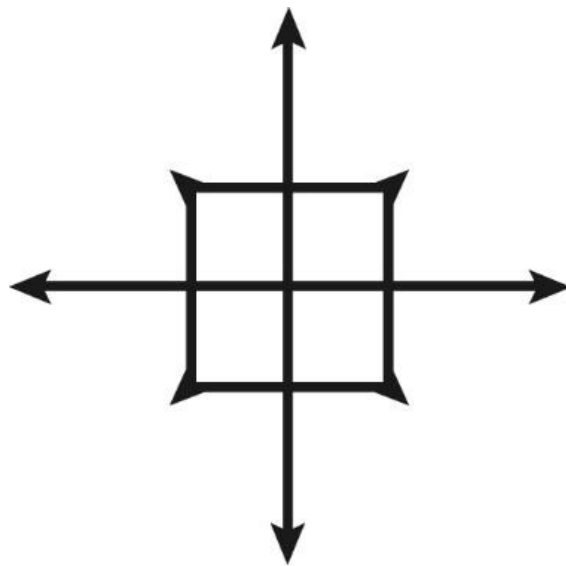


# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



**MUHLENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**A WELLSPRING OF GOD'S GRACE**  
*Open ✦ Authentic ✦ Relational ✦ Serving*

**Muhlenberg Lutheran Church**  
**Harrisonburg, Virginia**  
**January 24, 2021**

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## **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

As 2020 comes to a close none of us could have ever forecasted what we experienced as individuals or as a congregation when the new year arrived on January 1, 2020. In the 2019 year end report I mentioned Gratitude, Transparency and Transition. I never thought that we would experience more transition in 2020 than 2019 after “on-boarding” two new pastors – boy was I wrong. At the end of 2019 if we asked everyone in the congregation to define the word Zoom – just about everyone would have said “some sort of vehicle moving very fast.” The transitions that everyone had to encounter in 2020 were unprecedented.

I owe a great deal of thanks and gratitude to our entire staff for quickly adapting church services to an online format. More importantly, the improvement in the quality of the services throughout the year was phenomenal as they navigated and learned, on the run, how to make the best use of technology. Many thanks to Council members, ministry team members and many others to ensure that the ministries we offered continued during this pandemic.

Council made decisions that were focused on the health and safety of all members yet at the same time balancing some of the critical needs in our community (day care for essential workers).

Council also moved quickly on pursuing the funds available from the CARES act to protect the payroll of our staff. The work done by Treasurer Bill Vance was absolutely outstanding, and we should all be very grateful for his contributions and efforts in securing the \$112,000 grant. Our church would be in a very challenging financial situation if we had not received these funds.

As we close out 2020 and my term as President, I want to thank our Pastors for their leadership and innovation as we navigated through the challenges of a pandemic. I also want to thank the council members and staff for their support and willingness to serve in these challenging times. Like everyone, I look forward to the time when we can gather again in person as a congregation.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Calleo  
Congregation Council President

## **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND GATHERING TOETHER TASK FORCE**

This has certainly been an interesting year for Muhlenberg and the rest of the world. I am so proud of how our Pastors and staff have adjusted and adapted to whole new way of being church together. Just that word...together... requires everyone to understand it a little differently now. It hasn't meant the same thing in 2020 and probably still won't in 2021. Together now means you don't have to physically be with one another to share life with each other. Muhlenberg has embraced that we can be together while being physically apart. Church went on and our ministry together continued. Our Pastors and staff are to be commended...PERIOD!

One very meaningful part of 2020 for me was being asked to be part of our Gathering Together Task Force. Our committee included Muhlenberg members: Neil Alexander, Erin Burke, Cynthia Page, Kevin Stees, Crystl Whitmire, Pastor Lauren, Pastor Alex, and myself. Our group was created for the sole purpose of keeping our Muhlenberg community SAFE. We met several times via Zoom as well as by email. We researched Covid related data (local and state) and relied on Synod information in an effort to determine whether it was safe to meet in person. It was necessary to revise our guidelines as this pandemic has swept through our community. As of this moment, it is still not safe to meet in person. We are encouraged that a vaccine is starting to be distributed, and are hopeful that one day soon we will be able to greet each other again in the Gathering Area.

Wear your masks, stay 6 ft. apart, and keep Zooming with Muhlenberg!!

Respectfully submitted,

Greta Kostka Willis  
Congregational Council Vice President

## **REPORT OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARY**

The year 2020 has brought with it many unanticipated difficulties. The pandemic has forced us to refrain from face-to-face interactions and gatherings, and we have had to transform how church business is conducted. I am impressed and proud of the countless ways Muhlenberg's pastors, staff, volunteers, and Council members have risen to the challenge; I am ever so grateful for their dedication and effort. Though it has been a period of difficulty, it has also been a period of innovation, creativity, flexibility, and initiative. We have grown in our technological skills, and we have found new ways to reach out to one another and care for one another. Every aspect of our church life has had to undergo this transformation, but we have continued to serve God and love our neighbor. We have maintained our commitment to equip all people to live out Christ's love and to be open, authentic, relational, and serving.

The highlights of Council work over the past year include:

- We held a retreat in which we worked on our strategic plan and polished our mission, vision, and values statements for Muhlenberg:  
*Mission: To equip all people to live out Christ's love*  
*Vision: To be a wellspring of God's grace*  
*Values: Open, Authentic, Relational, Serving*
- We determined SMART goals and objectives for carrying out the strategic plan with regard to each aspect of church life.
- We planned a response to the table talks about human sexuality in the church, but then delayed it due to the pandemic. We plan to revisit this in 2021.
- We supported table talks and book studies related to racism and the church's role in combatting racism.
- We hosted a one-day regional church leadership (EPIC) workshop at MLC, in which we participated in many productive discussions and learned new strategies/perspectives.
- We approved Bill Vance as Treasurer and Tim Wessel as Interim Financial Secretary.

- We set policies about facilities usage to keep people safe during the pandemic while still providing outreach services to our community, particularly with regard to Second Home and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Child Daycare Center.
- We established a Gathering Together Task Force to develop short and long-term plans for interacting as a church in light of the pandemic.
- We established a Security Task Force to protect the security/safety of the people on our campus and of the facilities themselves.
- We pursued and secured funding available through the federal CARES Act; a huge debt of gratitude goes to Bill Vance for his tireless work in this regard.
- We discussed the assessment and improvement of the church sound system. We will pursue this further in 2021.
- We established a timeline for the organ capital campaign, which may now need to be revised because of the pandemic.
- We approved the charter of the Personnel Committee and supported their efforts in hiring a Communication Minister, Christian Perritt.
- We supported the work of the Property Committee in making many improvements/repairs to our facilities; another huge debt of gratitude goes to the dedicated volunteers in this group.
- We supported the work of the Care Committee in pursuing and securing a grant to alleviate loneliness among the seniors in our congregation.
- We supported the work of the pastors and the Christian Formation Committee in designing a multitude of innovative opportunities for worship, fellowship, and faith formation in the midst of the pandemic.
- We approved the work of the Local & Global Mission Committee in selecting the Habitat Faith Build project for our congregation to support in addition to many other community outreach projects. We are grateful for the dedicated work of the volunteers on this committee.
- We approved a financial commitment to Caroline Furnace of \$5,000 for the next four years to support their ministry.
- We held our first virtual Congregational Meeting, and it was a successful event – well planned, practiced, and executed.
- We presented the 2021 Spending Plan to the congregation and were granted congregational approval of the plan.
- We approved a bonus for the pastors and staff as a token of our gratitude for all of their efforts during the pandemic.
- We appointed Tim Wessel as Financial Secretary and Pete Weaver as Assistant Financial Secretary for a three-year term beginning January 2021.
- We welcomed three new members to Congregation Council for 2021 – Cathy Copeland, Bruce Hamilton, and Kevin Stees – and returning member Joe Grandstaff.
- We elected Karen Thomsen as President, Greta Willis as Vice-President, and Jenny Gibson Secretary for 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Gibson  
 Congregation Council Secretary

## ELECTED LEADERS FOR 2021/TRUSTEES

<b><u>Congregation Council Members</u></b>	<b><u>Class</u></b>	<b><u>Term</u></b>
Sandra Blade	2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Bill Compton	2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Elizabeth Fletchall	2022	1 <sup>st</sup>
Jenny Gibson, Secretary	2022	1 <sup>st</sup>
Russell Presnell	2022	1 <sup>st</sup>
Sarah Sunde	2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Karen Thomsen, President	2022	1 <sup>st</sup>
Greta Willis, Vice President	2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Cathy Copeland	2023	1 <sup>st</sup>
Joe Grandstaff	2023	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Bruce Hamilton	2023	1 <sup>st</sup>
Kevin Stees	2023	1 <sup>st</sup>

<b><u>Other Officers</u></b>	<b><u>Term Ends</u></b>
Tim Wessel, Interim Financial Secretary	2023
Pete Weaver, Assistant Financial Secretary	2023

<b><u>Trustees</u></b>	<b><u>Term Ends</u></b>
Neil Alexander	December 31, 2023
Diane Walton	December 31, 2023
John Mulder	December 31, 2024
Jennie Warner	December 31, 2024

## REPORT OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

Dear friends in Christ,

It is hard to know where to even begin to summarize a year like 2020! It's been a year full of surprises, challenges, and opportunities. However, it seems apt to review it through the lens of our three sermon series titles, so let's take a peek on the past year together through an *extraORDINARY* Lent, an *Unraveled* summer, and an Advent inviting us to *Do Not Be Afraid*.

