

2017

Annual Report



St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

Reading, Ohio

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St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

2017 Annual Report

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A Prayer for Meetings

ELW

Almighty God, you have built your church upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Grant that the people of this congregation may be joined together as a holy temple, a place where you dwell. Send your Holy Spirit upon us that, guided by your word and strengthened by your sacraments, we may plan and do things that will be for the good of your church and the glory of your name; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Pastor's Report

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

Ecclesiastes 3:1

This may come as a bit of a shock. You will not find anything below that you won't read in any of the other sections contained in this annual report. That is because I'm not giving you an account of what I have accomplished this year. A congregation's life and ministry are not dependent on its pastor—they are dependent upon the God who calls, gathers, and sends *the whole congregation*. That's why this report seeks to witness to you everything which God has done through *you*, the body of Christ at St. Paul, in 2017. God has called, gathered, and sent you in amazing ways this year! Whether you read this report first or last, be sure to read every section of this annual report so that you might be encouraged by God's power and strengthened in faith.

If the last year seems a bit hazy, and if you gawk at the length of this entry, then perhaps it's because we moved from one project to the next and sought to do so much in Jesus' name! Perhaps one of those distant memories is the completion of the visioning process in July of 2017. After visiting houses in Reading for a survey of our neighbors, studying Scripture to gain a deeper sense of our identity and values, interviewing key civic leaders in Reading, reflecting on our history as a congregation, studying the demographics of Butler, Clermont, and Hamilton Counties, and analyzing data from our own members' surveys, the Council was equipped to apply Ecclesiastes 3:1 to our life in Christ. According to God, it is time for: **Sowing, Reaping, Rebirth, and Joy.**

The danger of a visioning process is that congregations engage in all the work, but then stow the completed report away neatly on a shelf and never touch it again. The Holy Spirit was stirring among us, and the work of the visioning process did not go to waste. We paid attention to how the Holy Spirit was moving us to grow in membership, discipleship, community engagement, and fellowship. This is what God did:

Sowing: God sowed many seeds of faith! Perhaps the clearest consensus from our Adult Forums and congregational survey is that this congregation feels called to steward children's relationships with God. We intentionally focused on the education of our children by beginning the 2017-2018 educational year with three Sunday School classes bracketed by age and offering adult forums each Sunday. Youth members met regularly to grow in relationship with God and each other through Bible study, worship, prayer, and games. You paved the road smoothly and laid much ground for our youth attending the National Youth Gathering next summer by supporting their fundraisers. Children participated in the chancel dramas for the Easter Vigil and the Christmas pageant at the Live Nativity. We studied call stories and women in the Bible and learned that the way in which God reaches people in the Bible and the signs he gives them to reassure them of his promise are uniquely suited for their needs—God knows us, how to reach us, and how to work through us. A four-month study of Luther's Small Catechism revealed to us the freedom that we have in Christ, and how God desires for us to live out that freedom on a daily basis. We gained a deeper sense of God's desire and commitment to speak to us through his Word through the prayer and meditation Bible study series. We put that into practice with the Advent Devotional series.

God drew us closer to him during worship Sunday after Sunday, during our Lenten midweek services, through the addition of Stations of the Cross and Advent midweek services, and through the special music featured during Holy Week, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Lessons and Carols, and Christmas Eve. We heard children sing once again in the Sanctuary, and God fed us by his Word week after week. We hosted our sisters and brothers in Christ at the Service of Christian Unity for the Reading Council of Churches last January and for a faith chat on Scripture, the Church, and Eternal Life. Through these events, God reminded us that we are not alone and that he works through all of his believers!

God cultivated stronger relationships with each other by gathering us for community breakfasts once a month, and midweek Lenten suppers, and

for seeing the *Idea that Changed the World* movie about the Reformation together and discussing it during dinner. God sought to deepen our trust in each other through discussions of the Constitution. Through these conversations, God taught us that though we have varied perspectives, we all share the commitment to tending our organizational structures and governing patterns so as to sustain the vital ministry of St. Paul long into the future.

God sowed partnerships between us and our neighbors by inspiring us to welcome into our building Reading Community Schools for concerts and St. John UCC for community dinners while their kitchen was under renovation.

God sowed trust in him and his power to provide by working through you to pack over 100,000 meals in September with other ELCA congregations in Cincinnati, to send more than 70 cleaning kits in addition to financial aid to hurricane survivors this fall, and to feed and clothe the hungry and poor of the Mill Creek Valley through donations to Valley Interfaith each month.

Reaping: We know that we exist as a congregation so that God may strengthen our faith, but ultimately so that we might serve and speak in such a way that *others* might know and believe in Jesus Christ. We sought to reap more people for God's kingdom through all our ministries, but especially through the Drama Ministry plays, Community Easter Egg Hunt, Ice Cream Social, Live Nativity, Fall in Love Bridal Show (Reading Bridal District), neighborhood visits, and an increased online presence via our website, Facebook, and Google Ads. Thanks be to God, who through these efforts and many other acts of the Holy Spirit, brought these new members to the body of Christ at St. Paul through †Affirmation of Baptism† Joseph and Desiree Allgeyer (Joey and Lily), Kim Coulehan, Shirley Lathrop, Mary Ellen Welsh, and Maryhelen West. The Holy Spirit defeated death and gave eternal life to Liam Cathcart through †Holy Baptism†. The Triune God welcomed into eternal life our beloved † Paul Barry, Shirley Buhr, Harold Curless, Pat Edwards, Karen Kerlin, Marge Malin,

Ronald Replogle, Ruth Jones, and Bus Faulkner † and you accompanied their families in love.

Rebirth and Joy: God put to death our fears and raised us to live new life in joy! Nothing could have given us a more visceral experience of this than God bringing a new community in Christ out of the grief of the closing of Roselawn Lutheran Church. Out of that death, God blessed us all by binding us together in love, and we have all been encouraged and enriched in faith by each other. The beauty of this new life was signified especially at the dedication of Roselawn's baptismal font in St. Paul's sanctuary on Easter Sunday—a ritual which showed that all those baptized throughout the histories of Roselawn and St. Paul, and all those yet to be baptized in our sanctuary, are one in Christ. The gift from the sale of Roselawn Lutheran Church's building allowed us to retire our mortgage. Now St. Paul is completely debt-free! God led us to live into our future without fear by embarking on a Capital Campaign which will steward our property resources so that worship continues at St. Paul for many years to come.

