

Annual Report 2021 - 2022

201 N. 90th Street, Omaha, NE 68114

fcomaha.org

 **FIRST COVENANT**
CHURCH of Omaha
201 N. 90th Street, Omaha, NE 68114
fcomaha.org

LEAD PASTOR Greg Applequist



Annual Report 2022

I continue to give thanks for the opportunity and privilege to serve as the Lead Pastor at First Covenant Church. I am always grateful for the great staff I work with, for our leaders who have navigated these past few years with honesty and integrity, and for the chance to know all of you better and better. This year I am particularly thankful for the opportunity to spend the summer on Sabbatical.

This past year we have continued to reevaluate the structure of our church and how we are organized to live out the vision God has given to us. You will see in this report a more comprehensive and concise ministry plan from each of our teams. We have started to think much further out in our planning to minimize overlap in activity and to increase our intentionality in what we offer. Our hope continues to be that all of us will Love God and Love Neighbor more. I am excited to see what God does in and through our teams and church in the next year.

I am grateful you have provided the space for me to take a sabbatical this summer. The goal of the sabbatical is to provide intentional space where I can learn to recognize God’s presence wherever I am and to grow in my emotional and spiritual health. I plan to do this through extended times of solitude and silence, through reading books, intensive counseling, life giving activities like spending time with my family, walking outside, golfing and traveling. I feel that taking a step back from ministry will give me the space to grow in unimaginable ways. I was able to secure a grant for \$50,000 that includes money for the church to grow in the same ways I am intending to grow: in spiritual and emotional depth and maturity. I am excited for our whole church to engage in the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality material this coming fall. This is a tremendous opportunity for me, and for the whole church. I am curious to see how God moves at First Covenant in my absence; how you all continue to grow to be the church; how you stand in the places where I normally stand; and how you grow closer to each other, our neighbors and God this summer.

It continues to be a great gift to teach, preach, visit and lead at First Covenant. I am excited for what God has in store for all of us in the next season of our lives together.

Pastor Greg Applequist

SUPERINTENDENT Tammy Swanson-Draheim



December 2021

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.
Isaiah 43:19*

Dear Friends,

God is doing a new thing here in the Midwest Conference; can you feel it? While the pandemic has left many grappling with shifts in church dynamics and changes to long-held expressions of worship, we are grateful to serve a faithful God who goes before us, making a way for the Church and her people in this new landscape. Throughout the region, MWC churches and leaders are leaning into this promise as they join God in this new work he is doing.

Over this past year, a Journey Together cohort has provided space for prayer and encouragement for 40 conference leaders as they explore the impact of our current cultural moment on the future of ministry. Churches like Trailhead Covenant in Longmont, CO, and Engage South KC in Kansas City, MO, are embracing new models and rhythms of ministry that encompass holistic expressions of our faith. Students in our Equip program remain focused and committed in their second year of study, and we are excited to launch a second cohort in 2022. MWC youth ministry is taking new shape as a team of conference leaders establishes Engage, a conference-wide discipleship experience for high school students to be held in July 2022. Covenant Cedars Bible Camp of Hordville, NE, is looking to the future of camp ministry under the leadership of a new executive director. Here in the Midwest, new is continually springing up from the old, and God is in the midst of it all.

The realities of pandemic life pushed us into new spaces in 2021 as we held our annual celebration virtually. This year, I am excited to invite you to join us April 29-30, 2022, for our Annual Ministry Celebration, to be held at Christ Community Covenant Church in Arvada, CO. We look forward to witnessing God do a new thing as we combine both virtual and in-person elements to make the gathering more accessible than ever before. As your congregation gathers for its own Annual Meeting, know that we join you in celebrating the new and exciting things God is doing in your church and community. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to the Gospel.

On a personal note, as I approach the anniversary of Kelly’s passing, I continue to be blessed by the love and compassion that has been extended to me by the Midwest Conference family in this past year. Thank you for your immense kindness, shared memories, and faithful prayers. It is a joy to partner with you in this Kingdom work.

To God be the glory!

Tammy Swanson-Draheim
Superintendent

PRESIDENT John Wenrich



DECEMBER 9, 2021

Dear Mission Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you gather for your congregational annual meeting, I want you to know how much I appreciate you and our partnership in the Gospel. Together we share and tell more of God's story. Thank you for the many ways you have proclaimed and demonstrated the love of Christ. This is who we are: a Gospel-centered people, grounded in the Scriptures, and unified in our shared mission.

Our mission is to join God in God's mission to see more disciples in more populations in a more caring and just world. This mission advances through the mosaic of churches of which we are all a part. Together we bring hope and transformation to a world weary with despair and confusion.

Missional traction flows from our relationship with Jesus and with each other. The Holy Spirit continues to do amazing things on, in, and through the Evangelical Covenant Church. Yes, we have many challenges, we are working through those challenges, and we will emerge stronger on the other side.

I recently visited two vibrant Covenant churches on a Sunday morning. Although the churches were 22 miles apart and different in ministry style, I was delighted to hear both pastors preaching on the Holy Spirit. A conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit is one of our Covenant Affirmations. As a mosaic of mission friends, we continue to listen to what the Spirit is saying to churches. May we have ears to hear and hearts to respond.

As we navigate the days ahead, let us hold fast to the enduring promises of God's kingdom. May we remain centered by asking the three Covenant questions:

- Where is it written?
- How goes your walk?
- Are you alive in Christ?

