



Bethlehem
Baptist Church

2020
ANNUAL REPORT

2020 Annual Report

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Kurt Elting-Ballard

CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL OF ELDERS

2020: Seeing Fresh Glimpses of God's Glory and Greatness

Unprecedented. If there is a word of the year, it would be *unprecedented*.

The word is one that surely could have described what was being seen for the first time in the night sky in the early Spring of this year. Wise men marveled at it. What sort of bright “star” was this? Where did it come from? Had it ever been seen before? This bright object in the night sky, located in the constellation Ursa Major, was discovered by a team of wise people we call astronomers using the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE), which is a NASA infrared-wavelength astronomical space telescope. This object was discovered on March 27, 2020, using that telescope under the NEOWISE program. It was classified as a comet, and on April 1 was named after NEOWISE. Comet NEOWISE made its closest approach to the sun on July 3. Its path through our planetary system increased the comet’s orbital period to 6,700 years. It was estimated that it had previously been 4,400 years. That means it was possibly last seen in 2380 ... BC! (Which patriarch saw it first? We can ask them someday.) Given the characteristics and brightness of the comet, it was declared by some a “great comet.” *Unprecedented.*

When we started on our journey of “Fill These Cities: 25 x '25”—a decade of accelerated spreading—we could not foresee or even imagine the circumstances we would find ourselves in at the halfway point of this adventure in 2020. Yet, here we are with a pandemic raging, nations struggling, racial injustice on full display, jobs lost, businesses failing, and depression and anxiety rising around us and even within us. March 27, 2020, was not just a day to discover a new comet in the sky. It was also a day that Dyson committed to make 15,000 ventilators, the day that the Crocs company began donating shoes to healthcare workers, and the day that the United States led the world in cases of the new coronavirus. “Virtual” was about to become a new way of life. What are we to do? What will happen?

It is during a season like this that we must return to where we heard from the Lord. When we launched “Fill These Cities: 25 x '25,” we prayed and asked that we would not just get a vision *from God*, but a vision *of God*. We did not want him to just give us a vision, but *to be* our vision.

We prayed,

Cause our eyes to be riveted upon you so that we don't merely fix our eyes on you but feast our eyes on you. Satisfy our hearts with fresh glimpses of your glory and greatness ... break our hearts so that we are moved with compassion for the lostness we see in our families and neighborhoods and nations. Yes, give us compassion for the lost, passion for your glory, and perseverance in obedience. Cause us to fix our eyes and feast our eyes on you.

Has he done that? Given us fresh glimpses of his glory and greatness? Have we seen that?

At the start of 2020, the Council of Elders brought forward what we called our “20/20 Vision” of transition toward campus-specific preaching. We called it 20/20 not just because we were talking about changes taking place in the year 2020, but because the metaphor of 20/20 vision relates to sight, and we believed that this 20/20 Vision was primarily related to seeing. Our aim was to see our people more clearly, speak to them more specifically, and lead them more effectively. This 20/20 Vision focused on strengthening the core with campus-specific preaching and campus-specific Pastors for Preaching & Vision. You responded with widespread congregational affirmation at our July 26 Quarterly Strategy Meeting that established Jason Meyer, Steven Lee, and Dave Zuleger as Pastors for Preaching & Vision at our Downtown, North, and South campuses, respectively.

Is it not like the Lord, as we move forward in our plans, to put us in desperate and challenging circumstances so that we must turn to him and look to him alone? Is this not the very thing that we asked of him? Is there not opportunity after opportunity to see the lostness around us and to have our compassion recalibrated and refocused? Have we not seen fresh glimpses of his glory and greatness? What more will he show us of himself and his glory and greatness as we move into 2021 and celebrate our 150th birthday as a church?! When those 23 charter members held hands in that first prayer meeting of our church on June 22, 1871, do you think they prayed a similar prayer that we did as we launched 25 x '25? How many such prayers have been lifted up over the years, and how many times has the Lord shown himself strong, faithful, merciful, and gracious to Bethlehem Baptist Church?

In the following pages of our *2020 Annual Report*, you will read page after page and testimony after testimony of the Lord's faithfulness and goodness to us over the past year. He has not left us; he has *led* us. He has demonstrated again and again what a wonderful Savior he is. He reminds us over and over that we are not alone. He shows us that he is sovereign and present across virtual connections and that nothing and no one can thwart his plans and purposes. He is not impeded by pandemics. He sends them and bends them to his will for purposes and plans that may not yet be visible to us and may only be seen by our children or children's children or in the ages to come in God's presence. But they will be seen and known and celebrated. As you read this report, may you see fresh glimpses of his glory and greatness.

We end where we began, looking upward into the night sky. It is called a conjunction. A conjunction is when two objects in space appear to be close to one another as observed from Earth. On December 21, 2020, in the midst of winter, we witnessed the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. They were separated by just 0.1 degrees, an occurrence that has not been seen since the Middle Ages. The last time such a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was visible to humans was in 1226. Is it not like the Lord to show us not one but two dramatic astronomical events? Why would he do this in the same year? Is this not a fresh glimpse at his glory and greatness at a moment when we most need it? His glory and greatness are our best and greatest comfort, hope, and treasure. Isaiah 40 begins, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem."

The chapter goes on, and in the middle of it the Lord says,

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?... Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.
—Isaiah 40:25–26

May we see these events—all of them—with new eyes. And as we move into 2021, may we ask again for a fresh glimpse of the glory and greatness of the Lord.



Kurt Elting-Ballard
Chairman, Council of Elders

Ken Currie

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.—1 Peter 4:10

God's Faithfulness Through Trouble and Transition

The year 2020 has been a year of trial for the church. The global pandemic has required our leadership and congregation to make adjustments to normal church life in virtually all areas. With shocking abruptness, significant changes were implemented in the way that we gather for worship and handle the myriad of ongoing meetings for ministry, guidance for small groups, church staff working in the office, and every other area of church life.

Of course, we know that God has orchestrated these events according to his sovereign commitment to his glory and the good of his people. We have seen his grace *through* these trials as we look to him to meet our needs for peace, hope, relationships, finances, and more. There are many reports of gospel witness and acts of love and mercy that would not have come about were it not for these unprecedented circumstances. God has shown himself faithful to his people in the midst of suffering, and by his grace we continue to worship him by the power of the Spirit in Jesus' Name.

Of course, the pandemic is not the only challenge that Bethlehem has faced in 2020. The killing of George Floyd a few miles from the Downtown Campus and near the homes of many Bethlehem members, along with the subsequent unrest and destruction of property, has provoked fear and uncertainty among our flock. Again, though these things are not good in themselves, God is good, and he uses the bad to bring about good for his people. Discussions around race and politics have been tense at times, and some have left the church, representing a spectrum of opinions. At the same time, the fruit of bearing with one another, understanding, repentance, and unity has also been borne through these trying times.

It was a joy to see Bethlehem members on the front lines cleaning, feeding, and providing other essentials in our neighborhoods that were traumatized in the days and weeks following George Floyd's death. While these trials are far outside the norm for the church in modern-day America, we are reminded that throughout history the Church has been assailed from within and without. It is by God's grace that we maintain a love for God and each other, and a burden to share the gospel with our neighbors near and far.