Notice that I did not thank any individuals in this report. That is because since Christ is the vine and we are the branches, everything one of us does, we all do, for we are all part of the same Vine—Jesus Christ Our Lord. When the Drama Ministry invited people to deal with their grief at the Lenten dramas or equipped children to tell the story of Jesus' birth, you made that possible. When the Social Concerns Committee collected food items, winter clothing, and hurricane relief supplies, you made that possible. When Christian Education volunteers taught our children and youth, you made that possible.

What does all of this tell us about our God and our identity and purpose? God has made you a generous people who overflow with a compassion that reflects God's own heart. God has given us to each other because he knew that we need each other to make our joy complete (*John 15:11*). By giving us to each other, sending us out to our neighbors, and gathering us around his throne each week, God has given us everything we need to do the mission he has given us: bringing more people to know and to believe in Christ.

The God who brought us together will lead us into 2018. Now it's time to focus on living out his mission in 2018! Our ministries and our budget for 2018 are in line with our mission and reflect our commitments to sowing, reaping, rebirth and joy. The late winter Bible study series will focus on heaven and hell so that we might meditate on what Christ has done for us during Lent. The spring Bible study will focus on worship traditions throughout the history of the church in order that we might more deeply understand what we do on Sundays and why we do it. The children in their late elementary years have asked if they can launch a Pre-teen Group and so we will! Retreats are planned on grief in February and on prayer/spiritual disciplines in the summer. Each month the Stewardship Committee has events planned to help us care for our whole selves and manage all of life with Christ at the center. The new carillon system will ring out proclaiming Christ's presence in the neighborhood on the hour and God's promises through hymns at noon and six. You can further all of this work and deepen our mission by keeping on the lookout for the Holy Spirit; when he reveals to you a way to sow, reap, experience rebirth or joy—share it! As our Lord says,

“Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.” *John 4:35*

Thank you for sharing in the life of faith at St. Paul Lutheran Church. God has sowed faith and reaped rebirth and joy through you for the sake of many.

In Christ,
Rev. Emily Beckering, Pastor

President's Report

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united in Christ."

Ephesians 1:3

2017 has been a year of "Sowing, Reaping, Rebirth and Joy."

That mission theme came about as a result of our many hours of working on our visioning and mission process, through Council, congregational and community discussions and surveys.

Our acts of "Sowing" were evident as we went door-to-door surveying our neighbors, as we hosted both internal and external community events such as the dinner theatres, ice cream social, Thrivent workshops, Fall Festival, Live Nativity and the Christmas pageant; as we posted Pastor's empowering sermons online; as we opened our doors to help one of our neighboring congregations (St. John UCC) host and serve meals to the hungry in our community and offered meeting space for the local Cub and Girl Scout programs; as we hosted several choral concerts and exercise programs for Reading High School while they undergo reconstruction/rebuilding; as we hosted bingo games and served food for Tender Mercies, collected pop tabs and toiletries for Ronald McDonald House, collected "Items of the Month," as well as scarves, gloves, hats and socks for Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center, premie baby items for the NICU, quilts to be sent overseas that were loving stitched by our own Dorcas ladies, shoebox gifts for Operation Christmas Child, clothing and medicine bottles for Matthew 25: Ministries and blankets and Bibles for the Anna Louise Inn.

We demonstrated acts of "Reaping," as we welcomed visitors from the Reading Community and beyond, as we partnered with Thrivent and other Reading businesses on various projects and as we received new members into the St. Paul family by affirmation, transfer and baptism.

We witnessed joyful signs of "Rebirth" when we were blessed with many volunteers to teach and assist with Sunday School classes (we now have four classes: ages 3-7, ages 8-12, junior high/high school, and adult forum), the Nursery and

Youth Group. Rebirth appeared in the Narthex and offices, as we refreshed them with new paint, carpeting/flooring and through our Capital Campaign which launched this year to help fund a number of current and future building projects. It was also witnessed as we added new Council and Committee members, several of whom had never served in those capacities, and as we restarted a youth choir.

Our “Joy” was apparent and complete, everywhere, through our celebration and remembrance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, through the installation of a carillon bell system, through our welcomes, through our smiles, through the hands that donated financially or materially, through cooking, cleaning, repairing, teaching, leading, writing, directing, singing, acting, playing instruments, laughing, crying, hugging, and serving in so many ways.

I want to give a special thank you to **Pastor Beckering and Jane Owen** for their faithful service, endless energy and dedication to our congregation and to **Taylor and Henry Beckering** for their services and sacrifices, as well as to our music department, **Barry Prince, Jack Wagner and Carolyn Koehl**. Also thank you to our former Council members who faithfully served in 2016/2017: **Nancy Erbeck, Jim Forst, Penny Huber, and Diana Hawkins**, and to our new and continuing Council members: **Marie Calhoun, Pat Coldiron, Nancy Erbeck, Donald Harris, Dennis King, Linda Miller, Carole Replogle and Elinor Schieman**. Thank you to all who served and led various committees/campaigns/events and to those who are currently serving, for your time and commitment to St. Paul and its members.

I would like to personally thank ALL of you who have lived, breathed and carried out our mission theme of “Sowing, Reaping, Rebirth and Joy” this year. It is through these acts that we will continue to survive, thrive and reach those souls who are still searching for the answer... the Way, the Truth, and the Life. May the Lord continue to bless us in 2018 and beyond!

To God be the Glory, forever and ever! Amen!