I am confident that these questions will help to keep us focused on what matters most and on mission. Remember that you are not alone. You are part of a union of churches, over 900 strong throughout North America. Together we share the Gospel in word and deed in more than 50 countries. Together we see more people transformed by the love of Christ. Thank you for all the ways you remain faithful in giving to our shared mission. We can do more with God and for God as we join our hearts and hands for mission. I encourage you to stay connected and encouraged by signing up for Covchurch Now, a weekly email communicating the stories of God's work among us. You can sign up online [here](#).

I pray that in the coming year, God blesses you and your congregation in every way. May your congregation overflow with joy and thanksgiving as you celebrate the work of God in your midst. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ's love,

John Wenrich,
PRESIDENT, EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

ASSOCIATE PASTOR Mary Peterson



Last fall, I received an invitation to attend a Soul Care retreat sponsored by World Vision. At first I thought it was a scam because they offered it completely free and all expenses paid. I flew to Salt Lake City and climbed on a bus to head to the mountains. I spent three days listening to dynamic speakers, hearing from other leaders and being renewed. I picked up a card at a table with Psalm 63:1-5 written on it. I have found myself drawn to these words over and over again. "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." This last season has often felt like a dry and parched land, and, like the psalmist, I have reminded myself to pause and notice... to be still and know God. I remind myself of those places when I have seen God and stood in awe and wonder. I remind myself to praise God, even in the midst of struggles. We are called to follow God not just for a season, but for a lifetime. God is always at work around us- even in the dry and thirsty lands. Soong Chan Rah says that, "Hope is dependent on who God is rather than what we can do for ourselves." This year I have often reminded myself to focus on who God is rather than to rely on what I can do. It is my prayer that our church can do the same.

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

- Shifted to supporting Love God: Worship team as they plan thoughtful worship experiences for our church.
- Began working with the Love the World team to develop rhythms that help us participate in God's work throughout the globe, specifically in South Sudan/ Ethiopia and Ecuador.
- Worked with the Children's Christian Formation Team to restart children's formation groups on Sundays and Wednesday evenings.
- Praying with and for many of you throughout the year.
- Completed the first of three years of a Doctorate of Ministry through Fuller Seminary.
- Participating in a cohort of women pastors in our conference.
- Served as a delegate for FCC at the Conference Annual Ministry Celebration and the ECC Annual Meeting.
- Serving on Biblical Gender Equality Commission, Committee on Ministerial Standing and Nebraska Church Planting Team for the Midwest Conference.

Pastor Mary Peterson

YOUTH PASTOR Coby Fisher



Greetings! Whenever I am invited to contemplate on the events and experiences of a year, I always feel the immediate tension of how much time seems to have passed while simultaneously wondering how it could have gone so quickly. I find myself amazed at how much can be done in a year, while also frustrated by how much remains undone. The question that inevitably looms for me as a result is, “am I doing enough?” I have come to realize that this question isn’t a very helpful one. Understanding that there will always be more to do and more to learn, the question I find more fruitful is “am I growing?” With gratitude to First Covenant Church, I am confident that I have grown this past year and will continue to grow in the year ahead. Collectively, you have generously afforded me the opportunities and room to grow that I hope bears fruit in our life and ministry together.

This past year, with your support, I continued to pursue my master’s degree from North Park Theological Seminary. I have done so in partnership with the Midwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, studying alongside peers and colleagues within the region. My educational growth this year was highlighted by two courses that I particularly enjoyed: Pastoral Care and Counseling and Leading and Teaching in Ministry. Both courses were of high value in immediate practical application. Beyond course learning, the comradery of the cohort has been meaningful for me personally and in ministry.

As a congregation, you demonstrated your care for my family and I as we welcomed my newborn son, Charlie, on March 25th, 2022. We were encouraged by the generous meals, notes and gifts that we received. Even more so, the time that was gifted to me to be home and present with my family is something for which I cannot fully express my gratitude. Those few weeks were filled with joy, challenge and certainly growth. You provided me the time and space to care well for my wife and kids, and the space to focus on growing as a husband and father. Thank you.

In addition to these distinct opportunities, I have also grown as a result of simply walking with each of you. As we have done life together, I have been encouraged, challenged, and provided new perspectives. I have been reminded of God’s faithfulness in moments of celebration and in moments of grief. I have experienced God’s gracious love tangibly through the words and deeds of this community. I have been reassured of the call to act justly, love mercy, walk humbly, and proclaim the good news of Jesus as we explore our mission together to Love God and Love Neighbor.

My hope for the year ahead is to continue to grow. More so, my hope is that First Covenant Church would be a community of people committed to growing - not organizationally, but personally. I wonder what God may do in and through our community if we each desired to grow as full persons made in God’s image, aware that there is still so much for God to teach and form within us. I am excited to see the ways that God would work through a community of people open to His immanent presence, formative power, and missional prompting.

