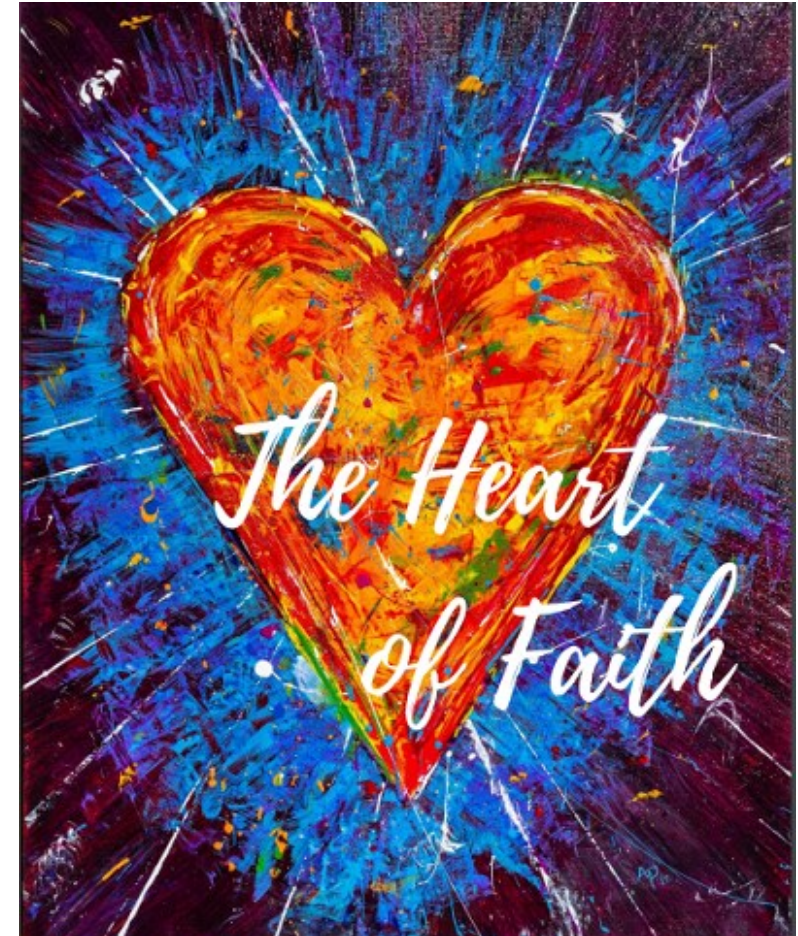


***Stepping Into the Future***



2021 Annual Report  
Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church

ABOUT US

We are an ELCA congregation. We have a long history and deep traditions, but we have also stepped into a new future. We share our building with Living Table United Church of Christ and Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community. Together, this partnership is growing new branches for sharing the gospel of grace in our world.



OUR MISSION

We are God's people being transformed by the Holy Spirit to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world in word and action.

Contents

3 Our stories and ministry highlights

17 Leadership reports

- Pastor's report
- Deacon's report
- Finance Committee report
- Foundation report



See separate documents for 2021 meeting agenda, 2020 meeting minutes and proposed budget information.

OUR STORIES: A more stable future

By Eric Grube, Multi-Church Initiative board member

I am excited about the future. My involvement with both the Discernment and the Multi-Church Initiative groups resulted in amazing personal growth and new lifelong friends. I met creative people who engaged me to imagine the future in new ways. I met leaders who modeled excellent listening skills and were able to distill thorny issues down to their essence. I also met compassionate people, who demonstrated how to find middle ground and come to consensus. And I met deeply spiritual people who prayed for and trusted one another throughout these past few years. Thank you members of Lake Nokomis Lutheran for trusting me with some weighty decisions that will affect the future of our congregation.

Let me recap the milestones of the past 18 months.

- LNL members completed a discernment process with members of two other churches. We voted to move forward with a shared campus concept.
- Spirit of Saint Stephen's Catholic Community, Living Table United Church of Christ, and Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church will jointly own and share the 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue building.
- The shared building, called New Branches, is in the finishing stages of renovation, with flexible main and secondary worship spaces, both equipped with modern sound and video technology, an enlarged gathering space, and new ADA-compliant bathrooms.
- Former members of Hope Lutheran joined LNL.
- We called Pastor Sara Spohr to lead us into the future.

All of this has happened within the uncertainty of COVID-19. Reflecting back on the discernment process and the Multi-Church Initiative, I think the key to success was how much people were willing to compromise to get to the goal of a shared campus. As each group desired to maintain as much autonomy and identity as possible, we all knew that collectively we would build a stronger foundation for the future than each group could achieve independently. Each of the three member churches brings engaged members with different talents and perspectives. We have a new model of what church may look like in the future.

