

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020



**FIRST COVENANT
CHURCH** *of Omaha*





LEAD PASTOR

Pastor Greg Applequist

Friends at First Covenant,

I have the privilege of writing this year's report from my new office! At the end of May our staff moved from upstairs to the first floor at the north end of the building. It is fun to have a fresh start and to have all of the staff nearer to each other. We are very thankful for Chuck Copeland and Gene Ericson for all their hard work in getting the offices built. I also write this year while we all live through the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. For 12 Sundays (as of June 1), we have had to hold worship services exclusively online and all activities at the church have stopped.

I am so grateful for the way our staff and teams have worked to try and keep everyone connected even as we have been at a distance. While I feel we are adapting well and providing faithful worship, I know we have the opportunity to be more innovative. And that being said, I am excited for the day when we can all be back together again.

I want to provide an update on my goals from last year. The first goal was to work with our building team to finalize the building plans and get shovels into the ground. The plans have been completed and we are in process with the city to obtain construction permits. The building team has done great work and the details seem to be falling in place for a late June or early July start. It has been a chaotic time organizing all the details and moving all the pieces, but in the end, I am very pleased with how this process has gone. Thanks to our building team for all of their great work.

I had hoped to develop my goals in leading the staff well. I feel our staff is in a good place in working together. We have been together for about two and a half years. We are all very comfortable with each other. And I think this next season in ministry will be a challenge for us. We are navigating the challenges of COVID-19, the reality of our building being torn apart, and the wonderful, difficult, beautiful conversations about what our church will look like when the building is completed! There is great opportunity for friction to arise, and I intend to keep our staff moving forward together even in our disagreements and challenges. In fact I think we will grow closer through these challenging days.

My next goal was to think with staff and leadership about the next season of life after the building is completed. We had started these conversations in November, December and January but got derailed once COVID-19 hit. We are back having these conversations and are excited to see what God is inviting us to become in the months and years ahead. My last goal was to connect with the Burmese and Sudanese congregations that use our facility. I have a great relationship with Pastor Johnson of the Sudanese church. There is lots of work we can do in improving that relationship, and our relationship with the Burmese as well.

I continue to work with the Board of the Ordered Ministry for the Covenant Church. I was elected chair last June and will serve one more year before my term is up. The Covenant is in a season of many transitions and it is a privilege to serve the larger Church.

As I look ahead to 2020/21, I hope to focus on the following areas:

- Work with the team that oversees the completion of the building project
- Facilitate conversations with staff and leadership around the future direction and structure of FCC when the building is complete
- Be more intentional in having conversations with staff around how they are doing and how I can support them better
- Read the entire Bible; I am doing this through a daily reading plan with two good friends

I am so thankful for our staff. Chris Wright has jumped in to leading worship and has done a fantastic job. Rick Spurgin has been excellent this year, particularly in navigating all of the challenges that go with moving to a fully online service. John Cooper continues to play the piano and organ with excellence and Ray Grabner has given us another great year with the choir. I am grateful for Everett Kelley, his sunny disposition and his faithful presence as he keeps our building clean. Dominique Kousgaard Parsow continues to be a creative genius and warm presence in the office. I can't begin to explain the joy, wisdom, grace and beauty with which Pastors Mary, Coby and Lyle live their lives and do their work. And Diane Stoner always goes above and beyond to keep all of us ducks in a row! It is a joy to work with such wonderful people. And it is a joy to serve you all at First Covenant.

With gratitude,
Pastor Greg



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

- John 10:10



ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Pastor Mary Peterson

I can hardly believe it is time to write another annual report! This past year has flown by with so many events and activities. I continue to remain grateful for the opportunity to serve at First Covenant Church of Omaha. You are a beautiful family of believers. Over the past 12 months, we have had many important discussions about race, gender and sexuality. I have been blown away by the courageous way which y'all have engaged these topics, all while discussing how to reimagine our building! We continue to be blessed by wise and courageous leadership that consistently reminds us of our vision to Love God and to Love Our Neighbors. As we wrap up this fiscal year in the midst of a global pandemic, I want to say thank you to each of you who have stepped up to care for and support the people in our church and your neighbors. May this next year be one that is full of growth and life for us all.

Here are the highlights of what I have been up to at First Covenant this past year:

- Children's Christian Formation Team (CCFT)
- Working with the CCFT to create goals for our ministry to children and their families; so grateful for the work of this team!!!
- Implementing Shine Curriculum during Children's Covenant Groups
- Serving on teams to provide intergenerational opportunities for people to engage with God's word through Immerse Experiences
- Growing our Godly Play practices to help our youngest kids interact with God's big story and learn to listen to the Holy Spirit
- Supporting the Adult Christian Formation Team to provide excellent Covenant and Community Groups
- Participating in developing a plan to help our church remain connected and provide continued growth during the coming building project
- Participating in a cohort of women pastors in our conference
- Serving on Committee on Ministerial Standing and Nebraska Church Planting Team for the Midwest Conference
- Continue to develop relationships with Iglesia del Pacto Mana to partner with the church in Pedernales, Ecuador
- Enjoying countless cups of coffee and hours of conversation with the amazing people of FCC Omaha

Mary Peterson,
Associate Pastor



YOUTH PASTOR

Pastor Coby Fisher

Greetings Church Family,

It has certainly been an interesting year for us! One filled with adaptations and adjustments, but one also filled with joy. Last summer, Monica and I welcomed our precious daughter, Remi Danae Fisher, on June 3rd. We have been overwhelmed by your encouragement and support of our young family as Monica and I navigate the new realities and responsibilities of being parents. You have been incredibly gracious to us and we are so grateful. We are excited for Remi to grow in this place and for her to experience God's grace expressed through the community of First Covenant Church.

Since our last annual meeting, I have continued to work towards my Masters of the Divinity from North Park Theological Seminary. I have completed four additional courses, including "New Testament 2: The Texts and Their Theology," "Vocational Excellence," "Christian History: The Early Church to Early Reformation," and "Cultural Dimensions of Mission." Each of these courses has been of great value and has produced practical application within my ministry this year. As I continue to pursue my degree, I am excited to be joining the Midwest Conference "Equip" Cohort, which will enable me to study alongside colleagues of the Midwest Conference, and to take courses locally to eliminate time and cost consuming trips to Chicago. I would not be able to pursue this education without the generous support of First Covenant Church. Thank you for encouraging me in this process and investing in me as a pastor and student. During this past year, I also had the opportunity to attend the National Youth Workers Conference in Tampa Bay, as well as the Youth Workers Connection Conference hosted by the Evangelical Covenant Church in Chicago. In both of these events I was able to come alongside leaders within the Youth Ministry community to participate in times of training, worship, and coaching. Both were refreshing and growth filled opportunities for me, and again I am thankful to be part of a congregation that enables me to be part of those experiences.

