

Annual Meeting of the Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Western Springs and Meeting of the Corporation

March 28, 2021

Agenda

Moderator: The Rev. Erik P. Khoobyarian

Clerk of Session/Secretary of the Corporation: Elder Walter W. Kovalick

Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

Opening Prayer

Opening Remarks/Presentation of Reports – The Rev. Erik P. Khoobyarian

Presentation of 2020 Financial Summary and 2021 Budget – Elder Mike Lobash

Meeting of the Corporation – Mike Lobash, President of the Corporation

Recognition of Church Officers – Rev. Khoobyarian

Recognition of 50-year Members

Dorothy Andersen

Janet Andersen

Mary Jo Blough

Ron Blough

Sue Cushman

John Kregg

Shirley Pine

Larry Randa

Ruth Riordan

Susan Salak

Jackey Scheibelhut

Joyce Schneiderbauer

Donna Strunk

Vi Wennerstrum Butler

Mary Anne Wilson

Transfer of Members to the Church Triumphant

Tom Bump • Billye Dvorak • Mary Kae Headland

Kathleen Kircher¹ • Carol Stoub • Betty Toft

Looking Forward – Rev. Khoobyarian

Closing Prayer – The Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman

Adjournment

¹ Affiliate Member of PCWS & Member of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Panama City, Florida)

Psalm 46

**God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

Selah

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

**The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Selah

Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God!"
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."

**The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Selah

Be still, and know that I am God. These words have always been a challenge for me. I'm not sure whether it is the being still or the knowing that God is God even in the stillness. And yet, in the year that was 2020, and especially the year that was 2020 at PCWS, we experienced God in so many different ways, even in the midst of a world that seemed to force us to stand still. But periodically, and especially when reflecting for this report, I needed to take my own moment of stillness to return to God. I had to stop and resist the temptation to rush to the "look at all that we did in 2020!" and instead recognize that God, once again, showed us God's goodness in 2020. *Be still, and know that I am God.* How interesting that in this psalm, written in the midst of destruction and tumult, the psalmist turns to God, sings praise to God, and recognizes that in the midst of it all, **it is God who is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** As we look back on 2020, as you look back on 2020 for your own life, I want to encourage you to read this psalm again. You might have jumped over it when first opening this report – scroll back up and read the psalm again, slowly. Let it be your prayer – a prayer of Thanksgiving, a prayer of painful remembrance, a prayer of hope, and a prayer of faithfulness.

One more note before I reflect more fully on the year. Do you see that small word up there, *selah*? *Selah*. I wonder if you've heard this word before. *Selah* is a Hebrew word that appears in the Psalms 71 times and is left untranslated in most modern translations of the Bible. Sometimes it appears multiple times throughout a single Psalm in between verses that are often grouped as stanzas. For instance, in Psalm 46, *Selah* appears at

the end of each of three movements (at the end of verses 3, 7, and 11). Other times it is the closing of a Psalm. So, what does this word mean? *Selah*.

I hope by now you've taken a moment to say the word aloud. Repeat it a few times. Listen to the sound your voice makes when you say it. If you're with someone else, encourage them to say the word as well so you can hear it in another voice. *Selah*.

Biblical scholars have various opinions about the meaning of this special word. Some say it means "pause for benediction or blessing" while others think it is a musical mark to indicate an increase in volume. The Amplified Bible translates *selah* as **pause, and think of that**.

I turned to the Psalms throughout the past year as a tool for praying and for finding words to articulate my heart and the journey through which we have traveled. I cannot predict where this new year will take us, but I remain convinced, as ever, that what we need now is found in this one word: *selah*.

We find ourselves still uncertain of the future. We find ourselves needing to cling to something far greater than any programs, politicians, or pandemics. Today, may we pause, reflect, remember, and turn ourselves toward God, placing our trust in God, and relying on God's steadfast love. *Selah*.

So, friends, let us pause, reflect, and think back on the year. This Annual Report is a little different from years past. You'll read a few reports from our ministry groups, but I'm also going to provide something of a recap to give you an idea of the nimble adjustments that were going on behind the scenes. This will also serve as a way of documenting a year like no other – documenting our collective journey.

January and February were active and, dare I say it, normal. Several of us attended family camp, we introduced a new logo that the Session commissioned, our youth under Candice Mares' leadership collected money for the Souper Bowl of Caring and also sold and delivered hundreds of Valentine-Grams, and the youth even snuck in a trip to the Wisconsin Dells for some recreation. We said goodbye to Forrest Schroeder and we welcomed Terri Angarone as our new Church Administrator. We began making plans for the spring. *Meanwhile, we were watching the news as reports began to trickle in about something strange happening, first overseas, and then domestically as a new virus and disease was becoming daily news.* We learned of the first case in the United States on January 20, 2020. By February 11, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus was given a name: COVID-19.

Our Gathering Around the Table program which was extremely successful in 2019 as a new way to gather folks from our PCWS community was ready to thrive in 2020. And we had a wonderful Tropical Night at the Banovic's in February (for many of us it was one of our last social gatherings before the stay-home orders). Our planned Game Night for March at Lorraine Hoskins' home was one of the first programs we cancelled. (*Lorraine, let's plan a Game Night for 2021!*) We had pop-up mission projects, we even had a trip to Greater Chicago Food Depository. And who could forget our awesome night at the Chicago Bulls game! We packed a lot into those Winter months and I'm so glad we did.

On Leap Day, February 29, our Board of Deacons spent a retreat day together considering how they could structure themselves to love the congregation more deeply. What a gift your Board of Deacons is to our community and this past year they have learned new ways to step up and care for all of us. The work from the retreat continues and the questions will guide the Deacons as they seek to understand the needs in the church.

Our Sunday School programs thrived in-person in those first two months with wonderful volunteer teachers and children who were eager to learn, laugh, and, of course, enjoy treats in the Jones Room after worship. And, yes, of course, we worshipped in our beautiful sanctuary. *I wonder if I'll ever take worship for granted again. I don't think I will.* Not just worship, but fellowship, and our Adult Education time, and even the parking lot conversations. During worship in January we also welcomed Izett Samá Hernández, our friend mission partner from Cuba and Elmhurst University

In February we gathered for Ash Wednesday as we started our Lenten Journey. We also started making some adjustments to our practices in response to the novel coronavirus. We stopped shaking hands during the passing of the peace and instead bumped elbows. We adjusted our communion practices. At the time, I thought we were changing things for just a little bit.

Truly, so much happened in those first two months of 2020! (I haven't even mentioned it all ... you all gathered in book groups and for lunch to benefit Interfaith Community Partners, you came to Bible Study, you participated in PW programs and gatherings ... and much more.)

