



# ANNUAL REPORT

— 2020 —



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.





## A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear friends in Christ,

This year has been a challenging one! The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the church and society. We have had to shift the ways we engage in ministry from a focus on in-person worship and meetings to livestream worship, virtual meetings and gatherings in the parking lot. We have had to shift to teaching children at home and working from home. We have not been able to travel to see friends or relatives or to celebrate life events. This has also been a time to address economic and social justice issues, to shift our thinking and our way of life.

In times such as this, our baptism in Christ makes a difference and makes us different. Like Christians before us, we recall that God is faithful to God's promises and God's people. We see that God enables us to connect with one another even when we are separated. Shifts in the world invite us to be innovative in how we do God's work and reach out to all ages in making disciples. We see that God is at work not only in our buildings but beyond them as well. We have found new ways to serve our neighbors and reach those in need.

As we experience this time of uncertainty, we sense something new emerging. In many places there are new strategies and renewed energy for ministry, often generated by emerging leaders. We have developed a framework to build on, and now is the time to engage in hard work together. As you do in your congregation, we want our collaborative efforts to be both faithfully thoughtful and sustainable. We want to build up the body of Christ today and for the future.

Looking across the church, I am grateful for your generous giving of time, talents and resources. Yes, God does continue to bless us! God will provide both relief from life's struggles and hope for a stronger church, God's church. We do not need to know how the future will unfold. As members in the body of Christ, we need only trust that God is with us and will provide.

Building up the body of Christ together,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." —Ephesians 4:11-16*

# **Faith Lutheran Church of Shelton**

Annual Report for 2020

1212 Connection Street  
Shelton, WA

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# 2021 Annual Meeting Agenda

**Faith Lutheran Church  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
January 17, 2021**

<b>Call to Order</b>	Andrea Miller, President
<b>Opening Prayer</b>	Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor
<b>Establish Quorum</b>	Joan Detrick, Secretary
<b>Approval of 2020 Annual and Special Meeting Minutes</b>	
<b>2020 Financial Report</b>	Ken Kramer, Treasurer
<b>2021 Budget</b>	Ken Kramer, Treasurer
<b>Explanation of Ballot and Voting Process</b>	Andrea Miller, President
<b>Recognition and Thanks</b>	Andrea Miller, President
<b>Benediction</b>	Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor
<b>Adjournment</b>	

# 2020 Congregational Meeting Minutes

## January 2020 Annual Meeting

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**Faith Lutheran Church  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
January 19, 2020  
Minutes**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by President Chriss Brickert at 11:27 a.m.

**Opening Prayer:** Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor

**Establish Quorum:** The secretary confirmed that a quorum had been exceeded.

**Approval of 2019 Minutes:** The 2019 annual meeting minutes were approved.

**Election of Congregation Council Members:** Andrea Miller is the Council President. Four members were nominated for three-year terms: Eric Barkman, Brad Riggs, Kiki Rathburn, Richard Ross. All four were elected by unanimous voice vote.

**Election of Memorial Committee Member:** Lynn Wilson was elected by voice vote.

**Election of Endowment Fund Committee:** Tabled.

**Election of Synod Assembly Representatives:** Tabled.

**Financial Report:** Ken Kramer, Treasurer, presented the 2019 financial report. We ended the year with a negative cash flow of \$10,704.15; the reason being that about \$30,000 was transferred to reduce the mortgage principle. The current mortgage balance is \$190,730.10 and we are on target to be "Debt Free in '23". The balance of Designated Funds is \$95,303.21.

**2020 Budget:** Ken Kramer, Treasurer, presented the proposed 2020 budget of \$443,529.00. The budget was approved.

**Proposed Changes to the Constitution:** Tabled to provide additional time to review wording and consider changes.

**Other Business:** Chriss Brickert presented Jeanette Leach with a gift of appreciation for her seven years of service as bookkeeper.

**Presentation of 2020 President:** Chriss Brickert, President, introduced President Elect, Andrea Miller.

**Closing Prayer:** Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor

**Adjournment:** Chriss Brickert closed the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joan Detrick, Secretary

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# October 2020 Special Meeting

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**Faith Lutheran Church  
Special Congregational Meeting  
October 11, 2020  
Minutes**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Miller at 10 a.m.

**Opening Prayer:** Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor

**Establish Quorum:** The Vice President, as acting secretary, Richard Ross, confirmed that a quorum had been exceeded both in person and on the Zoom call. Emily Shane confirmed those participating by Zoom could both hear and speak during the proceedings.

**Vote to Approve the Draft Constitution:** Passed

**Closing Prayer:** Rev. Dr. Doug Peterson, Pastor

**Adjournment:** Andrea Miller closed the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Andrea Miller, President

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# Financial Reports

## Treasurer's Report

As this very unusual operating year comes to a close, I am very happy to report that Financially our Church is very healthy. Though we did not achieve our budgeted amounts in either revenue or spending, the bottom line is that we ended the year with a surplus cash flow of over \$7,000, a healthy \$47,500 of General fund cash reserves, and a mortgage balance of \$145,360. This has been accomplished while shifting gears in many ways that we operate and several personnel changes. It is a true display of the Faith community and a realization that we will come out of this year with a stronger commitment to the missions of our church.

I would like to take a few words to say thank you for all the support I have had through the last 7 years as Treasurer and review a few major changes of direction we have made.

When I became involved on the council early in the last decade, many of the financial discussions were about where to make cuts in our expenses to maintain a positive cash flow. The first to go was the Benevolences, which were budgeted low in my opinion to begin with, then next was transfers to our building projects fund for those larger projects like roofs, painting and heating systems and finally we refinanced the mortgage to do some of those projects. At the start of 2015 we had a \$382,000 mortgage!

We have 6 years later a \$145,000 mortgage, a refreshed sanctuary, and study cash flow while avoiding any major adjustments to our annual financial plans. All this by improved utilization of resources and keeping the congregation as a whole better informed of where we are financially and what needs we must meet.

Eliminating the mortgage is a great goal, but only in conjunction with maintaining support for our congregation and greater community. It will happen, but whether this year or a couple years from now, keep our total mission in perspective.

As I resign as church treasurer, I am confident that Eric Barkman will take on the job and bring a fresh perspective.