One of my greatest joys is walking alongside the students of First Covenant Church, and I have had the opportunity to do so for five years now in a variety of roles. I am continually amazed by the ways in which God is working in their lives, and the stories that they have to share. I am so grateful for the numerous volunteers, and the Youth Christian Formation Team that work so hard to create safe and welcoming environments for our students to enter into relationship with one another and with Jesus Christ. Even more so, I am thankful for a congregation that sees and values our students and continues to love and care for them well. As we move forward this year and into 2021, I look forward to being with you all in person again as we walk humbly together, love our neighbors well, and partner with the Holy Spirit in the redeeming work of the Kingdom of God.

Peace,
Pastor Coby Fisher



PASTOR OF ADULT CARE

Pastor Lyle Person

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7



I think this picture reflects what we feel has happened to our world in this first half of 2020. Now we wait to see what God will do with these pieces of our world and our lives. Part of that is planning and strategizing and a larger part is waiting on God in prayer and trust.

In the verses above from Philippians 4, Paul is writing to encourage the Christians in Philippi. But it is agreed that Paul is not writing from the sidelines to cheer on others, he is writing from prison. He knew about anxious situations himself, and also knew how to respond! To pray and give thanks was his method and his advice.

I have been back in this part-time position at FCC for nearly 3 years. For me they have been good years and I pray they have been good for the church as well. I serve alongside a staff that are so amazingly gifted. They are so patient with a senior citizen that struggles to keep up.

Activities looking back:

- I facilitated a study on Prayer
- Sought to visit all shut-ins on a nearly monthly basis
- Sought to coordinate lay visitors to shut-ins
- Worked with leadership of OWLS/CRESENDO in planning activities for 2020 (now all on hold)
- Served as staff liaison to the Congregational Care Team
- Served on the Executive Board of Midwest Covenant Home in Stromsburg

Activities looking ahead:

- Continue the care activities of the past years
- Organizing another Senior Sunday (probably in October)
- Working to facilitate more involvement of the 60 plus age
- Continue to encourage a prayer team for the challenging times

Again I feel privileged to serve with all of you at First Covenant and am grateful for every day of good health to continue. I am living with great anticipation for the renovations of building AND lives in the months and years ahead.

Lyle Person,
Pastor of Adult Care



PASTOR READS

PASTOR GREG APPLEQUIST

Books read:

- **The Gift of Being Yourself**, David Benner
- **Immerse: Kingdoms**, Poets, Chronicles
- **Falling Upward**, Richard Rohr
- **Letters Across the Divide**, Anderson and Zuercher
- **Searching for Sunday**, Rachel Held Evans
- **The Hidden Wound**, Wendell Berry
- **Living Faith**, North Park Faculty
- **White Awake**, Daniel Hill
- **Peculiar Speech**, Will Willimon
- **Of Mess and Moxie**, Jen Hatmaker
- **White Fragility**, Robin DiAngelo
- **Incarnational Ministry**, Samuel Wells
- **The Christian Atheist**, Craig Groeschel
- **Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys**, Richard, Twiss
- **For all the Saints?**, NT Wright

PASTOR COBY FISHER

Books read:

- **White Awake**, Daniel Hill
- **The Grace of Dogs**, Andrew Root
- **Educated**, Tara Westover
- **The Road Back to You**, Ian Morgan Cron & Suzan Stabile
- **Talking to Strangers**, Malcolm Gladwell
- **Sacred Rhythms**, Ruth Haley Barton
- **The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation**, Justo Gonzalez
- **Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City**, Matthew Desmond
- **No! A Guide for Busy People**, Doug Fields
- **Searching for Sunday**, Rachel Held Evans
- **The Burnout Generation**, Anne Helen Petersen
- **Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys**, Richard Twiss
- **The Tipping Point**, Malcolm Gladwell
- **The End of Youth Ministry**, Andrew Root
- **Growing With**, Kara Powell, Steve Argue

PASTOR MARY PETERSON

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 | 09

Books continue to be an important way that I connect with God and continue to learn, here are some that I have read since last fall:

- **Defiant: What the Women of Exodus Teach Us About Freedom**, Kelley Nicondeha
- **I'm Still Here**, Austin Channing Brown
- **Redisipling the White Church**, David Swanson
- **For Everyone**, Jason Reynolds
- **The Gospel People Don't Want to Hear**, Lisa Cressman
- **Wild Goose Chase**, Mark Batterson
- **The Dream of You**, Jo Saxton
- **Life in the Spirit**, Greenman and Kalantzis
- **Moving in the Spirit**, Richard J Hauser
- **The Very Good Gospel**, Lisa Sharon Harper
- **The Universal Christ**, Richard Rohr
- **Entering the Passion of Jesus**, Amy-Jill Levine
- **Preaching the Luminous Word**, Ellen F. Davis
- **Beholding & Proclaiming**, Kristian Hernandez
- **Storm in a Teacup: The Physics of Everyday Life**, Helen Czerski
- **Shades of Light**, Sharon Garlough Brown
- **Love Between Equals**, Polly Young-Eisendrath
- **Institutional Intelligence**, Gordon T. Smith
- **Walking in Wonder**, John O'Donohue
- **Wearing God**, Lauren Winner
- **Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ**, Fleming Rutledge
- **We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship and the Community of God**, Kendall Vanderslice
- **The Reservoir**, Christopher Hall
- **Miracles and Other Reasonable Things**, Sarah Bessey



LEAD TEAM

VISION:

To Love God and Our
Neighbors – Luke 10:27

MISSION:

Walk Humbly with God, To Love Mercy and Act Justly – Micah 6:8
Share the Good News of Jesus – Matthew 28: 19-20

ACTION STATEMENTS:

- We equip disciples for Jesus.
- We invest in our youth and growing their relationship with Christ.
- We have loving, caring, and connected intergenerational relationships.
- We reach the lost and help the hurting.
- We are adaptable for God's purpose.
- We give generously of our lives and resources.
- Prayer is at the heart of who we are and all we do.

I trust that this report finds you well and safe amidst the pandemic that has changed our community over the past several months. Even with the changes and our unfortunate time of not being able to worship together in person, I am excited about the happenings at First Covenant Church and look forward to what God will do with our facility and His congregation. I can not thank our pastoral staff for their tireless work on keeping us engaged during this crazy season. We are so blessed to have wonderful ministers to shepherd the flock! I am wrapping up my third year in this position and look back at where we have been and where we have gone. What a spiritual journey it has been for me and I hope for you as well. I want to remind you about who we are and what we stand for as laid out in our Vision, Mission and Action statements. These items are what drive everything we do in our church. Nothing trumps these statements! As our leadership teams and pastors meet to continue the business and ministry of our church we are constantly measuring everything we do against these statements. We are so blessed by the tremendous love and support both spiritually and financially that FCC shows over and over again.

The 2019-2020 year has been an interesting one. Allow me to highlight a few things we have done this year.