By that second week of March, though, it was clear that things were changing. Our Session met for an emergency meeting on Friday, March 13, 2020, utilizing Zoom for our first remote meeting. That day the President declared a national emergency and it was just a few days after the Governor issued a disaster proclamation (making Illinois the 14th state to declare an emergency in response to the virus). The Session worked hard and discerned the next best steps. This would be the start of weekly Session meetings. After that meeting on Friday the 13th, we decided that worship on March 15th would be open to all with the encouragement for folks to stay home. We also decided, with some trepidation, that worship the subsequent two Sundays would be suspended in-person. On the 15th, the Governor ordered all Illinois bars and restaurants closed and a few days later the schools were closed. Then, **on March 20, the Governor issued a stay-at-home order for the entire state except for essential workers.** Because this went into effect on Saturday night, I made the decision to pre-record our Sunday worship service. Stephanie, Marcia Buell (liturgist), Kate Kelly (vocalist), and Roger Dold (sound and, first-ever video operator) bravely and graciously assisted. I quickly researched technology to enable us to stream the service on Sunday morning. Jim Koning and I had been working on livestream technology in the months prior as it had been our intention to begin streaming in 2020 and so we had some hardware already procured. I'm grateful for those early conversations and plans. But nothing really prepared us for such a sudden shift. I took trips back and forth to computer stores to obtain that one-more-piece of technology that kept coming up.

I panicked a bit after the 20th. *What would worship look like for us?* I began to see a variety of options being enacted by other churches throughout the country. I talked with friends, and, with the trust and blessing of the Session, I made some decisions that would shape all of our lives for the past year. I want to take a moment and acknowledge that in our Presbyterian form of government we try to be deliberative and that the pastor is not the one who calls the shots. But in March of 2020 we were in a strange and different spot. While I kept our Session informed at every step of the way, I also had to make decisions that impacted all of you, namely because of the safety and legal issues that were quickly changing. Thank you for the trust you placed in me. And thank you, especially, to Stephanie who was willing to try things, learn new things, and be flexible along the way.

As you know, we adopted a live form of worship that quickly turned my office and Stephanie's living room into a weekly worship studio using an integration between Zoom and Facebook Live. This integration of applications was never intended to be used in this way and it hasn't worked perfectly! We quickly discovered tricks and techniques and our musicians and liturgists were ready to be trained! This meant multiple Zoom practices each week to make Sunday look as seamless as possible. Stephanie's report is a wonderful recounting of our musicians and their contributions to our online services. But, again, I cannot stress how those first several weeks, stretching into the first months, were a period of constant learning and adjustment. Somehow, by God's grace and with our tenacious learning, our system has worked. You all learned how to login to Facebook, how to comment and love one another through technology! You texted "peace" to each other and celebrated the gifts of our musicians in worship. It was, and continues to be a beautiful thing. **Thank you for being so open, nimble, patient, and kind.**

In mid-March, the Session decided to close the church office with only me working in the building regularly. Patrick worked primarily remotely and came into the office to write checks. During those times he was working, I stayed away from the office. We worked out a good system to keep things happening (and to keep the bills paid!). **A moment of gratitude here for the continued financial support of the congregation.** As you can see from our financial reports our financial position in 2020 remained stable and strong. Without your support we would not have been able to keep our staff employed. By April 2, more than 10 million Americans were unemployed and was a blessing that we were able to keep our staff employed.

In the initial weeks of the pandemic, our Deacons were called upon to reach out to our members to check in with folks to see if anyone needed any assistance connecting online or help with other resources (like groceries). We held phone calls where people could dial-in, connect with others, talk through the pandemic, etc.). **Our Deacons have consistently been staying connected and available to help as needed.** They also sponsored a wonderful wellness program in the summer – the Step-by-Step twice-weekly walking groups. These were a great way for people to see one another, walk together, and connect with new people even. Participants also received a PCWS water bottle. The deacons supported people who needed meals during times of stress and medical concerns. At Christmastime the Deacons sent greeting cards and delivered cookies to several of our members who were either shut-in or otherwise needed some extra love. *Thank you to Ann De Vries for her leadership as moderator again in 2020 and for Sue Eck in taking the reins starting in 2021.*

In early January, well before the pandemic, the Session began speaking with Lottie MacAulay Friedman and in February, Lottie came for a visit to meet with the Session, Candice, and representatives from our youth and their families. We had been searching for a full-time Director of Youth Ministries for over a year. Lottie was about to graduate from seminary and was ready for ordination. This presented an opportunity and a challenge. After hearing about Lottie and speaking with her, the Presbytery of Chicago gave its blessing to allow PCWS to call Lottie into an associate pastor position. The congregation heard from Lottie in May and welcomed her at a congregational meeting and then with a parade at PCWS so people could meet her and her husband Jack in person. Lottie started at PCWS on June 15 and she was ordained in an online service in September. Please see her report for details about her ministry in 2020. I also want to highlight Lottie's addition to our worship team starting in the summer. Together with Stephanie, Lottie took on some of the coordination our Sunday morning technology and quickly learned the quirky Zoom-to-Facebook system we had adopted! I also gained office companions in June as we decided that it was safe for Lottie and Terri to begin working in the office.

Stepping back to the outset of the pandemic, almost immediately I decided to begin, on March 19, 2020, to open a space for **midday prayers at noon, Monday through Friday**. *All were invited to come.* We engaged in various practices including both ancient and modern prayer practices. Many people attended daily, and some attended periodically. It provided me a way to connect with others (especially as a single person living alone!) and I know it provided a meaningful place for others. It has been a gift to us all. My hope is that people have picked up some prayer tools for the journey, but I know that they also had a chance to connect to people they loved and missed.

Again, almost immediately at the outset of the pandemic I was concerned about our youngest members of the community. I was also sad to be missing them during worship! **Twice a week I started having Story Time with the kids over Zoom**. We read more than 60 books over the course of the summer! I was joined by other readers with Lorraine Hoskins as a regular presence. This time was about more than just stories as we tried to provide a place where the children could see their friends and connect with one another while also being reassured of God's presence and love during a strange time in their lives. Hopefully we gave the parents a little break, too, although I think I sometimes stoked the energy levels of the kids before bedtime! We shifted toward the end of the summer to once a week as it became clear that the pandemic wasn't going away.

By the end of the summer, Pastor Lottie and Mindy, along with Kim Fronk, Lorraine Hoskins, Hank Vaughan, and Carolyn Bozek, developed an **online Sunday School program that would take us through the end of the year**. *It was great for the kids to continue their time together.* As we moved toward the end of 2020, the Session decided to formally transition responsibility for elementary education to Lottie so that she was then responsible for coordinating programs for elementary-age children and middle and high school age youth.