In Christ,
Nancy L. Erbeck

Music Director's Report

Each annual report of the Music Director seems to begin with a discussion of the unexpected or extraordinary events of the previous year. This report is no exception; happily, most of 2017's surprises were pleasant ones:

A big change – at least for me – is that responsibility for hymn selection has been transferred from the Director of Music to a special hymn-selection committee appointed by the Worship & Music Committee. (Alas for me, I am still a member of that committee.) This is expected to have several advantages: Hymn selection should become more representative of the whole congregation, a greater variety of hymn-styles should become more apparent in worship, and new and/or unusual hymns should appear from time to time. Our thanks to those who have participated in the initial phases of this chore: Carol Curless and Sherry Bronner, Carolyn Koehl and Chelsea King, and Carole Replogle, Maryhelen West, Kathy Hirt, and Linda Miller.

Repairs to the organ are on-going; upgrades are planned and detailed planning continues. The electrical unit which furnishes the bottom notes of our trumpet stop failed in 2016. This was not astonishing, as the unit was installed in 1992 and a 25-year life for electrical equipment of that era is respectable. We had the unit shipped to the manufacturer for evaluation. It was eventually determined that our difficulties were owing to the failure of a tiny part in a single tone generator (bottom E-natural, for those keeping score at home). The result: A repair/replacement expected to cost thousands was completed for a few hundred dollars. The unit is back in Cincinnati, reinstalled, and working properly. That big “tuba sound” in the pedal got its first real workout on Christmas Eve.

In 2016, we learned of a potential (anonymous) gift for an electronic carillon to sound forth from the bell tower, which would chime the hours, play an occasional hymn, and otherwise be a friendly reminder of St. Paul's presence in the neighborhood. To gather information, we arranged a visit from a representative of the Verdin Bell firm in Over-the-Rhine who inspected our bell tower and the present service bell and ringing mechanisms. The carillon project became unlikely to proceed, as the price of Verdin's most inexpensive model seemed far in excess of the potential gift.

But we learned a great deal in 2016: Our service bell was cast in Cincinnati by a highly regarded firm. The Verdin representative mentioned that the present value of our bell is about \$50,000. Replacement cost would be a bit more. It would have been rung manually (i.e., by somebody -- or several somebodies-pulling on a rope). Electrically operated ringing mechanisms were apparently added when the bell was moved to the new church in 1957; the mechanisms are of 1950s technology. The bell is 49 inches in diameter and weighs about a ton when quiet. When ringing, the force is about 5,000 pounds. [There is a formula, hallowed in bell-casting lore – that the force generated by a rotating bell is 2½ times its quiet weight; I believe that this is a primitive attempt to measure torque, a foreign concept in the heyday of cast-bell manufacture-- about three centuries ago.]

Since 2016, some additional information has come to light about our tower bell. I trust the congregation will tolerate my recounting it here, as there are no better places, to my knowledge, to write it up with the reasonable expectation that the information will be preserved and found again when someone is looking for it.

Our bell was made by Buckeye Bell Foundry in 1902. Buckeye was the manufacturing subsidiary (at the time) of the E. W. VanDuzen Co., the artistic and marketing arm of the bell-casting firm. Buckeye Bell was in business before 1832 and had a succession of owners – mostly of the VanDuzen family after about 1850.

There are reports that VanDuzen's largest bells were 48 inches – or (subject to manufacturing variance or measurement error) the precise size of St. Paul's bell. However, research has shown that VanDuzen manufactured the famous bell at St. Francis de Sales, East Walnut Hills, which is considerably larger than ours. Dedicated in 1879, St Francis de Sales' bell “Joseph” or “Big Joe” was named after the donor, Joseph Buddeke. Cast by the E. W. VanDuzen Company on 2nd Street, the bell weighs 35,000 pounds and is 7 feet high and 9 feet in diameter. When “Big Joe” was first rung in January 1896, its E-flat peal shook buildings and shattered windows.

So much for the 48-inch limitation. More probably, that 48-inch limit was derived from a misreading of an old VanDuzen catalogue, which suggested bells of 12” to 18” for schoolhouses, 18” to 24” for churches, and 24” to 48” for court-houses. The (unstated) implication that bells above 48 inches were not on offer is clearly refuted by the St. Francis De Sales installation.

However, it does seem clear that bells above 24 inches were relatively rare. St. Francis De Sales was probably the largest bell ever cast by VanDuzen, but I can find no such claim in online data. Sadly, all the records of the VanDuzen firm were lost in the Great Flood of 1937. [Records since that time survive in the custody of the Verdin Bell Company.]

The Buckeye Bell Foundry was located at Second and Ludlow Streets (neither of which exist at present; they are beneath the site of the present Reds ballpark). The foundry was in business from some time prior to 1832 until about 1952, under a succession of owners.

Late in 2017, we learned that the carillon project was going forward after all – and we heard the first chimes just before Reformation Sunday. The new carillon was given by Dennis and Janet King and Judy Pflieger, in honor of their mother Rhea Young, a life-long member of St. Paul and an enthusiastic supporter of all the ecclesiastical arts. It will be dedicated on Sunday, April 8, 2018, which is especially appropriate since Rhea would have been 100 years old on April 10.

In 2017, the congregation added a series of Vespers services on the Tuesday evenings of Advent. Attendance was modest, but the services seemed to be valued by those who came out for them.

The music program at St. Paul continues to benefit from extensive congregational participation and support. About two dozen adults are actively involved in the congregation's vocal and instrumental music programs; this is a substantial portion of typical adult worship attendance and represents a level of participation to which most other congregations of our size can only aspire.

St. Paul has an orchestra under the direction of Jack Wagner which supports our annual outdoor worship at Baxter Park. Smaller groups drawn from the orchestra play on Reformation, Christmas, Easter, and other occasions. In 2017, Jack assembled a particularly talented ensemble to support the Lesson & Carols program on December 10th.

During 2017, the congregation has benefited once again from the musical talents of Nancy Erbeck and Eleanor Bardes on the flute; from Eric Bardes on the oboe; from Karen Koehl and Jack Wagner on the clarinet – and Jack Wagner on the bass clarinet as well; from Nick Huitger on bassoon – and occasionally on flute and piccolo as well; from Carolyn Koehl on the horn; from Holly Ford on trombone; from Mary Wagner on violin; and from Susan Bardes and Joyce Seals on 'cello.