- Our Building Vision Team interviewed potential construction companies to further our work toward completing our building update. We hired MCL to join us and our architect friends from BVH to help us transform drawings and design ideas into actual building plans to transform our building into a structure that will help us minister to our neighbors over the upcoming decades here at 90th and Dodge.
- Our church offices should have been relocated as I write this. They are now located on the North end of our building (formerly the apartment area) and can be accessed by using the door on the 90th street, Northwest corner. A big thanks to Gene Ericson and Chuck Copeland for taking on the role of general contractors to oversee this important first step in our building transformation.
- We are a year into our Capital Campaign, "Building on a Faithful Heritage", and have raised 1.8 million toward our goal of 2 million. Thank you to your continued generosity in investing in God's house. We owe it to past generations to build upon what they started and are paying it forward for those that come to Christ as a result of our ministry in the next 50 years.
- A construction loan has been approved from National Covenant Properties to cover the gap in raised funds and needed funds to complete the project.

- The Lead Team continues to work with our Building Safety team to ensure that we are safe when congregating at our building for worship and meeting events. The current leader of this group is Brad Ericson. He and his team have been doing great work in ensuring that each Sunday our building is safe for our members, guests and most important, our little people.
- We started a process of reviewing our Foundational Teams and assessing the needs of our church and how we go about putting our vision and mission into action. Through this process we may end up with new teams, changing teams, removing teams, etc. in order to allow the church to go about spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Prior to COVID-19, our Foundational teams were working together on plans to reach out to our immediate neighbors, both commercial and residential to invite them into worship/prayer with us during Lent and Easter. My hope is that this will resume as soon as we are able.
- The Lead Team, along with the Finance Team and our church administrator, Diane Stoner, applied for and have received the PPP Loan that became available as the pandemic affected the American workforce. These funds were a blessing and will help ensure that we can pay our staff for several months and allow us to use other funds to help church and community members that are in need of assistance. Another shout out to our congregation and its generosity in difficult financial times while offerings have been down a bit, you are still giving. God will bless you for your faithfulness to his church.
- A larger amount of work has gone into preparation for doing church with our building under construction. This work has recently evolved into how do we come back to face-to-face worship amidst COVID-19 concerns. As I write this report, we are in the process of beginning a return to worship at church, albeit slowly. This situation in some ways has helped us realize that we can do church in other ways (not my favorite) but we can do it via Zoom and streaming online videos. I believe this will help us over the coming months as we have a building under construction and we continue to worship in our sanctuary.
- Finally, countless operational, HR, and procedural actions have been discussed, created or cleaned up to help with FCC operating efficiencies.

Now, let me look ahead with you toward the next year in the life of FCC.

- The Lead Team along with the pastoral staff will continue to look at our current teams and shape them to carry out our vision and mission.
- Continued monitoring of the construction process, capital campaign resources, general budget funds, and general church ministry during this time of construction and ongoing pandemic.
- Last year at this time, I had mentioned that I felt it was time for our congregation to begin conversations about human sexuality and how it fits with our vision, "Love God and Our Neighbors", realizing our neighbors come from all walks of life. We had a start toward this process, but that all got put on hold. However, in the current reality, I believe this can expand to encompass "Black Lives Matter", and other social injustices that continue to flood our news and social media posts. These will not be easy conversations and will require listening well. We must give up our human nature of wanting to be "right" or "proving someone wrong" and actually listen to other human perspectives. A wise person once told me, God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason, listen twice as much as you talk! If you have not noticed, life is tough! Thank God, we have Him to come to with our concerns, prayers, hopes, anger, thanks...you name it, He can take it!

- As I mentioned in my recent letter about our annual congregational meeting, the Lead Team will work on wording to add an addendum to our By-Laws. The intent will be to give clearer instructions on how to carry on these types of meetings in the event of pandemics or other unknown events that would keep us from meeting face-to-face to do church business.

As this year comes to a close, one thing that I reflect back on fondly was getting the experience of leading a class through what I thought was a very powerful study on the book of Jonah. Here are my take-aways from reading and studying this powerful book. I think they really apply in our current setting more than ever:

1. God knows best! We doubt that God is good or that he is committed to our happiness, and therefore if we can't see any good reason for something God says or does, we assume that there aren't any. Don't doubt God!
2. All sin has a storm attached to it. Whether our wrongdoing or not, Christians have the promise that God will use storms for our good.
3. The way to love neighbors is not through sentiment but through costly, sacrificial, practical action to meet material and economic needs.
4. A God who substitutes himself for us and suffers so that we may go free is a God you can trust.
5. Don't read the Bible to feel righteous and wise in our own eyes (the mark of the evil fool). The Bible should be used to humble ourselves, critique ourselves, and encourage ourselves with God's love and grace despite our flaws.

God's Grace and Peace to You,

David C. Hemphill, Ed.D.
Lead Team Chair



FCC Lead Team:

Left to Right:
Lukas Rathjen, David Hemphill,
Jim Horwath, Marcia Weber,
Pastor Greg Applequist, Scott Lickteig,
Dorine Nordstrom, Brandi Kejr

FELLOWSHIP & HOSPITALITY TEAM

Although some of the events we hoped to enjoy together this year will need to be rescheduled or cancelled, we still have highlights to celebrate. We held our best-ever pool party at the George's family pool. With beautiful weather, hamburgers, a waterslide, floaties, and ice cream treats, everything was in place for a fun afternoon together. In October we held our Fall Festival at the Hemphill's. This event is a great way to get to know others within our church or to introduce a friend to FCC and its ministry. In addition to potluck favorites and good conversation, there is the ever-popular hayrack ride, inflatables, yard games, and more. The All Church Retreat (ACR) at Covenant Cedars was held over Labor Day weekend. Fellowship, worship, nature walks, games, zip line and water fun were all a part of this annual weekend that brings us closer to each other and to God. In addition, First Covenant Church hosted the Thanksgiving service and pie social for the area Covenant churches.

We continue to support events like the Christmas Choir Concert and Tea and Christmas decorating at FCC, as well as coordinating Sunday morning coffee and greeters to welcome everyone on Sunday mornings.

We added a few volunteers this year but are always looking for additional members to help plan and execute these meaningful and engaging events. Our hope for next year is to find a team leader! If you feel inspired to meet with us once a month and organize the Fellowship & Hospitality Team's agenda, please feel free to visit with Karen Caverzagie or Terri Small.

Karen Caverzagie,
Interim Leader



BUILDING TEAM

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the building team. It has been a wonderful experience to serve together in this way. We have had many meetings with our architects (BVH) and contractors (MCL), and prayerfully thought through so many details and designs! At this point, the new offices are finished and the staff has moved in. Thanks to Terry Johnson and our staff for designing this new space at the north end of the first floor. And special thanks to Gene Ericson and Chuck Copeland for being the general contractors on all of that work. The staff is getting settled in their new offices and really enjoying being closer together. As we enter June, our final plans have been submitted to the city of Omaha for approval. We hope construction will begin before July 1. The final project cost has come in at just under \$3.5M. There are a number of contingencies within that number, so we are praying that winter stays away and there are no surprises during construction! Here again is what our plans include:

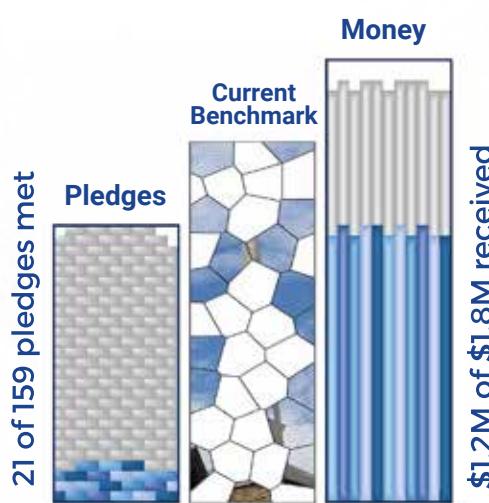
- The first floor will be made level so there is no more ramp. There will be a larger gathering space inside the new doors off the parking lot
- The second floor will extend out towards 90th Street. This will provide for a very large gathering space right outside the sanctuary
- There will be a counter where coffee/refreshments can be prepared and served in the upstairs space
- A new elevator will be installed near the front doors
- 2 new ADA compliant restrooms will be installed on each floor

We are excited for the plans we have and trust our building will be an even more useful tool for ministry in our community.

