

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

St. Peter United Church of Christ



A Note from Our Lay Shepherds

Although the 2020-2021 church year was challenging in that it took place entirely under the shadow of COVID-19, many exciting things took place at St. Peter despite – and, in a few instances, even because of – the pandemic!

- We learned how to do some things differently to best **reflect the changing environment** (for example, **Not-Sunday Un-School** for our children in the spring).
- **Hybrid church**, which is now a permanent component of our worship services, allows everyone who chooses to join us for service to do so in the manner that is best for them (in the building or via live stream).
- We shared the joy of the Advent season by **CARoling** and raising funds through the **Gift of Love** drive that sponsored seven nights at Lake County Haven's shelter for women and children.
- **Christmas Eve and Easter celebrations** were available as both drive-in and live streamed services, and **Tailgate Church** was offered in October and on the first Sundays of June, July, and August.
- **Adventure Island Mini-VBS**, which took place in mid-July, allowed us to share the love of Christ with children from our church family and the surrounding community.
- Two part-time employees – **Finlay Ross (A/V Specialist)** and **Samantha Eyster (Administrative Specialist)** – joined our staff, adding their unique skills and experience to help us continue living out God's vision for our church.

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.

The Year Ahead

As we say good-bye to the 2020-2021 church year, we turn to the year ahead. While we are excited and grateful that the availability of a vaccine has dramatically slowed the spread of COVID-19, we recognize that the pandemic is not yet completely over (especially with children under the age of 12 not yet able to be vaccinated, and the uncertainty regarding how variant strains of the virus will impact progress). So, as we plan for the coming year, we do so with both **optimism and caution**.

For as long as circumstances warrant, St. Peter will continue to operate on a **triannual (rather than annual) budget**. Remaining on a triannual budget for as long as is needed allows us to continually assess circumstances and make financial decisions accordingly.

The Assembly (including the Church Shepherds) will continue to lead St. Peter in living out God's vision for our church. The **slate of 2021-2022 Assembly members**, to be approved at the **August 22, 2021 annual meeting**, is provided later in this report. Approval of **proposed Bylaw update**, which – based on what was learned over the past two years – reduces the number of Assembly members from seventeen to seven, is also on the agenda for the annual meeting.

Many Thanks

Once again, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to:

- the **congregation** for its trust, patience, and prayers, and for the generous financial support that makes it possible for St. Peter to live out God's vision;
- all members of the **2020-2021 Act, Belong, and Engage teams** for their willingness to serve the church;
- all St. Peter **part-time staff, contractors, and volunteers** for the way they skillfully and faithfully worked together to handle the day-to-day operations of the church; and
- **Pastor Ruth**, for her steadfast guidance, leadership, 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**)

[Names of Assembly members continuing to serve in 2021-2022 are **bolded**.]



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.

The Belong Team (Fred Branding and **Katie Grover**) strove to live out these elements of our church's Vision this year by:



Easter Gifts

delivered to our kids & youth



Easter Flowers

delivered to our shut-ins



Christmas Gifts

delivered to our kids & youth

73

straight weeks of live church services

offered online or live since the beginning of the pandemic in order to make our church safe and inclusive for all



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**, and Trish Radaj) strove to live out these elements of our church's Vision this year by:



Question of the Week

Engaged weekly on Facebook to connect with each other.

What's the best thing to do in Chicagoland in the summer?

Just feel the sun on your face! I swear, I appreciate every moment of warm sunshine only because we live through the wind and cold.



CARoling

We decorated our cars and drove around the community to visit our elder members and played carols from our cars!

Chicago Botanical Garden or Brookfield Zoo. Both outside and fun to do!



Church work projects

We spruced up around the building including a facelift to the Church Street entrance of the Education Wing, the handrail under the portico, the sign on Lions' Drive, and more.

Hit the trails and see how the foliage changes from week to week.