As church membership falls nationwide, I am confident that we have made sound decisions that will provide a more stable future for Lake Nokomis Lutheran. I look forward to building and growing based on this strong foundation. I am excited to continue the journey with members of Lake Nokomis Lutheran and our new partners.



**HIGHLIGHTS:**  
**Leadership**

COVID Task Force guided us through worship and gathering and building remodel during a second year of pandemic.

Strategic planning and vision process developed.

MCI Board of Directors in place with Sarah Borgerding, Ginny Rudloff and Eric Grube representing Lake Nokomis Lutheran.

After years of faithful service, Jody Billmeier resigned as LNL’s Financial Administrator. We now contract bookkeeping services with local non-profit specialist Studio 501.

**2021 Church Council**  
Mark Patzloff, President  
Kathryn Selin, Vice President  
Jerry Winzig, Treasurer  
John Becker, Secretary  
William Awe  
Diana Grundeen  
Rachel Klenke  
Lori Mueller  
Lynn Walsh  
Andy Peterson  
Pastor Sara Spohr,  
Ex-officio

**OUR STORIES: 15 months as your treasurer**  
*By Jerry Winzig, Treasurer*

Last spring, I was asked to help resurrect Lake Nokomis Lutheran (LNL) inactive Finance Committee. Lacking any finance background, my first thought was, "Why me?" And with uncertainty due to the pandemic, my second thought was "What will happen to our giving?" By Sept. 2020, I was Treasurer.

Ever since then, people have been thanking me. But the thanks really belong to God and to the generosity of this congregation. We went through a call process during a pandemic, with meetings and interviews conducted via Zoom. (How many of us knew what Zoom was?) We started worshiping via YouTube. Our committee meetings switched to Zoom. We called a new pastor via Zoom and conducted two congregational meetings via Zoom. Some of had never heard of Zoom.

Through it all, people kept giving. Members increased their giving. We voted to go forward with the Multi-Church Initiative (MCI) – with all of its possibilities and uncertainties. We renovated our building to make this possible.

People kept giving. Online. Mailed-in offerings. IRA distributions. Extra gifts. Approximately 50 members from Hope Lutheran Church join LNL, bringing with them their own history of generosity. In disbanding, Hope brought over more than \$10,000 in dedicated accounts, and contributed \$100,000 to MCI. Wow!

To be sure, we still have challenges ahead. Our tenant charter school is moving, and we need a new tenant. We are feeling our way with MCI. We have lost personal contact with some of our members. But we are going forward in the certain hope that God is with us. Thanks be to God.

**OUR STORIES: Broadening our impact**  
*By Lynn Walsh, Council member*

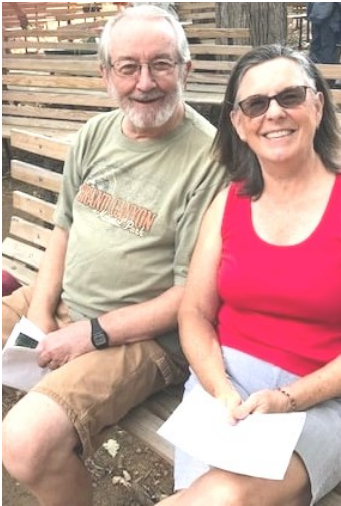
Three years ago at the annual meeting, I decided to volunteer to be on the Church Council. I was inspired by interest in the Three -Church Initiative, wanting to see it happen. It has been a dramatic three years, full of change for our church and the world, more than I could have imagined.

On the Council I took on Service/Mission as a focus. At the time we had a Mission of the Month. At the 2020 Annual Meeting we shifted to a new system of tithing church earnings, 6 percent of the tithe to the ELCA and 4 percent to be divided to missions of our choice. I became responsible for putting together a recommendation team.

During that time many former members of Hope Lutheran joined our church, and I asked one of those former Hope members, Mary Peterson, to be on the LNL Benevolence Team, along with Virginia Rudloff, Jerry Winzig and myself. Mary’s information gave us the opportunity to learn of the amazing generosity of Hope Lutheran Church.

Instead of looking back at what might have been, Hope has made the sadness a future full of blessings for the community, both locally and worldwide.

Hope has distributed \$490,000 from sale of their assets to 20 different missions. Some are in the neighborhood: South Minneapolis Meals on Wheels, Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, Roosevelt High School Foundation, and Minnehaha Food Shelf. Some serve the wider community, like Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Beacon Interfaith Collaborative and Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp. Some serve the global community, like Reconciling Works, Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry, and Lutheran Disaster Response. In addition to these contributions, Hope created a Legacy Fund to distribute on a percentage basis over ten years to a list of charities, including many of the above mentioned. What an ongoing legacy!





## OUR STORIES: Celebrating Mom's life

By Sue Anderson, "proud daughter of Barbara Lee Meyer "

My mom was a woman of great faith. When I was growing up in Faribault, I remember she was always involved at church. She wrote a tour guide about the cathedral, was on the church council, taught Sunday school, and served as the Sunday School superintendent. Mom was a member at Lake Nokomis Lutheran for over thirty years. She loved working with the women on the altar guild. As she became less independent in recent years, her connection to the Lake Nokomis faith community continued to be a blessing.