Thanks again for the opportunity to serve in this way.

Building Team

*Beth Hemphill, Todd Kraaz, Rebecca Gregory, Graham Person, Gene Ericson, Brenda George,
Terry Johnson, Pastor Greg Applequist*



CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM

Children's ministries are booming at First Covenant! We consistently offer high quality kids ministries that have resulted in a myriad of interactions with kids each week via Cov Kids and Covenant Groups. This would not be possible without our wonderful volunteers who selflessly give their time and talents to spend time with kids helping them know that church is a safe place where they are loved!

We continued using the "Shine" curriculum. It brought stories from the Bible to life through age appropriate materials and activities. All kids heard the same story so family members could talk about the ideas after church together. Summer Immerse activities followed our church wide reading of the Bible together through the summer following the Kingdoms readings. These events have given us opportunities to collaborate across foundational teams.

Highlights from 2019-2020:

- Children's programming at ACR, Camp grants
- Fall kickoff at Vala's
- Family Christmas party & Christmas dance
- Ann Voskamp Advent book given to each family
- Children's check in and Welcome Team
- Godly Play, Sunday Covenant Groups
- Cov Kids-weekly Wednesday night activities for kids age K-5th grade
- Safety: Fire drill, curtains in all Cov Group rooms for active shooter situations
- Children's Hospital donations each month
- Summer Immerse Activities 2019: Rahab, Joshua & 12 spies, Tracing the Ark of the Covenant, Naaman & Collecting Medical Supplies, and Josiah trivia night

Hopes for 2019-2020:

- Continue Cov Kids, Covenant Groups, kid participation in worship (singing, dancing, scripture reading), Godly Play
- Parenting resources/seminars
- Create space for families/kids during worship during construction
- Continue to use Facebook group to communicate with kids/families during quarantine

We have a fabulous CCFT team that works very hard to plan, implement, and evaluate the many offerings we're privileged to provide! Next time you see Jean Thomas, Pastor Mary, Jacque Torson, Maggie Person, Hilary Applequist, Brooke Applequist, and/or Amy Weber thank them for their hard, holy work on behalf of kids and families. We have ongoing needs for volunteers to help in the many areas. We seek to have a loving and safe place for our children to learn about Jesus and develop their faith.

Hilary Applequist,
Team Leader



WORSHIP ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY TEAM

The Worship Arts and Technology Team encompasses worship, choir, praise band, communion, readers, ushers, and technology. Our liaison is Pastor Applequist. We began the summer rediscussing the handling of weddings/funerals and their needs. During an all church summer activity, we helped to bring vacation bible school type songs to the event.

At the end of the summer, we helped organize and produce, worship, praise band and technology at Church Camp over Labor Day. Together we had a fall swim party and enjoyed bonding. Our church hosted a very meaningful Thanksgiving Eve service where we were joined by sister churches and ate pie to follow.

The praise band was moved from the left front of the church to the right choir loft under the screen. New music software and a new sound box for managing instruments and microphones were purchased. The choir performed a beautiful Christmas concert and the children from preschool to middle school sang and showed the nativity. New communion wafers were purchased and simple decorations were placed to complete the front of the church. Plans for a new screen was discussed. The decision on the budget was to remain the same with less of a reserve fund.

God threw in a curve ball with the scare of COVID-19 and life as we new it halted. Sunday church went to an online format with minimal participants and our meetings occurred on line. This brought in a whole new host of challenges. Yet, God was good and provided us with our every need. Our technology expert, Rick Spurgin, was a gift from God to help guide us through this. As this church year ends we are anticipating our church slowly opening and trusting God to lead us through this new normal.

Nancy Greufe,
Team Lead



CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM

The Congregational Care Team's mission is to integrate faith and health with the healing love of Jesus Christ: To nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the congregation and the community.

Hello! I'm Jim Ressegieu. I'm new to the group and have taken over leadership from the very capable hands of Karen Kraaz. I am so fortunate to be able to serve with a wonderful Congregational Care team. The team members are: Patti Boyer, Linda Chollett, Linda Lenser, Mary Palmberg, Sharon Peterson, and our pastoral staff coach, Pastor Lyle Person.

We have sponsored the following activities to fulfill our mission during the year.

- Home-bound visitations.
- Nursing home visitations.
- Poinsettias were distributed to home-bound and nursing home residents.
- Monthly blood pressure screenings.
- Quarterly Communion visitation.
- The annual Service of Remembrance.
- Hosting an appreciation dinner for the volunteers who offer transportation, visit shut-ins and serve others in many ways.
- Christmas caroling to shut-in folks and the home-bound. Chili was served to several teams of carolers afterwards.

However, because of the spread of COVID-19 virus and the closing of hospitals and nursing homes to all visitors, all visitations including home visits have been cancelled until sometime later in 2020, or until such a date is announced by city officials. Additionally, the virus has forced a cessation of Communion distribution, transportation activities, Easter lily distribution, Tai Chi classes, and CPR certification until a later date.

But dealing with a virus doesn't mean the team has not found a way to serve! Pastor Lyle has a list and we took that list and gave each team member the names and phone numbers of four or five individuals or couples whom we contact every seven to ten days in order to visit, so even if it isn't in-person we want to make sure no one feels forgotten.

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Ressegieu, Team Lead

ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM

The purpose of the Adult Formation Team at First Covenant Church, is to plan, form, and implement transformative groups that equip disciples to love God and our neighbors, to walk humbly with God, to love mercy and act justly, and to share the good news of Jesus.

The Fall 2019 trimester began the fourth year of offering adult formation opportunities through Covenant Groups. Spring groups were also offered, but for a shortened trimester due to upcoming building construction. The trimester was cut even shorter by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the fall and spring trimesters 16 groups were held and were facilitated by 17 people, some who facilitated more than once. Seven people facilitated for the first time this year! Our team is grateful to the following people who stepped up to facilitate life-changing, transformative Covenant Groups that brought participants closer to God and each other:

Blair Andrews, Greg Applequist, Julie Bonin, Kari Bulgrin, Cynthia Copeland, Bob Drake, Jens Gregory, Beth Hemphill, David Hemphill, Andrew Kejr, Steve Miller, Peggy Price, Jim Ressegieu, Eric Sonsthagen, Janet Truelsen, Jeff Weber, Liz Wright.