**extraORDINARY:** Even before a global pandemic disrupted just about every aspect of our life together, some truly extraordinary things were happening at Muhlenberg, in the midst of our “ordinary” lives. In the first eight weeks of the year, we gathered for a fun Epiphany celebration complete with a chili cook-off that raised over \$200 for Second Home, hosted the VA Synod’s “EPIC” leadership event, and voted to begin the process of a capital campaign to replace the organ. Congregational Council met for a retreat and prayerfully developed the draft of a new strategic plan. Our area Shepherds gathered to plan for a new year of care ministry, and our Local & Global Mission team spearheaded another successful week of



sponsoring Open Doors. A newly formed Personnel Committee developed their charter and began to make plans for expanding our staff. People of all ages grew in faith and understanding through Sunday school, mid-week Bible study, and Pastors’ Book Club. High schoolers attended Winter Celebration; middle schoolers had a lock-in; and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders attended Seventh Day. We looked forward to a fruitful Lenten season under the theme *extraORDINARY* using Jill Duffield’s book *Lent in Plain Sight*, and made plans to welcome Jill to Muhlenberg for an evening of conversation with her. We kicked off Lent with a delicious Shrove Tuesday pancake supper thanks to a reinvigorated fellowship committee. Sunday morning and Wednesday midday worship services were vibrant, with participation of a wide variety of people through word, service, and song.



Then—March happened. Almost overnight, lives were turned upside down with Stay at Home orders and COVID-19 fears. Suddenly, everything we did at Muhlenberg had to make a giant pivot to online and distanced ministry.

And let me tell you: It *was* extraordinary. Staff and volunteers (such as Mike Koch and Mark Byerly, who worked tireless hours to improve our sound quality, and David Hill, who never wavers in his leadership of an amazing altar guild) came together to ensure that our communal worship life continued through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. Thanks to the hard work of Pastor Alex Zuber and an anonymous donor with a passion for digital outreach, we already had plans to implement live-streaming, but compressing about 6 weeks of work into 48 hours to make a quick launch was quite a task. I’m so grateful for all Pastor Alex and the rest of the team did to make it happen. We had a steep learning curve, but before we knew it, Diane Bayer was recording children’s messages and Elizabeth Williams was calibrating sound levels for live-streamed music. Our office staff (Linda Depoy and Crystl Whitmire) did an incredible job switching gears and providing support for all our new endeavors, and our cleaning crew (Chip Bayer and Jim Doyle) used the time to do a deep cleaning of the building. After Easter, we shifted to leading worship from home, both in solidarity with our church community and to comply with Governor Northam and Bishop Humphrey’s requests and recommendations.

**Unraveled:** There was much about the late spring, summer, and early fall that felt like it was unraveling, making this an appropriate sermon series for our community. As we studied the stories of Biblical folks like Sarah, Paul, Job and Jeremiah, we also saw racial violence and civil unrest around the country, and the political divide seemed to deepen as the pandemic raged on.

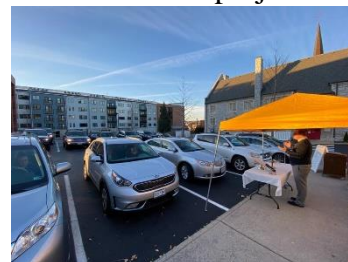
And yet Muhlenberg’s mission in our little corner of Harrisonburg continued, knitting us together in love. One benefit of the pandemic has been the ability to welcome guest preachers remotely, and so we delighted to have our seminarian Mycah McNett preach for our congregation in April. In June, we joyfully celebrated the 65<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of former Muhlenberg pastors K. Roy Nilsen, John Derrick, and Bill Nabers. We also led a Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine with Pastor Chinita Richardson from Bethel AME Church in Harrisonburg on the fifth anniversary of the tragic shooting at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.



Throughout the summer, Zoom facilitated confirmation classes and Sunday school, adult Bible study, Pastor’s Book Club, weekly coffee hour, support groups, Table Talks on racism, and countless meetings, so learning and connection continued. Some of our popular summer faith formation opportunities also moved to our screens: Virtual Vacation Bible School was a success, as were the VA Synod’s Kairos (for high schoolers) and Power in the Spirit (for adults).

As our online impact grew, we recognized the need for a professional to help with our communications. Christian Perritt joined our team in early September and has been invaluable for us as we continue to dream of creative ways to worship, learn, and serve together. Throughout the summer and fall, our Gathering Together Task Force spent many hours in prayer, research, and conversation, and put forth many good recommendations and guidelines for our community. The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Day Care, Second Home, People Helping People, and several support groups have continued to use our space safely to serve children of essential workers, those in economic distress, and those in recovery. We can be proud of how our church facilities have been utilized through this pandemic to help the most vulnerable in our community.

We sought to reduce isolation and “unraveling” this summer through hosting several “Spaced Out” fellowship events at local parks this summer. In addition, Muhlenberg was honored to receive a \$4000 Rapid Response Grant from Impact1890, a program of National Lutheran Communities and Services. The grant enabled our care committee to facilitate a video project to connect the senior members of Muhlenberg. In September, we transitioned to using a new lectionary for our worship. The Narrative Lectionary has been a wonderful way for the overarching salvation story of the Bible to be heard anew throughout the church year. The addition of a Sunday morning Zoom Eucharist service, Wednesday livestreamed Holden Evening Prayer, and monthly parking lot services have also served to keep us grounded in the Word throughout this fall.

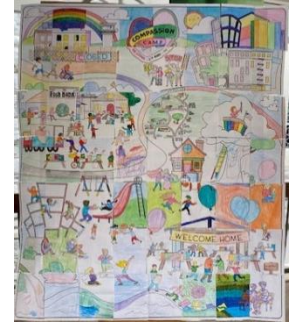


On a personal note, during this season I finished my term on Virginia Synod Council, and also had the opportunity to do some writing for Sundays and Seasons, a worship resource of the ELCA. I am grateful for both opportunities to serve the wider church.





Perhaps the strongest images that I'll take away from this season of our life together are the two mosaics our community completed. For Pentecost, and then again for Vacation Bible School, children, families, and elders contributed colored pages that came together in beautiful works of art. Despite our distance from one another, we were reminded visually of the ways we are still knit together as the body of Christ.



**Do Not Be Afraid:** This refrain from the first two chapters of the gospel of Luke led us through late fall and early winter, and stay with us as we enter a new year. We delighted in meeting St. Nicholas at our Adventure Sunday; we found great joy as we watched the annual children's Christmas program from home. Our connections to other faith communities in Harrisonburg strengthened as we participated in community worship services for Election Day and the Longest Night. The congregation acted not out of fear, but trust, as you responded so generously to the stewardship campaign: we've received 11% more Estimates of Giving than we did last year! And while it's hard to estimate the number of "attendees" in worship while we're worshipping online, all indications are that our Christmas Eve attendance was higher than it was last year, when we were in person.



It's been a rough year, but we are moving forward from a strong place, rooted and grounded in hope and trust as we seek to equip all people to live out Christ's love. We will not be afraid as we continue to live out our values of being open, authentic, relational, and serving. And while certainly no one can predict what's coming in 2021 (spoiler alert: our Lenten theme will be "Unexpected") we know that we will continue to be Muhlenberg Lutheran Church *together*, a *Wellspring of God's Grace* in Harrisonburg and beyond.

I continue to be exceptionally grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Senior Pastor, and I look forward to seeing where the Spirit leads us next.

Peace,

Pastor Lauren Eanes  
Senior Pastor

## REPORT OF THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR

*Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce... But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. -Jeremiah 29:4-5, 7*

Jokingly throughout this past year I have shared with some folks a comment that came out of my call process with Muhlenberg. At one point, I shared with the call committee and Council that “I believe Muhlenberg Lutheran Church should be doing more in the area of digital ministry.”

Whoops.

But here we are friends, and nowhere near where we expected to be as we shared and received reports last year. This year has been one of the most challenging times we as a congregation, community, nation, and world have faced. In the fall, we began an exploration of the Narrative Lectionary, and in this exploration of the story of Israel told across the Hebrew scriptures, I found a deep resonance with the story of exile. Across many accounts we hear of the Babylonian Exile, where captured and defeated, God’s chosen people are uprooted from their homes to the strange land of Babylon. In a moment they lost their temple, their comfort, and the center of their life of faith. It’s in this period of exile that the Prophet Jeremiah offers his encouragement to the people to plant gardens in Babylon, to seek welfare in the midst of exile.

Since March 15, 2020, we as a congregation have been planting gardens in Babylon. No matter how much I wanted to see this congregation take steps into the digital world of ministry, this pandemic shift is not at all what I imagined. Our worship life in an instant moved totally online, devoid of our house of worship, and we learned together how to reap the produce of this strange digital garden. Digital worship, digital devotionals, digital fellowship, digital faith formation, digital baptisms, digital eucharist... We’ve found a strange harvest in this digital garden, but we’ve learned in time how to tend it together.

I am immensely grateful for the generosity that made *The Wellstream* possible and set us up to be prepared for the challenges of this year. I am grateful for the ways that our members have read, prayed, and recorded from home to make worship in physically distant community possible. I am grateful for the ways our members have come together to connect others who may not have a reliable digital connection. I am grateful for the prayers that surrounded me while I battled COVID-19 myself, and still find myself in a long-haul road to recovery. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as Chaplain to a digital version of the Virginia Synod’s *Kairos* this year. I am grateful for the chance to welcome Christian Perritt to our staff and work closely with him in the digital realm. I am grateful for the continued opportunity to serve on the Virginia Synod Candidacy Committee and discern alongside the future leaders of our church. I am grateful for the positivity, understanding, and resilience of this community as we’ve remained committed to our COVID-19 restrictions. I am grateful above all for this community and the opportunity to serve alongside you.

An untold number of people across our community, nation, and even the across the world have enjoyed the produce of the garden through our online ministry. It has been both a joy and challenge to learn new things, solve unexpected problems, and work to provide a quality worship opportunity at Muhlenberg. Since March, approximately 19,000 unique viewers have engaged

with our online community. In total, 7,124 hours of content has been viewed on our Facebook Page and YouTube Channel. (For reference, from a nerd like me, that is equivalent to 316 complete viewings of all 11 Star Wars movies back to back.) I am proud of the work of our team, for the produce of this Babylonian garden, and for the welfare we have sought in caring for one another throughout this tumultuous time.

The call to plant gardens and seek welfare in the midst of exile is not a resignation or defeat. Nor is it trying to call a bad thing good. This call is a reminder that God is faithful to us, God will deliver us, and we will be together again. God will be faithful as we meet the demands of this pandemic and seek to overcome complacency and isolation. God will be faithful as we continue the repentant and soul-searching work of confronting white-supremacy and racism in our nation. God will be faithful through the individual challenges and crises we face, and we as a community will continue to be there for one another.