Our Chancel Choir sings most Sundays during the “choir year” which extends from September through the church picnic in June, as well as supporting the various weekday services during Lent. During 2017, we were fortunate to have the talents of sopranos Britt Hedges, Olivia Hedges, Kathy Hirt, Chelsea King, Carolyn Koehl, and Cindy Sieckman; altos Susan Bardes, Sherry Bronner, Chrison Harris, & Mary Wagner, tenors Cindy Mayhugh, Sarah Papin & David Hill, and basses Rick Hedges & Jack Wagner.

Barry Prince
Music Director

Committee Reports

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

We started this campaign with a total of eight (8) projects. These eight projects consisted of: purchasing a TV/monitor and new video camera; installing a fence around the backyard of the parsonage; updating and applying modifications to the organ; replacing the church main boiler; replacing all the windows and doors in the church parsonage; converting the lights in the sanctuary chandeliers with LED builds; painting both the sanctuary and narthex walls; replacing the carpet in the sanctuary; and finally updating and replacing portions of the landscaping around the outside of the church. The total estimated cost of all these projects is \$137,000.00, in round numbers.

Two of the Committee's projects are already complete: installation of the fence around the backyard of the parsonage, and purchase of the new video camera and new TV/presentation monitor. (The camera and TV were donated by a member of the congregation and are in use now.) The replacement windows and doors for the parsonage are under contract, with installation scheduled for late February and early March 2018. We are in the process of installing the sample LED lights in the sanctuary, so that we can select which bulbs work best for our application.

The organ, painting of the narthex and sanctuary, replacing the carpet in the sanctuary, and updating the landscaping projects are on hold until we have the available funds to start and complete these projects.

Regarding the replacement of the boiler project: we are working on the work scope to give to companies so they can quote the project. We will not start this project until spring.

The total amount of money we have for these projects is \$92,038.20 as of the end of December. With this amount of money on hand we are an estimated \$45,000.00 short to fund all eight projects on the list.

If you have any questions on the projects, please address your questions directly to Mark Lohmeier; he is the Campaign Committee Chairperson and he has all the information for these projects.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Lohmeier

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Activities in 2017

Rally Day: September 10th was Rally Day, with setup on the Friday/Saturday before. Since we learned it's time for Sowing, Reaping, Rebirth, and Joy, the theme for rally day was "planting seeds and growing joy."

Community Breakfasts: The Hedges family have continued serving the monthly Sunday breakfasts. We thank them for offering such a variety of wholesome foods that care for our bodies and give us the opportunity to grow in friendship with visitors and other members.

Youth Gathering Trip: The youth group will be attending the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas in June. Our youth will travel with the youth group of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Loveland to save on travel expenses and to build relationships with other Christian teenagers in the area. To raise funds for this exciting trip, the youth served the Reformation lunch, sold key chains and license plates, and did bake sales at Thanksgiving and Christmas. We are especially thankful for Marie Calhoun who coordinated, cooked, and led the youth in cooking a truly delicious German Dinner for Reformation. We thank the youth and families who aren't attending the Youth Gathering, but who helped to set up and serve all these events. We thank the whole congregation and Thrivent for benefitting these youth with their financial support and encouragement. Thus far, the youth have raised \$1313.05! That means you have already helped the kids surpass our fundraising goal by \$300! You are such a generous congregation! You have modeled generosity and supporting each other to our youth. They will still serve the Easter Breakfast on April 1st and do some community fundraising with the hope of earning enough to decrease the amount

needed as a budget item. To practice biblical stewardship, they will give an offering to God from their fundraising. Thank you for encouraging them in this endeavor!

Youth Choir: A youth choir has been organized by Carolyn Koehl, with practices on Wednesdays. We are so thankful to Carolyn for equipping families to sing together. Since there are no longer music classes at the elementary level in Reading, many of our children would not otherwise have an opportunity to learn to read music, to sing in harmony, or to sing with an ensemble until junior high school. Carolyn is enriching their lives, and they, in turn, are enriching our worship!

Sunday School: Three classes are meeting this year, three weeks of the month (first, third, and fourth Sundays). The classes are divided into ages 3-7, 8-11, and junior/senior high school students.

The teachers are Nancy Erbeck, Jane Erbeck, and Don Harris, assisted by Jeni Cathcart, John Cathcart, Kim Coulehan, Chrissy Harris, Steve Headley, Chelsea King, Shirley Lathrop, Linda Lawson, and Sarah Papin.

Nursery: We have a new procedure during worship. Children stay in the sanctuary until the children's sermon.

Children in first grade and younger can attend the nursery during the main sermon, with an activity time in the library for older children. The nursery and activity time have been taught by Jeni Cathcart, Leandra Hawkins, Penny Huber, Shirley Lathrop, Linda Lawson, Joyce McDowell, Maggie McDowell, and Bess Sturgill.

Goals for 2018

The goal for this year is to see the youth at St. Paul grow both in number and in faith; to have them become active participants in all the events at the church

with them becoming a cohesive group; and to see them use their specific gifts in all aspects of service.

Respectfully submitted,
Donald Harris

DORCAS CIRCLE

The Dorcas ladies worked this year to complete 123 quilts for Lutheran World Relief. A Quilt Raffle was held, and quilts were won by Freda Faulkner, Shirley Lathrop, and Cindy Sieckman. (Freda kindly donated her prize quilt to the Tender Mercies bingo event, so that it could be enjoyed by a resident there.) Proceeds from the Raffle were sent to LWR to help with shipping quilts to various parts of the world. Before packing the quilts, they were placed on the church pews and received a blessing from the congregation. A huge thank-you to Larry Huber and Jack Spelman for their strong arms and backs on the day the quilts were packed, and to Terry and Joyce McDowell for delivering the boxes to the truck in Dayton. Thank you to everyone for the donations of fabric and sheets as well as your prayers. If you would like to join us in making these quilts, we meet in the Fellowship Hall on the third Wednesday of every month, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. No sewing skills are required!