My mom had a tough summer. She was in and out of the hospital after a series of strokes until there was nothing more to be done. I took her back to Sunrise Senior Living to receive hospice care. The hospice nurse, the chaplain, musicians, and the caring staff at Sunrise offered support, not only to her, but to her family. Barb Tauferner prayed with us and served communion. Cards, texts, and phone calls from church friends kept us going that week as we lovingly said goodbye, we love you, thank you, we'll see you again. You were the best mom this girl could have ever hoped for.

Pastor Sara supported us in the days after Mom passed. She helped us plan her celebration of life. She prayed with us, officiated and gave the eulogy. We felt loved and supported. All Saints Sunday is one day of many to pause and remember all those who have entered the gates of heaven. They are not alone. We are not alone. God's love for all of us is ever present and everlasting. Praise God. And bless all of you.

*Originally published in our Nov. 4, 2021 eNews.*

## OUR STORIES: I Rejoice!

by Barb Tauferner, Parish Nurse and Director of Visitation

When you look back at 2021 you might not think there was much to rejoice about. Anger, division, injustice and the continued impact of COVID-19 were front and center in the news and in our lives. If you focus on only these types of events then yes, rejoicing doesn't come to mind. I'm not denying that 2021 was full of challenges. But I want to share with you some other examples of what occurred this past year. I hope they remind you that there was something to rejoice about.

First of all, do you remember how you felt when the COVID vaccine became available? I got teary eyed when I got my first vaccine shot. I know I wasn't the only one who felt deeply grateful that we finally had some protection against the severity of the deadly COVID virus. We started to feel some hope that we could get this pandemic under control. When COVID positivity rates decreased and we learned how we could safely spend time together we put on our masks, grabbed our lawn chairs and worshipped together outside. And I could see in your eyes there were smiles behind those masks as we gathered together. And I rejoiced.

Secondly, how great was it when we finally could safely spend more time with our family and friends? When I was able to begin visiting our LNL Elders I was thrilled. I really missed these dear people. To see them in person and share conversation, communion and prayers was heartwarming. More time with my biological family and my church family lifted my spirit. Many of you told me you felt it, too. Doing things that increase our body's serotonin level not only feels good but it's also healing. And for this I rejoiced.

I know 2022 will bring challenges. COVID-19 is still with us and we continue to live with the consequences. But I hope that as you reflect on 2021 you too are able to acknowledge when you saw and experienced something good. And as you begin 2022, I encourage you to be open to the good around you. And when you have the opportunity, help make good happen. And for the healing it will bring, I rejoice!

## HIGHLIGHTS: Congregational care

Provided for care phone calls and visits to our homebound members.

Provided meaningful funeral services and pastoral care for grieving families.

Delivered Easter and Christmas gifts to our elders.

Offered monthly worship to Nokomis Square residents.





## HIGHLIGHTS: Worship & music

Worship continued virtually and in person, increasing to about 85 in person and averaging 105 on the livestream.

Faith walks on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, and Easter Storytime Live connected us to the gospel story and each other.

Our Palm Sunday procession up and down 50<sup>th</sup> Street was a public witness!

Choir and Handbells began to make music together again.

'Worship: The Practice' allowed people of all ages to stretch their worship muscles in new ways.

Shared our concerns and hopes at The Longest Night worship.

Worshipped in the renovated large Sanctuary for the first time on Christmas Eve!

## OUR STORIES: A year of constant change by John Walsh, Worship tech team

2021 started with a hope of a Covid vaccine that would finally put an end to this strange world that we had been living in for the better part of a year. Logistically, we were still months away from getting the vaccine and finally reaching some sort of normal life. I was lucky enough to be working in a business considered necessary, so I was able to work through this time, taking pictures of homes for sale – but even more importantly, having some face to face connections with people.

Especially important to me was that every Wednesday, I had a chance to physically go to church to film the portion of our weekly service that was my responsibility.

We got pretty good at this. It was like putting together a 45-minute show every week. We became very efficient at shooting, editing and uploading to the Internet.

Everything changed when we started to livestream our outside services. New tech meant new challenges. William Awe, Pastor Sara, Jodi Gustafson, Rochelle Milbrath and I always arrived early to set up the sound and the cameras. It seemed like there was always some glitch to resolve, just seconds before the livestream was scheduled to start.

Through the summer and into the fall, set-up become more routine, and we could relax a bit, with fewer glitches to deal with. The two hours of set-up and tear down was becoming old, however, and we all were looking forward to Dec 24. The projected end date of the work on the large sanctuary meant that cameras would be permanently in place and wired, without the need to pack up until the next week's routine started all over again.