Perhaps even more far reaching than these situational trials in 2020 was the decision by the church to establish a *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* at each campus. For the first time in Bethlehem's 150-year history, the leading of the church through the ministry of preaching has been assigned to more than one pastor. In addition, the church voted at the annual meeting on December 13, to allow each of the three campuses to manage their own membership (receive, remove, and discipline their members) and elect their own officers. It remains to be seen what God has in store for Bethlehem with respect to the structure of campuses or individual churches, but it is already established that his people will be the recipients of his grace, and he will see us through to the end (Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Lead Pastor, Downtown

In August, I transitioned from the role of Bethlehem's *Lead Pastor, Downtown*, as Jason Meyer assumed those responsibilities. This transition was somewhat bittersweet for me, as I have appreciated the privilege of partnering with the Downtown pastors, elders, staff, and other leaders in pursuing our vision of "spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ" at the Downtown Campus. I do believe this change was wise, since the burden of fulfilling two pastoral roles gave me a sense that I was doing neither at the level of excellence that my conscience required. I give praise to God for the grace to coordinate with our Downtown leadership to navigate the initial challenges of the pandemic and the upheaval surrounding George Floyd's death—additional burdens to the "everyday" demands of shepherding a flock—and I am grateful for the privilege to have ministered at the Downtown Campus in this capacity.

Strategic Implementation

As stated, the church voted that my role transition to one pastoral position, effective August 2020. The elders recommended a revamped job description in order to focus this role on the needs of the church in our changing climate. Broadly speaking, I now have three areas for which to provide leadership.

1. *Vision and Values*

Practically, this means facilitating the commitment of the elders to guard the doctrine of the church and ensuring that the resources of the church are deployed in accordance with our agreed values and priorities. It is important to note that this is a facilitating function and not a position of top-down organizational authority. The *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* at each campus reports to the elders at the campus, and I directly report to the entire Council of Elders (through the Chairman of the Elders).

2. *All-Church Operations*

I provide a measure of servant leadership for the all-church operations. We have six ministry areas under our Operations department. Each of these areas is led by a director. Pastor Jon Grano is the *Pastor for Operations*. Pastor Jon reports to me, and I support him on the bigger decisions and matters that are not routine in this important area.

3. *All-Church Ministries*

As the church has moved toward greater campus autonomy, the elders recognize that we have graces from God that at present are serving the entire church. We want to steward those graces well and not allow those ministries to languish through inattention. In this area, my responsibilities are to serve our ministries of Global Outreach, Church Planting, Bethlehem College & Seminary, CityJoy, and Campus Outreach as an advocate and liaison.

Personal

I can report, by God's grace, that my wife, Theresa, and I celebrated 30 years of marriage in 2020. We love one another and continue to partner in life and ministry in our church and to our five children—who delight our hearts. It is a privilege to serve this church, and 2020 was another year in which God gave grace and strength to shepherd this flock.



Ken Currie

Pastor for Strategic Implementation

Jon Grano

OPERATIONS

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the
power of Christ may rest upon me.—2 Corinthians 12:9*

Overview

Many have used the word *unprecedented* to describe 2020. Overuse does not necessarily mean it is inaccurate or unwarranted. This past year was one of the most challenging *and* rewarding years in ministry for Bethlehem's Operations team. With the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, the Operations team did a remarkable job working behind the scenes by God's grace and power—in much weakness, at times—to flexibly assist and eagerly support all areas of Bethlehem ministry.

For example:

- **Building & Properties** kept our facilities clean and "COVID-19 prepared" (to the extent that that's possible).
- **Communications** adapted to a new "touchless communications" requirement.
- **Finances & Accounting** monitored income and expenses and provided the details needed to apply for, receive, and be forgiven a CARES Act Payroll Protection Program loan.
- **Human Resources** tracked ever-changing state and national guidelines and mandates that both constrained preferential ways to serve and provided opportunities to serve in new ways.
- **Information Technology** developed infrastructure and mechanisms for registering participation in all in-person events.
- **Media** supported first live-only, then livestream-only, and then simultaneous live and livestreamed worship services.

Team Highlights

Bethlehem's Operations team is organized into six ministry areas, each led by a proven ministry partner. I meet regularly with each director to help keep both all-church and campus-specific ministry vision and priorities aligned. With three campuses and their diverse, increasingly contextualized ministry, our team aims both to support campus-specific ministry initiatives and to help keep Bethlehem's campuses connected. The following six sections provide a summary of the Operations team ministry areas and 2020 highlights.

Building & Property (Scott Brueske)

- Increased North Campus energy efficiency by installing a capacitor bank and completing the replacement of all North Campus parking lot lights with LED fixtures, which will save thousands of dollars each year in energy costs and provide higher quality and more reliable lighting.
- Replaced an antiquated Downtown Campus fire alarm panel/system and the North Campus security systems with up-to-date models.
- Replaced a failed North Campus HVAC rooftop unit with a new and more energy efficient model.
- In spite of extended shutdowns and closures, kept all Building & Property staff employed to deep clean and complete other campus cleaning projects.
- In June, celebrated North Campus lead custodian Dave Carlson as we launched him into retirement. Dave served at the North Campus since "Day One" of the campus's opening, and he provided many years of fruitful ministry.

Communications (Amanda Knoke)

- Provided communication support for several major pastoral initiatives, including the shift to weekly (from bi-weekly) [campus-pastor emails](#), promotion of many virtual/online video messages (due to COVID-19), and the launch of a [20/20 Vision](#) page to highlight the background and process for Bethlehem's transition to campus-specific preaching and Quarterly Strategy Meetings.
- Pivoted communication focus to an online experience to support the shifting needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, including ...
 - » Enhanced worship service announcements via "Sanctuary slides"
 - » Updated our website's [homepage](#) to highlight [COVID-19 Updates](#) and Livestream button
 - » Created four YouTube channels/landing pages ([all-church](#), [Downtown](#), [North](#), [South](#)) with new intro videos and encouraged all campuses to secure 100 subscribers (goal met!)
 - » Installed interior COVID-19-oriented wayfinding signage at all campuses
 - » Worked with IT and Media to develop a system for livestream "attendance" from our members and viewers at large

- » Put concentrated labors into a touchless promotion of Good Friday, Easter, Advent, and Christmas Eve services—in addition to several campus-specific sermon series (1 Peter, Advent, Habbakkuk, Acts)
- Continued ongoing creation, coordination, and production of website and Facebook content, the *Weekly* e-newsletter, online [worship orders](#), month-at-a-glance cards and seasonal guides, and the *Annual Report*.
- Supported the transition to post three weekly campus-specific sermons (with manuscripts/notes) at [bethlehem.church](#) with the ongoing contract hire of proofer Christina Boyum.
- Celebrated God's gift of Ruth Gulbranson, *Coordinator for Communications*, to Bethlehem and her 10 years of invaluable service (two with North Children's Ministry, eight with Communications).

Finances & Accounting (Thayne Rossiter).

- Created and supported financial models, reports, and processes that undergird Bethlehem ministry-related financial decisions and ensure timely payment of funds to ministry partners, vendors, and staff.
- Partnered with Jake Wood, *Coordinator for Vision & Operations*, to help secure a CARES Act Payroll Protection Program loan in April that allowed us to keep our staff fully employed and engaged in ministry. We received 100% loan forgiveness in November.
- Revisited digitizing plan to increasingly maintain Accounting support materials online.
- Trained and deployed new employee Matt Ferguson to assist with Accounting functions, with a special focus on supporting CityJoy.
- Served as main point of contact for Bethlehem's financial partners (Tradition Capital Bank, Bremer Bank, Converge Cornerstone Fund, etc.).
- Thanked God for 15 years of Thayne Rossiter's faithful, dedicated "behind-the-scenes" service through many changes and challenges, as he helped Bethlehem "quantify" our vision and oversee our finances with integrity.

Human Resources/Office (Joby Morgan)

- Created Bethlehem's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan—along with innumerable other coronavirus-related documents, emails, and updated plans—that allowed offices to stay open and socially-distanced events to occur.