Elinor Schieman

DRAMA MINISTRY (ST. PAUL PLAYERS)

Lent Production

The Lenten Show was very exciting for everyone in the drama ministry this year, thanks to Sarah Papin, who wrote a lovely play called *Passing Grandpa*. It's about family and how everyone responds differently to losing a loved one. It's never easy, no matter how ready you think you are.

We would like to thank everyone who had a part in this production, including:

Sarah Papin, Nick Huitger (who directed the play), David Hill, John Mayhugh, Barry Prince, Michelle Cockerham, Molly McDowell, Hazel Mersch, and Carroll B. Mayhugh Jr.

The second half of the production was *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Chicken Man* by Tim Kelly. This was a play for fun, to help with the sadness of the show *Passing Grandpa*, and everyone had so much fun acting up on stage.

We would like to thank everyone who had a part of the production, including:

Sarah Papin, John Mayhugh, Chris Schingledecker, Hope Mayhugh, and Donald Harris.

The Lent Production came out ahead by \$362.01. Thank you to everyone who helped and who I forgot to mention.

Stations of the Cross

This is a skit written by Sarah Papin telling the story of Jesus in his last few days—a wonderful skit. We would like to thank everyone in the show and I hope I remember everyone because I forgot to write it down. Nick Huitger, Patrick Cathcart, Cindy Mayhugh, Carroll Mayhugh, Donald Harris, David Hill, Barry Prince, Pastor Emily, Chison Harris, Sherry Bronner, Kim Coulehan, Nancy Erbeck, and Cindy Sieckman.

Easter Vigil

For our Easter Vigil, children and their families acted out the Scripture readings as the lessons were being read. The children had a wonderful time doing this. We would like to thank everyone who helped with the Easter Vigil: Sarah Papin, David Hill, Pastor Emily, the Sturgill family (Jim, Bess, Katie, Bea, and Lucy), the Cathcart family (John, Jeni, Ian, Patrick, Bridget, Donny, Alanna, Teagan and Liam), Leandra Hawkins, Gabby Meacham, Maggie McDowell, Matthew Lawson, Maci Lawson, Donald Harris, Linda Miller, Chelsea King, Kathy Hirt, and Shirley Lathrop.

Summer Production

During the summertime we, the actors and actresses, like to do something fun and something that challenges the St. Paul Players, so this year we went with *Catch Me If You Can* by Weinstock and Gilbert. Everyone did a great job. Every night we were told “I never would have guessed who the bad person was.”

Thank you everyone in the cast and crew for making this show a great success, including:

Barry Prince, Sarah Papin, David Hill, Chison Harris, Steve Huitger, Sherry Bronner, Donald Harris, Nate Huitger, Carroll B Mayhugh Jr., Randy Blake, Michelle Cockerham, Nick Huitger, Chris Schingledecker, Bernadette Zinnecker and Dennis Eling (new to St. Paul Players).

Something new for St. Paul Players in 2017: we had our first Production Sponsor. So everyone from the Drama Ministry would like to thank Jack and Mary Wagner for sponsoring *Catch Me If You Can*. GOD IS GOOD!

The Summer Production of *Catch Me If You Can* was a great success; we came out ahead again by \$1,028.98.

Thank you to everyone who helped and who I forgot to mention.

The Christian Education Committee asked the St. Paul Players this fall to pass on theatrical skills and nurture the creativity of the youth and children of St. Paul. The Christian Education Committee's request aligned with the Visioning Process' revelation of our congregation's commitment to children, and so the Fall/Christmas Production was a Christmas Pageant designed to involve the children of St. Paul and their families. Again, our creative writer Sarah Papin wrote a wonderful and funny skit for the children of the story of Christ's birth, featuring Frosty the Snowman. All the children loved being part of the Pageant. Thank you, Sarah, for sharing your gift of writing.

We would like to thank the cast and crew for all their help. The Allgeyer Family (Joe, Desiree, Joey and Lily), The Cathcart Family (John, Jeni, Ian, Patrick, Bridget, Donny, Alanna, Teagan and Liam), Elijah Fuller, Chison and Donald Harris, Matthew and Maci Lawson, Barry Prince, David Hill, The Sturgill Family (Jim, Bess, Katie, Bea, and Lucy), and Kim Coulehan.

This has been a wonderful year for St. Paul Players, God has blessed the Drama Ministry in 2017 and into 2018. We now have next year's plays picked.

For Lent:

The Lower Room by Pat Wooley

Directed by Carroll Mayhugh

Sponsored by St. John's UCC

This play tells us of Jesus' life, ministry, and influence from the perspective of the women who served the Last Supper in the Upper Room. The play is thoroughly biblical; it was chosen not only for the quality of its content, but also because it so clearly witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ and invites us to be changed by him just as the characters in the play will be.

For Summer:

Lavender and Old Lace

Directed by Carroll Mayhugh

Sponsored by Jack and Mary Wagner

From the Samuel French website: Mary Ainslee, a charming and gracious little lady, is a tradition in her little New England village. She never leaves her house and every night a lamp burns in her attic window. As an accommodation to her neighbor, Miss Ainslee agrees to take in her neighbor's young niece, Ruth and they become warm friends.

For Christmas:

The Christmas Express

Directed by Barry Prince

Sponsored by Cindy and Carroll Mayhugh

From the Dramatic Publishing website: "This is the most hopeless place in the world!" Hilda intones as she and Satch, her assistant, argue over what time it is. She dreams of faraway places and only finds tedium in running the Holly Railway Station. That is, until Leo Tannenbaum drops in out of nowhere the day before Christmas Eve. Suddenly, an old radio that hasn't worked in years springs to life, the local group of carolers (which usually yowls like a gang of wet cats) begins to sound like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and the whole town gets the Christmas

spirit. Coincidence? Or is Leo doing all this? Even Satch changes his tune when it turns out that Leo might be on the run. This nostalgic theatrical greeting card is full of eccentric small-town characters, wise-cracking their way to finding the true wonder of Christmas. And on the way, they make us all wish we could take a ride on The Christmas Express.