With gratitude,
Pastor Coby Fisher

PROPOSED BUDGET

FIRST COVENANT CHURCH				
Current Budget vs Proposed Budget				
	2021-2022 Budget	2021-2022 Projections	2022-2023 Proposed	Year to Year Change
Unrestricted Income				
Offerings	\$ 730,000	\$ 634,746	\$ 635,000	\$ (95,000)
Misc Income (reserves, parking lot & rent)	\$ 152,670	\$ 150,260	\$ 277,517	\$ 124,847
Foundation Income	\$ 10,000	\$ 16,586	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Youth Christian Formation	\$ 2,300	\$ 2,015	\$ 2,300	\$ -
Love FCC - Celebrate	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,331	\$ 1,000	\$ -
Total Unrestricted Revenues	\$ 895,970	\$ 804,938	\$ 925,817	\$ 29,847
Unrestricted Expenses				
Personnel Relations	\$ 479,620	\$ 464,578	\$ 495,867	\$ 16,247
Properties	\$ 137,604	\$ 134,423	\$ 125,700	\$ (11,904)
Financial Stewardship (tithe, mortgage)	\$ 230,296	\$ 176,955	\$ 256,800	\$ 26,504
Adult Christian Formation	\$ 1,650	\$ 157	\$ 1,650	\$ -
Children's Christian Formation	\$ 11,000	\$ 5,844	\$ 11,000	\$ -
Youth Christian Formation	\$ 8,300	\$ 6,937	\$ 8,300	\$ -
Worship & Music Team	\$ 6,800	\$ 3,968	\$ 6,800	\$ -
Lead Team	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,338	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Love FCC (care, celebrate, connect)	\$ 8,200	\$ 4,090	\$ 7,200	\$ (1,000)
Love Omaha	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,260	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Love the World	\$ 2,500	\$ 388	\$ 2,500	\$ -
Total Expenses	\$ 895,970	\$ 804,938	\$ 925,817	\$ 29,847
Net Gain or (Loss)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Misc. Income will include the PPP funds and reserve transfers to balance the budget this fiscal year. This will exhaust the PPP funds and the church reserves will be used to balance the budget for 2022-2023 fiscal year.				
If you have questions, please contact:				
Diane Stoner: 402-391-2747				
Andrew Lieben: 402-639-0350				
Scott Lickteig: 402-515-6721				

NARATIVE BUDGET

Every year the Financial Stewardship Team 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 \$635,000. Additionally, we receive rent for parking lot usage, distributions from our Foundations, and other miscellaneous gifts. Finally, as we did last fiscal year, we will be relying on income received in prior years. Our total budgeted income for the 2022-2023 fiscal year is \$925,817.

Expenses

Staff: Our largest expense is for people. The Personnel Relations Team has a budget of \$495,867. This amount pays for salaries, health care premiums, retirement plan contributions, dues and other associated costs to develop and deliver ministry to our church and community. Our staff members work in concert with the Foundational Teams listed below to fulfill the mission of our church.

Formation: Our Formation Teams focus on teaching us the Good News, equipping us for evangelism, and helping us understand God’s great promises. The Children’s Christian Formation Team introduces the story of God to children up through 5th grade. The Youth Christian Formation Team works for the spiritual development of our Jr. and Sr. High students. And the Adult Christian Formation Team pursues the continuing transformation of all adults in our congregation. The combined budgets for these teams total \$20,950; these funds pay for Sunday School materials, group experiences, mission trips, DC (Confirmation), and other miscellaneous items.

Worship: Our Worship Team works toward creating a Sunday morning worship experience that is authentic, excellent, invitational, and accessible. The budget for this team is \$6,800 which covers music, technology, and general hospitality for both congregants and visitors.

Stewardship: Our Stewardship Teams work behind the scenes to ensure that all other Foundational Teams have the resources necessary to teach and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Properties Team is charged with keeping the building and grounds in good order and operational to ensure ministry can be accomplished. The Financial Stewardship Team works in conjunction with all other teams to see that all income and expenses are appropriately accounted for and disbursed. The Financial Stewardship Team also supports the Midwest Conference and the National Denomination of the Evangelical Covenant Church. The total budgeted expense for these teams is \$387,500.

Love: Our Love Teams work to fulfill our church’s vision to love our neighbors. The Love FCC Team focuses on caring for, connecting with, and celebrating alongside all members of our congregation, particularly the homebound and those most in need. The Love Omaha Team is tasked with encouraging members of our church to show the love of God to those in the Omaha metro area through acts of service. Finally, the Love the World Team seeks international engagement, supports our missionary families, and maintains our partnership with Iglesia del Pacto Evangelico el Mana in Pedernales, Ecuador. The combined budgets for these teams is \$14,700.

PASTOR READS

PASTOR Greg Applequist's Top Ten:
Where Prayer Becomes Real – Kyle Strobel and John Coe
Jesus and John Wayne – Kristin Kobes DuMez
What if Jesus was Serious About Prayer – Skye Jethani
The Deeply Formed Life – Rich Vilodas
Race and Place – David Leong
A Church Called Tov – Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer
Better Together – Danielle Strickland
Fearfully and Wonderfully Made – Philip Yancey and Paul Brand
Tracks in the Straw – Ted Loder
Freedom of Simplicity – Richard Foster



PASTOR Mary Peterson's Top Ten:
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:
A Church Called Tov - Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer
The Jesus Model - Dietrich Schindler
In the Shelter - Padraig O Tuama
Life Together - Dietrick Bonhoeffer
Faithful Presence - David Fitch
When the Universe Cracks - Angie Ward
What if Jesus Was Serious? - Skye Jethani
Better Together - Danielle Strickland
Forty Days on Being an Eight - Sandra Maria Van Opstal
Imagining the Kingdom - James K.A. Smith

PASTOR Coby Fisher's Top Ten:
Not Done Yet - Beth Severson
Seeing Jesus in East Harlem - Jose Humphreys
Embodied - Preston Sprinkle
What if Jesus was Serious? - Skye Jethani
Practicing Christian Education - Mark Madix
Impact Players - Liz Wiseman
Costly Obedience - Mark Yarhouse
Surprised by Hope - N.T. Wright
Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership - Ruth Haley Barton
Churches and the Crisis of Decline - Andrew Root

LEAD TEAM

In the last several months, I seem to be drawn back to the old song, “I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together! All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we’re the church together!” In this season, the words of this song seem all the more paramount. I am grateful for the work that was set into action last year - to work on the structure of our formation teams, in order to better live out our vision, “To Love God and Our Neighbors.” These teams, including formation, worship, stewardship, care, Love Omaha, and Love the World, have been essential in helping us move past our pandemic time and back into community, learning, and service.