The team would also like to thank the following people for their important work as coordinators for Community groups: Julie Bonin (FCC Moms with Littles); Terry Johnson, Pam Norlen, Linda Shallberg (OWLS - Older, Wiser, Loving Seniors); Linda Stanek (Sisters of the Skein); Brad Ericson (Westroads Prayer Walkers), Steve Kraaz (Retired Men's Maintenance); Karen Kraaz (Tai Chi), Ray Grabner (First Covenant Choir); Lou Ann Landholm (Christian Literature/Library).

Looking towards the summer in anticipation of space limitations due to construction, our team partnered with the Congregational Care team to make plans for a new model called Home Base. The pandemic moved up our plans and initial groups were formed in March as a way to stay connected while we could not meet at church or in person.

Beginning June 1, the full plan for Home Base groups will begin. As a church, we will be reading through the entire New Testament together over several months with a daily reading schedule. Home Base groups will meet twice a month online or in person (as restrictions are lifted) to pray together and discuss the week's reading. Groups will be provided with a helpful reading and discussion guide.

Participants will be encouraged to invite friends, family, and co-workers into their groups. Our hope is that everyone at First Covenant Church will join a group so that we can continue to connect and grow as a church throughout the difficulties of building construction and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

I am grateful for team members Andrew Kejr, Jon Markt, Lacey Markt, Eric Sonsthagen, and Linda Stanek, along with Pastor Mary Peterson, our staff liaison, and Brandi Kejr, our lead team liaison. They are an amazing team! At the end of June, I will be stepping down as team chair. I have loved chairing this team and working with each of these gifted, talented people. I have been blessed by them and by this experience and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do it.

Respectfully submitted,
Kay Horwath

ARCHIVES TEAM

The, now diminished Archives Team, has continued to organize and catalog its holdings.

The Website has been expanded and found useful by some seeking information about family members.

The team needs volunteers to assist in its work and in particular an individual is needed who can utilize the software to continue the augmentation of the database.

Remember to look at the website: <https://fccomaha.pastperfectonline.com/>

Bob Ecklund

PROPERTIES TEAM

The Properties Team is called to care for the physical/structural properties of First Covenant Church as well as the maintenance of the lots and grounds here at 201 N. 90th Street. The 2019 fiscal year was certainly one of change and improvement, in order to make better use of the facilities and spaces that we're so blessed to have.

The Tuesday morning retired men's group have provided an indispensable wealth of knowledge, manpower, and resources to the Properties Team. They take care of all lawn mowing, light and often heavy maintenance needs, remodeling projects, painting, and whatever else is asked of them. As a public service announcement, they're always looking for new members to join their group.

We are so excited to see the new building project come to fruition over the next year, and we look forward having an even more usable and welcoming space here at 90th and Dodge.

Thanks to our faithful team members: Chuck Copeland, Gene Ericson, Steve Kraaz, Bruce Peterson, and Lyle Peterson for their expertise and hard work. Thanks to all the members of the congregation who saw a need over the past year and dutifully volunteered to help when needed. Thanks to our custodian Everett Kelly for his daily hard work within this facility.

Graham Person,
Team Lead

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE/ LIBRARY TEAM

The Christian Literature Team is composed of Lou Ann Landholm, librarian; Sandy Champlin, secretary; Peggy Price; and Kathy Shelsta, treasurer. This team is responsible for maintaining the library, checking books in and out, purchasing new materials, and purging old books.

A part of the heritage of First Covenant Church is the strong desire of its members to maintain and grow in spiritual disciplines and to offer to our children and young people an example of people who delight in immersing themselves in literature that does more than entertain, but also encourages, deepens and strengthens their faith and daily walk with the Lord. To that end, we want to thank all of those who contributed to our Tree of Books campaign which is our primary means of support, along with memorial gifts. Because of your generosity, we have added 10 easy books, 2 junior books, and 48 adult books (36 fiction and 12 nonfiction).

We have deleted 154 books, many of those being set out for members and friends of the church to take home or give away. There are ample funds for more purchases once renovations are completed and we have been relocated.

Where will we be relocated? We don't know yet. Some of us might remember that our original location was on the north end of the lower level. Since 1978 we have been in our current location, which has served well, not only as a place to house our books, periodicals and reference materials, but also as a favorite place for small group meetings and an informal and safe place where families and friends can connect.

We would like to offer a thank you to those who thoughtfully brought in boxes for us to use to pack the books. And we want to offer a huge thank you to Everett Kelly who boxed up all of the books, labeled the boxes, and hauled them all into room 202.

As we journey on this new adventure of renovation, Building on A Faithful Heritage, we continue to strive to fulfill our mission of supporting the ministries of First Covenant Church through provision of resources for the congregation. A sincere effort is made to provide a balance of literature for varied ages and interests and to promote individual spiritual growth and wholesome reading.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Shelsta

YOUTH CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM

The Youth Christian Formation Team (YCFT) continually seeks to provide opportunities for our students to Engage in relationships with Jesus Christ and others, be Equipped through prayer, scripture, and discipleship, and Embark on an outward mission and lives of invitation. Over the past year, our students have continued to gather on Sunday and Wednesday evenings for a time of fellowship and Bible Study, at X-Roads (6th-8th) and Hi-League (9th-12th). Additionally, our middle school students participate in regularly scheduled Sunday School classes, while our high school students have been participating in the larger structure of Covenant Groups. These weekly gathering are not possible without our wonderful volunteers who graciously share their lives with our students. We continue to be grateful for each of them.

In addition to these gatherings, we have also rolled out a new supplementary Confirmation Curriculum. Rather than having Confirmation be tied directly to the middle school Sunday School hour, we have created a 12 week curriculum that is open for any student in grades 7-9, that meets at a separate hour during the week. We have done this in an effort to make Confirmation a more robust and intentional experience for our students, that is carried out in tandem with Sunday School and Youth Group participation. This year's class has been a joy to work with, and while we were saddened to not have Confirmation Sunday on May 3rd, we are excited to have Confirmation Sunday on August 30th of this summer! Confirmation is so enriched by the mentors who walk alongside our students through and beyond this process.

Thank you to all of you who are currently serving as mentors or have done so in the past.

In the midst of COVID-19 we have had to continually adapt, but we are so grateful for technology that has allowed us to continue each of our ministries in an online format. Although it often feels like a cheap substitute for our in person gatherings, we have still been able to have formative discussions together while also building connections and laughing a lot! We certainly hope to be together again soon, but we will continue to follow appropriate recommendations and guidelines.

An unfortunate loss due to COVID-19 was the planned trip for our high school students to Pedernales, Ecuador. We had a group of 16 that were committed and ready to go, but due to the present circumstances it was clear we needed to cancel this years trip. We were grateful to have the finances to cover the expenses that had already been incurred by Merge Ministries, as well as support the staff that would have served alongside us and facilitated the trip. We are excited for the relationship between FCC and Pedernales, Ecuador to continue in the years ahead!