I would like to thank everyone who helped in many ways to make my life easier again this year; many hands make light work, and each year the Lord sends more people to help grow the Drama Ministry. Thanks be to God!

Thank you all and God Bless.

David Hill
St. Paul Players

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Evangelism Committee is responsible to Church Council to organize and provide activities that spread the Good News. We witness both within our congregation and to the outside community in the hope of staying connected within our congregation and also in reaching people to hear God's message of hope. The Evangelism Committee has four main emphases:

1. Publicity
2. Welcoming
3. Engaging/Connecting
4. Outreach

Discussion

1. Publicity – we are responsible for St. Paul's website and Facebook accounts.
2. We update electronic community calendars with our events. We send out flyers and posters to the community to make sure our events are known throughout the local area.

3. Welcoming – we make sure that all visitors are welcomed. When a new member joins our congregation the Evangelism Committee sponsors the reception.
4. Engaging/Connecting – some examples from this year:
 - An Easter Egg Hunt after church on Easter
 - Reception for recent graduates in May
 - Reception for new members in June
 - Ice Cream Social for our members in July
5. Outreach Community Events:
 - In February we joined with Christian Education and set up and provided prizes for Bible Bingo that was played during the Community Breakfast.
 - An Easter Egg Hunt in April
 - An Ice Cream Social in July
 - A Fall Festival Costume Party in October
 - A Live Nativity in December – this year the event was held in the early evening and the Drama Ministry provided a play performed by the youth of the congregation in the Sanctuary.

Evangelism Goals for 2018

Increase congregational membership and worship attendance through increasing congregational connections and increasing our community presence. This year we are planning to provide welcome gifts with literature on the Lutheran Service for visitors. We are reviewing our Community Outreach and congregational programs in order to maximize our presence and impact.

Thanks to all who have devoted their time and energy to these efforts throughout the year!

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Hawkins
Chairperson & Council Liaison

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Activities

Members of the Finance Committee in 2017 included: Doug Lohmeier, Nancy Erbeck, Rick Hedges, Dennis King, Jim Miller, Linda Miller, and Jim Forst. Rev. Beckering also participated as needed. The committee met quarterly in 2017.

Committee goals and accomplishments for 2017 included:

1. Resolving Bureau of Workers Compensation (BWC) lowest cost alternative.
 - We were considered in “lapsed” status by the BWC and unable to enter into a third-party arrangement and discounted rates until October of 2017. At that time, we signed an agreement with Hunter Consulting through the Reading Chamber of Commerce. There should be a modest savings using the group rating, but we won’t know the actual numbers until July 2018 when the annual payment is calculated.
2. Decreasing property insurance cost.
 - Dennis King successfully negotiated a rate reduction of ~\$1400/year for our property insurance.
3. Assuring timely bill payment
 - Throughout the year we instituted automatic payments of most regularly occurring expenses. These include electronically scheduled (recurring) payments of bills that are the same amount each month and automatic withdrawals by utility companies. The use of the 5/3 credit and debit cards for most purchases assure the vendors are paid promptly. The credit card debt is easily paid via on-line transfer of funds in our checking account.
 - A calendar of bill payment due dates was set up and the Treasurer now receives reminders electronically.
4. Performing an internal mock audit.
 - We are still working on achieving this goal. Rick Hedges and Cindy Sieckman have agreed to help review our financial practices.

Additional Activities

A decision was made to explore a relationship with Valley Central Bank. A checking account alone initially was opened followed by a money market checking account that offered an interest rate far exceeding that available from 5/3 savings. This money market account currently contains funds designated for the capital campaign as a way of sequestering these funds.

Memorial Funds that were used/eliminated during financial hard times are now funded again.

In-kind donations were used extensively during 2017. This was found to be a bookkeeping issue and though it still can be used...the committee recommended members returning to the method of submitting an expense reimbursement form and then donating the funds for the item via envelope/check in routine offering.

The elimination of our delinquent tax and other bills allowed us to return to the quarterly summary and financial status reports used in the past.

Review of Financial Status

Expenses

Committee chairs did an excellent job managing their budgets this year. Expenditures were under budget for all committees. The Property committee budget was helped by a security deposit refund of a \$2068 from Duke energy in September.

Income

There was extreme generosity exhibited this past year from members and friends of our congregation. This generosity allowed us to retire our construction loan/mortgage on July 31st, two and one-half years ahead of schedule. We were able to pay the July balance of ~\$21K after receiving a \$25,000 gift from the Roselawn Lutheran Church. A year over year comparison table on the next page shows our cash assets/net worth increased by \$158,531 in 2017.

Cash Assets and Liabilities Comparison Year over Year

Assets	12/31/16	12/31/17	Comments
5/3 Checking	\$32,133	\$72,673	
5/3 Savings	\$21,001	\$21,005	
Valley Central	0	\$10,000	Capital Campaign
Valley Central	0	\$79,188	Capital Campaign
Scottrade	\$11,604	\$15,609	
Eli Lilly Stock	\$2,795	\$3209	
Liabilities			
Master Card 6794	\$24	0	
Master Card 6802	\$239	0	
Guardian Mortgage	\$24,117	0	Loan retired 7/31/17
Net Worth:	\$43,153	\$201,684	+ \$158,531

Effective budget management and an incredible year of giving has put us in a very good overall financial situation. We are well positioned to fulfill the mission of our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda C. Miller

O.W.L.S. (OLDER WISER LUTHERAN SENIORS)

The name change for Seniors Flying Solo was made to sound more inclusive and a bit more fun. OWLS is an acronym for Older Wiser Lutherans. In 2017 we attended two of the plays presented by the St. Paul Players, and we enjoyed a day at La Comedia Dinner Theatre to see a final (?) episode of the Church Basement Ladies' series of musical comedies about the lives and work of church women. In the fall, we watched and discussed films on Martin Luther and, later, *The Shack*. We are looking forward to getting together regularly in 2018 and hope that you will join us.

Elinor Schieman

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Well, 2017 was a good year for property for St. Paul Lutheran Church in Reading, Ohio.