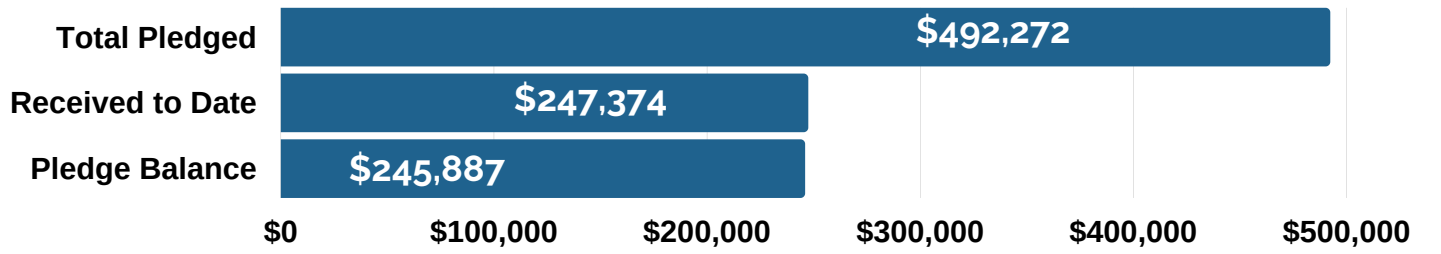
Part of this process has included finishing the First Covenant renovation! We moved into our new space in September, and began a journey through the different seasons of the church; our space was used to celebrate and mourn with many this past year. We are learning how to best use our new space and invite others into our place. We remain thankful for the generosity, the vision, and the many people who took this idea and propelled it to reality. Praise be to God! With this beautiful space, comes our new reality of a mortgage which will kick in this fiscal year. I am thankful for our finance team members who have watched over this progress. I am thankful to those who have completed their campaign pledges and have made additional pledges. We will all, together, need to continue to be faithful givers. This fiscal year, we will use PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) funds to cover some of our general operating expenses. Of course, any deficit is not sustainable, and we may need to consider another campaign to pay down our debt, or a restructuring of our expenses.

- This next season of First Covenant will require all of us working together to live out our 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 our resources.
 - Prayer is at the heart of who we are and all we do.

Our pastors have frequently asked us, “Where do you see yourself in the story?” I ask you, as you look over the action statements of First Covenant, where do you see yourself in our story? We are made of many parts but of the same body. As Paul writes, “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

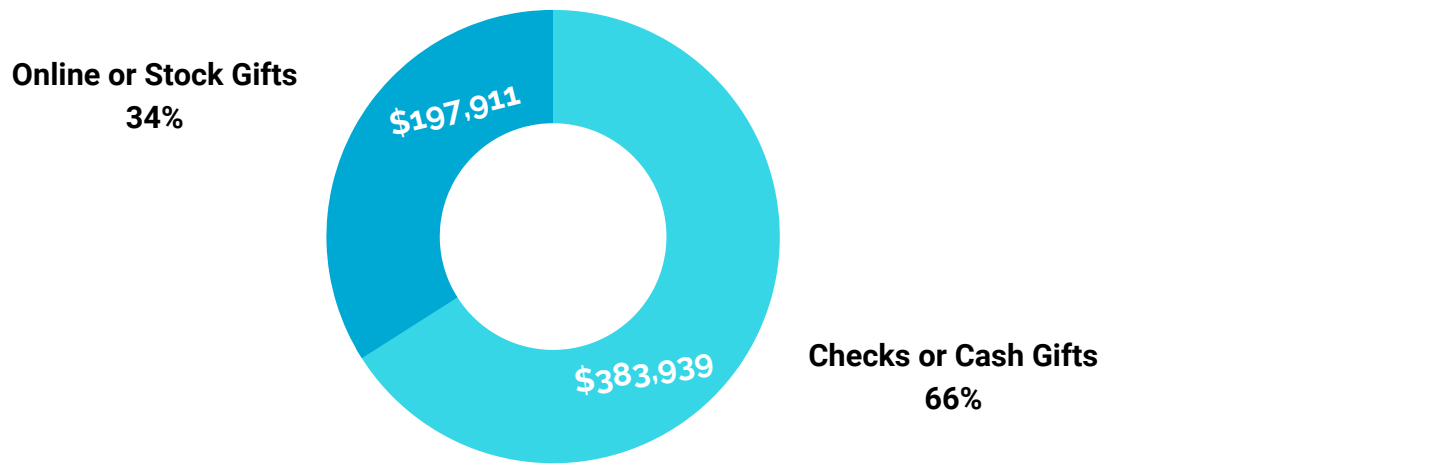
GENERAL FUND PLEDGES

65 households pledged \$492,272 to the general fund for the calendar year
January 1 - December 31, 2022



GENERAL FUND BUDGET

The budget for the general fund offering totals \$730,000 for fiscal year July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022. To date we have received \$581,850 (\$197,911 in online or stock gifts and \$383,939 in check or cash).