Ken Kramer



Faith Lutheran Church  
Proposed 2021 Budget

	2020 Annual Budget	2020 Year end	2021 Budget
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
<b>4100 · Contributions</b>			
4101 · Nondesignated Contributions	409,979	370,683.69	<b>392,900</b>
4102 · Facility Rental	9,350	2,825.00	<b>4,000</b>
4103 · Non-ELCA General Funds	13,500	400.00	<b>1,000</b>
4104 · Non-ELCA Thrivent Choice		2,760.00	<b>3,000</b>
4105 · Mortgage Principal	10,000	21,150.00	<b>10,000</b>
<b>Total 4100 · Contributions</b>	<b>442,829</b>	<b>397,818.69</b>	<b>410,900</b>
4200 · Interest Income (Bank)	700	395.75	<b>500</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>443,529</b>	<b>398,214.44</b>	<b>411,400</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>443,529</b>	<b>398,214.44</b>	<b>411,400</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
<b>5100 · Payroll Expenses</b>			
5101 · Salaries	172,050	145,276.59	<b>152,000</b>
5102 · Housing-Clergy	20,000	20,000.04	<b>24,000</b>
5103 · Employer Taxes-FICA	7,595	5,721.31	<b>4,197</b>
5104 · Employer Taxes - L&I	3,600	2,103.65	<b>2,400</b>
5105 · Health Insurance	33,504	25,429.52	<b>22,873</b>
5106 · Retirement	9,197	9,196.56	<b>12,687</b>
5107 · Continuing Education	1,500	495.00	<b>4,200</b>
5111 · Board of Pensions Admin/Retiree	1,260	965.70	<b>888</b>
<b>Total 5100 · Payroll Expenses</b>	<b>248,706</b>	<b>209,188.37</b>	<b>223,245</b>
<b>5300 · Benevolences</b>			
5301 · ELCA	41,000	37,068.00	<b>39,290</b>
5302 · Prison Ministry	2,400	2,600.00	<b>2,400</b>
5303 · Community Lifeline	1,000	1,000.00	<b>1,000</b>
5305 · PLU Annual Donation	1,000	1,000.00	<b>1,000</b>
<b>Total 5300 · Benevolences</b>	<b>45,400</b>	<b>41,668.00</b>	<b>43,690</b>
<b>5400 · Outside Services (non-employee)</b>			
5401 · Professional Services	250	0.00	<b>2,500</b>
5402 · Visiting Clergy	750	450.00	<b>500</b>
5403 · Contract Labor	15,000	9,495.00	<b>8,060</b>
<b>Total 5400 · Outside Services (non-employee)</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>9,945.00</b>	<b>11,060</b>
<b>5500 · General Expenses</b>			
5501 · Kitchen Supplies	500	385.48	<b>500</b>
5502 · Office Expenses	3,000	3,208.39	<b>2,500</b>
5503 · Postage	1,500	970.60	<b>1,200</b>
5504 · Miscellaneous Expense	500	125.66	<b>250</b>
5505 · Office Equipment	5,500	5,477.83	<b>6,000</b>
5506 · Worship/Liturgy	2,000	2,990.84	<b>2,500</b>
5507 · Advertising & Outreach	2,500	1,118.00	<b>1,500</b>
5508 · Printing & Reproduction		283.97	<b>0</b>
5509 · Stewardship	800	600.00	<b>800</b>
5510 · Conference/Convention	1,000	0.00	<b>1,000</b>
5511 · Dues & Subscriptions	50	658.00	<b>700</b>
5512 · Altar Guild	500	449.98	<b>500</b>
5513 · Church Picnic	500	0.00	<b>500</b>
5514 · History	250	0.00	<b>250</b>
5515 · Technology	2,000	1,692.48	<b>2,000</b>
5516 · Nursery Expense	500	0.00	<b>250</b>
<b>Total 5500 · General Expenses</b>	<b>21,100</b>	<b>17,961.23</b>	<b>20,450</b>

**Faith Lutheran Church  
Proposed 2021 Budget**

	2020 Annual Budget	2020 Year end	2021 Budget
<b>5600 · Ministry Expenses</b>			
5601 · Adult Parish Education	2,000	2,481.31	1,500
5602 · Sunday School Education	1,500	314.39	750
5603 · Youth Activities	3,000	246.97	0
5604 · Vacation Bible School	1,000	0.00	1,000
5605 · Music Expense	500	540.00	600
<b>Total 5600 · Ministry Expenses</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>3,582.67</b>	<b>3,850</b>
<b>5800 · Maintenance &amp; Repairs</b>			
5801 · Building & Grounds Maintenance	4,200	1,972.68	4,200
5802 · Custodial Supplies	1,200	1,010.64	1,200
5803 · Alarm Monitoring	3,000	2,103.78	3,000
5804 · Equipment Repairs & Maintenance	1,000	2,248.83	1,200
5807 · Landscaping Expense	6,000	-15.00	5,400
5808 · Small Tools & Equipment	200	0.00	0
<b>Total 5800 · Maintenance &amp; Repairs</b>	<b>15,600</b>	<b>7,320.93</b>	<b>15,000</b>
<b>6000 · Travel Expenses</b>			
6001 · Mileage Expenses	2,000	0.00	2,000
<b>Total 6000 · Travel Expenses</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>6100 · Financial Expenses</b>			
6101 · Insurance	9,000	8,878.88	9,000
6102 · Interest Expense	10,000	10,233.31	9,000
6103 · Bank Service Charges	200	611.42	550
6104 · Payroll Fees	2,600	690.79	800
6105 · Dues & Fees	300	47.25	200
6106 · Taxes Property	40	0.00	40
<b>Total 6100 · Financial Expenses</b>	<b>22,140</b>	<b>20,461.65</b>	<b>19,590</b>
<b>6300 · Utilities</b>			
6301 · Electricity	7,500	5,289.62	6,500
6302 · Natural Gas	3,000	3,499.10	4,200
6303 · Water/Sewer/Garbage	8,000	8,793.85	8,500
6312 · Telephone	1,400	1,339.07	1,500
6315 · Internet Expenses	900	924.08	1,300
<b>Total 6300 · Utilities</b>	<b>20,800</b>	<b>19,845.72</b>	<b>22,000</b>
<b>6900 · Reserve Transfer Payment</b>			
6901 · Monthly Pastor's Discretionary	1,000	1,000.08	1,000
6902 · Monthly Youth	3,000	3,000.00	1,200
6903 · Monthly Local Community Ministr	1,200	1,200.00	3,000
6904 · Monthly Non-Local Ministry	1,200	1,200.00	1,200
6905 · Monthly Maintenance Project	9,000	9,000.00	9,000
<b>Total 6900 · Reserve Transfer Payment</b>	<b>15,400</b>	<b>15,400.08</b>	<b>15,400</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>415,146</b>	<b>345,373.65</b>	<b>376,285</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>28,383</b>	<b>52,840.79</b>	<b>35,115</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>28,383</b>	<b>52,840.79</b>	<b>35,115</b>