Many commentators have reflected on 2020 as a year of two pandemics – the pandemic related to COVID-19 and the pandemic of systemic racism. In May, George Floyd was murdered and protests erupted throughout the nation, including in Chicago. None of us could ignore the situation and there was no way for me to remain silent as your pastor. I began to read as much as I could to learn more about the present situation. I decided that

we needed to take a communal look at our world as Christians and for that reason we gathered for Discussions in Community centered around confessions of our church. You all were invited to also spend time in discussion with others by reading books and watching films to help to understand systemic racism better and to begin to ask the questions of how we can grow and learn from the violence of the summer and our history. **Thank you to those of you who have begun this important work.** There is more to do, and long after the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved, there will still be more work.

During the summer **our mission committee sponsored a book drive for Bernie's Book Bank as our Summer Mission Project.** You can read more about the details in their report, but this was a hugely successful show of love for others. The congregation and the community responded generously and substantially! Also, our Lenten Challenge "Let's Fill the Can" (which is also detailed in the mission report) has been one of the most inspiring displays of love that I've ever experience in my life. Each day I bring a nearly full can of groceries into the vestibule only to see it cleared out by Kathy Wennerstrum or one of her helpers on Monday morning. The empty space becomes full again by the next Monday. Thank you all for being lights in the midst of a challenging year. Your generosity and participation in the good of the world has encouraged me.

We had a couple of other fun ways to gather in person in the Summer. Lottie has detailed ways that our young people met on campus and we also had some gatherings outside for informal groups of people. During the summer a large contingent helped spread mulch around the campus. This was a fun day of physical labor, but more importantly, for many people it was the first time being around one another. We also were led in two sessions of Tai Chi classes with Paul Banovic. Paul shared his passion for the martial art as a source of contemplation and exercise. Together with the Step-by-Step walking program, Paul's lessons were a way for us to tend to our bodies and souls.

Starting in Lent and continuing through the entire year, with just a couple of weeks off, **our Early Risers met to read books and have discussion from 7-8 a.m.** The transition to Zoom meant that we were able to include people from throughout the country! The books we read are detailed in the Faith Formation report. I can't wait for some of the folks who have been participating to meet one another in person someday!

For those who weren't morning people, we also had an evening book discussion of *The Soul of Wine*. Our discussion gatherings on Zoom even included wine tasting and the highlight was a visit from the author. Gisela Kreglinger was gracious to join us and lead us in a spiritual exercise and wine tasting.

The midweek Bible Study, Presbyterian Women, and other groups began transitioning to online meetings as well. I've been so impressed with the ways you all have been willing to make these adjustments. It certainly hasn't been business-as-usual, but it you all have shown your ability, and desire, to make it work.

A real blessing for me to watch was the development of the Finding Your Own Oasis program for the women of the church. When we realized that the annual women's retreat would not be possible, we discussed some alternatives centered around the question ... "What will we miss by not having the retreat?" This framing helped the creative energy flow and it has been wonderful to see the success of these monthly gatherings.

Thank you to Donna Kanak, Loretta Gratiyas-Bremer, and Elder Mindy McMahon for their work in conceiving and coordinating this program and to all of the women who have facilitate discussions.

Also during the summer and into the fall, **our Confirmation Program culminated in seven of our young people joining the church.** You can read more about this in Lottie's report and the Faith Formation report, but I want to thank Rogers Malone, Amy Malone, and Carolyn Bozek for their work throughout the year and Lottie for her leadership in bringing the class to a creative closure. I also want to thank the parents and the students for their flexibility throughout the process.

During the pandemic closure of our church campus, we've had the opportunity to do several capital improvements. The rehabilitation of the Narthex is nearly completed with new lighting installed by Matt Mosher, new paint, new carpet, and some beautiful new wood benches that cover the radiators. Sheryl Allen and her team of design consultants came up with ways to improve and modernize the aesthetic of the space. Thank you to Walt Kovalick who coordinated our contractors for this project and the installation of new safety rails on the walkway leading to the Sanctuary doors from 53rd and a safety rail on the chancel steps. We have also installed new pew cushions that were funded from a contribution. Finally, we are in the process of installing new equipment to enable us to continue live-streaming our worship services from the Sanctuary.

From the outset of the pandemic, our hope was to be in regular communication with the congregation. I am extremely grateful to Michelle Hennessy for her coordination of our electronic communications and social media presence. When we stopped producing the monthly newsletter at the start of the pandemic, we made the Weekly Connection more robust. Michelle also served as the Digital Host during worship for our first several months, ensuring communication with those who joined us on Facebook Live. Eventually she recruited and trained Kay Kelly who has been a wonderful addition to the team. As part of her Stephen Ministry responsibilities, Michelle worked with her fellow Stephen Ministers to assign everyone on our prayer list to one of the Stephen Ministers. The Stephen Ministers also began meeting weekly to pray before our worship service for those leading worship and for the prayer list. *I am extremely grateful for Michelle's partnership this past year.*

Wow! Are you tired yet? If you're still reading, congratulations, and I hope this has been a wonderful journey through a challenging year. It isn't over yet, though, because **this last section is perhaps the most encapsulating and culminating part of 2020 and our ministry together.**

When we realized that Advent and Christmas were not going to involve gathering inside at PCWS it became clear that we needed to do something different and significant. Through conversations with Lottie and the Session, we birthed the "Advent Extravaganza!" Along with all of our wonderful other advent preparations, including our worship (detailed in Stephanie's report) and events for children, this event was designed to remind us all of God's goodness and blessings – in an extravagant way. As part of the preparations, **we decided that the campus needed to look like it was alive and ready for Christmas.** Walt Kovalick, Sue Kovalick, and Sue Eck were instrumental in designing the outdoor decorations with me, and the Session enthusiastically supported the effort. We gathered a handful of people (in order to maintain social distancing) and the campus

was adorned in beautiful decorations that became the talk of the town. Diane Bonner, Rick Kanak, and Donna Kanak, and I chose an amazing tree from their family property and cut it down to be our PCWS Christmas Tree! The beautiful tree was transported by a tow truck and adorned with more than 1,000 lights.