- Provided care, stability, and expertise for the staff affected by various COVID-19 restrictions imposed on places of employment, working with staff leadership to keep all staff employed (where possible) and helping staff who struggled with the new realities imposed by COVID-19.
- Worked with many staff to determine how to rework job duties, how to learn to do old things in new ways, how to embrace doing new things in hard ways, and how to flex and learn it all over again a short time later.
- In conjunction with Jake Wood, *Coordinator for Vision & Operations*, oversaw Bethlehem's annual staff Open Enrollment process, with an increased focus on automation and online registration.
- Served as a key member of the search committee for a new *Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship* at the North Campus and participated in all Bethlehem hiring and staff change decisions.

Information Technology (Andrew Lang)

- In partnership with Media, brought online [livestreaming](#) to the congregation with hardware, network infrastructure, website integration, and streaming app delivery for each campus.
- Rolled out a no-touch worship reservation and check-in system using our existing kiosk hardware and our [Bethlehem mobile app](#).
- Deployed Zoom conferencing to our staff and ministry volunteers to assist with keeping our people better connected during [Minnesota's Stay Safe](#) constraints.
- Adapted our church database management system ([MinistryPlatform](#) from Think Ministry) to help us better understand congregational participation under COVID-19 constraints on events and ministry activities, and continued to receive MinistryPlatform awards for improvements in data quality as we support ongoing ministry initiatives.
- Added several new capabilities to our mobile app, including electronic voting at business meetings, small group management tools, worship service Orders, and many other new features.

Media (Timothy Frederick)

- Provided *outstanding*, dedicated AVL (audio, video, lighting) support and service through multiple COVID-19-related transitions across all three campuses amid reduced staff and volunteers, as Bethlehem ...

- » Transitioned on very short notice to a single livestreamed worship service on March 15
- » Incrementally added limited-capacity live worship services at each campus mid-summer (North on June 7, South on June 21, and Downtown on July 12), including a new early-morning worship service (7:30am and then 8am) at the North Campus, while maintaining live-streamed services
- » Successfully implemented new congregationally-approved (via a Bylaws change) electronically-connected Quarterly Strategy Meetings (QSMs) and Annual Meeting
- Completed the final phase of a multi-year effort to update the North Campus Sanctuary audio system, to help bring the audio infrastructure in the North Sanctuary up to date with both Downtown and South campuses, while replacing the last of the original 15-year-old North audio system components.
- Supported and trained many dedicated volunteers who stepped up in the midst of many changes/ challenges and simply made things happen!
- Hired Dane Styczynski as *Coordinator for Media Ministries, Downtown*.
- Continued supporting special events (baptisms, weddings, funerals, conferences, classes, etc.) that required Media Ministries support.
- “**Livestream-only**” services from March 15 through May 31 (12 services) averaged 3,133 unique viewers watching 30 or more minutes on our website, Youtube channels, and Facebook—with the assumption that each unique “view” represented 1.8 persons (i.e., one “view” often represents multiple viewers who shared one livestream link).
- “**Hybrid**” services from June 7 through December 27 (30 weeks) combined both in-person and livestream worshipers and averaged 2,836. (Note that this count does not include online viewers who watched the recorded livestream later in the day Sunday or later in the week.)
- Both contributions *to* (\$9.33M) and expenses *against* (\$9.95M) Bethlehem’s “Fill These Cities: 25 x ’25” general operating fund were below our congregationally-approved 2020 budget of \$10.4M.
- Bethlehem received a \$1.33M grant/forgivable loan under the CARES Act Payroll Protection Program, which thankfully allowed us to keep staff fully employed/engaged in ministry and to end the year without a deficit.
- See reports from our *Financial Secretary* (page 60) and *Treasurer* (page 61) for details on 2020 finances.

Other Areas of Ministry Focus

In addition to overseeing the six main Operations areas mentioned above, my role involved ongoing participation with the following teams:

- Pastoral staff Lead Team
- All-church organizational elders and North Campus congregational elders
- Financial & Property Administrators (FPAs)
- Staffing Resource Team
- Health insurance resource team
- COVID-19 Emergency Response Team

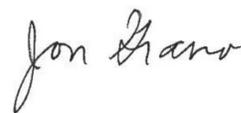
By the Numbers: Attendance and Financial

Our average weekly worship service attendance and financial numbers need to be viewed through the lens of COVID-19:

- “**Normal**” in-person services the first 10 weeks of 2020 averaged 2,973 attendees, compared to 3,240 for the 52 weeks of 2019 (a decrease of 9.2%).

Personal Note

This past year will not be remembered positively by many because of the coronavirus pandemic, election turmoil, and civil unrest in the Twin Cities and nation. However, in our extended family, it will be remembered most positively for the safe arrival of two granddaughters: Lydia Jane, born in April to son, Daniel, and his wife, Nicole; and Kaitlyn Grace, born in October to daughter, Rebecca, and her husband, Charlie. As our extended family grows, so does their preciousness to us. And as Bethlehem looks forward to her 150th anniversary in 2021, Pam and I anticipate our 40th wedding anniversary in 2021 and four decades of being a part of this Bethlehem family, the past 15 on staff. Each year, you also become more precious to us. In all of our weakness, may we never take for granted the gift of God’s grace and power to us as a blood-bought family and community in Christ.



Jon Grano
Pastor for Operations

Brad Nelson

GLOBAL OUTREACH

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.—Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

The curtain draws down on a year unlike any I can remember, with racial tensions and global shutdowns due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions making it nearly impossible to make firm plans about anything. The shutdowns have kept some of Bethlehem's global partners in the United States, some stuck in their country of ministry, many struggling to get visas, some sick and in isolation, and nearly all of our short-term ministry trips canceled.

In the midst of these challenges, we pray that what was true 2,000 years ago and what Isaiah prophesied long before that is true in ministry and your lives this new year. May the Good News of our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace be proclaimed to all people through our global partners and our members of Bethlehem, even to the ends of the earth!

Global Partners

As we conclude 2020, our global partners number 205 adults and 227 children—a total of 432 individuals. We have 95 couples and 17 singles living in 44 countries of the world—a total of 112 “GP units.”

Five global partner units completed their service in 2020: Erik & Kim Aasland, Ben H., Andy & Sarah H., Dan & Ami M., and Scott & Rachel M. Lynda Oatley, a global partner to Brazil for 17 years, passed away on August 3 in Brazil after a battle with ovarian cancer. We miss her dearly and look forward to the day we will see her again in glory.

Four global partner units were commissioned in 2020: Jake & Amber F., Jonathan & Lilli Leslie, Amy Miller, and Tom & Julie Steller. We also welcomed Matt W. to our group of global partners this year, when he married Global Partner Krista (S.) in late May 2020. Additionally, one more unit has been approved in 2020 and will begin field work as global partners in 2021: Chris & Katie Bruno.

Global Outreach (GO) Team

We thank God for the 36 outstanding volunteers (up from 28 volunteers in 2019) who prepared, sent, and cared for our global partners in 2020. Here are the campus teams as we move into 2021:

- Downtown Campus—Darin & Cristy Brink, David Jaeger, Daewon & Young In Kim, Burt & Trish Koppendrayner, Scott & Cindy Purser, and Chris & Elizabeth Tachick.
- North Campus—Derek & Kristin Dearth, Cherie Igielski, Morris & Wendy Johnson, Paul & Karin Lindberg, Jon & Joby Morgan, Joann Pittman, and Tom & Julie Varno.
- South Campus—Mike & Judy Anderson, Steve & Julie Anderson, Dane & Erin Carlson, Rachel Dyvig, Greg Jones, Terry & Eileen Kurschner, David & Karin Livingston, and Adam Sands.