God is faithful. That is the heart of our waiting and our living in this strange new time. Through it all, I have been grateful for the ways we have been faithful to the mission and vision of this congregation. Through faithful conversation at the beginning of the year, our Congregational Council formed an active mission statement in line with the aspects of mission this congregation holds dear: *To Equip All People To Live Out Christ's Love*. We were curious whether this statement would fit and chose to test it out over the year. It was put to an incredible test in March, and I found myself immensely grateful that when we could examine in the months that followed what remained, what resumed, and what grew in our exile, the means of equipping the saints were the focus of our ministry. Prioritizing meaningful worship, adapting faith formation, creativity through involving our members, seeking unique and inclusive means of gathering digitally and safely, and daily attention to and sustenance by God's word. This is what remained, and this has all been faithful to our mission.

I pray that we remain faithful to our mission throughout 2021, as we are sure that God will remain faithful to us. The pastors and staff of Muhlenberg will continue to do everything we can to tend the gardens and seek welfare in this strange land, and we look forward to doing this work with you. In time, we will look ahead to a return from exile. Everything was different for Israel upon their return, and I'm sure the same thing will be said for us. But I am confident that the one thing that will be true is the faithfulness of our God.

Peace,

Pastor Alex Zuber  
Associate Pastor

## PASTORAL ACTS AND STATISTICS

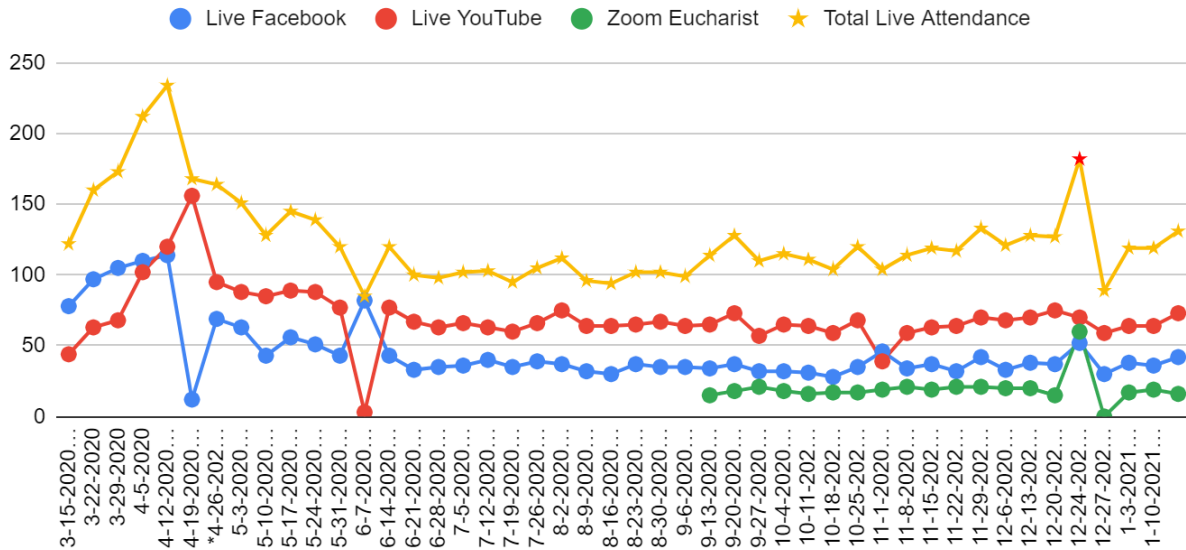
Baptisms .....	7
Confirmations .....	0
Weddings .....	4
Deaths/Funerals.....	13
Members Transferred.....	11
New Members.....	9
Average In-Person Weekly Attendance (Jan 5-March 11).....	327*
Average In-Person Parking Lot Services.....	33

\* Includes all worship services

*Calculating our online attendance is very difficult, as it's impossible to know just how many people are behind each screen. We've worked to create a best estimate for our weekly attendance for online worship. Please contact Pastor Alex if you have further questions about how this was calculated.*

Average Weekly Online Worship Attendance .....	350	worshippers
Average Weekly Live Viewers.....	125	screens
Average Weekly Viewers over a 7-Day Period.....	250	views

### Total Live Attendance Sundays



## **REPORT OF THE PARISH ADMINISTRATOR**

Every year of my 18 years serving Muhlenberg has been interesting in its own way with leadership and staff changes, new procedures and focal points, new and existing members sharing their time and talents. 2020 proved to be the most interesting of all! Even before Covid-19 was a factor, 2020 was a year of transitions that substantially impacted my job as Parish Administrator and Muhlenberg's overall administration. Here's a summary, with details to follow:

The transitions started in January with the resignation of Treasurer Terry Looney. Terry had served in this role for more than 25 years and picked up extra responsibilities along the way that were not directly related to providing financial statements. In an effort to realign the volunteer Treasurer position into something more manageable, some of those extra responsibilities came to me. We were blessed to have Bill Vance step in to serve as our new Treasurer. He did a fabulous job for us!

In February, I attended the Virginia Synod's Effective Practices for Innovative Congregations (EPIC) leadership development conference designed to strengthen congregational leaders for their ministry in the congregation. This was something I would not have attended five years ago, but with pastoral/leadership transitions (e.g. Pastor Bob and Pastor Brett leaving at the same time), my longevity has become a valuable resource to provide continuity as new pastors, Council members, and staff have joined our team.

And then in March, the pandemic hit ... We had to find new and innovative ways to accomplish our work of serving the members of Muhlenberg and its wider community. Instead of people receiving information when they came to church on Sunday mornings, we had to find ways to get information to them at home. This proved to be a labor-intensive task, especially since we lost volunteer office assistants who provide so much help. Administrative Assistant Crystl Whitmire became our on-site person to process mail, pay bills, and serve in a variety of ways.

Later in the year, we lost our second long-term volunteer. Janet Simmons resigned after serving more than 25 years as Financial Secretary. We were fortunate to have Tim Wessel step in to serve as Interim Financial Secretary. While Janet did a great job in training, I was again called to serve as a resource once Tim was on his own.

In July we started the search for a Communication Minister. The electronic communication responsibilities previously done by Mycah McNett were returned or transitioned to me and the pastors when she left. The pandemic intensified those responsibilities, and it became difficult to keep up with our other responsibilities. Prayers were answered when we hired Christian Perritt in September.

The Advent and Christmas seasons brought about new challenges to keep some normalcy in our worship routine and activities. With considerable planning and communication, we not only provided our members with a meaningful holiday season, but our worship services reached more than 10,000 unique viewers in December.

These transitions resulted in many new responsibilities being added to my job description in addition to the more temporary workload increase during the pandemic.

I assumed the following new responsibilities due to the transition in the Treasurer position:

- Helped new Treasurer Bill Vance become familiar with Muhlenberg's accounting procedures, specifically those surrounding accounts payable and payroll procedures for which I am responsible. Provided general guidance and support as he became integrated into the position and annual activities, and his new role serving as a member of Congregation Council and Executive Committee. Assisted Bill with understanding our budget process and served as a resource throughout the year.
- Accepted the responsibility to ensure federal and state payroll withholding taxes are paid each month, supervising this as a new online process for Crystl
- I began serving as the administrator of Portico employee benefits:
  - Set myself up as an administrator on the account. Assisted Bill Vance and Pastor Lauren in setting themselves up as alternative administrators. (Previously, Terry was the only administrator, a model we did not want to continue.)
  - Facilitate benefits for new employee(s)
  - Review current and next year benefits and communicate changes to Senior Pastor, Council President and Treasurer
  - Communicate to employees some of the lesser known benefits and educational opportunities Portico provides
  - Record Council's approved health insurance coverage level for 2021
  - Communicate open enrollment information to full-time employees and ensure they completed their benefit selections
  - Update salary information for 2021
  - Obtain revised benefit withholding information from Portico and communicate new health insurance premiums to our Treasurer
- Took on the responsibility of serving as Muhlenberg's representative for our property, liability, auto, and umbrella insurance coverage with Brotherhood Mutual, including the following:
  - Facilitated a meeting with Pastor Lauren, Bill Vance, myself, and our insurance agent to thoroughly review the coverages we currently have. We made two adjustments for the coming year
  - Review and authorize invoices related to insurance coverage
  - Complete Workers' Compensation Audit to provide information about Muhlenberg and Second Home employees
  - Ensure adequate coverage for Second Home, particularly as they began full-day programming
  - File/store policies on-site in my office vs. offsite previously

Attended the Effective Practices for Innovative Congregations (E.P.I.C.) conference held at Muhlenberg. Reported ideas and suggestions to Pastor Lauren for consideration.