On the evening of the Advent Extravaganza, more than 60 cars were strategically placed in the parking lot so that people could see the unlit tree. Jim Koning led us in singing carols and as the sun set, the tree was lit, the horns were honking, and we prayed for the year and for God's blessing. *It was a moment of great joy – a moment of selah – of pause – of understanding what it means to be a community of faith, what it means to be people who love one another, what it means to be ones who follow a God who is our hope, our refuge.*

Friends, we've heard it said over and over than 2020 was a year like no other. It was absolutely a year filled with disappointments, sorrow, loss, pain, and so much of each of those. And I don't discount any of that for you or for me or for our church. I'm incredibly overwhelmed with sorrow for all that we didn't get to experience together. *But when I remember 2020, and when I look back on it decades from now after the memories have faded, I hope to come back to this report and see the ways that God provided.* I hope to see the ways that you all stepped up in love for neighbor. I hope to see the ways that we were inspired, the ways we grew, the ways we laughed, and the ways we honked our car horns as the lights of a tree pierced the darkness and glowed a new beacon – *a beacon I will never forget.*

I'm beyond grateful to this community and I'm beyond grateful to God. *There's so much more that could be included in this report but I fear my verbosity has already gotten the better of me!*

Be still and know that I am God. One of the ways we prayed this text during our midday prayers was to take it in sections. I want to invite you to pray the prayer this way, reaching each line with a brief pause in between to consider the words and the meaning for you:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

May our continued journey together be a journey of being and a journey of knowing that God is God and we are God's people. *Thanks be to God.*

Peace,



The Rev. Erik P. Khoobyarian, *Pastor & Head of Staff*

The Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman – Associate Pastor

It has been said that the “true colors” of a community show through in times of crisis. PCWS, this year has indeed been a time of crisis and WOW! what lovely “true colors” you showed. In Worship, you faithfully oriented yourself toward God. In Mission, you cared deeply for neighbors. In Fellowship, you showed up for each other in new and creative ways. Pastor Erik has done a beautiful job creating opportunities for continued growth in all these areas.

This summer you welcomed me into your community with warmth and generosity. Candice Mares had been doing a wonderful job keeping the youth connected. As I transitioned into my role, I quickly learned that a passion for mission runs deep at PCWS. With help from Janet Andersen, we organized a few Pop-Up Mission Projects for Middle Schoolers and High Schoolers throughout the summer and fall. These mission projects benefited BEDS Plus Care and the lunch bag program at the 2nd Presbyterian Church of Chicago.

The youth also participated in fellowship activities outdoors while the weather was warm. We had a Tie Dye event and a Kickball night. As the weather cooled off, we gathered online to play Among Us! Additionally, students met monthly on Zoom for a series of lessons about Identity and Imago Dei. Loretta Gratiias-Bremer and Kathy Wennerstrum did a beautiful job providing additional adult leadership.

Another great joy this year was confirmation! Most of the lessons were completed before I arrived at PCWS, but I was able to join in time for the “wrap-up” stages. Rogers Malone did a great job leading lessons and teaching the students. Along with Rogers Malone, Amy Malone, Carolyn Bozek and Erik, I got to help the students craft their Professions of Faith. They were given the option between a written profession or an artistic profession. One student wrote poetry, one student painted, one student made a mixed-media collage, and several students created written professions. I was so impressed by their creativity and spiritual maturity!

I also had the chance to work closely with Kim Fronk, Mindy McMahan, Hank Vaughn, Carolyn Bozek, and Lorraine Hoskins on Sunday School for the elementary-aged students! This team of leaders cares so deeply about PCWS’s young people. They pour their energy, intelligence, imagination, and love into creating Sunday School programming.

This year, we prepared bags of Sunday School materials for the students. Families could then pick up a few months’ worth of craft supplies and snacks at one time. With materials in hand, Sunday School met every other week on Zoom for a lesson. Lorraine Hoskins was the faithful lead teacher for preschool through 2nd grade. She was assisted by either Mindy or Carolyn—depending on the week. Hank Vaughn and I taught the 3rd through 5th graders. I am so grateful for all these leaders and their ability to navigate Zoom and Zoom teaching with gusto!

During Advent, the elementary schoolers met on Zoom for an Advent craft night and, later, an intergenerational Gingerbread Nativity event! The kids are so good at making fun happen. Even though these events were on Zoom, they showed up with their joy and Christmas Spirit! Each family also received a devotional book and corresponding I-Spy challenge to read together during Advent.

Looking back at the whole year, prayer really stands out. It has provided me with a peaceful touchstone in new and surprising ways. I am grateful for Erik’s leadership of Midday Prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I am also grateful for the opportunity to write prayers for liturgy each week. Know that you all are in my prayers! Prayers for peace and comfort when you go through hard times, but also prayers of gratitude for this beloved community. It is a privilege to serve this congregation!

The Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman, *Associate Pastor*

Stephanie M. Coates – Director of Music Ministry

When Pastor Erik, Marcia Buell, Kate Kelly, Roger Dold and I met to record our first remote service a year ago in March, never could we have imagined that worship would be altered, not only for a few weeks or months but for more than a year! The first few weeks were definitely challenging – trying to find creative ways to make Zoom and Facebook Live work together and then how could music still be an integral part of the service? As the year unfolded, we saw how the wonderfully talented members of PCWS shared their gifts of music. Though the choir and bell choir haven't continued in the traditional manner of in person worship, through creative planning and technology, so much of the music we experience in worship has remained.

During January and February, the Chancel Choir sang in worship, Paul Banovic played flute and clarinet, Amy Malone, Kate and Kay Kelly sang as a trio and for Ash Wednesday, John Leslie led the hymns while Julie Spring, our guest harpist, played harp and cello. March then arrived and at first, all was as usual – the Chancel Choir sang, we had a guest tubist, Ryan White, and Lesley Sharkey, our guest pianist/accompanist, began working with the children on a song slated to be sung on Palm Sunday.

By April, we had shifted more fully to remote worship services. Our PCWS musicians were no longer singing or playing in person but rather, in their own homes. The new “normal” was finding a place at home to sing from, figuring out how to sing with a track running it through a speaker, Zooming on the computer, and setting up the microphone to best hear the singing/recording together. Musicians in April included, Kami Booth, Lesley Sharkey, Barb Vaughan, Laura Hepburn, Jim and Tricia Koning, Mike and Henry Lobash, John and Kara Leslie and Paul Banovic. Lesley Sharkey was still working with our Sunday School children by producing videos for them to practice at home. She even joined Erik for Storytime to sing with the children. Lesley also joined with our children in Zoom Sunday School periodically in the fall to lead them in singing.

During the summer months of May, June, July, and August, we found a new norm with remote worship. More PCWS musicians came forward to lead music for our services. Sheryl and Allen Tyler, Carly and Kami Booth, Kay and Kate Kelly, and Kevin Hennessy. John and Kara Leslie and Laura Hepburn shared their musical gifts as well throughout the summer. Jim and Tricia also sang and recorded a wonderful virtual bell choir recording. It was so nice to hear the bells and see Jim and Tricia play all the parts through a virtual recording. Late in the summer we decided that it was time to try a virtual choir. Jim Koning graciously coordinated the effort of gathering recordings of our singers to prepare the *Gloria Patri* and *Doxology*.