**Cash Flow**

<b>Mortgage Principal Payments</b>	<b>31,383.00</b>	<b>45,368.32</b>	<b>35,115</b>
<b>Total Expenses plus Mortg. Principal</b>	<b>443,529.00</b>	<b>390,741.97</b>	<b>411,400</b>
<b>Net Cashflow in General Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,472</b>	<b>0</b>

These are Designated funds that are supported both by directly designated contributions and some by transfers as annual general fund expenses. Over all we did not spend as much out of these funds as intended in 2020 due, as most things to covid-19.

The one area needing more support is our community ministries, mostly for our Community Lifeline dinners and the Tuesday lunches. We have increased our bugeted funding but also encourage your direct support.

Designated Funds	12/31/2019			Ending Balance
	Balance	Additions	Deductions	
202 Youth Group	\$ 13,919.92	\$ 5,600.00	\$ 7,542.21	\$ 11,977.71
301 Building Projects	\$ 41,787.02	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 8,752.13	\$ 42,034.89
302 Maintenance (Organ)	\$ 2,990.06	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,990.06
400 Community Ministries	\$ 2,468.69	\$ 2,955.34	\$ 4,521.35	\$ 902.68
401 Dominican Schools	\$ 3,860.00	\$ 3,920.00	\$ 3,250.00	\$ 4,530.00
402 Memorials	\$ 8,926.15	\$ 860.00	\$ -	\$ 9,786.15
403 Missions	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 5,224.00	\$ 1,271.33	\$ 6,052.67
404 Non-Local Ministries	\$ 9,017.26	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 4,717.26
405 Pastor Discretion	\$ 1,093.76	\$ 4,255.08	\$ 3,070.00	\$ 2,278.84
406 Scholarship	\$ 156.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,156.00
408 Stewardship Dinner	\$ 404.16	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 404.16
409 Waves of Change	\$ 1,490.76	\$ 876.72	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 367.48
500 Faith Acts	\$ 7,089.43	\$ 3,550.00	\$ 1,864.94	\$ 8,774.49
			Totals	\$ 95,972.39

Faith Lutheran Church  
**ME Balance Sheet**  
As of December 31, 2020

Dec 31, 20

<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Checking/Savings</b>	
1100 · Banking	
1105 · Checking - Columbia Bank	41,100.87
1106 · Money Market-Columbia Bank	96,453.49
1107 · Thrivent Money Market	9,694.34
<b>Total 1100 · Banking</b>	<b>147,248.70</b>
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<b>147,248.70</b>
<b>Other Current Assets</b>	
1160 · Living Stones PPP Receivable	19,650.00
1400 · Edward Jones	16,381.68
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<b>36,031.68</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>183,280.38</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
1500 · Building	2,061,242.67
1501 · Furniture & Equipment	9,677.33
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>2,070,920.00</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>2,254,200.38</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
<b>Credit Cards</b>	
2100 · Columbia Bank Credit Card	265.06
<b>Total Credit Cards</b>	<b>265.06</b>
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>	
2150 · PPP Loan (ELCA FCU)	19,650.00
<b>2200 · Payroll Liabilities</b>	
2203 · Washington Family Leave	148.45
2205 · L&I Liability	593.89
<b>Total 2200 · Payroll Liabilities</b>	<b>742.34</b>
<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	<b>20,392.34</b>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>20,657.40</b>
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>	
2500 · Thrivent Mortgage	145,361.60
<b>Total Long Term Liabilities</b>	<b>145,361.60</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>166,019.00</b>
<b>Equity</b>	
3000 · Opening Balance Equity	1,520,625.24
3100 · Retained Earnings	515,177.92
Net Income	52,378.22
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>2,088,181.38</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>2,254,200.38</b>

# Council and Staff Reports

## Council President's Report

Dear Faith Lutheran Members-

After a very difficult year for all of our community, I continue to be grateful to the people of Faith Lutheran for always being supportive of one another, the local community, and the world.

So many of our plans for the year were put on hold due to the pandemic. But we, as a congregation, continued to be successful in meeting the needs of our church and our neighbors.

The finances of the church remained strong throughout the year due to the continued generous giving of the congregation and the frugal management by the staff. Because of this careful stewardship, the council was not called on to make difficult decisions regarding meeting our financial obligations. We ended the year with a positive cash flow and with expenses more than 10% under what had been budgeted.

The council was particularly focused on ensuring the new Constitution that was drafted would meet the governing needs of the congregation for the future. The new Constitution is written to bring our governing documents up to date with the Model Constitution for Congregations recommended by the ELCA. It also updated the structure of the council and the method of electing council officers. The committee that made the recommendations for changes spent much time in prayerful consideration and the I am confident that the new documents will serve the congregation well for many years.

The council also appointed an Audit Committee that hired an outside CPA firm to conduct a modified audit of our financial processes in the church. The results of the audit will help the Finance Committee establish new procedures for handling and managing funds as well as develop processes for drafting the annual budget that align with our church mission.

Thank you to all the ministries of Faith for your work behind the scenes to keep things going this year even when we could not meet. The members of Faith continue to be as loving and supportive of each other and their neighbor as they ever were. I am reminded of the words of Martin Luther in his letter regarding how Christians should behave during the deadly plague:

“The service we can render to the needy is indeed such a small thing in comparison with God’s promises and rewards that St. Paul says to Timothy, “Godliness is of value in every way, and it holds promise both for the present life and for the life to come.” Godliness is nothing else but service to God. Service to God is indeed service to our neighbor.”

I am looking forward to the time when we can all worship together again at church! It has been a privilege to serve you this year as the council president.