As we look to this coming year, we are revisiting our weekly rhythms and working to determine how to best serve our students during this time of disruption to our building. We remain committed to being together and living into our Engage, Equip, and Embark initiatives. We are also very excited and began planning for UNITE 2021 (formerly CHIC) which will be held in July of 2021!

We continue to be grateful for each of you as you continue to be a church who loves and supports our students well. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Pastor Coby Fisher
Bill Torson - YCFT Chair

PROPOSED BUDGET

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 | 23

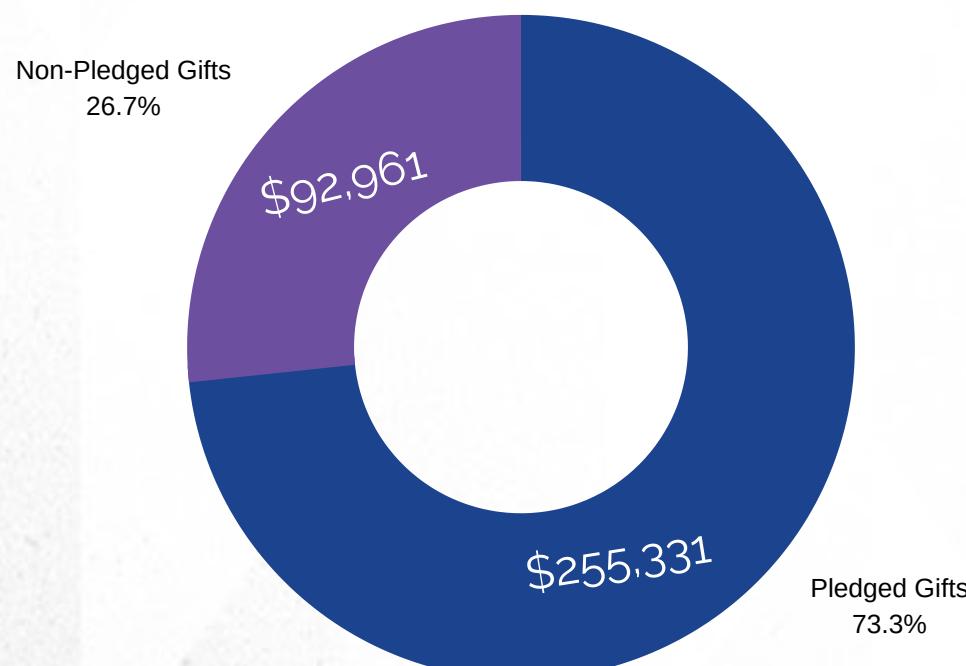
GENERAL FUND PLEDGES

71 households pledged \$535,944 to the general fund for the calendar year January 1 - December 31, 2020



GENERAL FUND BUDGET

The budget for the general offering totals \$800,000 for fiscal year July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020. To date we have received \$255,331 in pledged gifts and \$92,961 in non-pledged gifts.



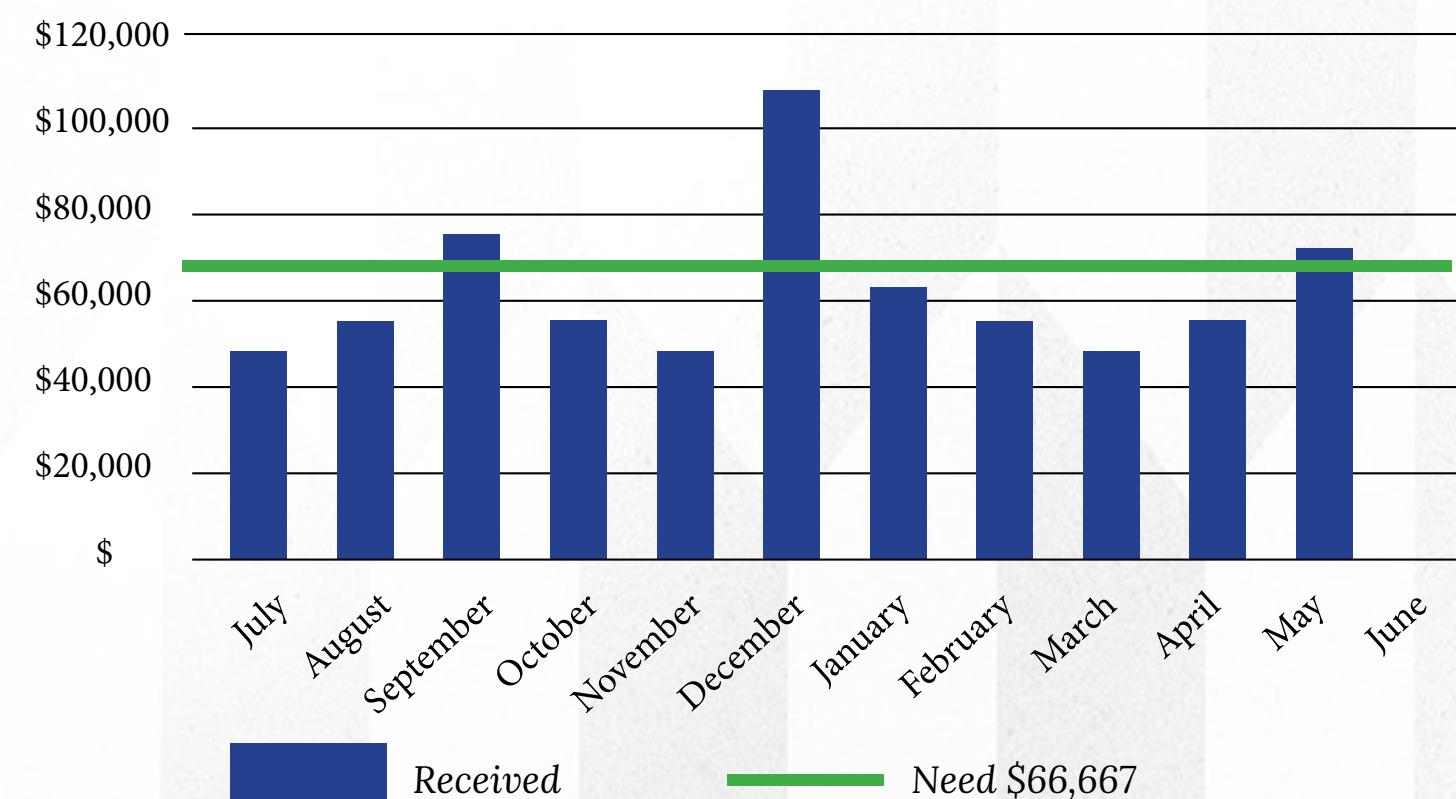
FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP TEAM

My faith flourishes when I witness the selfless generosity of this congregation. Our church habitually finishes the fiscal year with a budget surplus, and this year is no different. In the past, we have used these overages to improve our worship space, educate new pastors, sponsor church plants, and support our active mission work. Last fall, we used a portion of our surplus to do God's work in a much more personal way: members of our congregation received direct cash payments earmarked for creative and spontaneous acts of generosity directed to those in need. This year's surplus will go towards both the new difficulties and the new opportunities that our church will face in the coming year.

