

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

St. Peter United Church of Christ



A Note from Our Lay Shepherds

A Brief Look Back

So very much has taken place during the 2019-2020 church year that it's impossible to encapsulate it all in a paragraph or two! Major milestones include launching the Hearts & Minds programing (formerly Christian Education) for children and adults, opening our doors to the Lake Zurich Park District's preschool when a fire destroyed the building where they had been meeting, providing an electronic option for gifts and offerings via the tithe.ly app and website, and – along with the rest of the world – navigating the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by developing and following the “Reopening St. Peter” plan.

Be sure to look through the rest of this annual report for more information regarding all that has taken place at St. Peter United Church of Christ during the past year.

Looking Ahead

As one church year ends, we look forward to embarking on a new one. While we pray that a successful vaccine will soon be readily available, we know that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact our decisions and activities for the foreseeable future.

Because of the constantly changing landscape, long-term plans are difficult to make (and even more challenging to complete). For that reason, beginning on October 1, 2020 (and continuing for as long as circumstances warrant), St. Peter will operate on a triannual (every four months), rather than annual, budget. Due to the pandemic, we have seen a significant decrease in the number of outside organizations using our building for a fee and anticipate this continuing throughout the fall, thereby reducing our income. By transitioning to a triannual budget for as long as is needed, we will be better able to assess the situation and make financial decisions accordingly. A status update will be provided to the congregation every four months.

The pilot program for our church's organizational structure, which established the Assembly (including the Church Shepherds), is scheduled to continue through the end of the 2020-2021 church year (i.e., through September 30, 2021). While the Assembly remains intact, the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic have resulted in some elected members needing to step down. The Church Shepherds support each and every member of the 2019-2020 Assembly and respect and fully understand why some are no longer able to serve. Because of the pandemic, there are no plans to elect new Assembly members at this time. The existing Assembly members (listed elsewhere in this report) will continue to work together via email and other socially-distanced avenues to carry out the work of the church.

Pastor Ruth has worked graciously and untiringly throughout the onset of the pandemic (in mid-March). We look forward to her being able to take some well-earned time for rest and rejuvenation during the 2020-2021 church year.

Many Thanks

In closing, we want to express our sincere gratitude to:

- the congregation for its trust and patience during these very unusual times, and for the generous financial support that makes it possible for St. Peter to live out God's vision;
- all members of the 2019-2020 Act, Belong, and Engage teams for their willingness to participate in the pilot program and serve the church; and
- Pastor Ruth, for her ability to quickly and skillfully adapt to online worship service, steadfast guidance and leadership with respect to listening for the Holy Spirit's call on how and when to reopen the church, and unwavering devotion to the health and welfare of the congregation.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve St. Peter United Church of Christ.

Respectfully submitted,
The Lay Shepherds (**Ben Bercher, Beth Krischke, Laura Mills Danner, and Dean Olerich**)

Belong

Everyone works to create a culture of oneness, unity, and togetherness.

- We each seek to make our church community a safe and inclusive place for all.
- We respect, learn from, support, and love each other unconditionally.
- We continually nurture deeper relationships with each other.
- We celebrate each other's gifts.

We realize this by:

- Offering an inclusive welcome to all (ages, orientations, genders, political/theological perspectives, etc).
- Embracing those who are new to our community.
- Having fun together.

Some of the activities hosted by the Belong Team (Fred Branding, Katie Grover, Sue Pathmann, and Debbie Wheelock) this year included:



Hanging/Unhanging of the Greens

[together with the Engage Team]



Valentines Candy & Cards

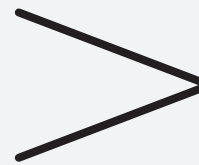
[made by our kids & given to all at church]



60 **Mother's Day treat bags**



41 **Father's Day treat bags**



12 distributed by **volunteers**



[and Pastor Ruth]



39 **Back to School Blessing Bags**

[given to St. Peter kids, parents, & teachers]

Engage

Everyone uses their gifts consistently to help our church thrive.

- We rely on each other and, therefore, each one is needed to consistently contribute to the life of our church.
- We strive to offer well-defined avenues for all (ages, orientations, genders, political/ theological perspectives, etc) to be connected and involved.

We realize this by:

- Offering a range of times and ways in which people can participate in our life together.
- Intentionally ensuring every generation is represented in our whole church decision-making.
- Supporting the next generation of leaders as they grow into their roles and encourage new ideas and creativity through the regular rotation of our leaders.

The Engage Team (**Ken Crisler**, **Linda Davis**, Jeff Pathmann, and **Trish Radaj**) strove to live out these elements of our church's Vision this year by:



getting to

know each other better

through 1-on-1 conversations, the Community Campaign, the Question of the Week, and more!



launching

tith.ly online giving

to offer more ways for everyone to engage financially in the life of our church.



tackling yearly

workday projects

in this socially distant world.



co-hosting

hanging of the greens

[50+ people, with Confirmands from St. Peter & Peace, and Cub Scouts.]



co-hosting

unchanging of the greens

[35+ people, with the Belong Team.]