We all had hopes that by the fall, we would be back in person for worship but alas, that was not to be the case. So, onward we moved with remote worship/music. For Lottie's ordination service, we once again were blessed to have Jim Koning prepare a virtual choir and instrumental accompaniment.

Musicians in September, October, and November included: guest musicians Julie and Dax Spring, Bridget Patton, and Lesley Sharkey. Joining our guest musicians this past fall were: Kevin Hennessy, Kay Kelly, Kate Kelly, Kami Booth, Paul Banovic, Barb Vaughan, Laura Hepburn, John Leslie, Kara Leslie, and Jim and Tricia Koning. The Konings played recorders during one service for an additional musical treat!

As we pondered what Advent and Christmas Eve would be in a virtual setting, Erik, Lottie, and I wanted to capture the feeling of family that PCWS experiences during the season of Advent. We worked to have multiple members provide music throughout the month, including Kay Kelly, Kate Kelly, John Leslie, Kara Leslie, Diane Wood, Kevin Hennessy, Paul Banovic, Kevin McDermott, Laura Hepburn, and guest musician Julie Spring.

Then on Christmas Eve we had a beautiful service with a virtual choir, a brass ensemble (Jim and Tricia Koning, Mike and Henry Lobash) and several musical offerings from Kami Booth, Sheryl and Tyler Allen, John, Colin, and Kara Leslie, and Shannon Sullivan. What a month and what a year!

I know this has been said many times but bears repeating: PCWS is so richly blessed with so many talented musicians. A very large part of what makes my job as Director of Music enjoyable and possible are all those PCWS musicians who are so willing, give their time and talents to the PCWS worship experience.

Stephanie M. Coates, *Director of Music*

Church Staff

The Rev. Erik P. Khoobyarian..... Pastor & Head of Staff
 The Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman.....Associate Pastor (*started June 15, 2020*)
 The Rev. Grayson Van Camp & The Rev. Rebecca McClintock..... Parish Associates
 The Rev. David Bebb JonesPastor Emeritus
 Stephanie Coates..... Director of Music Ministry
 Candice Mares Youth Leader (*through Summer 2020*)
 Terri Angarone..... Church Administrator (*January 27, 2020*)
 Forrest Schroeder..... Church Administrator (*through January 31, 2020*)
 Patrick Rivers.....Financial Secretary

Church Officers

Elders

Walt Kovalick, *Clerk of Session*

Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022	Class of 2023
Bob Cushman	Bob Cushman	Diane Bonner	Paul Banovic
Michelle Hennessy	Michelle Hennessy	Mindy McMahon	Mike Lobash
Mike Lobash	Suzie Mosher	Mike Pelton	Alison Weber
Suzie Mosher			
Peter Weber			
Steve Wennerstrum			

Deacons

Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022
Steve Blough	Sheryl Allen	Steve Blough
Gabrielle Cloutier	Betty Banovic	Stacia Farrar
Laura Cordell	Sue Eck (<i>2021 Moderator</i>)	Nancy Glickman
Ann De Vries (<i>2020 Moderator</i>)	Cindi Karstens	Sue Kovalick
Nancy Glickman	Laurie Merrifield	Katie Pendleton
Sue Kovalick	Bambi Tesmond	Eddie Restani
Aileen Pendleton		Stacy Restani

2020 Congregational Nominating Committee

Peter Weber, *Session Designee & Moderator*
 Suzie Mosher, *Session Designee*
 Matt Booth

Ann De Vries, *Deacon Designee*
 Lorraine Hoskins
 Tiffany Sellman

Membership Report

Active members on the church roll as of January 1, 2020 320

Members received during 2020

Professions of faith (Confirmation).....	7
Andrew Carlisle	Piper Murray
Ryan Gertsmeier	Shannon Sullivan
Alexis McClintock	Marin Yates
Avery Mezan	
<i>Total additions</i>	7

Members dismissed in 2020

Deceased.....	5
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Active members on the church roll as of December 31, 2020 322

Sacrament of Baptism

Gwenyth Jolene Gacek (daughter of Luke & Katherine Gacek) – September 27, 2020
 Alexis McClintock (daughter of The Rev. Rebecca McClintock) – December 10, 2020

Transfer of Members to the Church Triumphant

Carol Ann Stoub	July 24, 1934 – January 17, 2020	Joined PCWS in 1997
Mary Kae Headland	January 15, 1932 – September 28, 2020	Joined PCWS in 1967
Thomas Richard Bump	October 30, 1925 – October 5, 2020	Joined PCWS in 1989
Billye Dvorak	January 28, 1931 – November 11, 2020	Joined PCWS in 2002
Betty Toft	February 12, 1928 – December 15, 2020	Joined PCWS in 1958
Kathleen Kircher	July 26, 1923 – December 19, 2020	Joined PCWS in 1993 ²

² Kathleen's membership was transferred to St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Panama City, Florida) in 2003 and she remained as an Affiliate Member of PCWS from 2003-2020. Affiliate Members are not counted in the church roll, but are considered an integral part of the membership of the church.

2021 Budget Approved by Session

	Budget 2021	Actual 2020	Actual 2019
Pledge Income	410,000	411,523	420,208
Non-pledge Income	45,000	55,966	39,008
Per Capita Income	1,700	2,082	1,172
Loose Offerings	5,152	3,052	8,132
Interest Income	250	210	225
Use of Building Income	2,500	2,419	3,995
Other Income	0	5	1,055
Total Income	\$464,602	\$475,257	\$473,867
Pastor/Associate Pastor Expense	192,552	158,759	99,843
Other Personnel	90,350	89,469	95,165
Office/Administration	28,500	27,523	28,142
Per Capita (\$36 per member in 2021)	11,700	11,484	10,745
Faith Formation	5,450	3,861	5,848
Worship & Music	9,550	6,640	11,535
Church Life	2,000	1,423	3,266
Welcoming	500	2,104	–
Safe Space	1,000	22	–
Technology	3,000	11,392 ³	3,144
Deacons	800	591	844
Stephen Ministry & Grief Programs	200	2,252	–
Properties	68,000	70,079	73,743
Mission	51,000	50,593	47,050
<i>End of year transfers:</i>			
Pastor's Administrative Fund	–	2,000	1,500
Reserve for Major Repairs	–	25,000	70,000
Mission Discretion Fund	–	4,500	5,000
Session Discretion for 2021 Projects	–	7,565	–
Total Expense	\$464,602	\$475,257	\$455,825
Income/(deficit)	\$0	\$0	\$18,042

³ Increased expenses approved by Session to obtain livestream equipment for the Sanctuary.