One of the first things was a digital video camera to record the Sunday sermon and children's sermon. Jane Owen has been in charge of posting the videos to YouTube and our church website. Dennis King has been recording the services with help from Donald Harris and Jim Miller when Dennis was not in town. The next thing was the TV monitor and stand for help with classes and presentations by Pastor Emily. This has come in very handy as Pastor and Jane are so tech-savvy and able to make things available on the screen like Council reports and different presentations. The parsonage privacy fence was installed. There was a Carillon System with over 400 songs donated before Christmas by Judy Pflieger and Janet King in honor of Rhea Young, a life-long member of St Paul, and installed by our own Electrical Engineer, Jim Miller!

These were all private donations from members of the church. The Capital Campaign Committee ordered new doors for the parsonage and they were paid for by private donation from a member family also. The Capital Campaign Committee has several additional items on their list; they are handling raising the funds and following through to see that all items get funded and completed. Please see the list of items on the Capital Campaign Priority List for items to be done in the future or secure funds to do when needed. Gilkey Windows replaced five window glass panes that had failed and repaired three others with broken springs or balances upstairs in the Education area. They also installed new screens in the kitchen area.

Captain James T. Kirk (Miller) of the Starship Enterprise also put together the TV stand and monitor and made great improvements in the Internet capabilities within the church as well as about 100 other items just in the Property Committee area, not to mention the other items he has worked on in the church this past year.

We have contracted to have a new water heater installed sometime this month. The other was 20+ years old and served us for much longer than its expected lifespan.

We also had the pump replaced on the kitchen gas heater which has not worked in years.

In addition, we added a programmable thermostat to the fellowship hall and hope to add one in the Education and Music area upstairs soon. We also have had many more groups using the Church premises in the last year. This includes St. John UCC's community dinners on Thursday evenings. They left the place better than before. They deep cleaned the kitchen and buffed the floor in the fellowship hall after they were all finished. It looks great. The Reading City Schools students and teachers have been using the facilities also. The Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts also have been using the church property. It's great to be able to help others in need by providing our church property as a way for ministry.

Expenses have been up, but not that much when you consider how many more people are coming and going from our church property almost every day! One issue is we have a large expense compared to recent years regarding snow removal and salting of the parking lot. Last year we had no expense for this. All in all, it has been a great year for the Property Committee at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Reading. God Is Good All The Time!

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis King

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The Social Concerns committee is charged with implementing charitable programs that impact our congregation, community, and the world. We are very fortunate to have such a caring congregation.

In 2017, St. Paul participated in many worthwhile projects. The following is a list of programs supported by the members of St. Paul:

Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center: Each month we contribute items that are needed, but most of which cannot be purchased with SNAP cards (food stamps). Usually we bring in items such as paper towels, diapers, toilet tissue, laundry detergent, etc. We have a goal of 100 items per month and most of the time meet our goal. This summer we collected approximately 75 earbuds or headphones for Valley Interfaith's back-to-school project and, in November, 120 jars of peanut butter for Christmas baskets. We continued our winter donation of hats, scarves, and gloves/mittens. We thank Ron and Shirley Harbaugh for delivering all these items to Valley Interfaith.

Operation Christmas Child: This is a global effort to make a Christmas celebration possible for children around the world. This year, under the leadership of Kathy Hirt, we collected 79 shoeboxes filled with personal hygiene items, toys, books, and other supplies.

Heifer International Project: We collect quarters throughout the year in our quarter tube, which we send to Heifer International to end poverty and hunger in developing countries. This year we collected \$150, which will be used to purchase an alpaca. Alpacas provide invaluable sources of transportation, income, and wool, which is prized for making blankets, ponchos, carpet, and rope.

Ronald McDonald House: Our congregation donated 5.8 pounds of pop can pull tabs and two shopping bags of personal care items to support temporary housing offered to non-local parents with children at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at University Hospital: Our generous members have donated 79 newborn clothing items, 33 receiving blankets, and 19 small baby bottles for babies of families in need.

Matthew 25: Ministries: Thanks to Chelsea King for delivering many, many bags of empty pill bottles to Matthew 25. This donation serves two purposes: helping the poorest of the poor by providing a way to distribute medicine, and keeping thousands of bottles out of landfills each year. Jane Erbeck has continued to crochet sleeping mats out of donated plastic grocery bags, to be used as ground covers to keep our homeless neighbors more dry and warm. In 2017 she has created thirty mats.

Tender Mercies: Marie Calhoun and David Hill organized two bingo lunches for Tender Mercies, which serves homeless adults with mental illness. We donated snacks, personal items, and stationery supplies that are used to make up prize baskets for the bingo winners.

Emergency Food Bags: Janet King keeps Pastor Emily supplied with emergency bags of canned and boxed foods, which she distributes at her discretion.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Activities in 2017

The Stewardship Committee always starts by working on planning for the Fall Stewardship Drive so that we might fund the mission which God has entrusted to us. The Epistle featured articles from Carole Replogle encouraging us to pay forward all the good that God has done for us this year, and a mini-series of articles by Pastor Emily on what the Bible says about money. You received a series of letters this fall, which helped us learn from other members how giving impacts their relationship with God, their meaning and purpose. The letters also visually depicted how the money you give makes possible the various ministries of this congregation. Next we heard personal testimonials which connected our everyday lives, as well as life-changing moments, to our giving and showed us how God works through our offerings to change lives. Then on Stewardship Sunday, we tried to involve everyone from the youngest to the oldest, in submitting our Estimate of Giving Cards. Even above and beyond these numerical results, we pray that each of these elements of the Fall Stewardship Drive helped you grow as a disciple of Christ and in knowledge of all that God does through your offerings.

We discussed ways for members to make payments on their pledges, including online through PayPal. (It's a new age!) The PayPal giving option will be appearing on our website as soon as the security certificate on the site is fully up to date, which involves a bit of behind-the-scenes rearranging. We want to make sure that giving is safe and secure for everyone.