Act

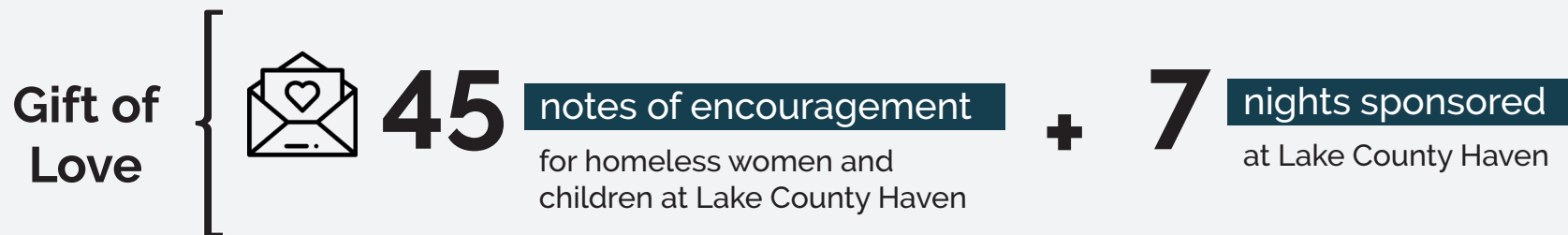
Everyone gives of themselves in service to our neighborhood and beyond, inspired and energized to act by the love of God.

- 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.

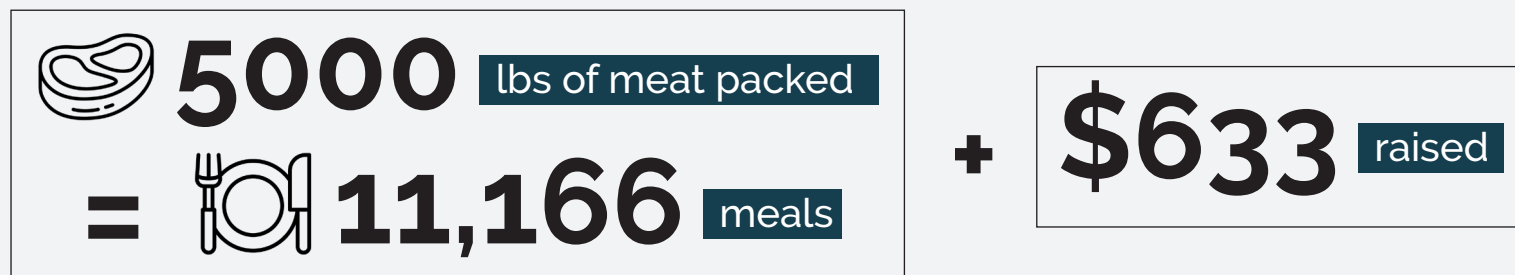
We realize this by:

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

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



Fundraiser for Northern Illinois Food Bank



Act

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



500+

items donated to A Safe Place by Piecemakers

almost 500 hand made items and a few quilts donated to A Safe Place's Holiday Shop



17

Girl Scouts from St. Peter & our community

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



3

Cub Scouts from St. Peter & our community

attended a God and Me workshop for 3rd Grade boys led by Pastor Ruth

\$1985

in support for

One Great Hour of Sharing + Our Church's Wider Mission

*Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, and the Christmas Fund offerings are taking place after publication of this report.

Worship Experiences



Live Worship EVERY Sunday and Holy Day During the Pandemic

Not many churches can say that – so it's a huge celebration for us! Most churches our size weren't able to handle the technology challenges of making services available live online or outdoors so quickly.

Tailgate Church 1.0 (2020) and 2.0 (2021)

As we continued to hold church outside, we upgraded our technology and began broadcasting on the radio, too.

Blessing of the Pets

Lots of pets were blessed by Pastor Ruth, including dogs, cats, and stuffed animals!

All Saints Sunday

We honored the lives of 11 loved ones of our congregation.



Christmas Eve Drive-In Service

Even though it was 10 degrees out, we celebrated Christ's birth with a drive-in service! A livestream service followed.

Worship Experiences

Drive-through Ashes on Ash Wednesday

35 people received ashes. Including not just St. Peter "regulars," but also people from the community.

Holy Week Prayer Stations

In person prayer stations in the sanctuary helped us connect our emotions to the events of Holy Week and deepen our relationship with God.



Drive-in Easter Sunrise Service

A beautiful outdoor sunrise service enabled us to celebrate Christ's Resurrection safely. A livestream service followed.



Became a Hybrid Church

In May, we shifted to offering both in-building and online services so all can participate in the life of our community however they feel most comfortable. Live streamed services from January - July 2021 reached an average of 150 people per week (with an additional 30-60 people joining in-building starting in May). One day in July 2021, one of our Facebook posts reached 1.4k people!!