--Andrea Miller

## Pastor's Report

January 5, 2021

“Every time I think of you, I thank my God...” (Philippians 1:3)

Well done, people of Faith. By the grace of God we made it through 2020! It was in February that we began to realize that the pandemic was going to disrupt our life together. By mid-March we suspended our on-site worship and ministry activities. The Faith Acts! Spring Musical was tabled. Mission trips to Costa Rica, Namibia, and the Dominican Republic were postponed. Kara Barkman and other Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) came home early. Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and summer Bible Camp were cancelled for 2020. And, maybe hardest of all, we were unable to stage annual events like the Rummage Sale and Holiday Bazaar.

I am proud of how quickly the congregation stepped up and adapted. First, we created an online worship. The Praise Teams, especially Pete and Jana Gedde, Cindy Mortensen, and Jordan and Glory Nylander (remember them?) began creating music videos for a YouTube channel weekly “playlist.” Jordan Leach and Rev. Brenda Satrum also jumped in to offer content and tech support. I launched the “Will Preach for Food” podcast with the invaluable help of Chas Tharp. Intern Pastor Mary Metzger initiated a “drive-through” Communion ministry. By the summer we resumed traditional worship on Sundays—livestreaming on Facebook, with Janna Wood on organ and with mask-wearing, social-distancing in-person attendees.

Council meetings, youth groups, and even Griefshare meetings went “virtual.” The office volunteers (Bev Robert, Toni Herrera, Jan List, and Bert Woods) made sure we had open doors and masked office presence during the week. They worked tirelessly with Connie Himlie to keep newsletters going out every month. I am so proud of the grace, patience, and adaptability of the people of Faith as we stayed open for business: making sandwiches and meals for Community Lifeline; contributing Waves of Change; donating PPEs, food items, and Christmas gifts for homeless Shelton students. And did you see the Virtual Christmas Pageant?! (Not BAAAd, eh?).

The year saw quite a bit of staff transition. It began with the news that Jeanette Leach was stepping away as bookkeeper after many years of faithful service in the office. We hired her replacement, Karyn Challender, only days before the pandemic restrictions kicked in. Karyn stepped right in with professionalism and experience. Anthony Schueller was let go as custodian in mid-March. The Nylanders moved out of town. Skylar Carroll retired as choir director. The pandemic meant Emily Frost was no longer needed to coordinate our Nursery. In June, Jordan Leach announced that she was leaving her youth and office position to move to the warmer climes of Arizona. Emily Shane, another former YAGM missionary, came on staff in July to replace her. Emily had big shoes to fill and has done so admirably. Pastor Mary completed her internship and seminary requirements this fall, and just accepted a call to serve St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Richmond, Kentucky. Faith is grateful for all the hard work and efforts of staff and volunteers throughout the year. Rev. Brenda Satrum has joined the staff on a contract basis, and is being recommended by Council to be called as a part

time Associate Pastor beginning in 2021. Rev. Terry Oliver will also join the staff to oversee our growing grief ministries and pastoral care.

Despite the disruption, we tended to business and got stuff done in 2020. Council President Andrea Miller spearheaded the effort to update governing documents of Faith, particularly the Constitution. Mark Biser, Joan Detrick, Bill and Dorina Sleep, and Pam Boad developed a five-year plan for improving our Landscape and Property. Faith staged its first financial audit in a decade. We updated processes and software for payroll, membership, and online giving. We ended the year in the black, with general income exceeding expenses by several thousand dollars. In 2020 we reduced our indebtedness by \$45,000, leaving us with a total debt of \$145,000 remaining: less than half of what it was when I arrived three years ago! Well done, Faith.

On a personal note, Brenda and I am grateful to God for family and good health again this year. Ben is studying elementary education in Missoula. Hannah is a lieutenant in the Army (armor division), stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas. My parents, Todd and Tyger Penson\* (\*Dick and Muriel Peterson changed their names in 2002), celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in February, and now live year-round in Union. It is fun to have my parents nearby—and a part of the Faith community!

As I look ahead to 2021, I am filled with pride for how positively and prayerfully the people of Faith have responded to the pandemic, the disruptions, the transitions, and the racial and political unrest of 2020. I am confident that God will continue to lead us, comfort us, bless us, and equip us for whatever the new year brings. As the apostle Paul says to the congregation in Philippi: “Every time I think of you, I thank my God!”

--Rev. Dr. Douglas Peterson

## **Pastor of Spiritual Formation's Report**

Dear Friends of Faith,

THANK YOU for your gracious invitation to grow closer to and more like Jesus with you! There is nothing I want to seek and share more than a wholesome, loving, courageous and compassionate life with God and others.

This year, I learned the power of online groups, meeting with young adults (that's how we connected with Emily Shane!) and others for Bible study and worship as COVID began, then moving into social justice/ anti-racism learning (how to be a better neighbor to people of color) as a co-facilitator with Rev. Jeannine Daggett. I also began online courses toward certification as a Spiritual Director through Portland Seminary/George Fox University and helped with worship.

In 2021, with Pastor Doug and others, I'll continue building energy and pathways for each of us to grow closer to God and more deeply enjoy the power and partnership of Christ in our relationships, jobs, physical and mental health, community service—really in *every* aspect of our lives. If this vision inspires you, please connect with me! [brenda@faithshelton.org](mailto:brenda@faithshelton.org) or 406-381-1919.

## **Parish/Youth Ministries**

It has certainly been an eventful year. I am very grateful to Pastors Brenda and Doug for suggesting and selecting me for this position. I took up this post in late July after Jordan left for Arizona, and it has been a blessing to become part of the Faith community over the past six months or so.

My first goal in the office was to assess the administrative technology that was being used and make necessary updates. Within my first couple of months, we migrated to a few new software solutions for record-keeping and emailing. During that ongoing migration process, we have been finding inconsistencies with our record-keeping and we're trying to fix those as we go; thank you very much for your grace and patience when wires get crossed. I have also been updating the website, trying to make information as accessible as possible. Lastly, I have been assisting Pastor Doug in creating the weekly Faith Worship Cafe playlists on our YouTube channel, setting up pre-recorded Advent Evening Prayer services to stream on our Facebook page, participating in virtual Praise Team videos, and updating the website and sending a weekly email with all of the online worship information.