MEMBERSHIP STATS June 16, 2021 - June 15, 2022

BIRTHS

Charlie Fisher
Sam Torson

BAPTISMS

Layla Rathgen

MEMBERS ADDED

Caden Fitson
Michaela Fritson
Marna Malnack
Carol McChesney
Larry McChesney
Linda Williams

DECEASED

Richard Baer
Robert Carlson
William Freeman
Leatrice Halleen
Bill Hammond
Jeannette Horwath

Dorothy Jenks
Bette Kvetensky
Dale Larson
Dale Shallberg
James Shuey
Ron Sobon
Janet Truelsen

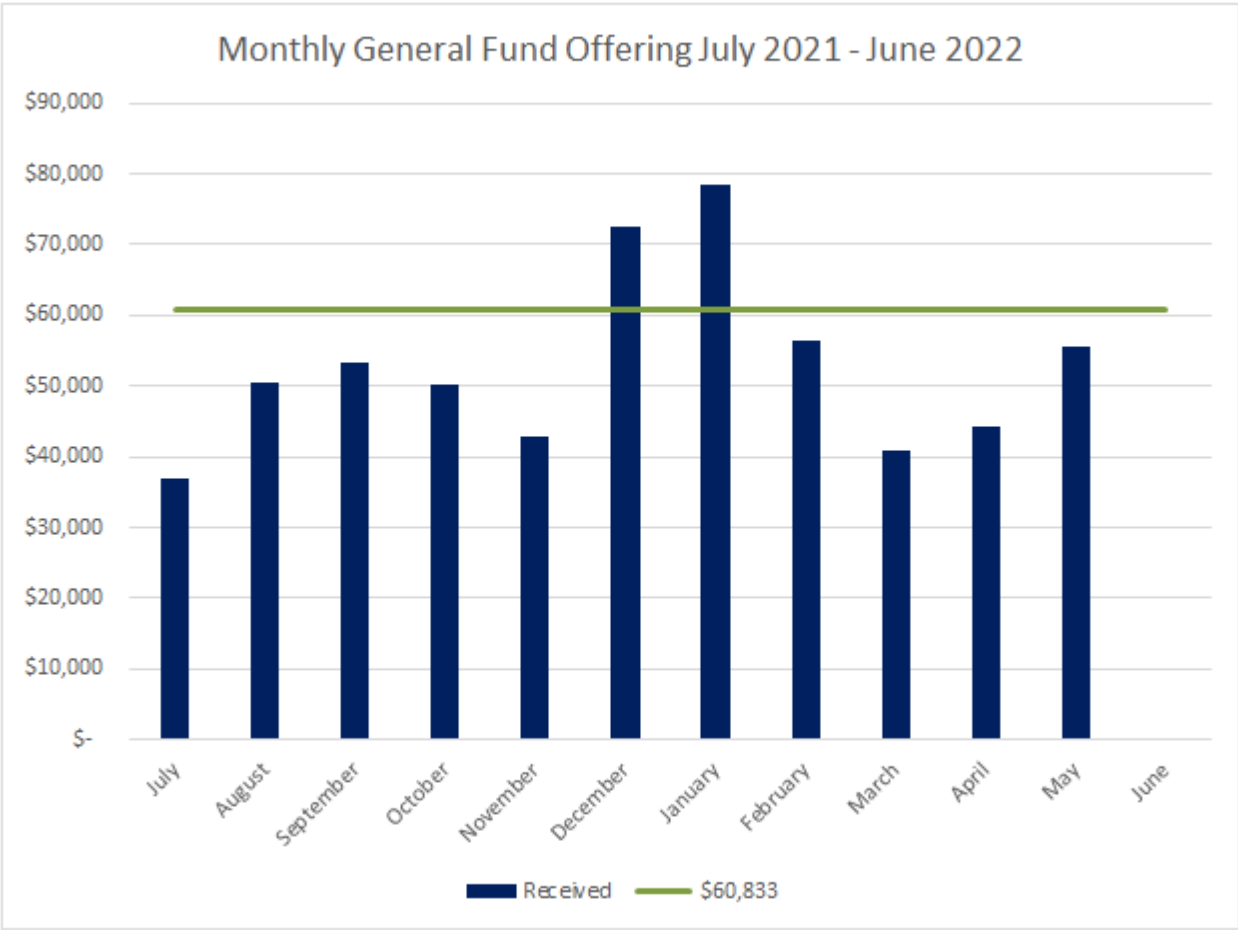
CONFIRMANDS

Natalie Kraaz
Luke Sonsthagen

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP TEAM

On the Financial Stewardship Team, we support the other Foundation Teams as they fulfill their callings. Our church consistently finds new and exciting ways to express faith, practice foundation, and celebrate fellowship, and I hope that, in the coming year, new visitors come to witness how truly remarkable this community is. I would ask the members of First Covenant Church to pray for our team that we might effectively manage the resources given to us in furtherance of our church’s mission. We express our faith in how we share the blessings God has given us, and none can doubt our faith abounds.

Andrew Lieben



LEAD TEAM - continued

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” Romans 12: 4-6. If you are a teacher, use your gift to teach. If you are youthful at heart, invest in our children. If you love people, build relationships. If you see the marginalized or lost, open our eyes to the hurting. If you are an encourager, give encouragement. If you are rich, give generously. If you are a prayer warrior, pray steadfastly. We need each of us working together.

