

# ST JOHN'S

LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA  
WILMETTE, IL

## 2021-22 Annual Report



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## Message from the Council President By Christi Wise

People of God, the 2021-2022 ministry year has been one of building on the firm foundation we have established at St. John's. At the Fall Council Huddle, we were grateful to be meeting in person and making plans for the coming year. We are so happy to be secure in what is likely the most critical component of our firm foundation: a community who can continue to safely gather in Christ.

This year we also built on a firm foundation financially as we passed a balanced budget for 2022, the second year in a row. And, we formed several teams who successfully led efforts to take care of the church operations, with regular updates to the Church Executive Committee.

We are grateful to the following leaders and teams for their efforts and briefly highlight their accomplishments below:

### Church Operations

**Facility Care:** Al Swanson (chair), Bill Kaspar, John Hauser, Lisa Hogarth

- Created a master plan of short and long term needs with cost estimates and prioritization.
- Followed through on the plan by replacing the refrigerator and gathering bids for resurfacing the parking lot.
- Transitioned tenants in the apartment, maintaining high level of occupancy.

**Finance:** Cindi Rachowicz (chair), Michel Hauser, Jason Shutters

- Automated and simplified payroll.
- Restaffed offering counters (thank you volunteers).
- Published monthly dashboards to support Exec and Council leadership needs.
- Followed through on our Green Team initiative to source energy from clean sources (wind) by switching providers. Advisors from Go Green Wilmette assisted.

**Space Sharing:** Mylene Pollock (chair), Greg Oreskovich, Katie Hauser, Chad Johnson

- Created a strategy and framework to reach out to the neighborhood, positioning the space at St. John's as a place for doing good.
- Identified future avenues to target organizations who might find St. John's space useful.

**Oktoberfest:** Peter Hauser (chair), Jeff Danielsen, John Hauser, Chris Maglocchi, Mylene Pollock

- Envisioning an event on 10/1/22 in the St. John's parking lot with live music, food, and drinks.
- Looking for others to pitch in on preparation and/or participation on the day of the event.

In addition to the work of operating the church, we formed several teams to advance strategic initiatives that are important in shaping the future of St. John's. These teams shared progress and sought input from the Church Council.

We are grateful to the following leaders and teams for their efforts:

## Strategic Initiatives

**Youth & Family Ministry:** Student Pr. Derek Stienmetz (chair), Luke & Erin Rasmussen

- Successfully re-established weekly Children's Church.
- Successfully re-established our Confirmation program, with 5 youth participating.
- Sponsored family events and family-oriented worship services.

**Music Minister Search:** Craig Gonder (chair), Richard Rusz, Jan Wendel, Tina Ziegler, Pr. Allison

- Identified through candidate search, interviewed, and onboarded Luke Duroc-Danner, who began at St. John's on June 13, 2022.

**Mission & Vision:** Christi Wise (chair), Jeff Danielsen, Michel Hauser, Pr. Allison

- Created a Draft Strategic Plan (see page 4) based on congregational and Council input.
- Hosted small group discussions during Lent for congregation members to respond to the draft and offer input.
- Led the congregation in further reflection at a special worship service in May.
- Plans to lead further discussion and reflection this fall with the goal of adopting a final draft at the January 2023 congregational meeting.

**Sacred Organizing Learning Community:** Pr. Allison (chair), Emily Chittajallu, Michel Hauser, Anne McGivern, Sabine Scholz, Christi Wise

- Joined with members of other Wilmette houses of worship to learn and carry out the arts and practices of faith-based community organizing, including having uncommon conversations that build deeper relationships and stronger community networks.
- Identified teenage mental health struggles as a widespread issue in our area. Connected the pressures teens experience on the North Shore to the characteristics of white supremacy culture (see page 11) and the work of becoming an anti-racist community.