Getting to know the community remotely has been difficult, but I was grateful for lots of good weather this fall so I could have some outdoor events for the children and youth! Although we could not go to camp at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp this year as has been the tradition in recent years, I put together a Camp Night event at the Millers' farm so that the children and youth could have a safe camp-style worship experience. Other events this fall included Jacob Miller's confirmation bonfire, an online game night led by the Barkman family, a collaborative coloring project, and a virtual Christmas pageant (available for viewing on our website and social media)! I provided printable coloring and activity sheets, devotionals, and children's bulletins online throughout the Advent season, and similar resources will continue to be available on our website.

While the weather was still warm enough, I gathered the youth group outdoors for weekly "Coffee and the Meaning of Life" meetings at Urraco Coffee Co. Once winter set in, we returned to Zoom and we've had lots of fun with trivia, a random discussion question generator, and virtual backgrounds in addition to our weekly practice of sharing highs and lows and praying together.

Thank you for your kind welcome, your patience and grace, your words of encouragement, and the care you've shown me in the past months. I look forward to a day when I can meet you all in person!

--Emily Shane



# Committee Reports

## **Mission Endowment Committee Report**

The Endowment Fund of Faith Lutheran Church was established to receive gifts that are endowed (Principal remains in the fund) to provide support to the ministry of Faith Lutheran Church.

In 2020, the committee offered scholarships to graduating seniors from Faith as well as continuing students. One scholarship application was received and a scholarship was provided to:

Joel Barkman – Pacific Lutheran University

The Endowment Fund has two CD's worth a total of \$36,500 as well as a checking account of roughly \$16,500 (Year-end total not available at the time of this report.)

The Endowment Committee consists of four members of Faith Lutheran Church. At the present time we are in need of a fifth member.

The four present members are:

Randy Grauer

Larry Johnson

Mike Leitch

Val Paulson

## **Memorial Fund Committee Report**

The Memorial Fund amount is \$9756.15

One meeting was held on March 2, 2020. There was discussion on items donated by the Memorial Committee in past years but there were no expenditures in 2020. Possible items that might be considered were discussed,

The committee had no other meetings and any business was done by phone or email because of COVID-19. We tried to keep up with "thank you's" for donations.

Yvonne Larson - Chairman

Kathy Gunnerson - Secretary

Kay Thykeson - Recorder

Bubbs Fuller

Lynn Wilson

## **Property and Maintenance Committee Report**

I would like to start by thanking all who participated in this committee this past year. What a year to forget but the good news we did not have that many pressing issues to deal with. The few projects that needed some attention were dealt with little expense to the church.

The committee meets the second Tuesday of each month at 9am. I invite all who would like to be involved to attend the next scheduled meeting.

Hopefully we all can get this terrible virus behind us and move forward on maintaining the church in a much more relaxed nature.

Some projects possibly in the mix would be some exterior painting, painting the curbs and sealing parking lot.

Richard Ross

# Ministry Reports

## Faith Moment Team

There are 13 individuals that make up this team, some having been on the team for many years. It was a challenge this year but everyone was willing to keep this ministry going, just online. Each week they have recorded their testimony and you were able to watch it online. When each round of individuals is complete a new theme is chosen by the team and the 13 different ways of expressing the theme is always a wonderful thing to listen to and hopefully inspire your walk with God.

Thank you to these individuals:

Kristi Knott  
Mary Ann Wagner  
Daniel Frishman  
Sue Barnard  
Bob Heisleman  
Kathy Heisleman  
Cindy Vernon  
Craig Brown  
Hal Burton  
Bert Woods  
Ron McMullen  
Toni Herrera  
Eric Barkman

Coordinator: Chriss Brickert

## Tuesday Women's Bible Study Group

In February of 2020 our group stopped meeting in person because of the risks of COVID-19. However, Chriss and Mary Ann continued, through November, to send lessons and points of discussion that we called the Bible Study Blog. For a few months it was weekly and responded to very well.

As we continue with the present status of things we still do not know when we can meet in person again but starting in January new plans will be made as to how to continue and keep connected. We have continued to have 25 people in the group and we look forward to when we can get together again.

Chriss Brickert and Mary Ann Wagner

## **Lutheran World Relief of Faith Lutheran Church**

This was a very unusual year for everyone due to the Covid 19 pandemic. People were encouraged to stay home as much as possible and to wear face masks when it was necessary to be around people who did not live with you. The Sewing Saints stopped meeting together in mid-March and the spring ingathering to send our quilts to Lutheran World Relief was cancelled. However, I am very proud of our ladies, as many of them continued sewing quilts and other LWR needs at home. We also did get together for special needs. A special quilt for Pastor Mary was made and our ladies wore their face masks and put the binding on this. They also came together to put together our baby care, school, and personal care kits all for LWR.

We made quilts in memory of members and special friends of Faith and those for whom our pastors have given memorial services, who have passed away since or were not mentioned in our last quilt Sunday last fall. Those were in memory of Herb Andrews, Maria Cole, Dennis Goetz, Ron detrick, Sandy Frishman, Riley Gibson, Char Kroenk, Jessica Kurpius, Jerry Larson, Miriam Puffert, Robert Redmond, Fred Sanderson, Lila Smith, Sally Thomas, and Roger Wilson. These quilts, along with others the quilters have made, were sent on to Lutheran World Relief. The total number of quilts sent to LWR this year was 59. We also sent 2 blankets, 50 school kits, 6 personal care kits, and 51 baby kits.

The gift quilts we made included two for Habitat for Humanity new households and one to Pastor Mary Metzger as a going away and congratulations for completing her studies to become a pastor. We also made and sent 50 face masks to LWR.

Our income this year again included donations from the Faith Lutheran Church Women and from individual congregation members. Our expenses were for the shipping of LWR quilts, kits, and masks and for supplies for the various LWR kits.

Thanks to all of you who have provided materials and financial help and the labor necessary to make all of these quilts and kits. These are greatly appreciated by the recipients who are in great need throughout the world.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Skare

## **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

Even though the number of prayer shawls going out in 2020 was significantly reduced due to exposure of compromised and sick individuals we still delivered to people 47 prayer shawls.

Also, I want to thank everyone that continues to make these beautiful shawls in all shapes, sizes, fabric and decor. Please continue. There will be many to go out again when COVID-19 is over.