Now setup is minutes rather than hours – and we're excited to expand the tech team. Join us!!

## OUR STORIES: Singing together again by Jodi Gustafson, Music Director

You know the "lifeboat" party game, in which you figure out which of your friends would be most valuable in a life-threatening scenario, earning them a place in the hypothetical lifeboat? I always thought that the "musician" skill set would fall pretty far down the group's hierarchy of survival needs.

Then came COVID, and we couldn't sing together any more.

The best we could do was to take worship online in 2020. It had its benefits: we got to see and hear our beloved community. We heard the Word proclaimed and preached, prayed together, and, yes, sang along with the video. It didn't feel quite the same, but it was a gift, for its time. Besides, people could join worship from wherever they were, including new friends we'd yet to meet. I know of a couple in Sioux Falls that joins us every week!

But I'll never forget the first Sunday we worshipped in the courtyard, with mics and a synthesizer, individual communion packs, lawn chairs on muddy ground, bottles of hand sanitizer, and a rainout plan. When you all opened your masked mouths and sang, I was incapacitated for a while; the power of singing *together* knocked me out! The beginning of Psalm 100 leaked out of my eyes and rolled down my face:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
Come into his presence with **singing**.

My feeling about the "lifeboat" scenario has changed. Music isn't less necessary than food; it comforts and inspires us, and binds us together in a way that nothing else can. Hymns remind us who we are and who God is. I'll never again take for granted the opportunity to make music with you, praising God and equipping ourselves for God's work in the world. Thanks be to God!





**OUR STORIES: “Serving on the fly” at the Minnehaha Food Shelf**

*By Cherie Wold*

Food. A basic human need. But also a way to show you care. We make special meals for celebrations. We take food to a neighbor who's been ill. We provide food to feed a family experiencing a loss.



When I retired and started looking for a volunteer opportunity, I found myself thinking about the important work at the Minnehaha Food Shelf. Giving food as a way to help our neighbors. I was given a warm welcome by a small group of volunteers I met at the food shelf, and I quickly felt a part of their team. After showing up every Tuesday for almost six years, I have a great group of friends, have gotten to know many of our clients, and have shared lots of laughter, and some tears, with people who were embarrassed to be using the food shelf – or who shared their story about suffering a loss.

I can see God’s hand in all we do at the food shelf. God has put talented people in places where they are most needed. Every need we have had has been met, from financial donations to having enough volunteers. The food shelf is serving the area at a grass roots level. During Covid, we have gone from a small group of volunteers to a pool of over 60! We have survived a pandemic by readjusting on the fly, serving outdoors, even during the coldest days of winter, and by continuing to serve our neighbors in need.

As I look forward, I am extremely proud to be a small part of this incredible organization that will continue to serve this community as long as we have the support of those who can give financially and so many committed volunteers who can volunteer their talents.



**OUR STORIES: Foundation gifts reflect new awareness**

*By Eric Grube, Foundation board member*

It has become a cliché to say a lot has changed since spring 2020. What we all can agree on is that people had more time to reflect and focus on activism and advocacy regarding social justice.

The short list of events that affected me includes the video of George Floyd’s murder and the resulting protests and upheaval. The newly-uncovered information about the disappearance of Native American children at schools operated in the United States and Canada, and finally, the revelation that white residents burned a prosperous Black neighborhood to the ground in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 100 years ago. These last two events shocked me because they were hidden from the public for so long. Each event had elements of race and class status inherent in the actions of one group against another. During this time, leaders at Lake Nokomis Lutheran began a social justice conversation about land acknowledgement, and the fact that our building sits on indigenous land.

Traditionally, the Lake Nokomis Lutheran Foundation has split its annual fund withdrawal to make grants to members for education scholarships, and grants to support church ministries and staff development, resulting in the majority of the Foundation’s grants benefiting our members. We altered this model in 2021, when we voted to approve a four-year, \$10,000 grant focused on Native Americans and administered through the Roosevelt High School Foundation. This commitment will continue over the next three years.

As a board member of the Foundation, I am proud that the Foundation’s giving is touching the lives of individuals who are outside our membership. As we all become more aware of social injustice and recognize how it affects groups of people, I am hopeful that these types of Foundation gifts become more frequent.

**HIGHLIGHTS: Supporting our community**

Donated \$6,777 to the Minnehaha Food Shelf in 2021 and \$12,545 in 2020. LNL members serve in leadership positions and as volunteers.

Four food shelf drives provided personal care products and meals in a can to hundreds of local families.

Delivered to South Minneapolis Meals on Wheels 7 weeks in 2021 for a total of 1,120 meals.

Awarded LNL Foundation awards to two Native students – \$1,250 each, to aid in college admission costs – administered through the the Roosevelt High School Foundation.

Distributed 10% of all gifts given to important ministries within our synod, community, and to global partnerships (\$31,359).