Global Outreach (GO) Staff

Our staff went through several transitions this year. In February, we added Krista Smith and Chelsey Schmitter to our team to serve alongside JoNell Baker as administrative assistants for Global Outreach. Krista is splitting her time between GO and Downtown Worship, while Chelsey is splitting her time between GO and Church Planting. Marianne Derfus is continuing to serve our church well in her transition to the role of Downtown Campus receptionist.

In late July, Tim & Amy Moline completed their year on staff as *Global Partners in Residence*, although Tim has agreed to rejoin our team one day per week until Summer 2021. Joe B. joined our team in October to take over as the new *Global Partner in Residence*. In order to better care for our global partners at each campus and oversee our short term trips, we have also added several new positions for ministerial coordinators on our team.

GO staff members continuing in 2021 include:

- David Livingston as *Pastor for Global Outreach Member Care*
- Brad Nelson as *Pastor for Global Outreach*
- JoNell Baker, Chelsey Schmitter, and Krista Smith as *Administrative Assistants for Global Outreach*
- Nick Whitehead as *Ministry Assistant for Global Outreach*
- Global Partners Joe B. and Tim Moline as *Global Partners in Residence*
- Global Partners Tim & Cassie Devane as *Global Partners in Residence* assisting with the Nurture Program
- Global Partners Derek & Kristin Dearth as *Ministerial Coordinators, North*
- Global Partners Chris & Elizabeth Tachick as *Ministerial Coordinators, Downtown*
- Ron Powell, *Ministerial Coordinator for Short-Term Ministry Trips*

Short-Term Ministry Trips

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to cancel 22 team trips as well as three vision-casting trips for individuals.

Three teams were able to go out:

- *Thailand:* Warren Weber led a team in a prayer ministry.
- *Republic of Czechoslovakia:* Pastor Kenny Stokes and church planting residents went to observe and learn from Global Partners Mark & Gretchen Potma.
- *East Africa:* Elizabeth Tachick led a team of women who provided prayer support for a spiritual life conference.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). We found that this season of slowed ministry trips enabled the department to work on projects that had been set aside due to lack of time. One of those projects was rethinking how we train those going out on a ministry trip.

Short-Term Ministry Mobilization Committee

The Short-Term Ministry Mobilization Committee is made up of godly, missions-minded individuals. They interview, debrief, and help teams and individuals think through ministry, missions, and future plans that may follow as a result of a short-term ministry experience. The committee members are Judy Anderson, Mary Anderson, Satish Amancharla, Doug Hanson, Kathryn Hedlund, Jan Korbel, Steve Prater, Ron Powell, Julie Thompson, Steve Walmsley, Eric Iverson, Denny Williams, and myself.

Barnabas Teams

Each global partner has a team of supporters who pray for them regularly and support them in a variety of ways relationally, emotionally, spiritually, and practically. At the end of 2020, over 750 faithful servants were serving on Barnabas teams to support our global partners.

Global Focus

The 2020 theme for Global Focus was “All In That All Might Hear: How the Gospel Propels Fervent Discipleship and Mission.” One of the highlights from the 12 days of Global Focus (October 21–November 1) was the campus-specific celebrations with delicious ethnic meals, times of worship, and opportunities to hear from some of our global partners. On the first weekend of Global Focus, our guest speaker Afshin Ziafat led a seminar on Saturday, October 24, called “Ministry to Muslims Near and Far,” and preached the next morning on “How the Gospel Propels Fervent Discipleship and Mission,” from 1 Thessalonians 1:4–10. On the second Sunday of Global Focus, all three of our *Pastors for Preaching & Vision* preached and, at the end of their messages, asked all who were sensing God’s call to long-term vocational global missions to come forward and be prayed over by our congregation. Across our three campuses, more than 50 people came forward. After additional campus-specific “Follow-Up” events, our team had the privilege of connecting with a total of 60 people concerning an interest in missions.

Nurture Program

We prepare our people for global outreach ministry with our Nurture Program, which combines strategies and resources to equip men and women for global ministry. Currently, we have 50 individuals, couples, and families enrolled in the program to discern God's direction and be equipped for future global ministry.

BAM (Business As Mission)

The BAM committee included Keith Anderson, Scott Rebney, Don Hoffert, Steve Walmsley, Paul Lindberg, Jonathan Rees, Richard Swanson, and myself. Several others assisted occasionally and served as consultants, including Scott Riddle, Joe Krekelberg, Jesse Rinkenberger, and JD Harris.

Global Diaconate

Our Global Diaconate task force members included Steve Prater, Kathryn Hedlund, Richard Swanson, Mike Anderson, Derek Dearth, and Joe B. Nick Whitehead and I provided pastoral and administrative support. This year, the Global Diaconate voted to provide 44 financial gifts in 26 different countries, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for a total of approximately \$143,000 given. Of these gifts, 82% went to the ministries of global partners, while the remaining 18% went to other trusted partners in ministry. This year, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly \$100,000 of the gifts were given specifically toward pandemic relief projects, most often in the form of basic food necessities.

Disaster Response Team

Our disaster response team consists of Steve Prater, Ron Powell, Steve Walmsley, Ben Peterson, John Holm, Scott Langlie, Gary Anderson, Kurt Swanson, Dave Burnham, Phil Nehl, Dan Obermiller, Ken Rude, and myself. When a disaster hits in any part of the world, this team of men reacts by connecting with global partners or trusted agencies and sends a team to help bring relief to those affected by the disaster. This year, we sent teams to Louisiana and the Bahamas for hurricane relief and cleanup. In the past, we have gone to Japan, Barbuda, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Philippines and various spots in the U.S. Everywhere we go, it is our desire to be the hands and feet of Jesus, showing his love and praying for opportunities to share the truth and love of Christ.

Reaching the nations with you in the Name above all names,



Brad Nelson
Pastor for Global Outreach

Kenny Stokes

CHURCH PLANTING

... *Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing* ...—2 Corinthians 6:10

Quite apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 was a year of unprecedented sorrow for our family. Our youngest child and only daughter, Kathryn Hope, died suddenly and unexpectedly on Sunday, August 23. She was 25. Having been plunged into the depths of sorrow and loss, we have also been driven to rely on the heights and depths of the love of God for us in Christ Jesus. I must, therefore, begin with an acknowledgment of God as our hope and Christ as our help. I also must express, on behalf of Kathy and our whole family, our deepest thanks to you, the people of Bethlehem, for your countless prayers and expressions of love shown to us this year.

Recruiting

Although our face-to-face recruiting efforts across the country were hampered because of the pandemic, we have been able to consistently cast vision for church planting in our local church context and also in my role as *Associate Professor of Church Planting* at Bethlehem Seminary. In the coming year, please pray for the Lord to call more church planters into our Church Planting Residency. In support of our “Fill These Cities: 25 x ’25” prayer goal, our hope is that there would be one church planting resident on each campus each year.

Preparing

Looking ahead, we are praying for God’s favor for our two 2020 church planting residents to plant new churches upon the completion of their residencies. Marshall Posey is currently our North Campus Church Planting Resident. He, along with his wife, Becky, are aiming to plant in the northwest suburbs of Minneapolis. And James Lecheler, a Downtown elder, is currently our Downtown Campus Church Planting Resident. James, along with his wife, Betsy, are aiming to plant in San Diego.

Please pray for both of our residents as they refine their vision and plan, gather and build a core group, submit to a denominational assessment as well as a Treasuring Christ Together Network assessment, and prepare for final approval and commission by our elder council.

Deploying: ‘Fill These Cities: 25 x ’25’

In 2020, our elders approved three new church plants.