Chriss Brickert

## Women of Faith

The Women of Faith at Faith Lutheran Church give thanks for the riches that are in our care - riches that have been raised by so many people in our congregation through our Rummage Sale and the Holiday on Main Street Bazaar. These activities have been cancelled during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From our savings, however, we are able currently to make some of our annual donations within our congregation and into the community for a total of \$3,750.

Small amounts of funds continue to come into our treasury through individual sales of rummage.

Please direct your requests for funds to Jackie Sanderson, FLCW treasurer (360-426-6602) or to Stephanie Paulson (360-275-6764).

May the New Year be a time of renewal and centering peace.

### FLCW Financial Summary

#### Savings –

Beginning Balance	\$3460.07
Ending Balance	\$3463.31

#### Checking –

Beginning Balance 1/1/2020	\$12,413.38
Deposits (inc. interest)	\$ 1,869.59
Disbursements	\$11,360.39
Ending Balance 12/30/2020	\$ 2,072.58

#### Donations went to –

Sowers of the Kingdom John Mee, Chriss Brickert project, FLC Youth project, Saints Pantry, Hood Canal Food Bank, Pioneer Food Bank, North Mason Food Bank, Matlock Food Bank, Olympic College Betty Wolf Foundation, Sound Learning, Community Lifeline, FLC Pastor's Discretionary Fund, Mason County VFW #1694, WELCA Giving Thanks, WELCA Katie's Fund, SW Washington WELCA, FLC Sewing Saints, Turning Pointe, Crossroads Housing, ABC of Mason County, FLC Endowment Fund.

--Jackie Sanderson, Treasurer

## **Disaster Response Team**

Even though this team was scheduled to be in California this last September and wasn't able to go because volunteers couldn't be housed in groups, we accomplished something else in 2020. The Church Men's group purchased a trailer for hauling tools and supplies but also for other church projects. The Faith Lutheran Church Women paid for the signage on the trailer and Leach family agreed to have the trailer stored on their property.

When the times allow the team will go to the Northern California area to help rebuild from fires. There are so many needs everywhere but we can drive to CA and we look forward to going.

Chriss Brickert

## **Waves of Change**

Through the end of 2020, the Waves of Change ministry of Faith Lutheran Church has raised a total of over \$37,000! This ministry began in March of 2014 and has the purpose to raise funds through monthly offerings of 'spare change'. The proceeds are distributed to organizations that provide material, support and equipment to provide clean water to third world countries. Additionally, support is provided to parts of our country that have experienced natural disasters and are in need of drinking water. Thirdly, support is given to organizations who provide efforts to support the clean water in our region.

In 2020, funds were distributed to the following organization:

Lutheran World Relief, Friendly Water for the World, El Porvenir, Lutheran Disaster Response, South Sound Estuary, and the Capital Land Trust.

It is with pride that the Waves of Change steering committee is able to distribute these funds on behalf of you, the members of Faith Lutheran Church.

Thank you for your generous support through your "Spare Change." You truly change the lives of many.

The Waves of Change Steering Committee members are:

Laura Van Etten, Herb Cargill, Mike Leitch, Larry Johnson

## Dominican Republic School Ministry

This Faith Lutheran ministry is providing education opportunities for the poorest of the poor children in Las Terrenas, Dominican Republic. Due to the failing education system these children spend their days roaming the barrios of the city with little hope for an escape from the poverty that they find themselves in. This ministry supports 18 school children in two not-for-profit private schools in Las Terrenas. The following is the status for the 2020-2021 school year:

Due to complaints regarding noise, the city council at Las Terrenas forced the relocation of the Dominican Joe's school. A suitable property was selected, and 7 additional classrooms built. This was accomplished in a truly short period and mostly accomplished with the help of local pastors and volunteer labor. The cost was just under \$10,000 paid for from the Dominican Joe's foundation.

Just prior to the 2020 school opening the Dominican Republic government announced that all public schools will be taught online. Students of this failing school system were to be supplied with hardware and internet access. These schools are filled to capacity and do not take undocumented children. Learning is extremely limited. It is not sure how they plan to accomplish this; however we wish them the best .

The Dominican Joe's school was told that they had to implement the similar online schooling as the public schools without receiving any government funding. They would receive regular inspections for compliance to rigid Covid-19 protocols. After meeting with parents, a teaching plan was developed. Students with computers and internet access would be given the online instructions option. Every two weeks they are required to attend school in person for review and testing. Students without the means to attend online instructions will meet at the school two times a week. They will be given instruction, tested and supplied with home assignments. All students will be given temperature checks, required to wear masks and kept in socially distanced groups of five. Now for the good news!! **All of our sponsored students accomplished sufficient studies to be promoted and are able to return. It appears that we will be supporting 4 additional students at Dominican Joe's.**

Los Ninos Del Reino is not an RNC (licensed) school, therefore the rules of operations are not enforced. However, the school implemented daily temperature checks, a mask requirement and desks that provide greater distancing. **All of our students will be returning.**

One of our two college students is doing quite well and has entered her second year. A local sponsor has been identified for her. The second student had to drop out due to lack of a computer needed to comply with Covid restrictions and the need for food and housing. He is extremely disappointed and hopes to return in the future. We have decided to not support college students in the near future until we can improve student monitoring and establish a separate funding account.

Distribution of funds have been sent to Dominican Joe's for the entire year. An additional distribution will be sent for the 4 new students once they are identified. The funds for Los Ninos were delayed until we had a full accounting of sponsors and students. That funding will be distributed soon.

We (John and Penny Mee) are very grateful to the leadership and staff at Faith Lutheran church that provides this channel of ministry. We are grateful for the sponsors (continuing and new) that are committed to this ministry. We believe that God is blessing these efforts in ways that we may never fully understand. Thank you all for your kindness and love.

## **Living Stones Prison Congregation**

Greetings to you and blessings in the name of Christ. Please allow me to introduce myself: my name is Chris Ode, and I am honored to serve as the pastor of the Living Stones Prison Congregation, the ELCA-associated prison ministry centered here in Shelton at the Washington Corrections Center (and for which Faith Lutheran Church has served as the "fiscal agent" for the past couple of years). A simple explanation of that role is to say that - due to Living Stones' unique structure - we are legally required to have a separate entity administer our financial matters, and Faith graciously agreed to do so a while back.