Our first mortgage payment to Covenant Properties comes due in January, and our church community continues to face hardship and uncertainty in the midst of a global pandemic. These and other challenges will stress our finances for the coming fiscal year. However, we foresee new possibilities for discipleship with our revitalized worship space and the ever-changing circumstances of our world. Having witnessed the unceasing generosity of our church community, I have no doubt we will meet our obligations and avail ourselves of these opportunities. We express our faith in how we share the blessings God has given us, and none can doubt our faith abounds.

*Andrew Lieben,
Team Lead*

MONTHLY GENERAL FUND OFFERING JULY 2019-MAY 2020



NARRATIVE BUDGET

Every year the Financial Stewardship Team (FST) is tasked with developing a budget. This shows where the resources of the church come from (income) and where the resources are expended (expenses).

INCOME

The majority of First Covenant Church (FCC) income comes from congregational offerings totaling \$823,000. This year, we will receive supplemental offerings of \$68,000 through an extension of our Building on a Faithful Heritage Campaign to cover our new mortgage obligation. We receive rent for parking lot usage, distributions from our Foundations, and other miscellaneous gifts; in all, the amount of this extra income is \$48,000. Our total income is \$939,000.

EXPENSE SUMMARY

Our largest expense is for people. The Personnel Relations Team (PRT) oversees about \$495,700. This amount pays for salaries, health care, pensions, dues and other associated costs to develop and deliver ministry to our church and community. Building maintenance and general church operations run an additional \$248,800. These items are overseen by our Properties Team, Financial Stewardship Team (FST), Archive Team, and Safety Team. The remaining Foundational Teams are allocated an additional \$194,500 to aid in the ministries and mission of our church. The details of each teams' responsibilities are detailed below.

EXPENSE DETAILS

The Properties Team is charged with keeping the building and grounds in good order and operational to ensure ministry can be accomplished. General maintenance, power, gas, computers, water and even trash pickup are included in their responsibilities. The FST works in conjunction with all the ministry teams to see that all income and expenses are appropriately accounted for and disbursed. They also ensure the mortgage, insurance, fees, and taxes are all current and paid. The Archive Team maintains the historical record of the church, and the Safety Team provides a secure and welcoming environment for worship. Finally, the PRT, Properties Team and the FST all work behind the scenes to ensure the other Foundational Teams have the resources necessary to teach and preach the good news of Jesus Christ within FCC, throughout our local community, and across the world. Aside from the pastors' personnel costs, which are associated with the appropriate Foundational Teams below, the total expense for these teams is \$274,149.

Our Adult Christian and Children's Christian Formation Teams center on teaching us the Good News, equipping us for evangelism, and helping us understand God's great promises. These mandates are coupled with the calling to serve our local community and our church. Both teams are led by Pastor Mary. We invest 135,834 from the budget to these ministries.

The Youth Christian Formation Team, led by Pastor Coby, works for the spiritual development of our Jr. and Sr. High students. His budget includes retreats, DC (Confirmation), mission trips, Sunday School materials, CHIC fees, and other miscellaneous items totaling \$101,471.

Pastor Greg oversees the Worship Arts and Technology Team, Fellowship and Hospitality Team, Mission Team, and Lead Team. These groups are responsible for worship, music, general hospitality. They also facilitate events in and out of church including the All-Church Retreat, leadership development meetings, and FCC's delegation to the Covenant Annual Meeting. The Mission Team supports the Midwest Conference and the National Denomination. We support these ministries with \$345,623 from the budget. The Congregational Care Team, led by Pastor Lyle, ministers to our senior members, homebound and ill with visitation and prayer. As we are aging we must be thankful for the leadership and volunteers who watch over the congregation so none are forgotten or left behind. This ministry's expense totals \$81,923.

A NOTE ON OUR SURPLUS

We enter the coming fiscal year with an anticipated surplus of \$60,926. This surplus is attributable to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) grant that we received in May, decreased operating expenses related to the cancellation of church activities, and the unceasing magnanimity of our congregation. Given the continuing economic uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and our new mortgage obligation, we have decided to save these funds to cover any potential shortfalls in the coming year.