- *Église Baptiste Bethléem* in Yaoundé, Cameroon (Dieudonné & Dominique Tamfu): The church has begun public worship and is growing. Pastor Tom Steller has joined the team, to assist as an elder and also to teach in the newly launched extension site of Bethlehem College & Seminary in the capital city of Yaoundé.
- Henniker, New Hampshire (Andrew & Lida Sheard and Eliot & Olivia DeLorme): Both Lida and Olivia gave birth to new babies this year and are settling with their families into their new Henniker homes. In this venture, in keeping with the strategy, the Sheards and the DeLormes are establishing themselves in the Henniker community as well as in a partner church in nearby Concord. Eliot manages a Trader Joe’s grocery store in the area, while Andrew recently secured a job as a high school science teacher for the local school district.
- **Emmaus Church** in White Bear Lake, Minnesota (Tom & Emily Boyer): Despite COVID-19, Emmaus Church launched in June and has steadily grown. Emmaus has purchased and is currently renovating a church in the city of White Bear Lake.

Therefore, since 2016, God has given us grace to engage in 11 new church plants and one revitalization (which has subsequently closed) toward the goal of planting 25 new churches by the year 2025.

1. Word of Grace Baptist, Minneapolis: 2016–2018 (this church has closed)
2. Northfield Community, Northfield, Minnesota: 2016 (Jonathon & Gina Woodyard)
3. Redemption City, Rochester, Minnesota: 2017 (Adam & Molly Pohlman)
4. Table Rock, Boise, Idaho: 2017 (Ryan & Katie Eagy)
5. Little Earth Fellowship Minneapolis: 2018 (Greg & Kelly Mott)
6. New Creation Community Church, Granville, New York: 2018 (Joel & Holly Aubrey)
7. Grace Upon Grace Church, Weston, Florida: 2019 (Michel & Gaby Galeano)

8. Ekklesia, Eau Claire, Wisconsin: 2019
(Dan & Angela Shambro)
9. Echo Church, Chino, California: approved October 2019 (JD & Lauren Hetteema)
10. *Église Baptiste Bethléem*, Yaoundé, Cameroon: 2020
(Dieudonné & Dominique Tamfu)
11. Henniker, New Hampshire: 2020 (Andrew & Lida Sheard and Eliot & Olivia DeLorme)
12. Emmaus Church, White Bear Lake, Minnesota: 2020 (Tom & Emily Boyer)

Since we believe that our new churches are best preserved in faithfulness to God and the gospel of Christ by being in life-giving relationships with other like-minded pastors and leaders, we require our approved church plants to be covenant members of the [Treasuring Christ Together Network](#) (TCTN) while receiving Bethlehem financial support. Our aim is that the leaders of our church plants will receive mutually supportive grace from networking with the elders and wives of the TCTN. The TCTN continues to grow in its aims to serve and support pastors, their wives, and congregations as they build new Christ-treasuring churches. In addition to the annual Pastors & Wives Retreat each October, the network provides a formal assessment for TCTN membership, “Treasure Groups” for mutual care, “Training Tracks” for practical training, fellowship sessions for wives, regional conferences, a church planting training seminar, and a [podcast](#).

Final Comments

Looking ahead, we have new ventures—some of which were hindered in 2020—that I hope will all move forward in 2021: Recruiting church planters at key seminaries and events; teaching church planting seminars off-site; expanding our use of assessment inventories for seminary students and wives; making non-crisis visits to church plants for care and counsel; undertaking a TCTN “Weekender” for church planting; taking vision trips with residents; teaching church planting courses at the Bethlehem Seminary extension sites in Cameroon and Hawaii; leading TCTN training tracks for leaders and wives; and resuming face-to-face TCTN assessment gatherings.

Special thanks to my wife, Kathy, who works with me in supporting and assessing our church planters. She also has been assigned responsibility for the TCTN assessment program. A special thanks to Cleon Engel for another year of glad partnership. I have often said, “The planters and their wives know that Jesus loves them because Cleon does.” Not only does Cleon help with the care and counsel of the planters and wives, but he also leads a TCTN training track on church revitalization. And a special thanks to Chelsey Schmitter, whose administrative gifts and happy help keep us tracking together. In our labor of planting, we believe it is not unreasonable to ask and even expect that God will sustain many of the churches that we plant for not only decades, but perhaps for centuries to come—should the Lord Jesus tarry. Our labor is not in vain.

Sorrowful, yet rejoicing in the promise of Jesus: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18),



Kenny Stokes
Pastor for Church Planting

Jason Meyer

DOWNTOWN PREACHING & VISION

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you.—Psalm 55:22

The year 2020 is a year that will stand out in our memories for the rest of our lives. We will all remember where we were when we first learned the lockdown was coming. We had to suddenly come to grips with a new normal. Many of the things we took for granted were gone. I am not even sure we understand the long-term impact of what we endured in 2020, as we desperately tried to navigate the seemingly endless new things to learn, changes to make, fears to address, losses to grieve, and controversies to endure.

And it seems like we never settled into a new normal because new tragedies and controversies were always just around the corner. We will also all remember what it was like to witness the way George Floyd was killed on the streets of Minneapolis. And we will all remember what it was like to witness the sight of Minneapolis in flames. Once again we had to plead for Christ-exalting wisdom to know how to live in the aftermath of all those tragedies and controversies. And everyone knew that a contentious election was just around the corner.

In some ways, the changes related to the global pandemic made a historic change at Bethlehem seem small in comparison. The church year began in January with our normal rhythm of focusing on prayer, the Word, ethnic harmony, and sanctity of life. In February, we walked through a series highlighting our “20/20 Vision.” We shared that the Lord had stirred up the shepherds with a vision of how to better shepherd the flock at Bethlehem by seeing them more clearly, speaking to them more specifically, and leading them more effectively. We thought the series would position the congregation to be ready to vote at the April Quarterly Strategy Meeting to move forward with a *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* at each of our three campuses rather than one *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* serving all three campuses.

I thought I would finish that series and then enjoy a sabbatical with my family in May, June, and July. But the Lord had other plans. COVID-19 invaded our lives, and I knew there was no way I could leave my pastoral post. I canceled my sabbatical. On March 15, we closed all in-person worship services and started a livestream-only worship service at the Downtown Campus. I will never forget what it was like to preach to a camera and an empty church. We finished the “20/20 Vision” series and then on April 26 we went into a preaching series through 1 Peter. By June 21, all three campuses were going through 1 Peter together but with different preachers.

During the season of online-only worship services, I hosted two midweek gatherings through Facebook Live. The devotional series *Don't Lose Heart* was on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9am, March 23–May 8, and is archived at bethlehem.church/dontloseheart. A series specifically for our children and youth, *Pastor Jason's Kids Corner*, was on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9:30am, April 6–May 1. That series is archived at bethlehem.church/kidscorner.

On July 12, the Downtown Campus reopened for in-person worship services with limited capacity (250 in Sanctuary) and other mandates for social distancing, wearing face masks, and additional cleaning procedures (still in place at the time of writing this report). At the All-Church Quarterly Strategy Meeting on July 26, we voted to make the anticipated staff changes official. We now have a *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* at each of our three campuses. We finished the series on 1 Peter on October 18.

I have been overjoyed to be the *Pastor for Preaching & Vision, Downtown*. I am getting to know more and more of the congregation. It is a privilege to shepherd with an amazing team of shepherds. And oh, what a blessing it has been to begin to preach through the book of Acts. We will take a multi-year journey through the book, and I cannot wait to see how God is going to meet us in the rest of the series.