**Reconciling in Christ (RIC):** Chris Maglocchi (chair), Molly Bolash, Luke Rasmussen, Alla Rusz

- Began envisioning a process for St. John's to become RIC (fully LGBTQ affirming).
- Facilitated a SafeZone training for the congregation to learn about LGBTQ identities.
- Placed projects on hold for the spring of 2022 and will reform the team in the fall.

It has been a blessing to me to be a part of the leadership team for the last 3 years. After participating on the Call Committee, I was motivated to support the welcoming and onboarding of our new Pastor, Allison Bengfort. As Vice President for two years and as President this past year, it has been an exciting time to continue the commitment to building on a firm foundation at St. John's.



# Draft Strategic Ministry Plan

Revised March 4, 2022

*This draft was prepared by the Mission & Vision Team in conversation with the congregation and Church Council. Opportunities for additional discussion and reflection will be offered this fall, with the goal of adopting a final draft at the January 2023 congregational meeting.*

## Congregational Identity Markers

Liturgical worship  
High-quality music  
Caring for one another  
Culture of welcome

## Vision Statement

A community actively participating in God's work of love and justice

## Mission Statement

Transforming lives and communities through God's liberating love

## Goals

1. Develop the infrastructure and implement the practices needed to be a congregation focused on working towards God's love and justice for all people.
  2. Establish a comprehensive children and youth spiritual development program that results in each youth articulating a faith that transforms how they live.
  3. Establish long-term financial viability.
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## Member Statistics

6/1/21 - 5/31/22

6 First Communion Recipients: Amelia Flachsbart, Madeline Flachsbart, Arjun Malhotra, Sam Novak, Ben Rasmussen, & Lila Shutters, 5/15/22

1 Confirmation: Colin Swanson, 10/31/21

1 Wedding: Stephanie Gablaoui & Craig Gonder, 1/6/22

1 Death: Robert Oakes, 5/8/22

## 2021 Calendar Year Statistics

191 baptized members as of December 31, 2021

156 confirmed members as of December 31, 2021

131 people actively participating in the life of the congregation in 2021  
(includes children and non-members)

51 average worship attendance in 2021 (includes in-person and online)

## 2021-22 Active Ministries

<b>Worship &amp; Music</b>	Weekly & Holiday Worship Services Livestreaming & Recording of Services Handbell Choir Music Minister Search Team	
<b>Christian Education</b>	Children's Church First Communion Confirmation Youth Ministry Team Children's Christmas Pageant & Family-Friendly Easter Vigil	Adult Forum Bible Study
<b>Connecting/ Building Relationships</b>	Weekly Coffee Hour Family Activities Men's Lunch	
<b>Acting Together</b>	Sacred Organizing Learning Community/Justice Ministries Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Team/Reconciling Ministries Green Team/Environmental Justice Ministries Family Promise Chicago North Shore Interfaith Action of Evanston Soup Kitchens at St. Paul's Quilting Knitting Holy Family Christmas Gifts	
<b>Leadership, Stewardship, &amp; Communications</b>	Church Council Executive Team Nominating Committee Mission & Vision Team Re-Entry Team Finance Team Facility Care Team Garden & Grounds Ministry Space Sharing Team Building/Space Sharing Partners Oktoberfest Team Stewardship Team & Stewardship Season Extended Ministries Fund (EMF) Board of Directors	Media Ministries (Church Website, Weekly eNewsletters, Facebook)

## Youth & Family Ministry Update



Led by Student Pastor Derek, the Youth & Family Ministry Team has been working to meet children and youth where they uniquely are in their faith. We, as a team, are working to create even more opportunities for our children and youth to meet others their age to gather in faith. Over the next year, Student Pastor Derek will work with other Wilmette churches and the Metro Chicago Synod to plan events like a confirmation and high school retreat. Creating spaces for our children and youth to explore their faith with others their age continues to be a priority for our team.

The Youth & Family Ministry Team is ready to boldly follow the Holy Spirit in this work wherever she calls us.