# OUR STORIES: Partnering with Allison Connelly-Vetter

By Deacon Erica Larson

I shared a joyful lunch with Allison Connelly-Vetter shortly after she began serving at Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community as the Children, Youth & Families Program Coordinator. It was immediately clear to me that she is a woman full of enthusiasm, energy, and ideas. As we shared our stories and learned more about each other, we began to dream together about what it could look like for us to partner together in ministry. By the end of that first lunch together, we had already made plans for a Halloween Trunk-or-Treat in our church parking lot, and a youth Service Project Night in December; with thoughts about future possibilities.

Since then, Allison and I attended a virtual education event together; we worked with members of our three partner congregations to create a new Safe Environment Policy for Children and Youth; and we spread the Good News about the birth of Jesus Christ during our Christmas Caroling outing in our Nokomis neighborhood. I realized for the first time in my 30 years of church ministry, I have a colleague in the work of ministry with children, youth and families. I’ve ALWAYS had wonderful congregational volunteers and pastors, but this is something special and different. Allison and I are both called into this ministry with families; we have a similar way of talking about theology, we spur one another on, we feed off of each other, and we are dreaming about the future together.

This has been truly an energizing experience for me, and I am thrilled for our multi-church community because this is exactly what we have been moving towards for several years! Lake Nokomis Lutheran will continue to provide ministries with and for our individual community, just as we always have. But we will also join with our partners in events and ministries that are better because we do them together; and this wonderful relationship with Allison will make ministry an even greater joy and privilege!

# OUR STORIES: Connecting my art to church

by Sarah Zaepfel

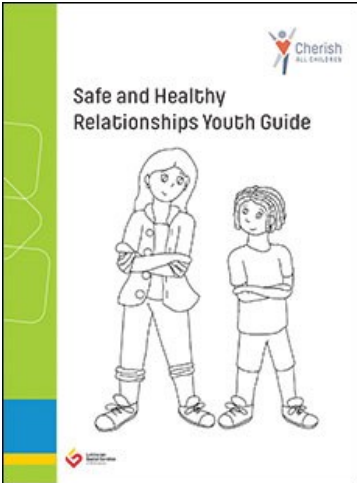
Last July Erica asked if I would design some coloring pages for a project for Cherish All Children – about online safety for teens. I replied to her email: “Sounds like fun!”

At the time, I had recently finished working on my belated and animated chapel talk for St. Olaf in which I grappled with the intersection of my identities as a Nonbinary person and a Christian. Behind the scenes, I had also been figuring out how much art was going to be a part of my professional life. Here I was presented with the chance to draw in connection to church, and to get some feedback on my art while I was at it.

This past year has been weird and tiring with the ongoing pandemic, and I haven’t been back to church as often in quite a while now. But working on this project was one way I was able to put something nice back into the world. I surprised myself at how excited I was to work on these coloring pages, and again at how excited I was to get feedback. By the end of July I had designed a total of five pictures, and everyone was happy with how they looked.

In October I was given a (free!!) copy of “Safe and Healthy Relationships Youth Guide,” the curriculum booklets, which turned out very nice (really, I’m not just saying that because my art is in it).

I don’t know if it’s too cheesy to say, but sometimes God really does work in mysterious ways, forcing us to be creative in ways we don’t expect. Needing to work around and through the pandemic has put me in places that have presented me with more chances to share my art. I’m still uncertain about the future, but I’m looking forward to it anyway. 2022, let’s go!







## OUR STORIES: We have a lot to learn

by Maggie O’Groske

A few years ago, I was pulled over for expired tabs. I could not believe it! I started to get out of the car to see for myself. The officer stopped me and said “Lady, never get out of the car unless the officer tells you to!” No one ever gave me the “talk” on what to do if I got stopped by the police. (Now they include this in drivers’ training.) But I never feared for my life. When I was chastised, I just shrugged my shoulders.

I generally go through life without thinking about the color of my skin and the benefits and privileges of being white. I did not even realize, until recently, that this was a privilege that I had as a white person – to rarely, if ever, think about the color of my skin.

As a member of our Racial Justice Task Force, I have learned a lot about racism and whiteness. We have committed ourselves to this work and continuing to provide opportunities for the congregation to learn more about systemic racism and ways to bring about positive change. A highlight of this effort was the small group discussion, “Dialogues on Race”. I got to know members from Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community and Living Table United Church of Christ and also more about our own members. The book and the videos provided challenging material for us to discuss.

If you were unable to participate, I encourage you to get the book, watch the videos and hold discussions with your friends and family. It is challenging work.

If you did participate, I hope you continue the discussion with others in your life. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with Spirit of St. Stephen’s and Living Table on racial justice work. We have a lot to learn from each other and can support each other’s work.