Looking forward toward the next year in the life of FCC, many of our gatherings and activities are intentionally geared toward being invitational. We hope each of you will take this seriously and intentionally invite others to join us in Kingdom ministry as we seek to share the good news of Jesus.

Pastor Greg will take the first part of our fiscal year for sabbatical. We look forward to hearing how God has worked in his life and the life of First Covenant in his absence. We are grateful for capable people who have stepped up to fill his shoes. We pray for rest, renewal, emotional and spiritual growth. We pray for a renewed energy and zest for leading, teaching, and shepherding First Covenant.

This fall we will all study Emotionally Healthy Discipleship by Peter Scazzero as a congregation. We seek to see lives changed by the gospel, and look forward to moving together toward deep transformation and spiritual maturity. We hope you also desire spiritual growth and will join us in this process.

As this year comes to a close, I am reflecting on many good memories from this past year. Remember how it felt to be back in our sanctuary after a long pause. Remember the beauty of seeing your neighbor’s smiles again. Remember how you felt when you walked up the new staircase for the first time. Remember hearing the choir sing, the children back in their classrooms, eating around the tables, in your small group studying God’s words, praying, crying, and laughing. I encourage you to take a look back, and remember where you saw God working in you as well as in First Covenant. Take also a look forward at your next steps in your own spiritual growth and where God might be leading you to participate in the story of First Covenant. We have much to be thankful for and yet a story to keep writing. So with a grateful heart, I thank you for being the good faithful people of First Covenant Omaha. I look forward to seeing where God will move in this next year.

Praise to God from whom all blessings flow,
Susan M. Meier,
Lead Team Chair

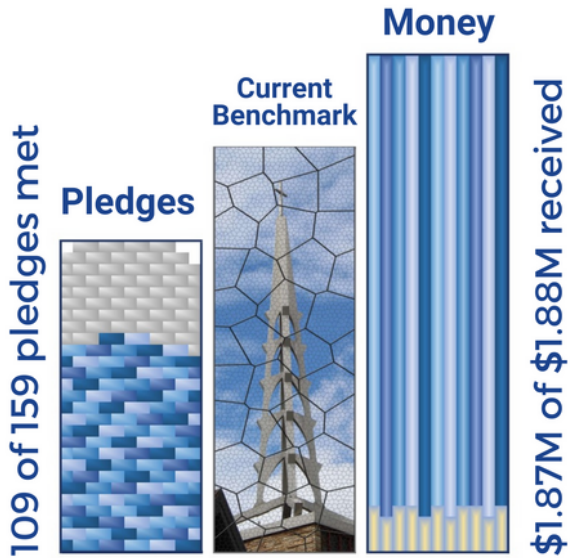
BUILDING TEAM

Building Update

One great thing that happened this past year was the completion of our building project! We were able to occupy the space in September and it has been wonderful gathering together, eating together, laughing together and talking together in our new space. We are thankful for the building team who worked hard in helping design the new space: Beth Hemphill, Rebecca Gregory, Brenda George, Terry Johnson, Gene Ericson, Todd Kraaz, Graham Person and Pastor Greg Applequist. We are especially thankful for Gene, Terry, Diane Stoner and Pastor Greg for overseeing the many details as the building was being built.

We are beyond grateful for the generosity of the people at First Covenant. Three years ago we started a capital campaign that resulted in the congregation making 159 pledges for \$1,878,841. As of May 31, 2022, 109 pledges have been completed and we have collected \$1,874,597 in pledges. An additional \$211,989 in non-pledged gifts came in, making our grand total \$2,086,586. Thank you for your extreme generosity!

Going forward we have secured a mortgage from National Covenant Properties. With construction being completed, our initial mortgage is \$11,202. That comes out to about \$134,500 a year. This amount is larger than we expected because, after completing construction, we totally replaced our parking lot. We had known about the need to do this for many years, but didn't want to replace the parking lot until all the heavy construction equipment was gone. We are excited to be using the space, we ask that you pray for wisdom to know how best to use our new space, and we ask that you consider how you might help us reduce the mortgage as soon as possible. Any gift is very much appreciated!



PROPERTIES TEAM

The Properties Team is called to care for and maintain the real property of First Covenant Church, as well as the maintenance of the lots and grounds here at 201 N. 90th Street. The 2021/2022 Fiscal year has certainly been one of change and improvement, as we rediscover what it's like to have a complete and fully functioning (most of the time) building to use for God's ministries.

- Examples of some of the projects the Properties Team has worked on over the past year-
- New LED Signage on 90th Street. Special Thanks to Terry for all of the design work, and to Gene for refusing to take No for an answer despite all the initial pushback from the city.
 - Removal and replacement of old parking lot.
 - Updating Interior lighting to LEDs in the Sanctuary, The Fellowship Hall, and Education wing, to be more energy efficient and brighten up all of those spaces making for a more cohesive blend of old and new spaces.
 - Removing the wall between Rooms 206 and 207 (The Old Nursery).
 - An untold number of walls painted, floors carpeted, windows fixed, etc... all in order to make both the new and old spaces safer, more usable, and more inviting.

The Tuesday morning retired men's group have provided an incredible 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. To say that we can't thank them enough for all they do is an understatement. Although their numbers have grown in the past several years, the retired men's group is always looking for new members to join the fun.

Thanks to our properties team members: Gene Ericson, Bruce Peterson, Chuck Copeland, Beth Hemphill, and Terry Johnson for all of their connections, 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 keeping the church clean and comfortable.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about the building or grounds at First Covenant Church, please feel free to reach out or flag me down any time you see me at church.