- How can the Gathering Area represent our mission statement of being Open, Authentic, Relational and Serving so members and visitors immediately recognize what is important to Muhlenberg?
- Changes to improve our Website
- Coordinated the formation of a Parish Administrators group. (Unfortunately, we were not able to meet in 2020.)
- Get Synod perspective and assistance with topics like security, social media, website design/maintenance

Assisted the Columbarium Committee with processing and archiving signed contracts to date:

- Applied Muhlenberg's seal on original and copies of signed contracts
- Mailed copies to those who purchased niches
- Retained original copy in a notebook for permanent, fireproof files
- Solicited contracts not returned

When the pandemic began, I provided administrative assistance to all areas of Muhlenberg's response and new ways to serve our members and community:

- Adapted to primarily working from home. Approximately 95% of my responsibilities are computer based and can be done remotely with the extraordinary assistance of Administrative Assistant Crystl Whitmire serving as our in-office representative. This process was already in place for me because our Computer Tech Chris Nalberczinski also maintains my personal home computer. The consistency of his services allows me to securely access my work computer from home. It was a true blessing to already have this in place at the beginning of the pandemic.
  - Working from home is much more productive, particularly helpful with my increased workload
  - I also recognized a side benefit of training people and assisting them with specific tasks. We can "meet" by phone with the person being trained positioned in my church office and me working from home. Both of us can access my work computer and see what the other person is describing/doing. Crystl and I process payroll "together" on a routine basis. I trained office volunteer Kathy Thompson to provide the worship booklet while I was on vacation — thank you, Kathy!
  - Went into the office as needed (mostly on Saturdays to minimize contact with others) to authorize invoices, sign office maintenance contracts, provide on-site support, and pick up/drop off paperwork as needed
- Provided initial communication to support groups and others who used our campus on a regular basis that the building was closing due to the pandemic
- Communicated with volunteer office assistants when we initially closed and throughout the year. We have really missed their valuable, consistent assistance. A few volunteers helped with specific tasks, but Crystl and I picked up the majority of the work they did for Muhlenberg (e.g. labeling envelopes, copying, processing mailings). Special recognition goes to Diane Walton for her weekly review of Sunday service materials and other communication. Also a special thanks to Frank Lambert who helped with bulk mailings and trained Crystl in the process.
- Facilitated communication to the congregation as needed
  - Mailed and emailed updates and seasonal plans until Christian came aboard and we began sharing this responsibility
  - Kept main voicemail greeting updated to reflect current practices
    - Created special COVID information voicemail box
- Researched and purchased *Wellstream* Phone, our phone-in worship package that allows those without a reliable internet connection to participate in worship
- Reformatted the worship booklet and *The Chimes* to make them easier to print from home
- Sent weekly emails with Sunday service materials and announcements to those on our email distribution list until October when the responsibility was transferred to Christian
- Initiated weekly mailings of *The Chimes* and other pertinent information to 50 households without internet connectivity, with Crystl's help from the office

- Assisted Treasurer Bill Vance with Paycheck Protection Program documentation
- With live streaming worship services and Second Home going to full-day programming, our internet connectivity was not performing well. I coordinated with Computer Tech Chris Nalberczinski, pastors, and our newly created Technology Team (Chris, Neil Alexander, Mike Koch, Christian Perritt and me) to re-evaluate and upgrade our service.

Provided assistance and support to the Personnel Committee:

- Offered a general understanding of the Staff Policy Manual, including its creation, implementation, and background for the information included since I was actively involved in its creation
- Offered an employee perspective as requested
- I served on the Communication Minister Search Committee along with Sarah Sunde and Katie McConnel. I took on the role of communication coordinator which included the following:
  - Attended meeting with the Personnel Committee to identify responsibilities and procedures for hiring a new Communication Minister
  - The Search Committee met with Pastor Alex to determine the overall process and I created a document outlining the process for reference
  - Created Google drive folder for committee reference and input, including a spreadsheet to summarize the candidates
  - Distributed all resumes and information to the committee
  - Corresponded with each candidate upon receipt of their resume
  - Scheduled interviews for our top four candidates
  - Followed up with unsuccessful candidates
  - The committee passed the top three candidates along to the pastors for final consideration and interviews.
  - Assisted Pastors in hiring process and negotiations for the chosen candidate, Christian Perritt
  - Provided a summary of the call process to the Personnel Committee including our overall process, what went well and what we could do better in the future.

At the time Communication Minister Christian Perritt began work in September, Pastor Alex was sick with COVID-19. Because our job responsibilities cross over in many ways, I was able to assist with Christian's onboarding in many ways:

- Trained Christian on administrative functions of his position
- Helped him become integrated as a Muhlenberg employee
- Provided training to get Christian started on website updates, sending bulk emails, etc.
- Provided support and suggestions for getting processes and procedures in place
- Served as a reference when questions came up about the new position, which had been restructured from Mycah McNett's position as Communication Specialist
- Continue to coordinate with Christian on a routine basis to ensure we are sending the same information out across multiple communication platforms
- Continue to coordinate with Christian and the pastors to clarify roles and responsibilities

Additional miscellaneous activities this year include:

- Maintained our computer church database, online directory, and bulk email program with member contact updates and new member information



- Facilitated the installation of a new postage meter.
- Served as a resource for the “Connecting Muhlenberg Seniors” project that was done in lieu of our annual Diamond Jubilee event

So far, this report has primarily included new and transitional responsibilities for 2020. With the Crystl’s valuable assistance, I additionally covered the top priorities of my position prior to the transitions and pandemic (preparing Sunday service materials and congregational communication; providing support for Council, staff, committees and members; keeping all the “Muhlenberg trains” on appropriate tracks, etc.). 2020 did not allow time for projects that with lesser priority, such as developing a comprehensive policy for member and community use of our campus, creating written procedures that provide clarity and consistency (e.g. a style guide, accounting procedures for committees), working with other parish administrators to share ideas, and keeping the ELCA updated on leadership changes. Though I may not have completed everything I wanted to, I am very proud of the administrative work that was accomplished. Crystl and I served the members of Muhlenberg and our wider community well during a transitional and most challenging year. I am blessed to be part of the Muhlenberg community and look forward to assisting with the exciting challenges 2021 will inevitably bring.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Depoy  
Parish Administrator

## 2020 PARISH REGISTER UPDATES

**RECEIVED by BAPTISM,  
TRANSFER, AFFIRMATION**

**October 11**

Matthew and Chelsey Bollinger  
Grover and Ashley Saunders

**November 15**

Kevin and Rhonda Stees  
Anna and Ryan  
Brandon Stees

**WEDDINGS**

Andrew and Grace Foote	1/1
William and Rachel Rosenow*	7/11
Allison Eanes & Tlotzin Chaveste Alatorre*	5/23
Sara & Casey Booth*	6/6

**CONFIRMANDS**

*Waiting until in-person worship resumes.*

**BAPTISMS**

Elise Driver	7/31
Elliott Ohgren	8/29
Benjamin Bollinger	9/12
Anastasia Eanes	10/25
Donovan Eanes	10/25
Kendall Hopkins	11/7
Charlotte Knappenberger	12/13

**MEMBERS TRANSFERRED**

Steve and Linda Yoder  
Terry and Linda Looney  
Rion Looney  
Hans and Linda Barthmus  
Joe and Lorelei Avery  
Gary and Nancy Beatty

**DEATHS**

**Death Date**

Doris Pippert	3/11
Zack Fletchall	4/17
Suzanne Monte	6/2
Bob Willard	8/7
Frances Walker	8/15
Lee Branner	8/18
Herbert Propst	9/9
Opal Davis	9/13
Hilda Arnaud*	9/25
Landon Walker	10/30
Thelma Shirley	11/11
Sam Cook	12/3
Jackie Kiser	12/26
Ann Payne	12/30

\*non member

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	<b><u>Child Roll</u></b>	<b><u>Confirmed</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Membership as of 12/31/2019	279	1,199	1,478
Acquisitions by baptism	+ 7	+ 0	+ 7
by transfer/restoration	+ 0	+ 7	+ 7
Confirmation	<u>(0)</u>	<u>+ 0</u>	<u>0</u>
	286	1,211	1,490
Losses by death	(0)	(13)	(13)
by transfer	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(11)</u>	<u>(11)</u>
<b>Membership as of 12/31/2020</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>1,185</b>	<b>1,468</b>

## REPORT OF THE MUSIC MINISTER

The vision of Music Ministry strives to achieve excellence in all aspects of the congregation's worship and music to the glory of God and inspiration to all. The Music Minister, in collaboration with the Pastors, is responsible for the development and oversight of the worship and music ministry of the congregation. The Music Ministry depends on a tremendously faithful and talented group of people who serve on the Music Ministry team. They are:

Linlin Uta: Music Ministry Accompanist  
Kath Wissinger: Handbell Director  
Rachel Peters: Cherub Choir Director  
Altar Guild: David Hill and Diane Walton  
Flower Guild Coordinator: Louise Layman  
Funeral Coordinator: Kathy Thompson  
Wedding Coordinator: Lesa Calleo  
Scheduling Servants in Worship: Kathy Thompson  
Lay Assisting Ministers: Mary Elizabeth Skinner & Kathy Thompson  
Sound/AV Team: Mike Koch & Mark Byerly

Prior to the beginning of our country's COVID-19 pandemic, our 2020 worship and music church year began as they have in the past: in person worship with three services every Sunday with Holy Communion; in person mid-week Wednesday Noon worship with Holy Communion; weekly choir rehearsals including Cherub Choir, SonShine Singers, Celebration Singers, Sanctuary Choir, and the Gloria Dei Ringers Handbell Choir.

Muhlenberg members and guests were able to worship together in person through the Season of Epiphany, January 12<sup>th</sup> – February 16 and February 23, The Transfiguration of Our Lord.

**February 26, Ash Wednesday**, was also worshipped in person. Three services were held that day with Holy Communion: 7:30 am and 12:00 pm (thirty-minute services held back at the font); and 7:00 pm. Music for the later service included Cynthia Page, vocal soloist and cantor; choral music presented by combined members of the Celebration Singers and Sanctuary Choir; and Rachel Peters, flute soloist. Linlin Uta served as choral accompanist. Elizabeth Williams served as accompanist for the morning services and organist for the evening service. Lenten Sunday and Wednesday noon services continued in person worship through March 11.

Additional in person worship and music opportunities during Lent were as follows:

**Lenten Evening Dinner Church:** Wednesdays, 6:15 – 7:15 pm, held in the MAC. This service included the sharing of a meal, singing (a cappella), a reflection on the evening's reading, and Holy Communion. Reflection and Holy Communion were both led by Pastor Lauren or Pastor Alex. Dinner Church was able to meet in person March 4 & March 11. Online Dinner Church met March 18 & 25.

**Thursday Lenten Noon Concert Performances:** two of the five scheduled concerts were able to be performed. The first, held on March 5, included Muhlenberg members: Greta Willis, flute; Cynthia Page, soprano; Katie McConnel, alto; Wylie Walton, baritone; and Bill Vance &

Elizabeth Williams, piano duos. On March 12, guest artist and JMU professor Kevin Stees, performed works for tuba. Elizabeth Williams served as accompanist for both concerts.