## OUR STORIES: Summer Camps: “Three amazing experiences”

By Sam Karkarbi

This summer I had three amazing experiences, all thanks to Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church. In June, I got to be in the Servant Leader Program at WAPO which meant that I helped out for a week at camp. As we were driving in, I said to my mom “I just hope they don’t put me in a cabin with the youngest kids.” And that’s exactly where they put me! In the end, I really loved being with this age. In fact, I want to apply to help with the Seeds program next summer.

Then in July, I got to go to Wilderness Canoe Base in the Boundary Waters. We had an amazing trip with many inside jokes, hardships, and laughs. In the end, we pushed hard and I was very proud of my group.

Lastly, in August, I attended Ox Lake with other senior high students. It was one of the best camp experiences I’ve had in my entire life. I was reunited with old counselors and old friends and met some new ones. I played a lot of chess with Alan Atkinson and just enjoyed hanging out and being together.

In reflecting on these trips, I truly saw God in all three experiences. I left each experience feeling better than when I arrived. I recommend Wapo to everyone. Thank you to Lake Nokomis Lutheran for making this possible for me.

*Originally published in our Sept. 9, 2021 Summer Stories website blog.*





**HIGHLIGHTS:**  
**Racial justice**

‘Jim Crow of the North’  
Zoom conversation with  
over 50 people from all  
three churches.

Members met with State  
Rep. Emma Greenman on  
Beacon’s Bring It Home,  
MN campaign.

Opened our church space  
to the community after  
Daunte Wright was killed.

Hosted Zoom reflections  
following the Chauvin  
verdict.

Shared stories of our  
histories to guide future  
justice efforts.

Dialogues on Race small  
group conversations  
included members from all  
three churches.

**OUR STORIES: Allowing the past to guide us**  
*by Linda Ojeda*

As a member of our Racial Justice Task Force, I shared my experience of when I served on the MultiCultural Commission back when the ELCA was newly formed. Even though the members of this Commission had shared experiences of discrimination, our different ethnic heritages influenced our values and how we saw the world. As we shared stories of our heritage – of our parents and grandparents – we soon realized how much our own base values were a reflection of their environment. As we listened to one another, we realized that, although different, we could celebrate one another’s differences, insights, and the wonder of an awesome God together.

During this past summer, the Racial Justice Task Force invited members of Lake Nokomis Lutheran to walk through a similar process. We met monthly and talked about important events and traditions in our family histories.

- In June, participants were asked to think back to their youth and share stories about a variety of topics such as how they celebrated a holiday, or went about their daily routines – and then to reflect on how their family values were imbedded in those stories.
- In July, we looked back on the interactions we had with others early in our lives. This backward glance helped us better understand why we had come to believe there were differences between ourselves and others.
- In August, we shared stories of courage – about a time when we recalled speaking up to defend someone experiencing racism. These stories ranged from confronting a ride-share acquaintance, or extended family members, to taking a leadership role on equity in the workplace.

Each story, all different, affirmed our understanding of the value of needing to do what was right – to allow the past to guide us in our efforts to seek justice in our future acts and deeds.

**Pastor’s report**  
*By Pastor Sara Spohr*

This is the time of year we all stop to reflect personally and professionally. In the life of the church this is a good practice as well, what have we done well, what would we do differently in the future, what is God leading us toward in the year ahead? These are all excellent questions and it feels good to evaluate with an eye toward celebration and future growth.

I visited Marge Holmberg at Nokomis Square in late December, she’s a long time member of our faith community and it was fun to hear her both remember and rejoice. Marge had some notes chronicling the women’s groups at LNL from 1907 until 2014. We took particular notice of the generosity of the women in the building of the church, their endeavors to share their faith in the community, and the variety of women who served in leadership roles. She shared some fun stories with me from the past. We laughed. If you visit Marge you will laugh.

Then she said, “I want to talk about the construction.” She wanted to know what was happening, what we are excited about, and more about our partner churches. She is excited to participate in a worship service when she can. She watched the latest construction update video with rapt attention. I share this visit, because it is a metaphor for the place we are in as a congregation. Remembering and celebrating all that this congregation has done and all that this congregation has been in our community. Then, also rejoicing and anticipating all that God is going to do among us into the future. One of our long time members inspires us to both - *remember AND rejoice*.

When I reflect on 2021, I will remember:

- **All of the tremendous efforts of our congregation to move forward into a new future.** It’s been a year of planning, construction, moving, cleaning, and more planning. We celebrated Christmas Eve in our newly renovated sanctuary space. After months of construction and adapting our worship space various times, it was truly delightful to gather together and celebrate our sacred Christmas story. Our Multi–Church Initiative board has worked tremendously hard this year to prepare us for this new future. They have worked with the other churches to move forward with construction, to secure financing, and to incorporate our organization as a 501(c)(25).
- **The work we have done to think strategically about how God is calling us as a congregation.** We’ve hosted many conversations throughout this year to discover the ways we’ve grown spiritually and to listen to your dreams about the future. A strategic planning team has been meeting regularly this fall to develop a new mission, vision, and values statement, as well as an outline of priorities and goals for the next 3-5 years. This has been exciting and spirit filled work, we look forward to sharing it!

