



2020 Annual Report

Annual Meeting | January 24, 2021

PASTOR'S REPORT

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

The Pandemic and lock-down orders this past year posed challenges few of us could have imagined. It forced us to quickly adapt. Positively, it meant that our church got back to the essential duties of a church. Negatively, the quickness with which we were forced to adapt meant that churches everywhere acted without having much time to think through actions.

Having had time to reflect on the past year, there is no doubt we (I) made mistakes in judgement. Yet, we are not rewarded for never failing, rather God's grace shines all the more where sin abounds (Rom. 5:20). A good conscience is not one that does everything perfectly, but one that is forgiven. We have a Savior who forgives! And we have a God who gives help and counsel! And this year has revealed we all need it.

In one of our Lutheran Confessions, *The Smalcald Articles*, Martin Luther talks about the different means through which God gives us counsel and help.

Predictably he says, "Through the spoken Word...Secondly, through Baptism, Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar, Fourthly through the power of the keys." And then Luther adds this neat little phrase: "And also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren."

"The mutual conversation and consolation of brethren" is what happens when Christians take the gospel and speak it to each other. It is quite often unscheduled, unpredictable and unscripted. However, consolation and good counsel do not happen in a vacuum or spring from an empty well. Endurance through the dark valleys of life –

encouragement on the long march toward home – comes from Scripture.

The writer to the Hebrews knew this well. "*Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*" (Heb. 10:24-25). We do well to meditate on these words and consider our current times not exceptions to the rule and norm, but rather *the* norm. It is times like these "*as we see the Day approaching,*" that we need "*all the more*" to "*encourage each other*" by "*meeting together.*"

It is of little surprise that in 2020, according to Gallup, the mental health of Americans from every age and demographic sunk to an all-time low – except for *one* group that actually saw an *increase* in their mental health: weekly church goers.¹

Moving forward into the new year, our church has numerous opportunities for physically gathering together for every comfort level – from private family communion services to smaller vespers services to the larger Sunday Divine Service. If I am missing an area to serve you, please let me know.

Just as a branch cannot survive cut from the vine, so Christians cannot survive cut off from each other or from Christ. Assembled together, as a body, as a church, (in however small or large of groups) Christians constitute *the* actual body of Christ and receive *the* body of Christ in bread and wine (cf. 1 Corinthians).

¹

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/327311/americans-mental-health-ratings-sink-new-low.aspx>

We sang these words this morning in the chief hymn for the Epiphany season, written by Philip Nicolai, who pastored during a severe plague in the 1600's. Externally, the world will likely be just as restless and chaotic as the previous year, so these consoling words serve as a fitting prayer for us in 2021 and for the rest of our lives:

Now richly to my waiting heart,
O Thou, my God, deign to impart
The grace of love undying.
In Thy blest body let me be,
E'en as the branch is in the tree,
Thy life my life supplying.
Sighing,
Crying,
For the savor
Of Thy favor;
Resting never
Till I rest in Thee forever.

In nomine Jesu,

Pastor Jeff Hendrix

Below is just a summary of God's work at Faith in 2020:

Bible Studies & In-Home Sunday School

After the blow in stay-at-home orders, and a sputtering attempt at online Bible Class, Bible Study slowly began again in August. August usually is a low month, when Bible study rarely happens, but this year we had Bible Study outside in the perfect weather during the month and into the Fall. We averaged around **8** adults and **2** kids. Pastor was able to get in **1** session of Bible Study at Oakhill Correctional Institute here in Oregon before being barred entry. Confirmation Class continued online, and Israel Mikkelson was confirmed on Pentecost Sunday. This new year, Confirmation Class has met in-person, as it is considered a religious service. We have **4** students. Pastor also began taking **2** people through new member class, as well as holding online marriage counseling classes for a couple.

Every Parent was offered free high quality age-appropriate books for doing at-home family Bible studies with their children, which have been purchased by our congregation for this purpose. We still have some books left.