Beginning Sunday, March 15, all in-person worship, meetings, and choir and handbell rehearsals had to temporarily cease due to the Covid-19 virus spreading throughout our local area and state. However, worship did not cease! Thanks to the talents and knowledge of so many, Muhlenberg Lutheran Church began livestreaming their worship services through Facebook and YouTube. This was a monumental task, and I am so grateful and thankful to both Pastor Lauren & Pastor Alex for their exceptional knowledge and leadership in all things technological! I am most definitely “old school,” and teaching an old doggie new tricks was no easy task. Through their leadership, the Music Ministry was able to continue meeting with regular rehearsals through Zoom, which then led to others contributing their tech talents in making worship and music available each week through social media forums.

Here are several ways we worshiped as a congregation, as a family, at Muhlenberg during COVID:

**Holy Week at Home:** An online worship booklet complete with in home instructions, with many families sharing their own home videos, made this Holy Week exceptionally meaningful.

**April 12, Easter Sunday** – Live streamed in the sanctuary. Participating in worship: Pastor Lauren and Pastor Alex; Elizabeth Williams, organist; & Chris Carrillo, trumpet. All social distancing precautions were taken.

**April – August:** Due to the “Stay at Home” order mandated by the Governor of Virginia, all elements of our normal worship services were pre-recorded at home and then premiered on Sunday morning at 11:00am.

**Zoom Choir-** Several members of our two adult choirs participated in Zoom Choir. Granted, this is not the easiest way to try and sing as a group; it’s actually impossible to sing as a group, but we managed to make the best of a situation! From May – June, choir met weekly, shared fellowship, sang a hymn or two, and prayed together. We then resumed again in September, meeting every other week, focusing on repertoire that would be recorded for Sunday online worship. We even made a couple virtual choir recordings, with the help of Music Ministry Accompanist Linlin Uta and her expertise in all things virtual! On occasion, a few members of our adult choirs met in the sanctuary and recorded an anthem. No more than eight choir members participated at one time. All members wore masks and were socially distanced.

It was also in September that the Children’s Choirs resumed their rehearsals meeting weekly through Zoom. Rachel Peters directed the Cherub Choir and Elizabeth Williams led the newly formed Tween group. The Tweens rehearsed and prepared a virtual song for Sunday worship in the Fall. They were accompanied by Elizabeth Williams, piano, and Keira Miller, clarinet. Both children’s groups participated in virtual songs on Christmas Eve.

The Gloria Dei Ringers, under the direction of Kath Wissinger, got creative with their rehearsals. They met outside at Kath’s home! Our handbell players continued to practice and record for Sunday worship until the weather became too cold. Afterwards, they met through Zoom for

rehearsals. Talk about dedication! Special thanks to Kath who continues to inspire this group with her own amazing talents as a teacher, composer and performer of handbells.

**Second Sunday of the month:** In addition to worshipping online each Sunday morning at 11:00, beginning in September, Muhlenberg had the opportunity to meet in the comfort of their own car for “Parking Lot Church.” This brief service included Holy Communion (bread only). It has been a wonderful way to worship together and also stay safe. Parking Lot Church has continued into 2021.

**October 30:** A live streamed recital was performed by pianist Elaine Lim in the sanctuary. It premiered on Facebook and YouTube. Elaine is pursuing her DMA in music at James Madison University. She performed works by Brahms, Ravel, & Debussy. Audience members were allowed to attend but were limited to no more than 10, and all who attended were socially distanced.

**November 1, 11:00 am All Saints Service:** We welcomed mezzo-soprano Jenny Anne Flory as our guest soloist in worship at the 11:00 premiered service. Ms. Flory is originally from Dayton, VA and a JMU graduate. She is currently performing with the Palm Beach Opera Company.

**November 1, 4:00 pm All Saints Concert:** an All Saints Concert was performed and livestreamed in the sanctuary. Participants included: Edward Gant, cello; Alice Wightman, piano; Linlin Uta, piano; & Elizabeth Williams, piano. Guests up to 25 were allowed to attend, and were socially distanced. Crystl Whitmire and Jeff Williams served as ushers. Pastor Alex Zuber and Communication Minister Christian Perritt assisted in livestreaming the concert on Facebook and YouTube.

**December 20, 7:00 pm** – a Longest Night Service, hosted by Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, premiered on Facebook and YouTube. This ecumenical service featured many ministers and musicians from various churches from our local area.

**December 24, Christmas Eve** – this traditional service premiered at 4:30 pm (and again at 9:00 pm); followed by a live Zoom service with Holy Communion at 7:00 pm. Music was led by Elizabeth Williams. Other musicians participating in the early service included: Rachel Peters, flute; Edward Gant, cello; and Jenny Anne Flory, mezzo-soprano. Both Children’s Choirs presented music through virtual song. Special thanks to Rachel Peters who serves as Cherub Choir Director, and Linlin Uta and Christian Perritt, who edited the children’s videos to produce the virtual performances. Also special thanks to the Gloria Dei Ringers, directed by Kath Wissinger, for their beautiful audio recording, “Go Tell It On the Mountain,” at the end of our 4:30 pm service.

**December 25, Christmas Day** – A special Christmas Day Concert premiered at 10:00 am on Facebook and YouTube. This 45-minute concert was given in honor to all members and friends of Muhlenberg for their continued support to the Music Ministry. Special performances included: Edward Gant, cello; Jenny Anne Flory, mezzo-soprano; Rachel Peters, flute; Gloria Dei Ringers; and Elizabeth Williams, piano and organ.

**December 27, Lessons and Carols** – a service of Lessons and Carols premiered at 11:00. A huge “thank you” to all the many families who participated in reading scripture and offering musical talents for this special worship service.

**Continued Projects:** Below represents information past and present regarding our ongoing endeavor to replace our current defective and troublesome pipe organ. I wish to thank Bill Wightman, New Pipe Organ Committee Chair, for this brief summary:

**New Pipe Organ Committee** – after nearly thirty years of enduring numerous mechanical and tonal issues with our current pipe organ, a committee was formed, with its first meeting taking place on Thursday, August 22, 2019. Members of this committee included: Bill Wightman, Committee Chair; Tassie Pippert, Crystl Whitmire, Mark Byerly, Hans Barthmus, Elizabeth Williams, and Bob Lent, who has served as our organ mechanic for our current since its installation. Proposals from three nationally ranked organ companies to replace our current organ were obtained. This information was presented to Council in October 2019. This project continued with a subsequent discussion/demonstration to the congregation on January 19, 2020 regarding the many problems with our current organ.

*At the January 26 Congregational Meeting, the congregation approved initiating the process of a capital campaign for approximately \$830,000 for a new organ. Vote was 87 in favor, 5 against. The next steps were to form a New Organ Capital Campaign Committee to develop fund raising plans and identify financial goals and a timeline. The plan would need to be approved by the congregation.*

*Following the January 26 congregational meeting, a **New Organ Capital Campaign Committee** was formed -- Bill Wightman, Chair, Tassie Pippert, Crystl Whitmire, Mark Byerly as well as new members Chris Kyle, Wylie Walton, and Pastor Lauren. At the committee's first meeting on April 6, many aspects of what a capital campaign would involve were discussed. Members of the Committee also focused on the difficult situation that COVID-19 posed to the rollout of the Capital Campaign, with the general view that delaying Capital Campaign efforts seemed prudent.*

*On June 17, a meeting with Jake Dowgewicz, representative from the Austin Organ Company, allowed an opportunity for members of the New Organ Capital Campaign Committee to learn more about many aspects of the design and installation of a new organ. The Austin Organ Company was decided upon by the members of the New Pipe Organ Committee as the best option for the design and installation of a new instrument.*

*As of January 2021, the current Capital Campaign is still being tabled due to COVID-19. However, it is the clear hope of all members of the New Organ Capital Campaign Committee that once Muhlenberg transitions back to more normal operations, the Capital Campaign will be formally rolled out. Clearly, much momentum was developed around the New Organ initiative, and members of the Capital Campaign are eager to begin their roles to establish the campaign's goals, timelines, etc.*

I want to thank Muhlenberg Lutheran Church for the opportunity to serve as your Music Minister these past twelve years. 2020 has certainly been an incredible year. May God's grace continue to bless us and guide us to grow and serve God, our church, and community.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Williams  
Music Minister

## **REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN FORMATION MINISTER**

Christian Formation is a growing vibrant ministry of Muhlenberg that strives to provide comprehensive programs for the lifelong learning and faith development of our members from pre-birth to death. This ministry continues to grow in understanding that our faith is formed through relationships starting with our own personal relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and sharing that relationship with others. In an effort to continue to grow in relationship during these times of Social Distancing and the church not holding activities inside we have worked to provide our members with alternative ways for Christian Formation to happen this year since March. The spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's call to all of us. I am ever thankful for my call to serve the members of Muhlenberg and for the blessings of working with many faithful members who give so freely of their time to help shape the faith formation of our congregation. With prayerful consideration, the Christian Formation Ministry Team and I have worked to provide new opportunities to grow and be formed in faith as we make use of online and zoom programs. Some of the event, programs and projects for 2020 include:

- Planned and implemented a Sunday morning Formation program for K-3 grade with a cooking lesson on the 1<sup>st</sup> - Sundays and a Service project for Second Home or People Helping People on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 9:30 we held Children's Church that models our adult worship at their level through Sunday March 8, before Covid guidelines took effect, then planned
- Contacted various member to apply for Thrivent grants in order that each service project was funded without using MLC budgeted money
- Planned online story-time during the Spring for PreK-5 grade, coordinated with Adult formation leaders to offer zoom adult formation, the Faith Lens class has continued to date without a break and the 40 Day Journey took a break during the summer and have been back online since the fall.
- Coordinated with the Christian Formation ministry team to plan and implement an Educational Ash Wednesday "World Hunger meal" focusing on education and service.
- Planned and was coleader with a Pastor, a First Communion Class until halted due to Covid
- Planned for fall startup with the PreK class meeting from 10:15-10:30 with one of our own campus students teaching, setup a class for K-3 grade to learn the stories from the Narrative Lectionary from 9:30-10:00 and setup a class for 4-5 grade to study about Martin Luther and to begin to study the Small Catechism, all resource materials for all

these classes was posted to Muhlenberg's website as well as packets were mailed or hand delivered to students