Star Words

On Epiphany, 32 people chose to receive Star Words. Folks who choose a star word were encouraged to place it somewhere they would see it every day and ponder the word in their heart over the year, listening to what the Holy Spirit might be saying through it, seeing where it leads.

Worship Experiences



Snowflakes

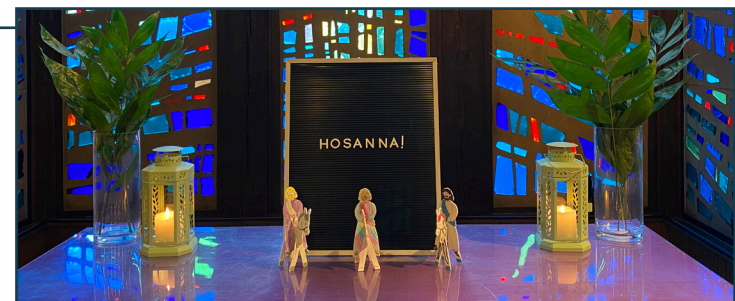
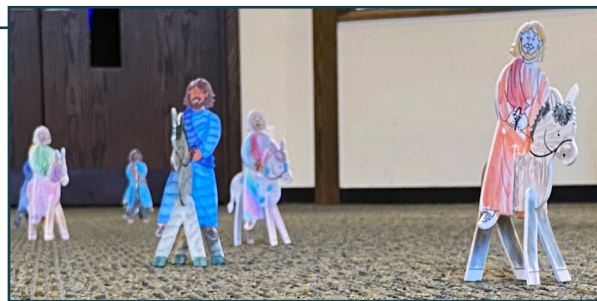
Congregation members made many beautiful snowflakes with prayer & praises written on them to accompany our Let It Snow sermon series in January.

Weber Concert Grand Piano

We were gifted a new piano for the Sanctuary which has enabled the music of our pianists, Pam Orals and Alice Grubb, to soar!

Palm Parade

Since our traditional Palm Parade wasn't possible this year, members of the congregation showed off their creativity in celebration of Palm Sunday by decorating a foam Jesus riding on a donkey. They decorated the sanctuary on the Sunday before Easter and were used in our Holy Week prayer stations.



hearts+minds Experiences

Tailgate Talks

For 4 weeks in the fall, we explored how to not lose your family and friends, your values, your faith, and your mind as we continued to struggle through COVID and headed towards Election Day.

Confirmation Class

3 kids were in this year's class. Led by Paul Nagy with assistance from Linda Davis and Pastor Ruth, they met weekly and also helped lead the Mother's Day worship service.

Advent & Lenten Mid-Week Livestream Devotionals

Tuesdays during Advent & Lent, Pastor Ruth presented a video devotional on Facebook Live.

Not Sunday UnSchool

An after school program where kids reflected on Bible stories, foot painted, played Marco Polo (COVID-style), created Holy Spirit kites, and more!

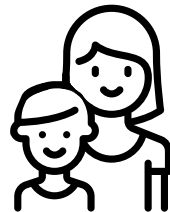
Laugh Out Loud Outside Summer Book Club

Ten people gathered on Sundays for this outdoor book club on *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*.

Mini-VBS

16 kids, 4 youth volunteers, and 7 adult staff had an awesome week at Adventure Island VBS!

"I just miss them already. I just love them so much."



"Please let the volunteers know how much they are helping these kids!"

Administration Updates

Welcomed Fin Ross

In March 2021, Finlay Ross joined us as our A/V Specialist. Over the last several years, Fin has been working as a professional event and theater technician. He is currently on staff at the Metropolis Performing Arts Center in Arlington Heights and has worked many shows and events throughout the Chicago area. When not working, he can be found enjoying hikes with his dog, Ginger, or advancing his website development skills.

Welcomed Samantha Eyster

Samantha Eyster joined the St. Peter staff as Administrative Specialist in June 2021. Samantha (Sam) studied at Michigan Technological University, where she earned her Bachelor's in Psychology and minored in Journalism. In the years following, she went on to study at Western Michigan University, where she earned her Master's in Educational Technology.

Samantha's husband, Nathan, works as the Senior Reliability Engineer at Novelis in Lincolnshire. They have two children, Josie and Asher, and three dogs: Merit, Walter, and Spree.

Celebrated 5 Years with Pastor Ruth

February 2021 brought Pastor Ruth's 5 Year anniversary at St. Peter. Lots has changed in the world and in the church during that time and we are so grateful to have her leading the way!