Future Projects

We have decided that each month in 2018 there will be an activity that connects us to stewardship. Stewardship is not only Estimate of Giving cards in the month of September, but the broader work of taking care of many aspects of our lives. Stewardship is the management of all of life with Christ at the center. Our calendar of activities will include “Mind, Body, and Spirit”. Each month, a speaker or activity will focus on a topic such as heart health, diabetes, recycling, finances, and other things of which we are stewards for Christ. Should be a fun year! We will talk about personal finances, participate in chair volleyball, provide back-to-school supplies... Stewardship is such a broad brush to paint with!

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Coldiron

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

The Worship and Music Committee was chaired by Linda Miller this past year with Carole Replogle acting as the Council liaison. Other members included Janet King, David Hill, Barry Prince, Carroll Mayhugh, Sarah Papin and Rev. Emily Beckering. The committee met five times in 2017.

New in 2017:

St. Paul joined with local churches five times during the year for ecumenical services and/or faith chats associated with the 500th Martin Luther Anniversary celebration. The Ecumenical Service for Christian Unity was hosted by St. Paul and followed a potluck lunch on January 22nd. This was followed by chats on Hymnody on Feb. 12th at St. John’s UCC; Scripture, Salvation, and Church at St. Paul on April 30th; an ecumenical picnic and Hymn Sing @ Vorhees Park on June 25th; and a chat on Communion at Mt. Notre Dame on September 10th. Those who attended learned much about the other faiths and enjoyed the fellowship as well.

Carroll Mayhugh chaired a 500th Anniversary of the Reformation committee that sponsored several activities (lessons, movie nights, historical pictures) during the year to educate the congregation and celebrate the history of the Lutheran

Church. In addition, there were historical facts about Martin Luther and Lutheranism published several times with the Sunday bulletins.

A Hymn Committee was formed to help choose hymns for all worship services. Members include: Sherry Bronner, Carol Curless, Maryhelen West, Carole Replogle, Chelsea King, Carolyn Koehl, Rev. Emily Beckering, Barry Prince, Linda Miller, and Kathy Hirt.

Terri DeAngelis coordinated Advent devotionals written by members of the congregation. This was a huge success and will be expanded to other times of the year.

Carole Replogle donated five new Communion kits in honor of Ron Replogle. Whenever hospitalized or homebound members are visited, they are reminded that they are not alone—Jesus Christ and their sisters and brothers at St. Paul are with them.

Cindy Sieckman retired from recruiting readers and greeters for each week/month as she had for the past 15 years. Her continuous efforts were deeply appreciated and recognized during a worship service in December. Kathy Crosby will be assuming these responsibilities starting January 1, 2018.

Funeral Hospitality is a work in progress. The plan is to formalize/standardize the process to make the process go more smoothly.

Vespers services were held three Tuesday evenings in December. Attendance was quite low, and the committee will discuss the value of the services for our congregation in the future. We plan to offer a Vespers service in June to determine if daylight makes a difference in whether people choose to attend an evening service.

We purchased a new stand for the cross that is being kept at the rear of the church to simplify processional logistics.

Committee Activities

The Assisting Ministers group in 2017 included Doug Lohmeier, Terry McDowell, Nancy Erbeck, Leandra Hawkins, Donald Harris, Sarah Papin, and Taylor Beckering. David Hill filled in as assisting minister when the choir was on break for the summer.

Lent: Ash Wednesday was on March 1st and Wednesday Lenten services began on March 8th. Lenten services included Vespers, Compline, Healing Service, Drama (*Passing Grandpa*) and a dramatization of Stations of the Cross. Themed meals were offered prior to the Wednesday evening services. Services were held on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday (noon and 7 p.m.), and the Easter Vigil on Saturday.

The Friday evening Tenebrae service started with the Veneration of the Cross and the Solemn Reproaches. The music for the Solemn Reproaches - written by Barry Prince and sung by Pastor Emily - was both deeply moving and beautiful.

The readings at the Easter Vigil were increased to nine readings from seven last year. Many adults, children, and youth participated in the Easter Vigil by dramatizing the readings. This was meaningful for both the participants and those attending.

The Church Picnic was held at Baxter Park on June 18th. Thanks again to the Lohmeiers for providing us a perfect place to worship outdoors, and doing a terrific job grilling the food. Shirley Harbaugh provided her usual support in assuring we had the correct supplies.

The Blessing of the Animals service on October 8th was canceled due to rain.

Reformation Sunday was on October 29th. The service was followed by a German lunch prepared by the youth as a fundraiser for their trip to Houston in June for the ELCA youth gathering.

Lessons and Carols was offered on December 17th. This followed the Christmas Pageant by the children and was well attended.

There was a morning service on December 24th and a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7 p.m. Both were well attended.

Carole Replogle faithfully checked the suggestion box each month and passed along the suggestions to the appropriate person for follow up.

And finally, Janet King's efforts as the sacristan and coordinating the work of the Altar Guild are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda C. Miller

Children's Choir

A Children's Choir began rehearsing in October 2017 with 6 students ranging in age from 5-11 years old. They rehearse on Wednesday evenings from 5-6 p.m. They have caroled to a homebound member and sung at the Christmas Eve Sunday morning worship service during the children's sermon. They look forward to more service participation in 2018. Thank you for your support.

Carolyn Koehl, Director

Parochial Report

Members received during 2017

by Baptism	1	November 26	Liam Cathcart
by Affirmation / Transfer	8	April 16 May 4	Shirley Lathrop; Maryhelen West; Mary Ellen Welsh Joe Allgeyer; Desiree Allgeyer; Joey Allgeyer; Lily Allgeyer; Kim Coulehan
Total	9		

Membership losses during 2017

by Death	9	January 26 February 8 February 26 June 18 September 8 October 1 November 10 November 21 December 30	Harold Curless Karen Kerlin Margaret Malin Ron Replogle Paul Barry Ruth Jones Patricia Edwards Shirley Buhr Deward (Bus) Faulkner
by Transfer	6		Cheryl Barrett Chris Geiger Mark Byrn Allison Byrn Austin Byrn Asher Byrn
Total	17		

Average Worship Attendance

12/31/17: 79

12/31/16: 71

Total Membership

12/31/17: 213 members

12/31/16: 221 members