- Planned and coordinated with my ministry team chairperson to provide something new and different this year due to Covid restrictions, a virtual VBS which included making 12 in person videos and also providing music, movement, craft and service videos. We created an opportunity to have all ages (3yrs. – 93) involved in a VBS mosaic that was placed the Gathering Area. Planned the Opening kickoff and the Closing with a Parking lot event!
- Worked with the Director of the Harrisonburg Rockingham Day Care to lead 3 sessions of a Chapel time in the sanctuary throughout March 8
- Worked with the JAMers to offer various opportunities for our young to share their gifts and grow in their understanding of serving others as they grew in faith a few of the opportunities that were provided for them to serve were; making soup and blankets for OCP "Our Community Place" and for Second Home, before Covid practices. The children requested we find a way for them to put together the Salvation Army Senior Citizens Santa Bags, to do we met at the park with masks wore and socially distancing on a very cold afternoon and the JAMers who attended were delighted to be able to serve the older population.
- Continue to support our Adults Sunday morning Formation classes providing materials as need and suggestions of curriculums in person through March 8 and since then online
- Planned and coordinated to present a virtual Christmas Program that involved more than 30+ participants from a grandfather to several 3-year old children. There were both reading and musical pieces provided by our youth. Coordinated to receive permission to air the program on Muhlenberg's Facebook and YouTube site for two weeks after original airing for family across the country to be able to view the program. It was a delight to have members from all levels of Christian Formation groups sharing their gifts and talents
- Planned and coordinated the collecting of Items for the Salvation Army Angel Tree, the Salvation Army Senior Citizens Santa Bags, filled socks for the Homeless and Alternative Advent collection boxes
- Serve on the Central Valley Habitat for Humanity Church Relations Board and coordinated to have Muhlenberg be part of the Faith Build 2021
- Serve as a representative at the Harrisonburg/Rockingham Interfaith Association and working together to find faithful solution/ help for our homelessness and poverty stricken neighbors
- Coordinate for the use of Biblical Story tellers during the worship service.
- Prepared a program of Lectionary stories for the Nursery till March 8
- Spearheaded a successful effort to continue to raise money for a scholarship for a student in Rwanda as we educate our members on care for others
- Serve on the Virginia Synod "Roots and Wings" committee that focuses on helping families nurture faith formation from pre-birth to 11 years old.
- Coordinated "Baskets of Promise" a service opportunity for the whole congregation during Lent sponsored by the JAMers youth, to fill personal hygiene kits for LWR through March 8
- Work continually to provide opportunities to strengthen family ministry providing various programs such as Faith Five and a Family Resource Table in the Gathering Area
- Coordinated the participation of our children K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the ELCA Day of Service as they packed 100+ lunches for Second Home



- Represent Muhlenberg at the Virginia Interfaith Association for Public Policy and Social Justice and coordinated a group to attend “The Day of All People’ online
- Have served on Synod-wide youth event planning teams and also have served as a small group leader at these events for both youth and adults

I thank God for the holy privilege to serve Him here at Muhlenberg. I have been blessed to have wonderful opportunities of working together with faithful members of Muhlenberg. I thank all of the Christian Formation Ministry team’s members and all teachers and leaders for their hard work and commitment especially during these times of Social Distancing and not being together in the church building. I look forward to another year of answering my Call as Minister of Christian Formation and working alongside faithful brothers and sisters in Christ as we grow and journey together in Faith.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Bayer  
Christian Formation Minister

## **REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN FORMATION COMMITTEE**

Our ministry team had a productive year in the life of our congregation. Many thanks to our members for sharing of their time, ideas and talents: Lauren Bothel, Jenny Gibson-Council Liaison, Nina Stensby-Hurst, Kristy Peifer, Katharine Pellerito, Melissa Perritt, Katie Rinker McClure under the leadership of Christian Formation Minister Diane Bayer.

### Adult Formation:

- Class led by Mark and Jennie Warner of *40 Day Journey*.
  - Class led by Jean Helmick of *Faith Lens*, and scriptures from the Narrative Lectionary.
  - Sophie Moeller & Ruth Sigmon Circles using the *Gather* magazine as part of their Bible studies.
  - Wednesday morning Bible study led by Pastor Lauren.
  - Mary/Martha group fellowship events.
  - Young Families class.
  - Monthly Pastor led book discussions.
- (Many of these classes were led virtually during the pandemic.)

### Youth Formation:

- Bible stories were read to the nursery children.
  - Formation hour classes held for Pre K - 5<sup>th</sup> graders.
  - Children's church twice monthly in Nielsen Room with adult and Alpha Teen or J Crew member.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders with Holly Haney.
  - Computer lessons with biblical software were offered some Sunday's with Ryan Hurst leading.
- (Many of these classes were led virtually during the pandemic.)

JAMers youth group:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> thru 5<sup>th</sup> graders meeting monthly with Holly Haney and Diane Bayer for group fellowship and service projects.  
(Many of these meetings were led virtually during the pandemic or outside using CDC guidelines.)

Formation sponsored the Ash Wednesday meal of beans and rice recipes from various countries. World hunger was highlighted with educational materials. Approximately 40 people attended.

Formation education and Children's Church offerings donated for Rwanda School student scholarship program.

Diane Bayer provided educational materials in the Gathering Area and via internet to parents to share with their children for at home discussion.

Formation held a Virtual Compassion Camp VBS program which was recorded and available for viewing for the congregation. The parking lot kick-off consisted of student bags of decorated cookies, project materials, crafts, coloring sheets and games to do at home and view the program. In conclusion of the program, a parking lot meeting to enjoy ice cream cups from Kline's and bring in non-perishable foods for the food pantry and dog/cat food for the ASPCA as their service projects. Our thanks to Pastor Alex for stringing all the parts of this program together so many could view at home.

An Advent-ure Sunday program on December 6 in the parking lot provided a visit from St. Nicholas who gave some history of his life and gifted the children with golden chocolate coins in their shoes which were placed on the hoods of their parents' vehicles. Greens, wreath forms, candle cups and pins were made available for those wishing to make Advent wreaths at home along with a craft bag for each family filled with craft making supplies, Advent calendars and coloring sheets.

A virtual Youth Christmas Program of the *Christmas Letters* play premiering on December 20 for the congregation to view and families to enjoy. Thirty participants were recorded at home acting their scripts in costume, playing their instruments and singing. Our thanks to Christian Perritt for stringing all the "performances" together.

Many plans and activities had to be halted due to the pandemic, however Christian Formation was still able to serve the congregation with the help of many individuals thinking outside the box and giving of their talents.

It has been such a joy to see the faces of those worshiping, participating virtually and knowing that we are all part of God's family serving at Muhlenberg.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Alexander, Chair

## REPORT OF CAMPUS MINISTRY

COVID-19 definitely took a toll on Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM). We had an exciting start to 2020 as a growing community. I attended a continuing education event in Charleston, South Carolina in January to learn alongside other Campus Ministers throughout the ELCA. Our semester began with exciting weekly gatherings by our community as we alternated between studying “Womanist Midrash” by Dr. Wilda Gafney and hosting fun social events. Unlike the fall, our ministry was once again based out of the Campus Ministry room, and as such was able to be rooted in community worship. We had a weekly Dinner Church service with Holy Communion and meals provided by members of the congregation.

With COVID-19 sending students home in March, LCM was severely disrupted as attention at Muhlenberg shifted toward digitizing ministry and LCM became rooted in 1-on-1 check-ins with students to tend to their needs amidst the disruption of COVID-19. During this time, JMU student Bo Boisen was instrumental in helping get *The Wellstream* off the ground, serving as the operator of our Sunday morning live-stream from the sanctuary through Easter Sunday.

In May we celebrated the graduations of three LCM seniors: Tori Callahan from Bridgewater College, and Kelsey Kokkonen and Megan George from James Madison University. We prayed for them and blessed them with a Digital Farewell and Godspeed during worship.

I represented LCM and our Virginia Synod-wide encouragement of high school youth to join campus ministries through involvement with Winter Celebration in January, and through Kairos in July. August was spent welcoming back students into an unprecedented and challenging semester. Unfortunately, I became sick with COVID-19 on August 18, and had to go into quarantine and recover as the semester began, derailing plans for the summer. LCM has continued mainly through 1-on-1 pastoral care and support, but we look forward to resuming gathering through digital means in January 2021.

In Christ,

Pastor Alex Zuber

## REPORT OF THE COMMUNICATION MINISTER

### *Summary*

2020 was a short year for my role at Muhlenberg, as I only started on September 8. But, given the nature of 2020 and the challenges we faced as a church and a staff, it feels like a full year's worth of work and growth.

The pandemic brought with it turmoil, grief, and also unprecedented challenges for Muhlenberg. I feel we rose to those challenges, learned new things we never thought possible, and connected with our members in ways we'd never dreamed.

Below, please find an overview of the projects undertaken in my role as Communication Minister since September, as well as some of the growth that I and the rest of my team at Muhlenberg experienced.

### *Digital Worship*

Digital worship grew exponentially in 2020 because of Muhlenberg's decision to cancel in-person worship and go all-online with its worship services. The move to all-digital was accomplished without significant loss of membership due mainly to the robust and consistent online communication to members, as well as the complete reinvention of Muhlenberg worship experiences to an online format. Following is an overview of how this reinvention affected and shaped my role over the past 4 months.