Financial Statement

Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances Arising from Cash Transactions

	As of 12/31/2020	As of 12/31/2019
ASSETS		
<i>Cash and equivalents:</i>		
Checking account	199,033	194,128
Invested accounts	637,640	581,401
Total Cash and Equivalents	836,673	775,529
Prepaid Expenses	6,891	8,506
Total Assets	\$843,564	\$784,035
	As of 12/31/2020	As of 12/31/2019
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	4,652	4,166
In & out accounts – net	26,063	35,269
Pledges received in advance	53,648	53,048
Total Liabilities	\$84,363	\$92,483
FUND BALANCES		
<i>Unrestricted:</i>		
Operating fund	72,695	72,695
Quasi-endowment funds	115,572	83,044
<i>Restricted:</i>		
<u>Temporarily:</u>		
Memorial funds	30,681	20,299
Capital Campaign 2016-2018	-0-	13,668
Other reserve funds	203,790	182,623
Designated funds	160,717	143,499
<u>Permanently:</u>		
Endowment funds	175,746	175,725
Total Fund Balances	\$759,201	\$691,553
Total Liabilities & Fund Balances	\$843,564	\$784,036

Mission Committee

Believe it or not, this was a busy year for Mission! Even though the world changed in the middle of March, the year started off like every other year and the Mission Committee hit the ground running. We worked on already established projects as well as found new and creative ways to share the congregation's time, talents, and treasure.

Before the pandemic cancelled our gatherings at PCWS, we had two Pop Up Mission Projects (P.U.M.P.). For the first one, the congregation gathered during fellowship time to assemble 110 laundry Kits for BEDS Plus Care. For the second one, 200 sack lunches were made for Second Presbyterian Church of Chicago. When we were no longer able to gather, Pastor Lottie and our youth continued the PUMP projects through socially distanced outdoor events.

As in years past, a significant portion of the 2020 Mission budget was allocated to denominational support through gifts to the General Assembly, the Synod, the Presbytery of Chicago and the PCUSA Theological Education Fund. For a congregation of our size, these gifts were substantial. Our giving reflects financial support of global, national and local agencies through traditional budgeted giving.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository continued to be an organization that PCWS worked with and supported. In 2019 a special donation to PCWS included a request that some of the funds be used for mission. After Mission Committee discussion and Session approval, a gift was made to the Greater Chicago Food Depository's workforce development program, Chicago's Community Kitchen. The funds were used to support students as they participate in the free 14-week training program. This job training program prepares unemployed and underemployed adults for successful careers in culinary and hospitality jobs. The program has graduated more than 1,300 students since its inception in 1998 with a 90% job placement rate. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the culinary/hospitality jobs. The Greater Chicago Food Depository has designed new free training programs in additional fields for unemployed and underemployed adults living in Cook County. In addition to supporting the Greater Chicago Food Depository with our treasure, we also shared our time. Because of the pandemic, PCWS was only able to volunteer at the food bank once in 2020 but on March 14th (Pi Day and the day the world began quarantine), several members of the congregation spent the morning inspecting, sorting, repacking and labeling food for distribution to soup kitchens, shelters and food pantries throughout the Chicagoland area.

What began as a 2020 Lenten challenge quickly evolved into "Fill the Can", a drive-thru mission project that provided multiple 12-gallon tubs of non-perishable food items to the Second Baptist Church of LaGrange food pantry every week. A quick guesstimate would say that our Monday morning deliveries averaged 12-15 tubs per week, over the course of 52 weeks. By March of 2021, we will have delivered between seven and eight HUNDRED tubs of food to the food pantry.

Mission also engaged the congregation in a summer-long project collecting books for Bernie's Book Bank. Bernie's is Chicago's largest provider of children's books to low-income children that have no books of their own. Each child receives 12 books per year for 12 years. Over the course of the summer, between book donations and monetary donations, we collected over 10,000 books.

With regards to our partnership with Nueva Paz, Cuba, the year started out on a high note with a week-long visit in January by our friend, Izett Sama Hernandez. A leader within the Presbyterian Church in Cuba, Izett has also served as an interim pastor in Nueva Paz and is a dear friend of ours and of many others engaged in Cuba partnerships. Much like our congregation, our partner church in Nueva Paz, Cuba has found themselves needing to adapt their way of serving their community as a result of the pandemic. At times, the church has been open, at times closed. They have found ways to worship "together" in their own homes and have found new tech tools with which they are able to stay connected with each other and with us. Notably, the Living Waters system has continued to be operational throughout the year. Cuba is also in the midst of a significant

economic crisis and, while we were unable to travel to Cuba in 2020, we were able to continue to send financial support. We are definitely looking forward to a time when we can return to Cuba!

In December, we started a new program called Community Conversations. This series explores mission through many and varied lenses. Our first conversation was held on December 9th and was titled “Let’s Talk About Homelessness”. It featured representatives from three Chicago agencies, The Boulevard, Chicago HOPE for Kids and Night Ministry, in a conversation about the clients they serve and the ways in which they serve them. We will continue to have Community Conversations throughout 2021.

Our December Alternative Giving Fair this year was completely online. Even so, nearly \$4,000 in generous donations were received supporting our mission partners: Heifer International, Nueva Paz church in Cuba, Margaret’s Village residents with gift cards and funds to restock the Pine Avenue Pantry.

During our Christmas tree lighting event, we collected an amazing 284 NEW winter hats, mittens/gloves and scarves to provide to clients of Sharing Connection and residents of Margaret's Village. Both organizations received your warm winter items with much gladness and heartfelt thanks.

Our goals for 2021 include continuing to provide ways to broaden our congregation’s engagement with Mission from a time and talents standpoint, to be intentional and knowledgeable in our budgeted giving and to continue to celebrate our congregation’s partnerships both near and far.

On behalf of the 2020 Mission Committee, which included Janet Andersen, Mary Jo Blough, Ron Blough, Diane Bonner, Kevin McDermott, and Kathy Wennerstrum, we would like to thank everyone in the congregation for supporting the many projects and organizations that were presented to you. The need is great, and each of you really helped! THANK YOU!!!