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## 2021 EMF Recipients

*The following organizations/causes received distributions from the Extended Ministries Fund this year. Distributions totaled \$18,000, with distribution amounts ranging from \$500-\$2,000.*

Chicago ELCA Youth Ministry Network  
Connections for the Homeless  
St. John's Emergency Assistance Fund  
Faith in Place  
Family Promise  
Go Green Wilmette  
Holy Family  
Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service  
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

The Night Ministry  
The Poor People's Campaign  
Reconciling Works  
Reunification Ride  
SamaraCare  
Seminary Scholarship  
for Derek Stienmetz  
Shekinah Chapel  
UR Chicago Alliance

# The Year in Review: SUMMER



## Return to In-Person Activities

As we have continued to navigate COVID-19, the health and well-being of our most vulnerable people have remained a priority. Our Re-Entry Team has carefully guided our return to in-person activities to keep everyone as safe as possible while also offering opportunities for connection. In June of 2021, we returned to in-person worship followed by outdoor coffee hour while continuing to offer a simultaneous online worship option. Children's Church moved from online-only to hybrid in-person/online in August.



## New Livestreaming System

In July, we installed a new livestreaming system, allowing us to continue offering a high-quality online worship option for those who are homebound, sick, or out of town. The new system includes 3 webcams in the sanctuary, improvements to our sound system, and a control center downstairs. In addition to streaming our services live online through Zoom and YouTube, the system also records all our services, storing them on our YouTube channel for later viewing. The funding for this project was provided by the Doug Peters estate as well as by gifts in honor of Kevin Beretta, The Rev. E. C. Franke, Irene Franke, Paul Hoffmann, Ken Johnson, Janice Knobel, Herman Meyer, Doug Peters, Doris Regan, Ione Riepe, Bob Smith, Louise Stanek, Tom Wendel, and Ed Woltman.



# The Year in Review: FALL



## **Farewell to Robert McConnell**

On September 19, we bid farewell and Godspeed to our beloved Organist and Music Director, Robert McConnell, as he accepted a new position at Church of the Holy Spirit Episcopal in Lake Forest. To celebrate his 11 years of faithful service and let him know how much he means to us, we gathered for a party on the church lawn after worship. Among the parting gifts we offered him was money toward the purchase of a new bike.

## **Interim Music Minister**

Following Robert McConnell's departure, we welcomed Christine Kraemer as Interim Music Director and Organist. Christine was familiar with St. John's since she had served as substitute organist several times in the past. Christine played for worship, worked with the cantors, and led the bell choir from October through April. We are so grateful for her ministry during this time.





## Family Pumpkin Carving & Blessing of the Animals

On October 3, we gathered as a community to celebrate the beginning of fall. Our Family Ministry Team organized time to carve pumpkins, and Pastor Allison blessed the pets that attendees brought. We spent the afternoon in the west parking lot enjoying fall snacks and time spent with St. John's families.



## Baptized in Tear Gas Author Event

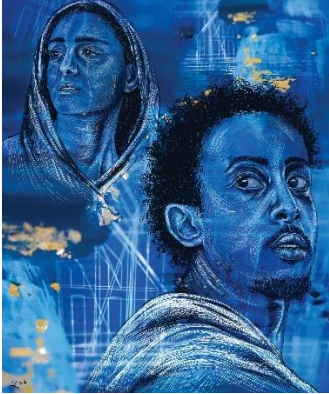
On October 10, St. John's hosted an author event with Elle Dowd, author of *Baptized in Tear Gas: From White Moderate to Abolitionist*. At the event, Elle (pronounced "L," she/her) shared about her background, gave a live reading of an excerpt from the book, answered questions, and signed copies of the book for those in attendance. Several members and friends of St. John's met a week later to continue discussing the abolition of the police and carceral system.



## Stewardship Season: Building on a Firm Foundation

Building on the firm foundation of God's love that has made possible the many successes of our congregation, our 2021 stewardship season focused on increasing offerings for the purpose of sustaining vital ministry, practicing liberating love, and supporting our facilities. By sharing stories of why we give and how the ministry of St. John's has an impact on so many lives, we connected more deeply with one another and stepped into the divine flow of generosity. We were able to increase intended offerings for 2022 by \$155/week, and we exceeded our goal of collecting 55 intent cards. Thank you for your generosity!