Study Groups

Soon, we will hopefully be starting multiple study groups:

- **Sunday Bible Study:** "The Body of Christ" – A study of 1 Corinthians.
- **Men's Study Group:** "Christ Have Mercy: How to Put Your Faith Into Action"
- **Young Adults** (college-30's): "On the Road with St. Augustine: Real World Spirituality for Restless Hearts"
- **Women's Study Group** (led by Carla): "Enough for Now: Unpacking God's Sufficiency."
- **Adult Instruction Course:** "Didache [The teaching]" (an adult instruction course centered around the liturgy)

Hymnaries for Home

At the beginning of the stay-at-home orders, we worked hard to get hymnaries into homes. A special donor offered to pay for one hymnary for church, for each hymnary a family purchased for their home (up to 30). This was then matched by another donor, and Bethany Lutheran College gave us a discounted rate (\$12) for each hymnary. Many others from the congregation donated copies, with the result that we have enough hymnaries for our (used) pews now (whenever the public health orders recommend we can use them normally again). It was decided to purchase the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (the black hymnal), as the *Christian Worship* (the red hymnal) is being retired at the end of this church year by the Wisconsin Synod. The ELH is also the hymnal of our own Synod, and Pastor Hendrix has easy access to multiple (free) digital resources, something not available for the WELS hymnals.

It ended up being the "right timing" to get new hymnaries, as this spring, Holy Scripture Lutheran Church (ELS) in Midland, MI suffered a massive flood and lost every one of its hymnals. So this summer, our elders recommended and the council voted to send all but 50 of our red *Christian Worship* Hymnals to them. They were very grateful for the hymnals. Keeping 50 for ourselves allows us to print enough

copies of hymns or music from CW for services, should we decide to use something from that hymnal which is not contained in ELH.

Faith 40th Anniversary & New Paraments

2020 was Faith's 40th Anniversary. An anniversary service had been planned for the Sunday after Easter, which was postponed. Instead it was held on October 11. New red paraments were bought/donated during a significant sale to help commemorate the event. The Altar Guild would like to purchase new white, purple, and green sets before our 50th anniversary in 9 years, and is welcoming donations for this purpose.

Call Returned

In February, Pastor Hendrix received a divine call to be pastor at Lakewood Lutheran Church, Lakewood, WA & Our Redeemer, Yelm, WA. After a few weeks of deliberation, Pastor Hendrix returned the call to stay at Faith.

OFFICIAL ACTS

Out of 52 weeks, we have had **42** Regular Sunday Services with an average attendance of **27**, plus **11** Special Services with an average attendance of **25**. Due to the lock-down orders, there were **10** Sundays we had no regular services. (**15** services were "online-only.") Since reopening on Pentecost Sunday, Holy Communion has been celebrated **every Sunday** and, since Fall, offered every Thursday. Often and consistently offering the Sacrament is especially important due to the uncertain nature of week to week.

In addition, Pastor has brought communion, as often as he has been able, to **9** homebound members, as well as a further **10** members who regularly make use of Pastor's Thursday communion service offering due to the pandemic. The number of times the Lord's Body and Blood has been delivered in this way to individuals is **86**.

Pastor Hendrix also performed **2** weddings and **1** funeral.

Baptisms

- Isaiah William Frederic Hendrix - March 1, 2020
- Joel Raymond Jarois - July 29, 2020

Confirmations

- Israel Mikkelson - Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

Weddings

- Cody & RJ Casper - May 2, 2020
- Grace & Landon Brands - August 8, 2020 (Minneapolis, MN)

Transfer In

- Justin & Victoria Shaffner - October 25, 2020 (from Peace Lutheran Church, Houghton, MI [WELS])

Transfer Out

- Jeff & Cathy John - January, 2020 (to Resurrection Lutheran, Verona [WELS])

Release

- Jason & Daisy Becker; Mikayla, Malia - May, 2020
- Troy & Heidi Brummond; Taylor - May 2020

Deaths

- Gati Grundmanis - May 5, 2020 (funeral held outdoors at the gravesite on May 16)

Digital Statistics (for the 2020 calendar year):

- **Sermon Podcast – 3,159 plays***
*Audience for new content each week is ~7 people
- **YouTube Service/Sermon Videos – 2,400 views**; 41 new subscribers**
Average percentage viewed is **25.8%.
Meaning of all those combined who watch, most only view only 25.8% of the video (or, of a roughly one hour and ten minute service video, about 20 minutes).
- **Unique Views of Live Stream:** (Note that a single "unique viewer" could have multiple family members at his or her device).
On the first Sunday of the pandemic, **71** unique viewers watched the video; over the next few months of the lock-down, viewership fell to around **22**. Once churches reopened, over the spring, summer and fall, viewership was steady around **7** viewers. Around Advent & Christmas, viewership rose slightly to around **12**.
- **Website views – 8,208 views** (~50% higher than previous years)