I cannot overstate how grateful everyone associated with Living Stones is for that arrangement - especially over this past year. What would normally be a relatively minor footnote in our operational structure has - due to the pandemic and its impact on our budget - been a literal lifesaver for this ministry. I want to especially thank Karyn Challender (your brilliant and diligent bookkeeper), Pastor Doug, and your church council for their leadership and support in procuring a PPP loan for Living Stones in 2020 (as well as a possible second one in 2021). Candidly, without that loan (and its conversion into a grant) I am not sure Living Stones would have survived the year.

In a normal year, I'd have a parade of numbers to dazzle you with: hundreds of baptisms, thousands of worship attendees, dozens of congregations visited, etc. But this year - as you might expect - has been quite different: back in March 2020 the Department of Corrections closed the prisons to visitors and volunteers, with no indication that that will change until sometime in mid-2021 (at best). As such, while I've been able to continue ministering inside WCC (at least, until an outbreak after Thanksgiving locked things down even further), most of our efforts have had to focus outside the prison.



To that end, we've seen some tremendous advances this past year in the face of all the setbacks and hurdles:

1. By taking advantage of remote/virtual preaching opportunities, we've been blessed to speak to congregations across the country about the powerful work of Living Stones - developing supporters we would likely never have otherwise met.
2. A new website - with a simpler URL ([livingstonesprisoncongregation.com](http://livingstonesprisoncongregation.com) is wonderful, but also a mouthful) - is readying itself for launch in 2021.
3. We've developed a weekly newsletter to send inside the prison, keeping "our guys" informed about life on the outside and reminding them of their continued value as children of God (submissions for this newsletter are always welcome - email [livingstonesassistant@outlook.com](mailto:livingstonesassistant@outlook.com) if you feel so moved).
4. We've developed a relationship with Underground Ministries - a reentry-focused organization in Skagit County associated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Their strong background in reentry dovetails nicely with our work inside the prison, greatly aiding the transition process for people as they leave incarceration.
5. Donations of fabric were converted into masks by inmate sewers and donations of clothing and backpacks continue to aid men who are released homeless.
6. After a great deal of relationship-building, we have received permission from both the Northwest Washington Synod as well as the Washington DOC to develop a second site for Living Stone at one of the units in Monroe. This news is huge: while the realities of the pandemic limit how involved volunteers and visitors can be just yet, ministering at two locations (in two ELCA synods) opens up congregational resources and opportunities for support that wouldn't be possible via a single location (not only from ELCA-associated congregations, but our ecumenical partners as well).

It's certainly "been a year" - no doubt about it. But as I look back, I am aware of just how powerfully God has continued to work through this ministry - not only despite everything, but in some cases because of it.

As we begin 2021, I ask you to continue to keep Living Stones in your prayers - the men, the staff, the volunteers, and everyone who has supported us over the years. And if you find yourself pondering how you want to spend your energies in the eventual post-pandemic world, know that you would always be welcome to join us in serving Christ "inside".

Blessings,  
Pastor Chris

## **GriefShare - Grief Recovery Ministry**

As we entered 2020 the congregation's leadership became aware that there were a number of families in the congregation in which a family member had recently died and that there was the need for some kind of support ministry. Beginning in mid February, the congregation began a 13 week program developed by GriefShare, an international ecumenical ministry, to help give support to those individuals experiencing this painful loss of a loved one. A leadership team was drawn together, made up of our Intern Pastor, Mary Metzger, St. Andrews Retreat Director, Dan Oberg, and Pastor Terry and Doris Oliver. This program utilized grief recovery video presentations by experienced counselors, followed by small group discussions, and weekly journal exercises. After meeting at the church for four weeks, the Covid-19 pandemic began, and it necessitated changes in order to complete the program. Thankfully, we were able to switch to an online format and began meeting over Zoom. While it was not nearly as effective as connecting in person when dealing with emotional issues like grief, we did manage to complete the series. The seminars drew 18 participants, both from within and outside our congregation, and offered significant gleanings and support to those learning to walk together "through the valley of the shadow" of mourning.

A second GriefShare series was begun in September of 2020, and this was offered in a "hybrid format" with some individuals gathering online through Zoom and others sharing in the same presentations together at the church building, using appropriate social distancing procedures. This group was made up of 14 individuals and will complete the current series in mid January. It is anticipated that GriefShare will be an ongoing ministry of bereavement support with a new series beginning in mid February and continuing through the spring.

Because there are so many layers of loss that people have experienced in the past year with the pandemic, it is anticipated that more diverse ministries of grief recovery and support will be offered through Faith Lutheran Church. In particular there is interest in beginning a "Divorce Care" group later this spring, and then, a more general seminar called "Healing from Loss". As St. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in his day:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God". (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Thanks so much for the opportunity to walk with you and serve together in this important ministry of compassion!

Pastor Terry Oliver

# Contact Us

Pastor	Rev. Dr. Douglas Peterson	doug@faithshelton.org	406-381-0885
Pastor of Spiritual Formation (staff)	Pr. Brenda Satrum	brenda@faithshelton.org	406-381-1919
Parish Ministries Coordinator	Emily Shane	emily@faithshelton.org	360-620-8131
Children and Youth Coordinator	Emily Shane	youth@faithshelton.org	
Bookkeeper	Karyn Challender	flcsheltonbookkeeper@gmail.com	
Church Office		welcomehome@faithshelton.org	360-426-8611



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# 2020 Congregational Committees

## **Council:**

Class of 2020: Joan Detrick, Secretary

Members at Large: Joy Fulling, Jan List, Laury Thorson

Class of 2021: Andrea Miller, President

Members at Large - Krysi Boyer, Barby Pyle (resigned after 2020), Bert Woods

Class of 2022: Richard Ross, Vice President

Members at Large - Eric Barkman, Kiki Rathburn, Brad Riggs

## **Audit Committee** (Appointed by Council)

Class of 2020: Mark Biser

Class of 2021: Kevin Leach

Class of 2022: Paul Miller

## **Endowment Committee**

Class of 2020: Mike Leitch

Class of 2021: Val Paulson

Class of 2022: Larry Johnson, Randy Grauer

## **Memorial Fund Committee**

Class of 2020: Kathy Gunnerson, Kay Thykeson

Class of 2021: Yvonne Larson, Bubbs Fuller

Class of 2022: Lynn Wilson

## **Nominating Committee**

Joan Detrick, Beth Grauer, Jan List, Laury Thorson, Pastor Doug Peterson

## 2021 SAMPLE Ballot

**Approve Council recommendation to ratify the constitution as approved by the Congregation at a special meeting on October 11, 2020. The procedures and policies of the new Constitution will take effect immediately.**