This year has been such a remarkable season of changes, challenges, and controversies—and 2021 has already shown us that more trouble is on its way. Surely burdens abound! But look what we have gained. The Lord has laid us low. He has shown us that we cannot carry our cares in our own strength. We have learned that we must quickly cast all of our burdens on him. How the Lord has proven his steadfast love and faithfulness! He has proven again and again that he will sustain us. We have learned that it is sweet to trust in Jesus and to take him at his word. I think it will be a long time before any of us take for granted how precious it is when the people of God can gather together in worship. And I think we all learned to long for the return of Jesus like never before.



Jason Meyer
Pastor for Preaching & Vision, Downtown

Jared Wass

DOWNTOWN SMALL GROUPS & ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

Christianity Is More Than Resilient

Toward the end of 2020, as I read 2 Thessalonians in my morning devotional time, I was struck by how the letter began. In the first few verses, Paul gives a shout-out to the Christians in Thessalonica, commending them for a faith that was abundantly growing and a love that was increasing (1:3).

Spiritual growth of any kind and at any time is a miracle. But what we read in the next verse makes the fact of growth among the Thessalonians even more remarkable. These early Christians were growing in a time of persecution and affliction, not ease (1:4). Spiritual vitality was increasing while the storms of antagonism and suffering were raging.

What's still even more remarkable is how unremarkable this really is. Suffering has always been an occasion for Christian growth. We don't look for suffering out of some morbid desire for pain, but it surely finds us. And when it does, we see that Christianity is ready-made to endure whatever is thrown its way: pandemics, social upheaval, and the like. It is a resilient faith.

What Is 'Resilience'?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says *resilience* is "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change." Recovery is good, but these early Christians were experiencing something more than recovery. They weren't going to return to a prior stable condition when this storm passed but were experiencing an even more vibrant faith before it was even over.

That fact was a great boost of confidence and hope for me. The year 2020 had more than its fair share of hardship, and I had more moments of feeling low and listless than I have in a long time. Perhaps you too have had periods of feeling defeated and confused, hoping for life's present trials to pass so an increase of peace around you could lead to more peace within. But Christianity offers something better.

To be sure, we need periods of what Charles Spurgeon called "holy inaction" and "sanctified leisure." God rested on the Sabbath to show that rest and enjoyment of the

fruits of our work are good things. Times of peace are important. But it's also true that God is still doing a good work when the world around us is not at peace. And for the first-century Thessalonians, they weren't just being kept in Christ when life was hard, but they were growing in him. Two thousand years later, being in union with the same Christ, this is true for us too.

So whatever storms are raging in your life right now, here is the word for you:

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?—1 John 5:4.

Your present trials are not a threat to undo you or your faith. They don't have the power to do that. They are filtered by your Father's good hands to be an occasion to actually increase your faith. The kind of faith John says gives you the final victory. A faith that is more than resilient. A faith in Jesus that we have by grace.

Faith-Growing Activity

Though small group ministry has gone through waves of adjustments as the COVID-19 pandemic has taken twists and turns, groups are still meeting. As of the typing of this report we have 54 Downtown small groups led by 176 leaders with 670 participants.

We praise God for the work he is doing in the lives of our people as they build each other up in love (Ephesians 4:16).



Jared Wass
Pastor for Small Groups, Downtown

Bryan Pickering

DOWNTOWN CARE & COUNSELING

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.—Lamentations 3:22–23

I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to serve our Downtown Campus by working with you for your joy in Jesus as we seek to apply God's glorious gospel to the general and specific troubles and pleasures of everyday life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here are a few highlights of what the Lord has been doing among us in 2020.

Equipping the Saints for the Work of Ministry (Ephesians 4:12)

Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation Classes

The Lord gave grace for us to offer five CCEF graduate-level counseling courses at the Downtown Campus.

- **Dynamics of Biblical Change:** A course on the counseling model, taking a deep dive into answering practical questions, such as how does Christ's past grace, present grace, and future grace speak to our hearts and change how we live our daily lives? This course is about people. It is about how we face the troubles of life. It is about how we deal with our inner struggles. It is about how we change into Jesus' image.
- **Counseling Problems & Procedures:** A course that aims to go deep with the everyday and universal problems of life, such as guilt, shame, fear, anger, and suffering. The course content also goes broad by considering problems that are not found in a concordance, such as bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder, anorexia, bulimia, and addictions.
- **Counseling Abusive Marriages:** A course designed to train helpers (pastors, elders, counselors, and friends) to care for victims of abuse and oppressors.
- **Helping Relationships:** A course on the counseling method, aiming to help students grow in their ability to listen well, know people, interpret another person's story from a biblical perspective, and offer biblically-based truth that will motivate others in their growth in Christ.

- **Marriage Counseling:** A course that equips students with a model and methods that in every way connect the truth of the gospel to everything they are going to see in marriage problems.

To date, we've trained more than 150 men and women through CCEF classes, about 70 of whom call the Downtown Campus home. These students are currently involved in a wide range of ministry roles, including ...

- Abuse care
- Bethlehem Baptist Church ministry and support staff
- Campus Outreach ministers
- Counselors
- Global partners
- Pastors/elders and their wives
- Small group leaders
- Small group coaches
- Women's ministry leaders

It's an honor to be able to walk with these students into deeper, richer, and more robust expressions of wise and compassionate care. They bless me tremendously by helping me to see Jesus more clearly and to love others more deeply.

Bethlehem College & Seminary

In this final year of my teaching at the seminary, I had the privilege of co-teaching the counseling classes to seminarians with my friend and fellow Bethlehem member, Glen Bloomstrom. Highlights of the 2020 academic year include ...

- Ten men completed their second semester of counseling.
- Fifteen men completed their first semester of counseling.
- Topics included counseling models, methods, local church context, suffering, grief and loss, guilt and shame, anger, fear and anxiety, depression, crisis and trauma, suicide, alcoholism, addictions, eating disorders, abuse/oppression and neglect, infidelity, diseases affecting mood, intellect, behavior, psychiatric disorders, same-sex attraction, and gender identity/transgender issues.

CCEF Regional Conference on Untangling Emotions

Though we intended this conference to be an in-person event, the Lord had other plans for us in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were blessed to have the CCEF Executive Director, Alasdair Groves, lead us through teaching from the Scriptures and his book, *Untangling Emotions*, during an online conference in November (rescheduled from April). Over 800 people participated, seeking to grow in ministering and living wisely in the midst of strong, subtle, and sometimes confusing emotions.

Continuing to Refine a System of Care (Colossians 1:28)

The Downtown Campus staff and I continue to labor to refine a robust, holistic system of care to deploy as needed. As a norm, this system includes pastoral oversight, focused care (often a counselor or other specialist), and community involvement (often a small group). While the pandemic did necessitate a holding pattern in this area in 2020, we look forward to more growth in grace in this area in 2021.

Thank You (1 Corinthians 1:4)

I want to thank God publicly for all of you who have labored with our Care & Counseling ministry by holding up the helpers and those being helped to our heavenly Father in prayer. I also want to thank him for all of your efforts to show tangible and refreshing expressions of God's steadfast love toward his people—from the strongest to the weakest, and everyone in between. The Lord has clearly been pleased to sustain this ministry

through your seeking his face on our behalf. Please keep praying for fresh grace and new mercies! I also want to say a special thanks to God for a few of his many relational graces I experienced:

- My fellow Downtown Campus pastors and staff members. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a *joy* to serve with you!
- Gretchen Spencer, for your amazing help during this pandemic year. From distributing food, to moving offices, to planning and re-planning the CCEF Regional Conference, your great help has been simply invaluable to this ministry.
- Cache Barnes and all the men and women at Redemption: Twin Cities. Your consistent, wise, and compassionate counsel of our people is bearing fruit big-time. It's a joy to have you near to us as partners in ministry.
- Debby, my wife, for being *the* most excellent partner and friend in life and ministry these 24 years. Debby still reflects the countenance of Jesus to me more consistently than any other person on the planet.