Diane Bonner, *Elder for Mission* with Kathy Wennerstrum & Janet Andersen, *2020 Mission Committee Moderators*

2020 Budgeted Mission Giving

Denominational Mission Support

General Assembly.....	\$10,000
Presbytery of Chicago	\$10,000
Synod of Lincoln Trails	\$3,000

State, National, and World Mission

Feed My Starving Children.....	\$1,500
Nueva Paz Church (Cuba).....	\$1,500
Opportunity International.....	\$1,000

Metropolitan Mission

Facing Forward to End Homelessness.....	\$1,500
Margaret’s Village	\$6,000
Chicago HOPES for Kids.....	\$1,500
Night Ministry	\$1,500
The Boulevard	\$1,500
Umoja Student Development.....	\$1,500
Pop-Up Mission Projects	\$2,592

Local Community Mission

Leadershop.....	\$1,500
BEDS Plus Care.....	\$1,000
Interfaith Community Partners.....	\$1,500
Pillars Community Health.....	\$1,500

TOTAL MISSION *BUDGETED* DISTRIBUTIONS.....\$48,592

2020 Mission Distributions From Direct Contributions & Mission Reserves

PCUSA Special Offerings

One Great Hour of Sharing	\$3,025
Pentecost	\$1,264
Peace & Global Witness	\$606
Christmas Joy	\$775
Total	\$5,670

Mission Support

Second Baptist Church of La Grange Food Pantry	\$250
Nueva Paz Church Breakfast Fund	\$1,800
Church World Service	\$50
Nueva Paz Church (Cuba)	\$4,500
Souper Bowl of Caring (donation to St. Cletus Food Pantry) ...	\$565
Greater Chicago Food Depository	\$7,000
The Boulevard	\$250
Chicago HOPES for Kids	\$250
Night Ministry	\$250
BEDS Plus Care	\$551
Pine Avenue Presbyterian Church Pantry	\$1,500
Bernie's Book Bank Summer Mission	\$2,011
Heifer Project International	\$740
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance	\$2,250
Total	\$21,967

Alternative Giving Fair Donations

Pine Avenue Presbyterian Church Food Pantry	\$1,000
Heifer Project International	\$1,410
Nueva Paz Church (Cuba)	\$610
Margaret's Village (gift cards for clients)	\$1,300
Total	\$4,320

Personnel

The role of the Personnel Committee is to ensure our staff is well-positioned to support the overall mission and goals of PCWS and to assist with all matters related to employed personnel. The Personnel Committee is made up of the following Members, Elder Paul Banovic, David Boxell, Julie Kelly and Steve Wennerstrum.

Leadership is always important, but it is especially important in challenging and unpredictable times such as we experienced in 2020. We are blessed to have the Rev. Erik Khoobyarian as our Pastor and Head of Staff. Erik helped us navigate through the many challenges that came our way in 2020. Under Erik's leadership, we re-invented how we worship, interact with each other, and support our communities. In some instances this meant transitioning from an in-person environment to a remote environment. It also meant introducing new and meaningful activities to help us stay connected with each other, continue to grow in faith and carry on our mission at PCWS.

Erik's leadership has been the driving force behind our success during the pandemic. And, in many ways, he makes it look easy. But it has required a tremendous amount of thought, careful planning and hard work. Thank you, Erik, for your many contributions to PCWS, for your passion and for your leadership.

Stephanie Coates, our Director of Music Ministries, is a talented musician. And, in 2020, she also showed she is creative, innovative and flexible. As we transitioned to remote worship, Stephanie had to re-think the approach to music. Working with the many talented musicians in PCWS, the music program has not missed a beat. The music continues to be beautiful and joyous. The quality and variety of the music has been impressive to say the least. Thanks to Stephanie and all the members of the Choir and our other musicians that have created such a wonderful musical experience.

In June, we enthusiastically welcomed the Rev. Lottie MacAuley Friedman as our Associate Pastor. Introducing a full-time staff member focused on Youth Ministries had been a priority for the Personnel Committee and Session for the past year plus. In Lottie, we found someone who has the passion and talent for Youth Ministries and also has the ability to help in other areas as well. Joining during the pandemic certainly presents challenges, but despite these challenges, Lottie has done a wonderful job getting to know the youth, the broader congregation and is already making a positive impact at PCWS. We are extremely fortunate to have added Lottie to our team.

Patrick Rivers is our Church Financial Secretary. Patrick works closely with the Treasurer to maintain PCWS's financial records, including processing financial transactions, reporting and financial control. Having joined PCWS in 2019, 2020 represented Patrick's first full year in the role. Patrick brings a wealth of financial experience to PCWS and is a valuable member of the team. Thanks, Patrick.

Terri Angaraone serves as our Church Administrator. Prior to the pandemic and the shutdown of the office, Terri was probably the first face you saw when visiting the church during the week. As the church office shut down, Terri transitioned to working remotely, not an easy task when relatively new in a position. Thank you, Terri for your support of PCWS.

As we closed the church campus in March, this impacted many things, including the need for Nursery and Sexton teams. But we would be remiss not to offer our thanks and express our appreciation to Cory Hoskins and Noor Hafeez for their work in the Nursery and for Sextons who were on staff for the first portion of 2020.

Finally, we thank the many volunteers that work with our staff to make everything happen. PCWS would not be the same without your dedication and hard work. You are instrumental in carrying out our mission.

Paul Banovic, *Moderator of the Personnel Committee*

Faith Formation

The mission of the Faith Formation Committee is to meet the educational and faith development needs of all ages of our congregation. Although we had fewer in person opportunities, the thoughtful leadership of Pastor Erik and creative response from members contributed to a rich variety of virtual gatherings that received consistent participation. Remaining connected through our virtual gatherings was Pastor Erik's ultimate goal. This was also a year of transition from Candice Mares, Youth Leader, Kim Fronk, overseeing the teaching and curriculum selection for Sunday School classes, and numerous volunteers with hiring a full time Associate Pastor, Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman.

Story time began in March taking place twice a week and then in June moved to Thursday night. Erik led it and had guest readers quite often. Children enjoyed hearing Bible stories before bedtime.

While we had a variety of wonderful teachers and assistants part of the year, beginning in the Fall, **Sunday School classes** were taught via Zoom every other week after worship with consistent attendance, even with

grandchildren living in Iowa and Florida participating. Pre-school to 2nd graders and 3rd through 5th graders began learning about the Beatitudes. Lottie also offered teachers lesson preparation discussion and designed worship bags that were sent home.

During the Winter, Youth Leader, Candice Mares took Youth to the Wisconsin Dells Water Park and met for coffee and lunch game sessions at local restaurants working to create fellowship among the students. She oversaw selling **Valentine-grams** which included a teddy bear and chocolate rose that members purchased for friends and family. Approximately \$1100 was raised that will go toward the summer Youth mission trip when we're able to schedule our next one. Youth also collected \$565 from our generous congregation for the St. Cletus Food Pantry marking the 31st anniversary of **Souper Bowl of Caring**.

Beginning in August with Associate Pastor, Rev. Lottie MacAulay Friedman. **Youth** in middle school learned about Identity and the Image of God along with a once a month socially distant and mission activities. High School students met to learn about Identity, Image of God, and the Enneagram along with once a month socially distant and mission activities that Lottie designed and several adults assisted. The mission activities were also available to third through fifth graders. Weather permitting there were outdoor activities offered periodically.