- *Video Production, Editing & Graphics, and Uploads* – in terms of learning curve and overall impact, this area of my role was the most significant. Making worship services an engaging and impactful experience for members “raised the bar” for video edits. I collaborated with Pastor Alex in learning the ins and outs of worship service video edits, design of graphics, etc. – and worked to expand and improve our video offerings, as well. The upload process also presented a learning curve – in that we expanded our offerings to include worship and sermon video edits for YouTube, Facebook, and our website; as well as audio versions for Wellstream Phone which allows people without a reliable internet connection to participate in worship.
- *Web Updates, Email Campaigns* – for each worship service, we needed to prepare and inform our members appropriately. So, making worship booklets and announcements from *The Chimes* available consistently in advance was a priority. Also, informing our members on news updates (like death notices, cancellation announcements, etc.) was a key focus. So, a great deal of time was spent on updating the Muhlenberg website, on developing email campaigns and adjusting email templates, etc.
- *Streaming* – along with the variety of video edits, we expanded our online worship services to include streaming video. My role involved learning how to stream services like Holden Evening Prayer, which received significant positive feedback from our members.
- *Zoom* – A key aspect of the Communication Minister role involves acting as “the face” of Muhlenberg for congregational Zoom gatherings. This year, this included Sunday morning fellowship hours (8:30– 11:00 every Sunday) as well as special events like Congregational Meetings, New Years' Eve “party,” etc. These Zoom meetings have become a key touch-point for Muhlenberg members, and have helped us stay connected with our membership (especially our home-bound senior members).

- *Social* – Along with uploading weekly video edits to YouTube and Facebook, my role also involved helping with social posts. I.e., shooting photos and video at events (Parking Lot Services, for example) and posting to social.

### ***In-Person / Outdoor Events***

With in-person worship in the church building cancelled, we still wanted to offer members a way to connect in person at the church while remaining socially-distant and safe. So, our team worked together to develop (and continually improve) “Parking Lot Services” – including a Holy Communion Service and then occasional Special Event Services (like Blessing of the Animals, A Visit from St. Nicholas, etc.). My role included:

- *Planning and Reporting* – I helped to plan aspects of the initial event (and those following), including outline/approach, volunteer coordination, equipment needs, logistics, etc. And, after the initial events, I reported to the team different areas where we could adjust and improve our approach, and we collaborated on follow-up.
- *Photography / Video* – at each event, my role also included shooting video and photos for quick editing and then posting to social.

### ***Special Projects, Brand Strategy Planning***

As Communication Minister, a significant amount of my time in 2020 was spent on special projects - from media projects to beginning the planning process for brand initiatives.

- *Senior Outreach Projects and Grant* – Muhlenberg received a grant focused on reaching out to seniors, specifically. I worked with the Care Committee to develop a two-phase plan on how to spend the funds on projects that would help seniors feel connected and their stories heard:
  - Diamond Jubilee DVD – the first phase of the project included development of a DVD “video greeting card” to be mailed to seniors. This included research of DVD development and duplication (including coordination with multiple partners on DVD mastering, duplication, etc.), gathering of all greeting clips (including Zoom interviews, etc.), edit of the program, assistance in mailing logistics and materials purchasing, etc.
  - Senior Interview Project – going forward, I also helped to plan for a way to consistently hear seniors’ stories and document them as web video. This included planning of project logistics, research of a custom video production package, and reporting to the grant organization.
- *Christmas Program* – this special video project was a way to involve Muhlenberg families and children in a Christmas program, while staying socially distant. My role included coordination with the Christian Formation Minister on planning of the program components, helping to coordinate the gathering of all participant videos, researching a royalty-free Christmas score, editing the video and developing graphics, and posting online.
- *Communications Team Formation* – my role also involved the initial stages of planning and forming a Communications Team. With a focus of engagement in 2021, I collaborated with fellow staff and the Pastors to get potential team members contacted and committed where possible.
- *Brand Project Planning* – I also started planning for Brand Projects to kick off in 2021, including development of a Brand Position / Personality platform, potential audience research, Brand Identity development, etc.

### ***Professional Development***

My role involved a significant amount of professional development in 2020 – not only to learn the projects / duties associated with the role of Communication Minister, but also to expand capabilities going forward. Some examples of professional development (that went beyond basic onboarding) included -

- Online tutorials on how to expand and improve video edits, design of graphics, audio editing, etc.
- Research and training on email platforms, web design platforms, graphics development programs, etc.
- Research on production and post-production equipment for Muhlenberg.
- Training and use of new equipment such as streaming technology, a new camera gimbal, etc.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Perritt  
Communication Minister

## **REPORT OF THE CARE COMMITTEE**

For 2020, with COVID restrictions keeping us apart, the Congregational Care Ministry Team focused on keeping up connections as possible and encouraging members to keep in contact with one another. We continued to send caring cards and/or use our Neighborhood area Shepherds to make contacts when appropriate.

In the Spring and later in the year, ministry team members and area shepherds made an effort to contact our most vulnerable members and others to “check in.” In some cases, call partners were matched. We coordinated with the church staff to help them develop lists of members who would benefit from regular mailing of *The Chimes* and other communications.

With cancellation of our annual fall Diamond Jubilee gathering of 75+ senior members, the Care team and Pastor Lauren developed a “Connecting Muhlenberg Seniors” project for which Pastor obtained an *1890 Impact Grant* on behalf of the church to provide funding. The first phase of this grant project goal was to create a “video greeting card” DVD featuring greetings from at least 2 dozen of our senior-aged members. This will be distributed to each of our Diamond Jubilee members. Thanks to our new Communication Minister Christian Pettit for joining in to coordinate and handle the technical aspects and become a critical member of the grant project team. Thanks also for technical editing by Karl Gabb, and the help with communications, member contacts, and mailing by Linda Depoy. There are plans to continue the projects in more phases during 2021 including creating videos of stories/memories recorded by senior members and sharing DVD recordings of special church services or devotional readings with seniors without regular online access to Muhlenberg web pages.

We thank all who have provided calls, cards, and other caring gestures to one another during this difficult time of isolation.

Care team members for 2020: Linda Morrison, Sandy Randolph, Lori Amato, Lesa Calleo, Jeannette Norfleet, Crystl Whitmire, and Stephanie Hudy. Sandra Blade served as Council Liaison and additional member.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Hudy and Linda Morrison  
Co-Chairs

## **REPORT OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

The property ministry is responsible for the maintenance, repairs and overall upkeep of Muhlenberg campus, its buildings including the grounds and parking areas. Property Committee members: Neil Alexander, John Mulder, R.W. Carneal and Chris Harbin.

Summary of projects completed 2020:

- Ott St. House repairs were completed and People Helping People moved into the space.
- Spot lights installed to illuminate the columbarium niches
- New chandelier installed in the Caring Corner
- Neil has set up a mowing schedule shared by several members to save cost during Covid
- Property has taken over doing the “spring clean up” of brush trimming and any mulching that needs done to save cost during Covid.
- Several landscaping projects (new shrubs and moving old shrubs) have been done over workdays.
- Maintained contract with snow removal company “Turn-a-Leaf Landscaping”
- Numerous HVAC issues at Ott Street House, the MAC and also the main church building have been repaired by our HVAC contractor “Southern Air Inc.”
- MAC floors to be stripped, waxed and buffed (to be done on a yearly basis)
- All parking lots had much needed resealing and lines repainted by “Perfect Parking”
- Neil Alexander has taken care of numerous items around the church campus that have saved the church a substantial amount of contractor cost.

Future Projects for 2021:

- As the weather breaks, masonry repairs to the west side of the church near the roof.
- Other major projects will be in a holding pattern and will be done on an as needed basis until church is back into full swing.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Harbin, Chair

## **REPORT OF THE LOCAL & GLOBAL MISSION COMMITTEE**

Members that met in person and virtually: Cannie Campbell, Emily Carneal, Susan Gallaher, Vicki Heitsch, Susan Lawrence, Karen Matthias, Karen Thomsen

- In January, LGM financially supported Faith in Action (\$1,000), People Helping People (\$3,120), and Virginia Interfaith Center (\$300).
- In February, LGM appealed to the congregation to collect canned food for “Souper Bowl” Sunday which was donated to the Patchwork Pantry. This year, Muhlenberg collected 355 pounds of food, more than in 2019 (325) and 2018 (200).
- Also in February, 75+ members volunteered to host Open Doors for one week, providing breakfast, dinner, and laundry services to some of the most vulnerable in our community experiencing homelessness.
- During Lent, LGM appealed to the congregation to support Lutheran Disaster Response and Lutheran World Relief’s Basket of Promise for alternative giving.
- Additional meals were prepared for Open Doors when the shelter transitioned to “pandemic mode” and moved to JMU’s Godwin Hall
- Financially supported the Micah Street Church Bible Project (\$100)
- Ran a school supply drive for Second Home and Minnick School
- Joined the Faith Build for Central Valley Habitat for Humanity, LGM surveyed the church and felt there was an appropriate response for volunteerism as well as financial support, and have to date, transferred \$4,000 to Muhlenberg’s Habitat fund.
- End of year financial support also included Minnick School (\$200) and Second Home (\$200)
- During Advent, appealed to the congregation to support Central Valley Habitat for Humanity and ELCA Disaster Relief.
- LGM also created “monthly highlights” to ask for member’s prayers and support of various groups when the pandemic prevents us from acting in other ways. We educated the congregation about the wildfire disasters out west, China’s suppression of the Uighars, and the Gemeinschaft Home in Harrisonburg.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Carneal, Chair

## **REPORT OF THE COLUMBARIUM COMMITTEE**

- Early spring in 2020, 24 additional niches were installed. That brings the total to 48 niches.
- Out of the 48 niches, 23 have been sold. All niche costs have been paid for by the purchasers.
- Documents have been finalized to record ownership. The original copies for Muhlenberg are being kept in the church safe. Owners have received copies of the documents as well.
- Lighting updates have been installed in the room.
- If you wish to contact any of the Columbarium Committee Members, they are Pat Costie, Marion Carr, Bill Compton, Karen Thomsen and Pastor Lauren.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Compton, Chair



## REPORT OF THE TREASURER

### INCOME

Gifts & Offerings	\$650,777.02
Use of Church Building	\$10,927.94
Day Care Building Use	\$40,836.00
Campus Grants	\$29,719.99
Investment Income	\$4,942.13
Other	\$4,470.16
	<b>\$827,662.43</b>

### EXPENSES

#### *Benevolence*

Apportionment Payments	\$59,919.51
Local & Global Missions	\$8,920.00
	\$68,839.51

#### *Pastoral Care*

Senior Pastor Salary & Benefits	\$125,830.57
Associate Pastor Salary & Benefits	\$80,586.12
	\$206,416.69