# The Year in Review: WINTER



## Close to Home: Advent at St. John's

This year's Advent theme, "Close to Home," allowed us to explore the metaphors and imagery of home in the Advent scriptures and draw close to Christ, who makes a home with us and always welcomes us home. Advent Boxes, filled with Advent wreath supplies, Close to Home Advent devotional materials, activities for children, an Epiphany star for each person, and other season goodies were delivered to each household. Our Sunday worship services included "Open Space" time, in which worshippers were invited to

explore the different stations around the sanctuary. The stations included prayer and candle lighting, poetry and journaling, drawing and coloring, and Visio Divina (meditation on visual art).

*Above art by The Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity.*



## Christmas In-Person & Online

After having all our Christmas services online last year, we were thrilled to gather in person for Christmas Eve worship. This year's Christmas services included an in-person Blue Christmas Service of Lament and Healing on December 18, an online Children's Pageant titled "Do Not Be Afraid" on Christmas Eve, and hybrid Christmas Eve services at 5 pm and 11 pm.

*Art to the left by The Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman.*

## Saturday Evening Services Conclude

The final Saturday Evening Contemplative Service was held on January 29. After taking several forms over the last decade, the service had most recently been offering a space for silent contemplative prayer, discussion about the scripture readings, and communion. Though it served a special role in the lives of those who participated, attendance at this service had been significantly low for the past four years. After the Service of Celebration and Conclusion on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the three regular attendees were integrated into the life of the congregation in other ways.

# The Year in Review: SPRING



## The Fast I Choose: Confronting White Supremacy Culture

During the season of Lent, we took a hard look at the culture of white supremacy that permeates our lives. Though we do not consider ourselves white supremacists, we recognize that we have internalized cultural norms that perpetuate injustices in our community. Over the course of the season, we examined 12 toxic characteristics, or “poisons,” of white supremacy culture (see Tema Okun’s article, “White Supremacy Culture – Still Here,” for more information). Through preaching, liturgy, and weekly handouts, we explored the symptoms of each of these poisons as well as the antidotes. Each week, we repented of the systemic sin of racism and committed to mindfully choosing alternative pathways and practices for being in community together. *Art to the left by Melanie Walby.*



## Holy Week at St. John’s

For the first time since the spring of 2019, we were able to celebrate Holy Week in person. Our Palm Sunday service on April 10 featured preaching by Metro Chicago Bishop Yehiel Curry, and Student Pastor Derek Stienmetz preached and coled the Maundy Thursday service with Pastor Allison. On Good Friday, we gathered for a dramatic Tenebrae service, and on Holy Saturday, our Youth & Family Ministry Team hosted our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Intergenerational Easter Vigil. Our joyful Easter Sunday service featured string quartet and was followed by an Easter Egg Hunt and Coffee Hour celebration.

## Spring Activities Continued...

### **First Communion & Opening the Table**

During the season of Easter, Student Pastor Derek offered a three-week First Communion class for children. Six children completed these classes and received their First Communion on May 15. We are so happy to have officially welcomed these children of God to the Lord's Supper!

Given our congregation's firm conviction that all are welcome at Christ's table without exception, we are now adjusting our practices to offer communion to people of all ages, including young children. Even as we open the table to all, we will continue to offer Communion education for our youth on a regular basis.



### **Family Promise**

Family Promise guests returned to St. John's May 1-21. We had the opportunity to host two families who are housing insecure, providing them a safe environment to have dinner, visit, and sleep. The St. John's youth held a welcome party (pictured) for our guests upon their arrival on May 1<sup>st</sup>. During the remainder of their stay, the families spent the daytime hours at the Family Promise Day Center receiving supportive services and then returned to St. John's for the evening. Our eager volunteers took turns preparing meals and visiting with our guests. How blessed we are to be able to participate in such a caring and important ministry!