Bryan Pickering
Pastor for Care & Counseling, Downtown

Ming-Jinn Tong

DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

*Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf,
for in its welfare you will find your welfare.—Jeremiah 29:7*

I will never forget Memorial Day 2020. Sitting at home in the midst of a devastating global pandemic, I watched as a Minneapolis police officer mercilessly pressed his knee onto George Floyd's neck, keeping it there for nearly nine excruciating minutes—until at last George Floyd was motionless. He died moments later.

As an American, I have witnessed the murder of unarmed black men again and again. Each time, I asked myself, “What does the video not show? Is this the whole story?” But this was different. From beginning to end, George Floyd was handcuffed and on his belly—absolutely not a threat—and yet he was shown no mercy from officers whose vehicles were emblazoned, “To Serve With Compassion.” In that act, the world saw neither service nor compassion.

Three days later, riots broke out in the heart of our neighborhood. Devastating riots as a response to devastating injustice in the midst of a devastating pandemic. What is the Church called to do? With so much brokenness and sin engulfing us, we cried out to God and went out to seek the welfare of our city.

Outreach in the Neighborhoods

While the pandemic put a hold on many of our regular outreach events, Bethlehem's Downtown Campus was actively involved with caring for the congregation and neighborhoods during the year.

Support the Cities began as a single clean-up event, prompted by Bethlehem member Amy Wass, which garnered the attention of more than 1,000 people in the span of an hour. With the help of Nick Stromwall, Richie Stark, Gabriel Leake, Gretchen Spencer, Harmon Squires, Karen Gangnon, Janice Evans, Beth Lundstrom, Heather Elting-Ballard, Scott Anderson, Eric Iverson, and many others, Support the Cities mobilized more than 8,000 volunteers from around the Twin Cities to clean up the streets and wipe the tears of our hurting community. God blessed us with more than 20,000 followers who became a pop-up battalion, armed with brooms and clad with gloves to serve the Twin Cities.

As the pandemic raged on and thousands of jobs were compromised, **Jericho Road** became a significant resource to the local community. Jericho Road was there to provide both spiritual and physical help as they distributed roughly 1,000,000 pounds of food in 2020.

Sanctity of Life Ministry (SOLM)

In January 2020, the Downtown Campus participated in the annual March for Life at the state capitol. More than 100 people also attended a church-wide seminar entitled “Answering the Crisis of Abortion,” led by John Ensor of PassionLife. John Ensor also served as the guest speaker for Sanctity of Life Sunday.

Other events through the year included the baby bottle fundraiser for New Life Family Services, which raised \$7,588; showings of the movie *Unplanned* at each campus; and a Pro-Life Action Ministries sidewalk counseling seminar. When the Whole Women's abortion clinic relocated from Minneapolis to Bloomington, the SOLM shifted its emphasis from one site to encouraging involvement at clinics located close to members' respective homes.

Consistent with many changes at Bethlehem, the SOLM was restructured this past summer from a church-wide ministry to campus-specific ministries.

Hispanic Ministry

Joey “Pepe” Bures and René & Magali González have worked faithfully to continue ministering to the Hispanic community throughout this year, even though they have not been able to meet in person. Spanish translation of the entire worship service is regularly available at the 9am service, and our Hispanic Ministry includes two Spanish-speaking small groups.

Welcome Team

Under the leadership of Michael Ruamthong, our Downtown Campus Welcome Ministry has cheerfully stepped up to meet the new challenges brought by the pandemic. They continue to provide a faithful, welcoming presence to regular attendees and visitors on Sunday mornings, equipped with masks and hand sanitizer to help provide a safe space for us to gather in person.

Equipping the Saints

Becoming a Better Listener

Listening is not quietly preparing your response while you wait for the other person to stop talking. Yet that's how we often "listen" in our daily experience. Listening to someone is an indispensable part of loving them. How we listen shapes how we respond. In the Spring, I had the pleasure of teaching a Sunday School class on growing in active listening skills so that we can better model the wisdom and love of Christ in conversations with our neighbors.

Intercultural Intelligence Training

In Fall 2019, I had the opportunity to become certified as an instructor in Intercultural Intelligence (ICI) Training with [KnowledgeWorkx](#). In Fall 2020, I led two ICI workshops for Bethlehem's Downtown elders and congregation, with more workshops scheduled for 2021. At Bethlehem, we are actively seeking to grow in knowing, loving, and caring for each other well. A lack of awareness about our own and others' worldviews and the cultures that flow from them can greatly hinder relationships. Conversely, a deep awareness of our own worldview and the worldviews of those around us can lead to stronger, richer relationships among people who come from varied cultural backgrounds. It's been a joy to see our congregation and leaders growing in the ability to love each other and those around us well through these workshops.



Ming-Jinn Tong

Pastor for Neighborhood Outreach, Downtown

Meg Anderson

DOWNTOWN WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Is anything too hard for the LORD?—Genesis 18:14

In May 2020, Samm Poteat's faithful and effective service as the *Minister for Women's Ministry, Downtown*, concluded. We have not yet hired another leader for this position. Also this year, Gretchen Spencer, the *Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry, Downtown*, transitioned to a new role Downtown. In January 2021, we are excited to welcome Cynthia McGill as the new *Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry, Downtown*, and we are also eager to move toward filling the position of *Minister for Women's Ministry, Downtown*.

God's faithfulness has been evident during these changes in leadership and through many alterations to our programming due to the constraints of the coronavirus pandemic.

Women's Bible Study

The year began with a study called *God of Creation: A Study of Genesis 1–11*, written by Jen Wilkin, offered Wednesday mornings and evenings. Teaching was provided by a team of teachers Downtown: Tammy Peters, Beth Dougherty, and Jamie Carlson taught in the mornings, and Alyssa Miller and I taught in the evenings. We ended the study three weeks early when the pandemic shelter-in-place mandates began. Over the summer, we tested offering Bible study online over Zoom, using materials on Deuteronomy from The Gospel Coalition's 2018 Women's Conference. One particular joy of this format was the ability to include some of our global partners, since we met online. In the Fall, we resumed studying Genesis with *God of Covenant: A Study of Genesis 12–50*, offered over Zoom on Wednesday mornings and evenings. Our meetings included live teaching and small breakout groups for discussion and prayer. The teaching team included Tammy Peters, Beth Dougherty, Monica Geyen, and myself. We also had a faithful team of breakout group leaders, who made the study possible. Despite the limitations of Zoom, women were pleased to "be together" online and grow together.

Titus 2 Mentoring Ministry

This year was the final season for the Titus 2 mentoring ministry at the Downtown Campus. Samm Poteat, the Titus 2 Committee, and the Downtown Campus pastors collectively decided to bring the ministry to a close and incorporate mentoring into other ministries, such as

Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and small groups. We cannot adequately express our appreciation for the foundation for mentoring that our Titus 2 mentors have laid at the Downtown Campus over the past years and for all of their faithful, loving care toward younger women at Bethlehem!

MOMS

Krista Coronado and Janette Takata have done a fantastic job adapting the MOMS gatherings to the unexpected circumstances brought on by the pandemic. The Spring meeting calendar was cut short due to gathering restrictions, but the 2020–21 year began as usual in September. MOMS has continued to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month during this school year, exploring the theme of God's steadfast love for his people.