#### *Education*

CF Salary & Benefits	\$70,429.53
Youth Minister Salary & Benefits	\$8,016.54
Educational Programs/Opportunities	\$7,626.99
Campus Ministry	\$1,655.71
	\$87,728.77

#### *Administration*

Salaries & Benefits	\$83,878.29
Telephone	\$8,617.11
Workers' Comp Insurance	\$4,348.96
Equipment (purchases/maintenance)	\$17,864.52
General Office Supplies	\$9,888.51
Discretionary Funds	\$2,400.00
Other	\$1,527.66
	\$128,525.05

#### *Worship*

Salaries & Benefits	\$126,398.06
Supplies	\$4,255.21
Music	\$1,616.66
Organ/Piano Maintenance	\$1,835.00
Organ Fund	\$1,100.00
Other	\$53.45
	\$135,258.38

#### *Property*

Salaries & Benefits	\$65,103.47
Utilities	\$34,591.47
Elevator	\$2,600.00
Supplies	\$4,161.58
Insurance	\$13,035.57
Repairs & Maintenance (includes Ott St)	\$40,910.98
Van (includes replacement fund)	\$5,875.55
Reserve Funds	\$4,182.33
	\$170,460.95
<i>Evangelism</i>	
Promotion	\$17.98
	\$17.98
<i>Care</i>	
General Expenses	\$50.00
	\$50.00
<i>Fellowship</i>	
General	-\$108.20
	-\$108.20
<i>Communication</i>	
Salary & Benefits	\$17,143.00
	\$17,143.00
	<b>\$814,332.13</b>
<b>PROFIT/(LOSS)</b>	<b>\$13,330.30</b>

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Vance  
Treasurer

## **REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY**

First and foremost, please join me in thanking Janet Simmons for more than 25-years of dedicated service as our Financial Secretary. Muhlenberg would not be what it is today without her unwavering support! Thank you, Janet, thank you.

With COVID-19 suspending in-person services, we've had to become creative on how we receive your gifts and offerings. Thank you to the 170 members/families who are actively giving online through Simply Giving and to the many other faithful givers who are mailing their tithes and offerings to the church. Your continued and recurring support allows us to continue our ministries in these unprecedented times.

If you are so inclined, I encourage you to consider online giving -- it simplifies depositing the money and ensures we have the funds for day-to-day operations. I am available to speak with anyone about the procedures for setting this up or anything else concerning your pledges and offerings. Please contact me at [twessel@aol.com](mailto:twessel@aol.com) or 803-528-0239. Thanks again for your continued support of our amazing congregation.

Respectively Submitted,

Tim Wessel  
Interim Financial Secretary

## **REPORT OF THE ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE**

The Muhlenberg Endowment committee oversees the Mission Endowment Fund which was established as a stewardship ministry to fund mission work and projects at home and around the world that are above and beyond those programs supported through regular offerings. Memorial gifts and bequests (\$2090) have been added to the Mission Endowment fund throughout 2020. Funds dispersed in 2018-2019 were \$7500 (\$1500 to the Southwest Virginia Mission Fund and \$6000 to Second Home). In 2020, \$40,000 of the 2019 earnings, was set aside for the Organ Fund. The balance at the end of September for the Mission Fund was \$515,321.96. Besides the general endowment fund, there is a second endowment (established in 2014) to provide funding for Muhlenberg members' seminary schooling. Mycah McNett received \$3000 each semester for the 2020-2021 school year. At the end of September, the Seminary Fund balance was \$205,221.90.

The Endowment committee members have continued meeting with individuals and small groups to gather information as to areas of interest for future endowment dispersal as well as sharing general information about the fund and its future growth. We continue to encourage Muhlenberg members to remember this avenue of giving when making estate plans, in weekly giving and designated memorials. An informational brochure is available near the entry door closest to the elevator in the Gathering Area.

Please direct any questions to a committee member: Janet Simmons, Tassie Pippert, Susan Gallaher, Wiley Walton, and Lesa Calleo.

Respectfully submitted,

Lesla Calleo, Secretary

## **REPORT OF THE MEMORIALS COMMITTEE**

For 2020 there were 8 thank you notes written to family and friends who contributed to memorials. There were 6 memorial letters written to family members of the deceased.

Respectfully submitted,

Oris Griffin

## **REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

For this year's Stewardship Campaign (for 2021 giving/operations), we had members of the congregation talk about Generosity – what it means to them, how it's affected their lives and how they are living it out supporting others. Pastor Lauren sent two letters, also talking about Generosity – more specifically, how your financial generosity supports the missions and services of our church for our members, Harrisonburg and beyond. With the last letter was an Estimate of Giving card that we requested members prayerfully consider then send it back to church. We also allowed members to submit their pledge through our website. We received 78 pledges for a total of \$313,044, which is more than an 11% increase over last year. That is wonderful! I want to thank all of you that turned in your pledges – I hope doing so blesses you in new and wonderful ways. If you haven't yet turned in your pledge, you still can. If you have any questions about giving, please feel free to contact one of the pastors or me, Tim Wessel. Stewardship is about using our Time, Talents and Treasures to further God's Kingdom on Earth and it's this Treasures one that can be often cause us difficulties.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Wessel, Chair

## **REPORT OF THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The new Fellowship Committee began 2020 with a long-awaited Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. It was well attended and enjoyed by all. Plans for coffee after church services once a month were in place. And then along came Covid. However, over the summer two Spaced Out events were held at local parks with facilitated discussions on what Covid had taught us. The committee looks forward to the time when we again can enjoy fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Roadcap, Chair

## YOUTH REPORT

**Middle school:** In the spring, Karen Thomsen and Pastor Lauren led confirmation classes on the Ten Commandments and Apostles Creed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders Sunday morning at 9:30am. We moved to Zoom for several sessions in April and May. 8th graders studied the Bible and current events with Oris Griffin, Jocelyn Shinseki, and Tori Callahan. Rebecca Pettit led the Alpha Teens youth group experience, hosting a middle school lock-in in January. This fall, confirmation classes for grades 6-8 moved outside, as Karen Thomsen, Pastor Lauren, and Lily Harmison led a combined learning, service and fellowship experience twice a month on Sunday afternoons at Hillandale Park. In November, three 7<sup>th</sup> grade youth attend the virtual Lost and Found Synod youth event.

**Senior high:** Senior high youth met on Sunday mornings through March with Pastor Alex, Clay Arthur, Gloria Goeres, and Adam Copeland sharing leadership. In January, nine youth along with Mycah McNett, Clay Arthur, and Pastor Alex attended the synod Winter Celebration event. Despite the pandemic, we were able to bless 8 high school graduates and deliver comforts from the comfort makers to each of them. Clay Arthur concluded his position working with senior high youth in July. We thank him for his faithful service over the past 3 years.

This fall, middle school and senior high youth have been instrumental in worship leadership, serving as lectors, musicians, ushers for the parking lot service, and tech support, and we are grateful for their full participation in the body of Christ at Muhlenberg!

In Christ,

Pastor Lauren Eanes and Pastor Alex Zuber

## REPORT OF SECOND HOME LEARNING CENTER

Second Home is a social outreach ministry of Muhlenberg Lutheran Church.

**Mission:** We provide children with a safe place to learn and grow, we offer support that ensures academic success, and we strive to have each child recognize their potential.

**Vision:** We envision a community where all children are afforded the same opportunities to thrive, and barriers of poverty and difference are overcome.

**Values:** We respect the value and potential of every child. We seek to model the positive social interactions we want our youth to exhibit. We recognize our children are parts of families, and we engage those families as partners.

**Our team** (*Council liaison - Russell Presnell; Executive Director - Krisztina Szekely; Assistant Director - Leeanne Shepherd, Administrative Assistant - Lori Remmel Reich; Teachers and program assistants, and the Second Home Board of Directors*) **would like to thank all congregation members for their financial and in-kind support, and those who have volunteered with our program or served on our Board of Directors.**

**Your donations ensure** that even the most needy families are able to access child care, able to hold jobs and work with a peace of mind. Financial donations supplement fees, grants, and fundraising income and are used to provide scholarships to our neediest families, pay our staff to

assure that we have well qualified and consistent staff members, pay for staff training required by licensing regulations and to be able to best serve our students' needs, as well as help with food and other supply needs. Donations may be tax deductible.

In 2020, Second Home faced possibly the biggest challenge in its 13 years of existence. January through March 13 Second Home offered academically focused and affordable before- and after-school programming to over 100 children from 80+ low income families from Spotswood, Smithland, and Waterman Elementary Schools and Thomas Harrison and Skyline Middle Schools. Second Home is unique in Harrisonburg as it is the only before-school care program that opens early enough and that is affordable for parents working in the local manufacturing industries.

**Due to the COVID-19 emergency**, Second Home **restructured** to fulfill families' even more essential needs of child care as a result of the national emergency and schools going virtual.

On April 15, the program reopened as a full day program for a very limited number of children of essential workers. Apart from doubling our hours, we extended our operations by 5 weeks into the summer in order to facilitate virtual summer school attendance for students, and further assist essential workers with much needed quality and academically focused child care.

On August 31 Second Home opened up to 62 students in grades K - 6 to offer safety, a caring environment, supervision and assistance for virtual education, and academic enrichment for HCSP students. We are open 6:00 am - 6:00 pm in order to accommodate parents' work hours. Mitigations of the pandemic, social distancing, and space availability limit our numbers to 62% of our licensing allowance. HCPS have only allowed 15% of its students to return to schools in person. Full day child care is essential for families' survival, and the economy's well being.

Second Home offers grace and understanding to families affected by income constraints and poverty, language and cultural barriers, who often find a lack of affordable services and understanding of their needs. Second Home differs from other affordable school age child care centers in that it offers a strong academic focus, social skill and character-building activities, and other academically enriching activities that our students would not otherwise be able to participate in due to socioeconomic difficulties. Second Home strives for providing individualized attention to students with the help of dedicated and well-trained staff members. We aim to protect children from the risk of being home alone and getting into unsafe behavior and exploitation while their parents are working. To learn more about our daily activities, follow us on Facebook or Instagram.

Respectfully submitted by

Krisztina Szekely, Director