*Continued on next page.* 17

- **Lake Nokomis Lutheran has continued to provide excellent worship and education both in person and virtually.** In a year of constant changes, both in the pandemic and our building construction, we have continued to worship, engage in educational activities, and mark both important life milestones and sacred faith traditions. This congregation, our leadership and staff has had to be adaptable when it comes to location, programs, hospitality, and music. We have learned that we can continue to proclaim the gospel of God's grace outside, in a basement, over Zoom, with a few less people, and a few less verses. When everything else changed at a rapid pace - we kept proclaiming God's grace. When our people were hurting, when beloved members died, when we simply needed each other, God's grace was proclaimed with love and hope.

As I look to the year ahead, I am aware that we will have to make a few compromises, squeeze a bit to welcome new partners, and continue to be nimble as we seek to keep our community safe. But still I rejoice as I look ahead. Here's why I'm rejoicing:

- **We've got a vision.** Our new strategic plan is coming soon! It will be a guideline for staff, leadership, and working groups to move forward into the future. This plan is all about the abundance we have and are called to share. Our Lent theme will walk us through this new plan, and give our members both a sense of the work we are mapping out and a place to become more deeply involved. This plan includes priorities around building meaningful relationships, justice, and creating a culture of abundance.
- **We make decisions out of love.** We have learned to coexist with Covid among us, yet our faith community continues to worship, give generously, and grow in faith. This would not happen without a deep commitment to share God's love. As we move into the new year ahead, we will continue to balance in-person opportunities for worship, fellowship and education with our desire to love and protect the health of our neighbors. Our newly renovated sanctuary has the capacity for us to make our livestream more interactive so that worship can be meaningful and community building both in-person and from home.
- **We're doing a new thing.** In the book of Revelation God says "behold I make all things new." God is at work doing a new thing in us. As I talk about our Multi-Church Initiative with other pastors and church leaders I have consistently heard excitement and awe around the vision. We are three very different communities, sharing faith, making decisions and solidifying commitments together and this is inspiring. The Multi-Church Initiative board continues to lead us faithfully in this brand new endeavor.

One of the things that Marge pointed out to me in the historical documents of our women's group was a decision made by the Naomi Circle on January 18, 1956. It said, *"Naomi Circle decides we will all use our first names so we can have a closer relationship."* Marge and I laughed as we read that. *In my whole lifetime, first names have been a given, but in 1956 the decision for those women to move to first names was significant. They did it because they wanted to deepen their relationships.*

As we remember and rejoice I am thankful for all of the things, big and small, that have been done for the sake of deepening meaningful relationships, and I rejoice in anticipation of the things we will do in the year and years to come to keep this commitment to each other and to our God at the heart of who we are.

For this year of ministry, thank you, and thank God for you.

In good faith,

Pastor Sara Spohr



## MILESTONES

### Baptisms:

Hazel Vollbrecht



### Deaths:

June Anderson  
Robert Awe  
Dan Debe  
Sharon Dymoke  
Sara Haik  
Chuck Landis  
Faith Lindell  
June Mazzola  
Barb Meyer  
Ron and Jerilynn Pederson  
Jackie Rucker  
Bob Smedstad  
Kathy Snetting  
Lois Swenson  
Patricia (Patsy) Vessey



# Deacon's report

by Deacon Erica Larson, Director of Faith Formation

I recently discovered that I can watch episodes from previous seasons of Project Runday on IMDb, and I am in heaven! While I don't always appreciate the "drama" of a reality TV show where highly creative types are thrown together for weeks at a time, I find the process of designing clothes quite remarkable; and I am often thrilled when I see these designs come to life on the runway. There is an expectation on the show that designers will be innovative, and if they send something down the runway that the judges have seen before, they will hear about it! The most well-known and oft quoted phrase from the show is Tim Gunn's "make it work!" Whenever a designer is struggling, it's a "make it work" moment. And remarkably, they typically do! It's really quite remarkable to watch these artists design a garment, choose fabric, make a pattern, fit it on a model, sew it, choose jewelry, work with hair designers and makeup artists, and send a model down the runway in 1 or 2 days! These people are geniuses.

In many ways, church ministry in the last two years has been a sort of "make it work" moment. We really can't do anything the way we used to do it. We are constantly innovating, designing new ministry opportunities, putting all the pieces together, and sending it out into the world. Sometimes we turn on a dime, make a shift, and transform an idea in a day or two as we respond to what's happening around us. It has been both exhausting and exhilarating! I'm incredibly proud of our community and the way that we have responded to the almost constant changes of the last two years. I've enjoyed trying new things and having people receive them with grace and appreciation. And I'm finding energy and joy in collaborating with leaders from both Lake Nokomis Lutheran and our partner congregations.