MEMBERSHIP STATS

June 10, 2019 – June 7, 2020



BIRTHS

Paisley Ericson
Benjamin Thabal



BAPTISMS

Molly Bonin
Jacob Kejr
Joseph Kejr



DECEASED

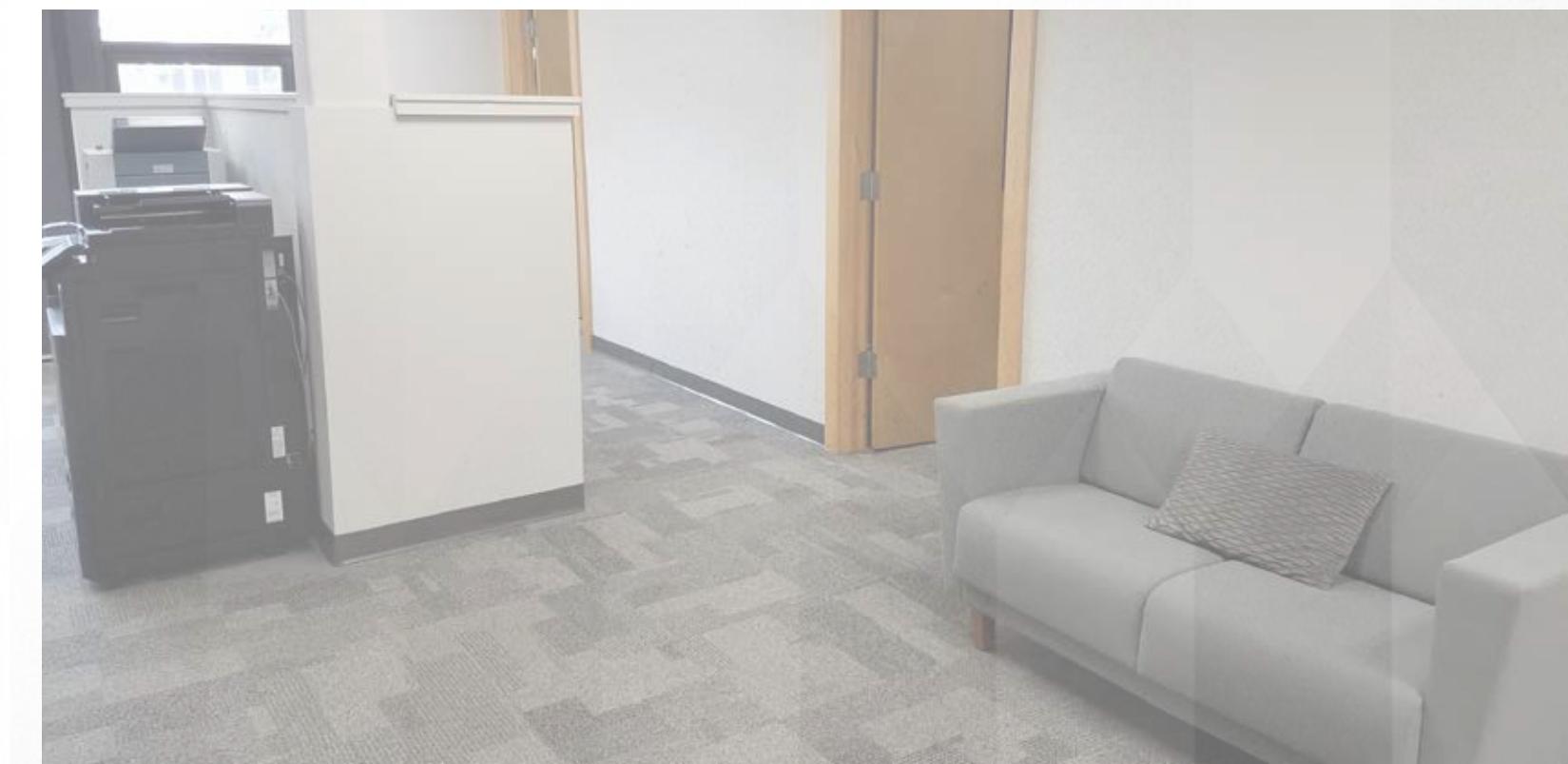
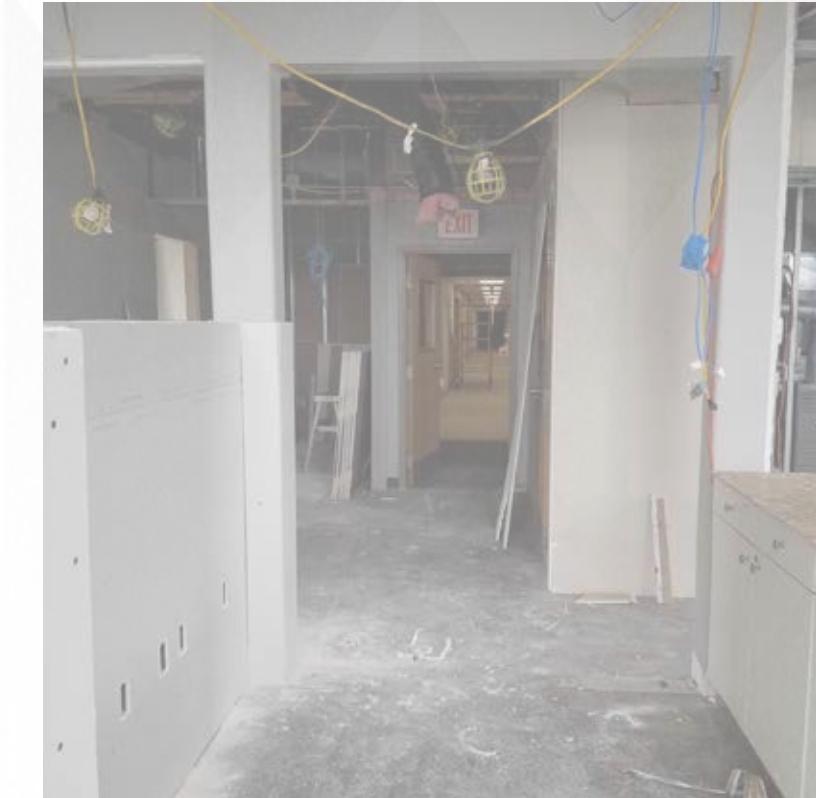
Dean Bragg
Miriam Coleman
Donna Langbehn
Robert Neiens
Rae Olson
Jeff Pinegar
Bonny Swaggard
Shirley Woodward



MEMBERS ADDED

Lois Christensen
Milt Christensen
Rob Fisher
Betsy Frodermann
Brian Frodermann
Terry Johnson
Carlos Maspons
Debbie Maspons

NEW OFFICE SPACE COMPLETE



The staff are getting settled into the newly completed office space at the North end of the lower level.

Having an entrance close to the office has made greeting visitors and receiving deliveries so much easier. We all have a bit of organizing yet to do, but so far we are enjoying the space!



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

May God richly bless you as you gather for your congregational Annual Meetings and celebrations. I greet you on behalf of the entire Evangelical Covenant Church. I am deeply grateful for our partnership in the whole Gospel. We join as mission friends to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of Jesus.

We are a union of 875 churches on mission together, which is to join God in his mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world. The Holy Spirit is the Blazing Center of that mission, and we advance that mission through a multiethnic mosaic of churches.

This aligns with one of our key Covenant Affirmations: a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out this mission, serving locally and partnering together to impact more than 2.5 million people in close to 60 countries and on five continents. Our kingdom impact is only possible through the Holy Spirit, who is the personal agent of Christ's presence and power.

As you gather to celebrate this past year of ministry and plan for the year ahead, remember that you are partners in ministry with many other Covenanters. You are not alone. Most important, know the Holy Spirit will continue to comfort, strengthen, unify, and instruct you. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit continues to lead us deeper in Christ and further in mission.

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

In Christ's Love,
John S. Wenrich

President



LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

God is doing amazing things throughout the Midwest Conference! From baptizing new disciples to birthing new churches, from raising up called and gifted female pastors to intentional conversations around race—Midwest Conference churches are truly transforming the lives and communities around them!

We continue to develop and shape resources around our 10-year vision to reach 8000 more disciples through 140 churches, with greater ethnic diversity and increased female leadership so that we may more fully reflect the kingdom of God as we continue to lean into the work to which he has called us. In 2019, seven churches entered into church planting agreements. Five of these churches are serving ethnic or multi-ethnic populations, and four of these churches are being led or co-led by female pastors. We held three Exploring Call retreats for female leaders, with one of those geared towards students. We recently completed our third MWC Sankofa Journey with representation from eight of our MWC churches, and we are offering our first Journey to Mosaic experience in February 2020. Camps and youth retreats are creating space for young people to know Jesus. Soon, you will hear about a cohort that will help develop pastors by providing a North Park Seminary education right here in the Midwest. Churches working together in the Midwest Conference continue to impact the lives of the lost and hurting in their own communities. We are grateful for your ministry!

A kingdom movement of this magnitude is only possible when God's people come together to bear the workload. Thank you for your ongoing encouragement, faithfulness in prayer, and generous partnership as we take each step towards fulfilling our 10-year vision. I am grateful for your persistence in seeing our shared ministry extend into new spaces each year.

I invite you to join us for the Annual Ministry Celebration to be held at Christ Community Covenant Church in Arvada, CO, on April 24-25, 2020, where we will focus on the work being done to make and deepen disciples in our midst. I look forward to an incredible celebration of the work God is doing in our conference churches!

As your congregation gathers for its own Annual Meeting, I pray that it will be a celebration of all that God is doing within your local context. Thank you for the privilege of serving alongside you in ministry. We pray for you and give thanks to God for the impact you are making throughout the region.

To God be the glory!

Tammy Swanson-Draheim
Superintendent



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CHURCH of Omaha

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