Graham Person



YOUTH CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM



The Youth Christian Formation Team continues to provide opportunities for our students to Engage in relationships with Jesus Christ and others, Equip themselves through prayer, scripture, and discipleship, and Embark on an outward mission and lives of invitation.

Over the past year our students have gathered regularly on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings to connect with one another and explore their faith and Scripture together. On Sunday mornings our students worked through a variety of studies including "Echo the Story," "What if Jesus was Serious about Prayer?" and "Alpha: Youth." For many of our students, our engagement with Alpha was a highlight of our formation hour this past year. On Wednesday evenings, the YCFT strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students to re-engage during the week. Our desire is that this would be a place of belonging where students feel confident in sharing who they are and sharing FCC with their friends. Conversations are wide ranging and laughter is frequent! A highlight for our team has been seeing growth over this past year in the ability of our students to identify God's movement in their own life, and an increased awareness of God's relational presence with them.

Beyond these regular gatherings, we gathered for a variety of events including the return of Nerf Wars, The Tournament of Champions, our annual trip to Vala's Pumpkin Patch, along with our Fall Retreats out at Covenant Cedars Bible Camp.

As we look toward the summer months, we are excited for all our students will get to encounter. Along with our regular summer gathering "Hang Time" on every-other Friday evening, we also have special trips planned for Mad Cow Paintball, Papio Fun Park, and Joe's Karting. Additionally, we know that our students experience this summer at Covenant Cedars Bible Camp, and ENGAGE 2022 will be formative life events, and we are excited to see the work that God will do in and through each one of them!

In the year ahead, we look forward to continuing to live into the priorities of our Student Ministries and the whole of First Covenant Church. We are grateful for a faithful congregation that cares for their youth and invests time, talent, and treasure in their formation as we all continue to grow in our walk with Jesus.

Youth Christian Formation Team



CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM

This past year our kids and their families have engaged with the Shine curriculum in the Fall and Spring. Through the stories of the Old Testament we remembered the ways God is at work among the people of God. Then we engaged with the stories of Jesus found in the New Testament to learn more about how God wants us to live. Our children and families participated in the multi-generational, "all-church" Advent opportunities to engage in prayer and practice their faith together. We love this time of children learning alongside their parents and other church adults for special times during the year. We hope to work with the Adult and Youth Formation teams to plan this shared formation time for next year during both Advent and Lent. Those times also help our children's teachers get a break and be able to take part in adult formation to grow and learn as well.

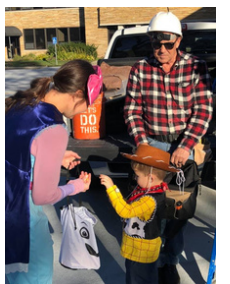
We have been really enjoying our new, beautiful indoor spaces in the Children's Wing of the church! All of our children now gather in one hallway creating a safer and more convenient place for families to drop off their kids. We are grateful for the ongoing work of Everett and the Retired Men as they help us remove an awkward divider wall in the Preschool room.

We've also made some small, but significant improvements to the nursery and our check in stations. The nursery is fully stocked and cleaned after each use. We are so thankful to Cassidy who lovingly cares for our infants and toddlers each week and to the parents/helpers who take turns ensuring we have two adults there all the time. Checking in children for programs has never been easier since parents can do it from the Realm app on their phone and it prints out stickers for them to pick up when children are dropped off. Our hope is that every family will feel welcome, safe and excited to join in the Children's Ministry at FCC.

We have so many fun things going on this Summer! We had a Summer kickoff party in June, many FCC campers going to Covenant Cedars, a Wonderful Wild Weekend (VBS-like) event in August, followed by a Back to School Party. All church members are invited to participate or help with these events and we love to see more and more adults interact and share their faith with our kids.

Our team continues to focus on the importance of families growing in their faith together. We also want to continue to empower the children of First Covenant Church to Love God and Love Neighbor.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacque Torson



WORSHIP ARTS & TECHNOLOGY TEAM

A year in review for WAT-Worship Arts and Technology Committee June 2022

Change is nothing new after the first year of Covid, but we forced our way into more planned changes implemented by the church. The overall church team layout and set up was changing for starters and our team tried to support much of that action. We fell under the love FCC category and began to recruit people to help with the opening of our new space. Our team now broadened into finding people to help with safety, ushers, hospitality, information and Kid check-in. After the opening of the space, our team focused more on music, technology, communion and the whole worship experience. We helped promote and execute all church retreat which was a breath of fresh air compared to the last year that we all dealt with. People loved being together face to face with the ability to enjoy the complete worship experience in a place that is loved by many-Covenant Cedars Bible Camp. Following this, new service times were implemented during our theme of change. The overall goal of the church was to set up a more planned church calendar of events and services in advance. We helped with the Advent and Easter event calendar and implementation. Adult and children’s music and gatherings with food(the culmination of an easter breakfast) were enjoyed by all!

Nancy Greufe



LOVE OMAHA TEAM

The Love Omaha Team strives to provide support and opportunities to the FCC family as all of us love Omaha. The team is focusing on three areas: Opportunities for Giving, Events and Activities, and Communications.

Last year our giving opportunities included collecting Open Door Mission Hope Totes, thank-you treats for local school teachers, water and snacks for Together Omaha, and Christmas gifts for nursing home residents. FCC is a generous family who contributed well to all of these. We are looking forward to continuing to use targeted giving opportunities as a way we can love Omaha and plan to have four of these opportunities in the coming year.