YES NO Please circle one

**Approve Nominating Committee recommended slate of Council Officers and Members at Large and other Committee Members as listed:**

YES NO Please circle one

**Council Officers:** (elected according to 2021 Constitution C11.03)

President: Andrea Miller – one-year-term

Secretary: Joan Detrick – one-year-term

Vice President: Richard Ross – two-year-term

Treasurer: Eric Barkman – two-year-term

**Council Members at Large:**

Krysi Boyer - one-year term

Bert Woods - one-year term

Kiki Rathburn - two-year-term

Brad Riggs - two-year-term

**Endowment Committee**

Mike Leitch – three-year-term (second term)

Ron McMullen – three-year-term

**Memorial Fund Committee** (elected according to MFC by-laws)

Kathy Gunnerson – three-year-term (second term)

Bob Thomas – three-year-term

**2021 Nominating Committee** – one-year-term; (elected according to 2021 Constitution C13.02)

Andrea Miller (Outgoing Council Member)

Bert Woods (Outgoing Council Member)

Toni Herrera

Bill Sleep

**Approve Council recommendation to call to Rev. Brenda Satrum as Associate Pastor, part time (3/8 time), beginning March 1, 2021.**

YES NO Please circle one

**Approve Council recommendation to adopt the proposed 2021 Budget/Spending Plan, which includes compensation for Rev. Brenda Satrum 3/8 time Associate Pastor, in keeping with synod salary guidelines, prorated to reflect the March 1 starting date.**

YES NO Please circle one

# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING **OPENING LITURGY**

## LITANY

L. O God of all power and love ...

**C. ... we give thanks for your unfailing presence.**

L. O God of all power and love, we give thanks ...

**C. ... for the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss.**

L. O God of all power and love ...

**C. ... we ask you to send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire.**

L. O God of all power and love, we ask you ...

**C. ... to revive us to live as Christ's body in the world.**

L. O God of all power and love, we ask to be ...

**C. ... a people who pray, worship, learn, break bread, share life, heal neighbors, bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit.**

L. O God of all power and love, we ask you to be with us ...

**C. ... wherever and however we gather. Unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission, that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

### Build Us Up, Lord



1 Build us up, Lord, build us up; set in  
2 Build us up, Lord, build us up; let our



us a strong foun - da - tion. Lead us to do your  
lives re - flect your glo - ry. Cast a - way all our



ho - ly will; form and shape your new cre - a - tion.  
doubts and fears; help us tell the world your sto - ry.



Build us up, Lord, build us up; as we  
Build us up, Lord, build us up; help us



guide and teach each oth - er, help us to share your love with the  
bear good fruit for you, Lord, give us vi - sion and keep us



world: ev - 'ry sis - ter, ev - 'ry broth - er.  
sure. Grant us faith that's stead - fast and true.



*Refrain*  
Grow - ing in Christ, we plant seeds for the king - dom; we fol - low in



faith what's be - gun! Lord, set in our hearts the pow'r of your



word to spread the news of your Son!

Text: Mark Glaeser, b. 1956, and Donna Hanna, b. 1952  
Text © 2003 Augsburg Fortress

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In the early verses of Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus, a city on the Aegean Sea at the mouth of a river and at the intersection of three trading routes. The letter was written about ten years after the church had started. During the early years of this congregation, Jews and Gentiles from several ethnicities and nationalities had come together to form “one body.” Paul was aware that they had done well and commended them for their faith and love.

The word “one” appears more than seven times in the first four verses. This reflects the importance Paul gave to being called into the “unity of Christ.” He wanted to note that, although many of the church members came from far off, there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” This oneness reflects God’s gift of reconciliation in Christ.

A second emphasis from Paul was that, as believers, they were to “bear with one another in love.” This would require humility, gentleness and patience as each of them practiced their faith. It would require tolerance to “maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

A third emphasis was that each person had been given gifts by God and that these gifts were given to increase the whole. Because the Ephesian church was a young congregation and its members were just beginning in their faith journey, their understandings were often tossed to and fro. But as they grew in faith, each person contributed to building up the body of Christ.

The fourth and final emphasis was that by “speaking the truth in love,” each person must grow into Christ. This means taking time to learn about one another and their gifts. Knowing these gifts, we can do God’s work both within and beyond the faith community. When there are decisions to make or relationships to reconcile, we know to begin with prayer and reflection, always desiring to speak the truth in love — not for our own benefit but for God’s glory, that we might become more complete.

As our members and friends gather today, whether face-to-face or online, we are reminded of our calling into “unity in Christ.” We come from many places and work in many contexts, and yet we recognize “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

Whether new to a worshiping community or further along the journey, we realize that humility, gentleness and patience are required both in the good times and especially in times of uncertainty and struggle. God wants us to be more complete through our work. Christ provides the way. The Holy Spirit is with us for guidance and courage. Each of us has been given the gifts to be complete, and through our faithfulness we will grow stronger and work together as one body.

**LET US PRAY: LORD, LET THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL DWELL IN US DEEPLY. MAY WE EMBRACE THE RECONCILING POWER OF ONENESS WITH CHRIST. MAY THIS ONENESS GUIDE OUR CONGREGATION AS WE LIVE INTO THE NEW REALITIES OF THESE TIMES. AS WE MEET NEW PARTNERS IN MINISTRY, MAY WE TAKE TIME TO GET TO KNOW THEM WITH PATIENCE, HUMILITY AND LOVE. HELP US TO SEE HOW SHARING OUR GIFTS WILL MAKE YOUR WORK EASIER AND MORE FULFILLING WHILE BRINGING ALL OF US CLOSER TO CHRIST. MAY THE BLESSINGS YOU GIVE EACH DAY STRENGTHEN US TO A LIVING, DARING CONFIDENCE IN YOUR GRACE. AMEN.**