or via Zoom. Let us know if there are any ways that we can connect with our community. There are a lot of great things happening at St. Luke. While small, we have a Sunday School, a confirmation class, a choir and a faithful community of worshipers. There is so much more that we can do, but we need your help.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen J. Lindemann

WELCA

Due to the continued presence of COVID-19, we were again unable to hold any of our three traditional events this year, including the Ladies’ Tea in May, the Strawberry festival in June, and the Wreath-making party in November/December. We hope to start looking to resume activities sometime in 2022.

Our financial information will be discussed by Jane Busch in her Treasurer’s Report.

In His Name,
St. Luke’s WELCA

WELCA Treasurer’s Report for 2021

Balance on hand as of 12/31/20:
\$1,565.01

Receipts:

FONNJ – Goats 21.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS **\$21.00**

Disbursements:

Bulletin Sponsor 3/1/21 15.00
Bulletin Sponsor 4/18/21 15.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS **\$30.00**

Balance on hand as of 12/31/21:
\$1,556.01

Respectfully submitted,
Jane Busch, Treasurer

Parish Life

Parish Life is all about the fellowship of St. Luke's Lutheran Church and its congregation.

Unfortunately, with the continued pandemic, we were unable to hold any events in 2021.

We are looking forward to coming back to in-person services and holding many more events to bring our congregation together in fellowship once again.

God Bless,
Michelle Bennett

Footprints

After finally re-opening in September this year, we have 23 Students enrolled in our program. We are following all CDC guidelines and trying our best to keep everyone safe and healthy. Parents and students seem to be very happy. Our staff includes Randi Funes, Jane Busch, Audrey Devine and Michelle Bennett. We are still hoping and looking forward to more students returning in the midst of Covid. Enrollment is low but we are looking forward to more people sending children as the pandemic slows down and our services are needed again in the community.

The current school board members are Ruth Muzik (Chairperson), Gwen DeMenna (Vice Chairperson), Craig Busch (Treasurer), and Maggie Drouaillet (Secretary). Pastor Ortega and Michelle Bennett are ex-officio members of the board.

I would like to thank St. Luke's, the school board, all our parents and staff for their support since re-opening. We pray for the end of the pandemic and going back to a normal school year with more happy faces coming through our doors each day.

God Bless,
Michelle Bennett,
Footprints Christian Preschool Director

Footprints Treasurer's Report for 2020/2021

Footprints reopened this past September with a smaller student body that it had when closed in March 2020. Prior to the Covid closure Footprints was on track to have a great year with a surplus financially. Unfortunately, that of course did not come to pass and the year ended in a deficit. During the closed year the deficit continued as carrying costs were maintained.

With the school now reopened we now have some revenue, but the smaller student body is forcing Footprints to run a deficit. For the 2020-2021 budget, we are planning a nearly \$30,000 deficit. The school is working to bring in more students for the year to bring operations to a break even financial position.

Finance Committee Report for 2021

This past year has been another under the cloud of Covid-19 creating a negative financial position for St. Luke's.

Again, we are running a significant deficit (as expected) with the proceeds from the sale of the parsonage providing us funding to support normal operations. The church was able to pay all of its bills on time throughout the year.

The church was able to raise funds in support of a number of humanitarian efforts, including \$230 for Fish.

Reviewing the financial results for 2021, internal operating revenue fell by \$17,042 as compared to 2020 due to continued donation losses from Covid-19 and shutdown of Footprints. Operating expenses were also down by \$15,485 due to services moving to virtual saving OpEx.

The proposed budget for 2022 basically calls for most expenses to match 2021. On the revenue side the anticipated income considers the year over year envelope donations will be flat. The bottom line is that the 2022 budget calls for a deficit of about \$103,000.

An important note is that we did receive a \$10,000 grant from the NJ Synod and \$11,000 from an ELCA Church-wide grant to help defer our deficit. This was received and reflected in our 2021 accounting.

Respectfully submitted,
Craig Busch
Treasurer, on behalf of the Finance Committee

Stewardship

"Stewardship" is defined as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." As members of St. Luke's we have been given the responsibility to be stewards of a portion of God's church community and of our outreach program: Footprints. We bear the responsibility to manage these missions as they have been entrusted to us.

The Bible teaches us that we all have been given talents to offer and we must ask every member to consider what talent is mine? How can I help my church?

- Service Time - We need members who can help with the weekly church service. What job can you do - Usher, Acolyte, Lector, Prayer Reader, Choir Member, Coffee Hour, Communion Assistant, Committee Member?
- Treasure- We also need to support St. Luke's with our steady weekly donations. These are the core of our financial survival as an independent community of God.