Events and activities are a fun way to love Omaha together. Last year we hosted our first Trunk or Treat in our front parking lot. It was great fun and we look forward to doing it again this year. We also brought in representatives from Rise, a local ministry to prisoners and those re-entering society. After church those interested heard more and were able to write encouraging letters to prisoners. We are exploring this and other opportunities and are planning three events for the future to continue to take action to love Omaha together.

Finally, we want to have regular communications with the FCC family about how we can better love Omaha together. We all live in different areas of the city and nearby, so we want to encourage each other as we love our neighbors and those closest to us as well as those in other parts of the city. We are exploring ways to encourage each other as we all strive to love Omaha better.

Diane Drake



LOVE THE WORLD TEAM

Love the World continues to help us reach out to our neighbors across the globe.

In 2022-2023, we are planning to:

- Gather at immigrant or refugee owned restaurants in Omaha to experience their food and learn about their experiences.
- Host the World Vision Global 6k to raise awareness and financial support for clean water through Covenant Kids Congo.
- Partner with the Sudanese Covenant Church to support two seminary students and over 20 orphans in Gambela through a sponsorship program.
- Continue to connect with Iglesia del Pacto Evangelico el Mana Pedernales
- Support and encourage 4 ECC missionary families.



LOVE FIRST COVENANT CHURCH TEAM

The Love FCC’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.

Hello! I’m Jim Ressegieu, chair of the Love FCC team. I am very fortunate to serve with team members Patti Boyer, Linda Chollett, Linda Lenser, Mary Palmberg, Sharon Peterson, and our newest member Kevin Study.

We’ve had a name change: The old name, Congregational Care Team, did not clearly define our mission so it was changed to Love First Covenant Church in order to fit more closely with other groups within our church and their specific missions.

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

- Phone calls and visitations to those who can’t attend church worship services and other programs regularly throughout the year.
- We visit church members in nursing homes and send greeting cards throughout the year.
- We plan and present the annual November Service of Remembrance that honors our departed church family members.
- Christmas gift bags filled with useful and tasty items for members who cannot get out easily in winter. We delivered them to their homes, assisted living, and nursing home environments.
- Easter lilies were also distributed to our members at home, assisted living, and nursing homes.
- Monthly blood pressure screenings were stopped during several months of Covid, however, they have begun again once a month after a Sunday worship service.
- Quarterly Communion visitations were also stopped during the Covid outbreak, however, plans are being made to resume this important ministry within a month or two.

“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

Jim Ressegieu



LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The library is back! We have a new location and new shelves, and the books are out of the boxes and back on the shelves. Soon we will have some new books for your reading pleasure. Check us out if you haven't already. We are located on the lower level in a spacious multi-purpose room with lots of windows. Children's books are located on the upper level in the hallway by their classrooms.

The library committee has resumed their monthly meetings. Members are Lou Ann Landholm-librarian, Sandy Champlin, Peggy Price and Kathy Shelsta. If you have any book requests or questions, see any one of those ladies.

Kathy Shelsta



ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION TEAM

It is the desire of the Adult Christian Formation Team (ACFT) that we are continually being formed by Jesus. At FCC we do this by regularly engaging with Scripture, other Christian writings, Spiritual Practices, Prayer and with each other.

During the fall of 2021, two Bible studies were offered. One on Ruth and the other, Kings and Prophets began reading through 1 Kings. Drop in Devo's offered connection time through a weekly reflection. Being With was our fourth group that engaged others by 'being with' them at a deep level. The church met together through Advent where we engaged with scripture, poetry, and art.

The winter of 2022 saw an increase in offerings from four options to six. Kings and Prophets continued to read through 1 and 2 Kings and a study on Daniel was offered. A group read Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton which was a study on spiritual practices. Another group read No Longer Strangers by Eugene Cho dealt with bringing a healthier form of evangelism to our marginalized communities. A study through 12 Extraordinary Women by John MacArthur was offered as a women's study and Man in the Mirror by Patrick Morely was offered as a men's study. Lent was a rich season at FCC this year. The ACFT compiled a Lenten Devotional that was written by many people from the congregation. Lent also brought us all together on Wednesday nights for a meal and communion before breaking out for a class on prayer or time to engage God alone in the sanctuary. Sunday mornings were spent discussing the week's devotionals as well as some art and poetry. The Prayer Labyrinth also provided a powerful prayer time on Sunday mornings.

During this summer there are five book studies in progress. The books are also on Pastor Greg's sabbatical reading list and we are hoping we can grow together even while he is away. The books are Subversive Witness by Dominique Gilliard, Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, Messy Spirituality by Mike Yaconelli, The Gift of Being Yourself by David Benner, Surprised by Hope by N.T. Wright. Additionally, the ACFT and Lead Team will be training on Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Pete Scazzero.

Moving into the Fall, it is the desire of the ACFT that the church also go through the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality course. Current plans are to offer this course on Wednesday evenings after a shared meal, and again on Sunday mornings in order to accommodate as many people as possible. There may be an alternative formation option in the fall as well. Additionally we are planning to offer a more intensive formational event during the fall. This event will provide extended time to dive into a particular spiritual practice or topic.

The Adult Christian Formation Team looks forward to continued service to those who attend First Covenant Church as we seek to be more like Jesus. It is a responsibility we take seriously and a task we execute joyfully.

ACFT Co-Chairs

Betsy Froderman and Andrew Kejr