# Year-End Financial Summary

## As of December 31, 2021

Balance Sheet		
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash		
Available for Gen Operations*	\$	41,290
Non-Liquid & Restricted		129,556
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>170,846</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable less Prepaid	\$	(1,875)
Mortgage Payable		97,603
Cap Campaign shortfall		(72,227)
Security Deposits		5,100
Designated Funds		102,410
Fund Balances		39,834
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>170,846</b>
<p style="color: #c00000;">The \$41,290 cash available for General Operations is below our cash reserve goal of \$59,400 (2 months of operating expenses).</p> <p>* Cash available for Gen Operations is unencumbered by restrictions of minimum balances and Designated Funds.</p>		

2021 Cash Flow	
<b>Surplus through 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$ 5,482</b>
Increase in Capital Campaign Receipts	5,873
Mortgage principal payments	(17,348)
Synod Congregational Grants	(266)
Decrease in Accounts Payable, Prepaid Bills, & Memorials	(4,450)
Increase in Designated Funds*	82,000
Change in cash	71,291
Beginning of year cash	99,555
<b>Cash Balance at 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$ 170,846</b>
<p style="color: #008000;">We ended the year with a surplus of \$5,482, which has been applied to our cash reserves.</p> <p>* The increase in Designated Funds includes a bequest from the Doug Peters estate, which has been used to create a Capital Expenses &amp; Improvements Reserve Fund.</p>	

Fellowship Hall Project	
<p style="color: #008000;">We have visibility to funding 99% of the project cost through the initial capital campaign.</p>	
Total Cost	\$ 1,027,875
All payments received	937,283
Anticipated pledge receipts*	74,479
<b>Anticipated shortfall</b>	<b>\$ 16,113</b>
<p>The loan balance is \$97,603 (\$75,571 for Fellowship Hall and \$22,032 for the apartment building renovation).</p> <p>We paid \$17,348 in 2021 principal payments, which was covered by \$5,660 in gifts/pledges received and \$11,473 from operating cash.</p> <p>* Anticipated pledge receipts were reforecasted 1/2021 based on outstanding pledges.</p>	

Extended Ministries Fund & Designated Funds	
<b>Extended Ministries Fund (EMF)</b>	
Market Value @ 1/1/21	\$ 311,950
Change in Value	7,944
Income less fees	11,248
Withdrawals	(18,000)
<b>Mkt Value @ 12/31/21</b>	<b>\$ 313,142</b>
<p style="color: #008000;">In keeping with the purpose of the EMF, 5.7% of the balance was donated to selected organizations in 2021.</p>	
<b>Designated Fund Balances*</b>	
Music Fund	4,317
Family Assistance	426
Soup Kitchen	93
Other	2,967
Capital Expenses & Improvements Fund	93,092
Memorials	1,516
<p>* Designated Funds are donations that have been restricted to specific uses, ministries, or projects outside our budget.</p>	