In 2019, seven of our youth began the **confirmation** exploration in person under the leadership of Rogers Malone who was assisted by Carolyn Bozek, Amy Malone, and Pastor Erik. The program was to continue in 2020 culminating in confirmation in May. In February, the in-person gatherings were suspended, but Rogers continued to keep in regular contact with the confirmands and their parents, including providing monthly activities to keep them engaged with their faith exploration. In the Fall, Rogers and Lottie, along with the other leaders, gathered the students to complete the confirmation process in person during outdoor gatherings focused on helping them create professions of faith. Rev. Lottie introduced their projects that each of them pursued and presented these professions of faith to the Session and on **Confirmation Sunday** to the congregation.

Virtual Baccalaureate Sunday allowed 4 high school seniors to inform us of their post high school plans during worship. Pastors Lottie and Erik also dropped off celebratory package at their homes. It was wonderful listening to these recent graduates as their parents sat nearby listening proudly.

Pastor Erik created a **drive-thru Advent Fair** during which time members could drive thru to pick up candles for Christmas eve, drop off hats/mittens for mission, pick up projects for Advent, etc. Singing and the lighting of the beautiful live Christmas tree was a highlight of the Fair.

Two Advent craft nights were design by Pastor Lottie. One was intergenerational while members of all ages built a gingerbread nativity house. The second night was for the children to participate in making Advent crafts.

Adult Education was again well received with tremendous participation of members and friends around the country.

Pastor Erik continued offering weekly **Bible Study** mid-week at 2pm for exploratory discussions of upcoming scripture he would subsequently present a sermon on. Meeting over Zoom enabled more participants than in the past.

Mid-day prayer began March 23rd taking place daily, Monday through Friday and eventually shifted to Tuesday through Friday and finally, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Participants were able to expand their repertoire of praying practices and pray together.

Book groups informally chose to read and discuss issues of **racism and white supremacy**. Pastor Erik and Rev. Lottie prepared book summaries of 5 titles that members could choose to read and discuss with each other as we explored current events.

Discussions of the **Belhar Confession** and the **Confession of 1967** was offered and we were excited that Rev. Lottie was able to have [Prof. Dirk Smit](#), one of the primary authors of the Confession of Belhar join us virtually to discuss the confession.

Pastor Erik shared some of the history of **Praying the Examen**, an ancient prayer practice that enables you to find God in your daily life and guided the group in the practice.

Jane Strunk Anderson returned to PCWS virtually so participants could experience the power of character strengths and other practices from positive psychology, in the **Building Strength & Resilience in Trying Times** session.

The Soul of Wine, Savoring the Goodness of God, book discussion and wine tasting took place virtually in the homes of each of the participants. Participants also received PCWS wine glasses! We met for four sessions over Zoom and were joined by the author for one of the sessions.

Erik facilitated a full year of **Weekly Early-Risers Book groups meeting** at 7 am on Thursday mornings. In March the group shifted to meeting online and our participation increased significantly. Titles discussed included, and may still be available if you wish to read any of them:

Crossing the Waters by Lesley Leyland Fields

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life by Tish Harrison Warren

Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers) by Eric Elnes

Advent in Narnia: Reflections for the Season by Heidi Haverkamp

In response to cancelling the October Women's Retreat, the **Finding Your Own Oasis** program was created by Donna Kanak, Loretta Gratias-Bremer, and Mindy McMahon so women could gather for discussion and fellowship. Discussions were facilitated by members on a variety of topics such as gardening, cooking, kindness, meditation, prayer, notecards and fellowship followed as we connected and strengthened relationships.

Mindy McMahon, *Elder for Faith Formation*

Welcoming Committee

The Committee began 2020 looking at ways to improve how we welcome friends and visitors to any event at PCWS - from Worship, to fellowship time to Summer Barbecues. As we were developing programs the pandemic halted everything. We put our plans on hold, and focused on what we could do without meeting in person. We worked with Erik to:

1. Encourage all to greet new participants to all online forums;
2. Created a "Digital Host" for online worship whose sole responsibility is to welcome everyone and be available to answer any questions that might come up - either in the "Chat" function or through Messenger. Michelle Hennessy and Kay Kelly served as the digital host role.
3. When PCWS stopped printing a monthly newsletter at the outset of the pandemic, we worked with many members who were not "computer savvy" to receive our weekly emails, and to learn how to watch worship via Facebook Live or our website.
4. Updated our website to include all our email communications, and a link to our Facebook worship. We worked with Erik to include all Zoom links for various programs and special worship services.

We continued our work incorporating the new logo:

1. Our website was updated to incorporate the new logo and colors and has a cleaner look and constantly updated content.

2. Designed new letterhead, envelopes, and business cards.
3. Created opportunities for logo merchandise: t-shirts, hats, wine glasses, water bottles, and Christmas ornaments, to name a few.

The Committee looks forward to returning to in-person worship, Sunday School and other events. And, to return to our work of formalize processes to create a “Welcoming Church” based on Henry Brinton’s book *The Welcoming Congregation*.

Michelle Hennessy, *Elder for Welcoming & Communication*

Flower Committee

During January and February, flower arrangements were placed in the Sanctuary by a member of the Committee: Sue Eck, Nancy Glickman, and Sue Kovalick. When worship transitioned in March to being online only, Sue Kovalick and Sue Eck provided weekly arrangements, first for Pastor Erik’s office and eventually for both Pastors Erik and Lottie. There were a few dedications during the year and on those occasions the arrangements were more robust. The committee also worked with Erik to prepare arrangements for special holidays, including Palm Sunday which occurred during the stay-at-home order. Easter flowers were also prepared and arranged in the Sanctuary and outside for the sunrise service.

December was a joyous time at PCWS. Because of restrictions on indoor gatherings, the Session decided to decorate the outside of the church more robustly. To do this, a small group of volunteers was organized (to maintain social distancing) to decorate the outside of the church using strings of lights of various sizes and shapes. Over 2,000 lights and 20+ extension cords and timers were first designed and procured by Walt and Sue Kovalick, and then installed by the crew. The front sidewalk railings were decorated with greens and holly, while the porte cochere was hung with green roping above the north and south openings. Wreaths were added above the front entrance of the church and to the west face of the porte cochere. Decorative arrangements were placed in the large urns at the front entrance. A Moravian star was hung in the sheltered entrance at the front of the church. A 24-foot pine tree was donated by the Kanak family and erected on the west lawn. This amazing tree was delivered by a tow truck! Members and friends of the Congregation decorated individual signs with Christmas greetings and surrounded the tree. An 8-foot-high plywood Christmas tree was hung on the west wall of the porte cochere with lights. Members of the Congregation hung custom “ornaments” on it—each with a response to the question about where you’ve seen Christ’s peace, joy, hope, and love.

Submitted by Sue Kovalick



Presbyterian
Church
of Western
Springs