However, we must never forget to focus on our faith, and if you need to step back from a job, please do that. As we start undertaking our redevelopment efforts, we all need to examine what we can do to help our church, share our faith, and impact the community.

Christian Education

The year 2021 was full of the same challenges. Nevertheless, St. Luke's was able to restart its Sunday School Program, led by Ruth Muzik, as well as the confirmation class, which is being held jointly with St. Stephen's in South Plainfield, and led by Pastor Ortega and the pastor at St. Stephens. St. Luke's has 2 children enrolled in Sunday School and 1 enrolled in Confirmation class.

Property Committee

Again, with reduced use of the building comes reduced property issues, and for that at least we can be thankful. With Oscar Ramos no longer providing lawncutting and snow removal services, the church has contracted M&L Hector Lawncare to do both. With heavy rains, the building still gets water, and I would like to thank our sexton Rob Bennett for always cleaning up such issues quickly and thoroughly.

The church property undoubtedly has its issues, but the property committee continues to do its best to be fiscally responsible while providing a safe and beautiful building for our congregation, our Footprints students, and all of our guests.

Respectfully submitted,

Maggie Drouaillet, Property Committee

Parish Statistical Report

Baptized Members	80
Unconfirmed	10
Confirmed	70
Members Received - Baptized	0
Unconfirmed	0
Confirmed	0
Members Removed – Baptized	0
Baptized Members who were Confirmed	0
Confirmed Members who Communed	30
Unconfirmed Members who Communed	0
Average Sunday Worship Attendance	15
Average Wed. Prayer Service Attendance	7
Average Sunday School Attendance	2
Pastoral Acts	
Baptisms	0
Funerals	2
Confirmation	0
Holy Communion for Shut-ins	3

St Luke's 2022 Proposed Budget

Category	2021 Budget	2021 Actual	2022 Budget	Category	2021 Budget	2021 Actual	2022 Budget
Income				Ex:Pastor Grp			
In:Bulletins Income	550	372	375	Ex:Pastor Grp:Pastor Salary	32,000	31,693	31,500
In:Christian Education	300	2	0	Ex:Pastor Grp:Housing Allowance	18,000	17,992	18,000
In:Envelopes	29,000	25,862	26,000	Ex:Pastor Grp:Medical Pastor	19,000	15,930	16,772
In:Flowers Income	300	104	125	Ex:Pastor Grp:Car Allowance	2,000	0	2,000
In:Footprints Contribution	6,000	0	0	Ex:Pastor Grp:Pastor Cell	400	0	450
In:Fuel Donations	600	410	450	Ex:Pastor Grp:Cont Ed / Coaching	2,400	125	250
In:Other Inc	10,200	7,100	10,500	Ex:Pastor Grp	73,800	65,740	68,972
In:Plate	100	60	100	Ex:Property Grp			
In:Seasonal	2,400	936	1,000	Ex:Property Grp:Maint-Repair Church	15,000	4,209	4,500
Internal Total Income	49,450	34,846	38,550	Ex:Property Grp:Sexton Salary	10,000	9,934	9,950
In:ELCA Partnership Grant	10,000	10,167		Ex:Property Grp:Snow Rem	1,000	1,080	1,100
In:NJ Synod Grant	0	10,000		Ex:Property Grp	26,000	15,223	15,550
TOTAL In	59,450	55,012	38,550	Ex:Utilities			
Expenses				Ex:Utilities:Gas & Electric - Church	12,000	8,532	8,600
Ex:Com Exp:Christian Ed	250	0	0	Ex:Utilities:Telephone-Alarm-Church	2,900	3,129	3,100
Ex:Office Exp Grp				Ex:Utilities:Water-Trash Church	2,000	2,332	2,350
Ex:Office Exp Grp:Office Expense	1,200	702	700	Ex:Utilities	16,900	13,994	14,050
Ex:Office Exp Grp:Secretary Salary	8,500	8,505	8,500	Ex:Worship			
Ex:Office Exp Grp:Service Contracts	2,900	2,691	2,700	Ex:Worship:Flower Expense	1,000	0	70
Ex:Office Exp Grp	12,600	11,898	11,900	Ex:Worship:Music Director Salary	14,000	13,836	14,250
Ex:Ops Grp				Ex:Worship:Worship-Music Exp	1,200	1,233	1,250
Ex:Ops Grp:Benevolence-Fire-Rescue	2,500	2,481	2,500	Ex:Worship	16,200	15,070	15,570
Ex:Ops Grp:Insurance	4,100	7,205	7,200	TOTAL Out			
Ex:Ops Grp:Payroll Tax & Acct Srvs	5,900	6,096	6,200	158,250	137,705	141,942	
Ex:Ops Grp	12,500	15,782	15,900	Net Difference:			
				-98,800	-82,693	-103,392	