# Year-to-Date Budget

## As of May 31, 2022

*See next page for commentary.*

	2021 ACTUAL	2022 BUDGET	5-31-22 YTD ACTUAL	5-31-22 YTD BUDGET	5-31-22 YTD DIFFERENCE
<b>Revenue</b>					
Envelope Offerings	246,779	248,500	69,458	90,546	(21,088)
Matching Funds	8,000	8,000	3,333	3,334	(1)
Fundraiser		4,000			
Interest Income	180	120	77	77	0
Building Use	17,617	20,000	11,246	6,831	4,415
Thrivent Matching Funds	108	150	367	63	304
ELCA Congregation Support Grant	196				
	<b>272,880</b>	<b>280,770</b>	<b>84,481</b>	<b>100,851</b>	<b>(16,370)</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Pastor (incl. benefits, expenses, etc.)	97,106	100,495	42,123	41,873	250
Music Director	26,186	20,050			0
Interim Organist	5,283	7,000	8,741	6,364	2,377
Administrative Assistant	37,090	38,903	15,918	16,210	(292)
Director of Youth	17,762	21,924	9,547	9,135	412
Compensation - Other	9,049	9,507	3,628	3,961	(333)
Worship Services-Music	6,253	7,950	3,927	3,313	615
Worship Services-Other	3,131	3,970	2,255	1,654	601
Administration	6,077	6,750	2,544	2,813	(269)
Children in Christ	1,823	2,150	453	896	(443)
Adults in Christ	506	300	70	125	(55)
Fellowship	250	250	69	104	(35)
Stewardship	4,901	3,000		1,250	(1,250)
God's Properties	64,669	76,407	28,424	34,434	(6,010)
Benevolences-Synod	15,125	15,465	6,444	6,444	0
Social Ministries	3,949	1,800	8	750	(742)
	<b>299,159</b>	<b>315,921</b>	<b>124,151</b>	<b>129,325</b>	<b>(5,175)</b>
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>(26,279)</b>	<b>(35,151)</b>	<b>(39,670)</b>	<b>(28,474)</b>	<b>(11,195)</b>
<b>Apartment Building</b>					
Income from Rent	50,950	52,800	19,140	22,000	(2,860)
Expenses	19,189	17,200	5,999	7,167	(1,168)
	<b>31,761</b>	<b>35,600</b>	<b>13,141</b>	<b>14,833</b>	<b>(1,692)</b>
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>5,482</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>(26,529)</b>	<b>(13,641)</b>	<b>(12,888)</b>

# Year-to-Date Budget Commentary

By Cindi Rachowicz, Treasurer

## **Surplus of \$5.5k in 2021**

Our revenues came in under budget in 2021, due primarily to the inability to hold fundraisers and secondarily to having fewer facility rentals and slightly lower giving than expected. Fortunately, our maintenance, compensation, and ministry expenses were below budget, offsetting the shortfall in revenues and allowing for a \$5,482 surplus in 2021. This surplus has been applied to our cash reserves.

## **Balanced 2022 Budget**

The 2022 budget reflects a modest increase in offerings compared to the 2021 actual figure. Salaries include a 3% cost of living increase. Budgeted ministry expenses are slightly less than 2021, enabling us to budget a surplus of \$449.

## **Currently \$13k Behind on the 2022 Budget**

So far in 2022, our building rentals have increased, bringing in 165% of their year-to-date budget. Unfortunately, our offerings are only 77% of what we anticipated for the first portion of the year. While nearly all of our households are on track with their pledges, a small number of large donors have had changes in life circumstances that have put their giving on hold. We are hopeful that these pledges will be fulfilled later in the year.

Expenses through the end of May are running slightly below our budget, but with inflation, we recognize that expenses may increase during the second part of the year.

## **Forecasting a \$6.5k Year-End Deficit**

It is challenging to give a year-end forecast given so many unknowns. If all pledges, including those currently on hold, are fulfilled in 2022, our best estimate indicates a \$6,616 deficit at the end of the year (a shortfall of 2% of our expected operating costs). We will need to make up this difference in the coming months through additional giving, building rentals, and/or fundraising.

## **Thank you!**

Many thanks to our generous donors and dedicated volunteers for contributing to the life-giving ministries of this congregation. God is alive among us.



## 2021-22 Church Staff

The Rev. Allison Bengfort, Pastor  
Student Pastor Derek Stienmetz, Minister of Children, Youth, & Families  
Dr. Christine Kraemer, Interim Music Director & Organist  
Jan Wendel, Administrative Assistant  
Efren Fausto, Custodian

## 2021-22 Council Members

Christi Wise, President  
Jason Shutters, Vice-President  
Mylene Pollock, Secretary  
Cindi Rachowicz, Treasurer  
Molly Bolash  
Alissa Gemeny  
Peter Hauser  
Chris Magloci

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# ST/JOHN'S

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