Winter and spring of 2021 saw us continuing with ministries we began in the fall. Our Faith & Life Conversations became "Faith & Fellowship", and we were able to combine meaningful conversations with prayer and fellowship. We often had as many as 30 people join our Sunday morning Faith & Fellowship conversations on Zoom, with highlights being our Lenten Bible Study using Adam Hamilton's "The Way," retracing the path of Jesus' life, as well as several sessions where we learned about our ministry partners such as Meals on Wheels, Beacon, and Kubi, Nigeria.

We also continued to meet on Zoom with our children and youth; and, while not ideal, we remained connected to them through these gatherings. With the wonderful leadership of Tom Dowzak, JoAnn Snyder and David Walker, we were even able to complete Holy Communion Instruction with our 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade youth over Zoom, and our students helped lead our pre-recorded Maundy Thursday worship service. This fall, we all breathed a sigh of relief when we were able to go back to in-person faith formation for our children and youth. It's been another "make it work" moment, with Sunday School

during Sunday worship; and both our Sunday morning confirmation instruction and Wednesday evening high school ministry taking place in hybrid form, with people joining both in person and on Zoom. Every single one of our participants, from our 3-year-olds on up to our high school seniors, has been a joy to work with. I have been especially thrilled with our high schoolers, who have been incredibly engaged in deep and meaningful conversations each week. They are thoughtful, critical thinkers who are learning how to truly live out their faith in their daily life.

Many of my highlights from the last year have been the collaborative efforts of many people. Almost immediately upon my return from my much-appreciated sabbatical, we began our 3-week experiment called Worship: The Practice. What a joy those three Wednesday evening, outdoor services turned out to be! We had so much fun with our creative, hands-on, intergenerational, 20-minutes services; and my hope is that we'll be doing it again. We also collaborated with our partner congregations on opportunities in 2021: a fall kick-off parking lot campfire for youth; Trunk-or-Treat; Christmas Caroling in our Nokomis neighborhood, at Oxendale's and at Nokomis Square; and a youth service project night, where our youth put together 100 wellness kits for Hennepin Middle School, made 150 sandwiches for The Dignity Center, made two fleece-tied blankets for Project Linus, and dug out the glitter and construction paper to make Christmas cards for our elderly church members.

This fall, our partner congregations also joined us for "Dialogues on Race," and we had 68 people in eight small groups, gathering on Zoom each week to build relationships, learn more about race and the church, and envision how we can work together to take steps towards dismantling racism and creating a diverse and welcoming center for ministry.

It isn't always easy to collaborate, to accept and thrive in the midst of change, or to innovate and "make it work," but it is the most effective and thrilling way to be in ministry! I am thankful for this year of rest, rejuvenation and growth; and I truly look forward to the next year of ministry in this community of faith that I love so dearly!



# Finance Committee report

Submitted by Jerry Winzig, Treasurer

The Finance Committee’s function is to evaluate the daily and long-term financial responsibilities and make recommendations to the Council on how church funds should be spent. In 2020, the church approved a budget of \$501,150 income/ \$501,150 expenses with actual \$585,943.55 income/\$525,930.58 expenses and ended with a \$60,012.97 surplus at year end. This was due in to continued generous giving by LNL members, including our newest members from Hope Lutheran Church.

The congregation voted an ELCA benevolence support that was 6% of our total giving, or \$20,256.19 in 2021, and Other Benevolence that was 4% of our total giving plus Mission giving, or \$15,800.00, in 2021.

## Mortgage report

January 1, 2021 balance: \$385,154.

December 31, 2021 balance: \$356,533

**2021 Finance Committee members:** Jerry Winzig, Tom Dowzak, Eric Grube, Randy Ritterman, and Glen Wheeler



# Foundation report

Submitted by Eric Grube, Foundation Treasurer

The Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church Foundation provided 9 financial awards to students who were pursuing degrees in higher education. Each award recipient received \$1,000, which was sent to the institution where the student was enrolled. The 2021 financial award recipients were:

Amber Atkinson  
Emma Horstman  
Julia Zaepfel  
Kathleen Grube  
Nick Kendall  
Owen Kimmes  
Ben Gardner  
Katie Fernandez  
Nissa Rolf

The Foundation also provided funding for the following individuals, groups and projects. The total of these awards was \$8,330.

- Benevolence contribution related to 2019 annual meeting motion - \$3,900
- Native American scholarship given to and administered by the Roosevelt High School Foundation - \$2,500
- Technology requirements necessary for Sunday morning online services - \$1,800
- Member registration to attend the Augsburg Youth Theology Institute - \$130

**2021 Foundation board members:** Diana Grundeen (vice president), Eric Grube (treasurer), Cammie Kimmes, Pastor Sara Spohr