Act

Everyone gives of themselves in service to our neighborhood and beyond, inspired and energized to act by the love of God.

- We walk the talk of our faith not just at church events, but in everything we do.
- We live the Gospel, encouraging all to love as Jesus loved.
- We create a world of justice and hope for all.

We realize this by:

- Graciously offering help to those in need.
- Holding our world in prayer.

The Act Team (Joyce Blau, **Barry Bordenave**, **Jean Crisler**, and **Pam Smith**) sponsored the following events to help our church serve our community and world:



Act

Additionally, St. Peter serves our community through several other means, including:



542

items donated to A Safe Place by Piecemakers

[262 quilts, 37 fleece tie blankets, and an assortment of other goodies]



15

Girl Scouts from St. Peter & our community

[attended a My Promise, My Faith Girl Scout workshop led by Pastor Ruth]

\$1100

in support for

Neighbors in Need + One Great Hour of Sharing + Strengthen the Church + the Christmas Fund offerings

Hosting Community Groups in our building



- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scout troops & Lake Zurich Service Unit
- Cub Scouts



- Lake Zurich Park District
- Toastmasters
- Village Singers
- Knight Music

- St. Scholastica Home School Co-op
- Youth & Family Counseling

Worship



74 average Sunday attendance
[October 2019-March 15, 2020]



252 average views
Sunday Worship Service on Facebook

492 highest # of views
Sunday Worship Service on Facebook

Sunday morning of the year which brought the most smiles:

December 15, the day of The Christmas Extravaganza featuring the Choir, Bell Choir, and super cute kids doing even cuter Christmasy things!

hearts+minds

In January 2020, Heart & Minds was launched. The goal of all Hearts & Minds groups and events is to feed our hearts and minds, ourselves and each other, as we consider God's Word and world.

Formerly known as Christian Education, Hearts & Minds was adopted as "Christian Education" generally denotes a teacher leading a classroom of obediently listening pupils, but research shows this isn't an effective way to grow faith. Christian Education also implies a left-brained (analytical, linear) approach to faith, but again research shows that transformation happens best when we engage our whole person, both our hearts and our minds. We certainly saw this happening in the first six months of Hearts & Minds offerings.

Adult Groups (and events attracted over 50 St. Peter adults)

- Deepening Prayer
- World Religions
- Hope When Hope Seems Hopeless (wrestling with questions about suffering)
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Entering the Passion of Jesus (a midweek Lenten group)

Kids & Youth Groups (attended by over 25 St. Peter kids)

- Joining God at Work in the World (Preschool Sunday School & Elementary groups)
- Submerge (Middle & High School group)
- Confirmation (6-8th graders)
- Youth Group (6-12th graders)

Hearts & Minds Events

- Tell Me a Story Women's Retreat (15 ladies)
- Empowered Planning: Demystifying the Death Process (attracting over 25 people in the first two sessions)
- Compassion Camp (9 Preschool - 5th graders, 2 youth helpers, 3 adult helpers, + Pastor Ruth)
- SteppingStones (2 kindergarteners completed a Introduction to Church class; 2 second graders completed a class and received Bibles; 3 fourth graders completed classwork and received their first communion; 3 eighth graders were Confirmed, 1 tenth grader became a member of the church, and 2 twelfth graders were celebrated with a drive-by graduation parade).

A Note from Our Lead Pastor

When we started our fiscal year last October, none of us could have possibly imagined how we would be ending it. In January, Wuhan, China, seemed so far away few of us dreamed what was happening there could happen here. As we begin this next year in the life of our church, many of us find ourselves bracing for what comes next.

But the important things still remain unchanged by the pandemic and other chaos around us. The sun still rises in the morning and sets in the evening. The seasons still ebb and flow (and please, Lord, may the summer and fall linger this year!). God still loves us beyond reason and faithfully takes care of us. We are still called to be Jesus' hands and feet and heart in this world, bringing his hope, peace, love, and joy to all those around us. Our church family is still an important part of our lives, even if we've learned to love each other in the comments or while sitting 6' apart.

While many things have remained unchanged for our church during the pandemic, we have also lost some things (at least temporarily) that we continue to grieve. A good hug from a trusted church friend would feel great right about now. A chat over a warm cup of church coffee in the Fireside Room would be so much fun. Singing *For Everyone Born* in a Sanctuary full of our church family would sound like a little bit of heaven.

But not all of the change has been sad. We've learned to gather virtually and even found some benefits of doing so, like going to church in your PJs on your couch or being able to worship with your church community when you're traveling. We've become more intentional about encouraging and supporting one and embraced a whole host of ways of communicating with our church friends. We've been able to extend our extravagant welcome well beyond the 100+ people who called St. Peter home before the pandemic, now regularly reaching 1,500+ people weekly through social media.

Change often scares us and at church, we don't want to be scared. We want to feel comforted and comfortable at church. But we need to change. God is always doing a new thing and that includes doing a new thing at our beloved St. Peter. Whatever changes the pandemic brings to us in the next year, may we be on the lookout for the ways God continues to faithfully love us and the good the change brings into our midst.

May God's love and grace and joy surround you and encourage you every moment of every day,
Pastor Ruth