Gathering for Single Moms

Haven Stephens and Cynthia McGill have continued to facilitate this group for single moms to connect and encourage one another each Friday evening. They switched the format to Zoom to allow the group to continue to meet during the pandemic. The group is a great blessing to its members, and attendance has expanded to include women from the other campuses as well as Downtown.

White Cross

Under the leadership of MaryAnn Burnes, this group of women has continued to meet twice a month to work on quilts and other sewing projects and to share fellowship together. They took a break from meeting in the Spring because of the pandemic but were able to resume their gatherings this Fall.

Meg Anderson

Meg Anderson
Women's Ministry Bible Study Leadership, Downtown

Gretchen Spencer

Gretchen Spencer
Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry, Downtown

Bud Burk

DOWNTOWN CHILDREN & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Galatians 6:14

Overview

In the conclusion of my 2014 annual report, I said, “The glory of Christ and the grace he brings has risen more fully to the surface this year, and I believe it is just beginning to blossom and will do so even more by God’s faithful grace in 2015 and following. *I look forward to giving annual reports in the years to come*, of this unfolding story of God’s grace in Christ to undeserving sinners at Bethlehem among families which bring both salvation and sanctification for our joy. If I had to summarize this glorious theme in a word it would be a name: Jesus.”

I look forward, with anticipation, to repeating the above paragraph each year in my report, for God is faithful to lift up, above all things, his Name and the Name of his Son. He has done so again in 2020.

God’s Blessing During a Hard Year

The challenges of this year through racial injustice and the COVID-19 pandemic were extraordinary. It brought a great measure of felt uncertainty, instability, and fear, but it was wielded by the Spirit to bring us to Jesus, for he is moved by what troubles us. He is merciful.

The coronavirus quarantine and shutdown accentuated loneliness. However, I am glad to report, this was the beginning of a maturing in our ministry emphasis that saw significant blessing this year with plans and goals that reach well into the future. I summarize this ministry emphasis with the words *personal contact in Jesus’ Name*. In short, we practiced a new measure of bringing gospel hope and love to families through personal contact.

This methodology began in March, has stretched out for the entire year, and has settled into a rhythm that includes contact through (1) home visits, (2) phone calls, and (3) hand-written letters with 8–12 households (out of 220 total households) each week.

When I visited a home—even for a short front porch hello—I brought resources highlighting the beauty of Christ and the power and hope of his good news. In this context we prayed together. I kept that focus for our phone calls as well. The letters that we write also bring Scripture, encouragement, and prayer. These methods

increased our experience of personal fellowship with our families, whom we serve by the strength that God supplies, and was most rewarding. It is amazing to type out these words, knowing that such a great measure of Christ-exalting fellowship with households, parent support, and family encouragement happened in 2020, of all years! This word is meant to remind the reader that our God does good in dark places, to proclaim that Jesus is steadfast and present to his sheep during the storm, and to cultivate the fires of gratitude and vision in my heart and my team’s hearts for another year of the same. Looking forward to 2021 indeed!

I did not do this alone. My team jumped in and supported this vision well. My wife, Lisa, and team members Connie Oman, Sara Scholtens, and Nina Mariani played strategic parts in this plan of loving families in Jesus’ name in personal ways. We are preparing to grow together in 2021, taking another step forward in personal contact to families. I am deeply grateful for the partnership of these women in this ministry emphasis.

Prayer

By God’s sovereign grace, the challenges of this year were wielded for good in the context of prayer. He was pleased to draw us to himself, in part, through two distinct prayer initiatives. The first was a “40 Days of Prayer” guide to use as a daily devotional in April–May. The second, was a collection of video clips titled “Downtown Campus Leaders in Prayer” in which various leaders prayed through selected themes. We provided the videos to the flock once a week for eight weeks during the summer. Praise God for giving us new ideas of how to come to him together in Jesus’ Name during adversity.

Disability Ministry

This year in the Disability Ministry there were new opportunities and new connections. The Disability Ministry coordinators from the North, South, and Downtown campuses worked to create signs, symbols, and brochures that show God’s gracious welcome and the strength that he gives in our weaknesses. Because of the lack of in-person ministry on Sundays, I’ve had the opportunity to connect with families through “good

old-fashioned” letter-writing and phone conversations. I’ve especially enjoyed writing letters and sending little messages and gifts to the children in this ministry. We continue to share prayers and pour out our concerns to our Savior together.

Nursery Ministry

In January, February, and early March, our Nursery Ministry was humming along by serving families during Sunday worship services, MOMS, and Bible studies. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, our nursery care ministry closed down until September. Since our nursery rooms went unused for almost 6 months, it was a great time to deep clean and refresh the nursery environment. We were able to offer limited Nursery Ministry beginning in September, and then closed down again in early November. One word that has defined our ministry this year has been “flexible.” The Lord was gracious to provide a small team of nursery caregivers, who were gracious and flexible to serve our youngest at Bethlehem. We are also very thankful to welcome 35 new babies born in 2020.

Prayer in Closing

Colossians 3:3–4 says, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Father in Heaven,

*The thought of temptation no longer reaching our children,
the thought of their beholding your Son in all his majestic
splendor and gazing upon his gentle and lowly countenance,
and the thought of their resting in perfect fellowship with you—
experiencing joy upon joy—
these thoughts reflect the aim and goal of your gift to us in this
maturing ministry to households.*

*In short, we seek to offer personal contact
for the sake of your glory*

and great joy among multiple generations.

*Father, thank you for this good lesson in 2020,
and we ask for more in Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Bud Burk



Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship, Downtown

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY (January – March 2020)

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY					
Weekly Services	Age Group	Total Unique Participants	Participant Average	Total Volunteers (includes 1:1 Buddies & Subs)	Volunteer Average
Sunday 9am	<i>Preschool–Grade 5</i>	109	64	44	21
Sunday 11am	<i>Preschool–Grade 5</i>	180	128	65	39
Weekly Service Totals:		289	192	109	60

NURSERY MINISTRY (January – March 2020)					
Total number of babies born: 36					
Weekly Services	Age Group	Total Unique Participants	Participant Average	Total Caregivers	Caregiver Average
Sunday 9am	<i>All Nurseries</i>	114	55	67	29
Sunday 11am	<i>All Nurseries</i>	78	34	40	17
Weekly Service Totals:		192	89	107	46
Special Events (MOMS & Bible Studies)		61	38	12	11

HIS STRENGTH DISABILITY MINISTRY
5 children with weekly 1:1 Buddies in Preschool–Grade 5

SPECIAL EVENTS
Men Who Sing & Keep Singing: 40 attendees
Father/Daughter Retreat: 14 father/daughter groups attended
Men Who Read & Keep Reading: 82 attendees
50 outdoor visits from March to December
535 phone calls & letters to families
Parenting with Words of Grace (a google hangouts event): 9 sets of parents involved

Richie Stark

DOWNTOWN YOUTH & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.—James 2:1

Overview

This Fall in our youth ministry, we began a series in the book of Esther to remind ourselves of the sovereignty of God. He is in control of all things even if we don't see him at work.

Staff Team

- Patrick Claytor, *Ministry Assistant for Middle School Discipleship, Downtown* (since August 2016)
- Caleb Ziegler, *Ministry Assistant for High School Discipleship, Downtown* (since August 2019)
- Allison Steddom, *Ministerial Coordinator for Youth & Family Discipleship, Downtown* (since September 2020)
- Scott Byers, *Administrative Assistant for Youth & Family Discipleship, Downtown* (since September 2020)

The Middle School and High School ministries are blessed with 37 volunteer staff who serve in various ways, such as worship, announcements, small groups, coordinating events, and maintaining relationships outside of planned events.

Programming

Due to the pandemic, the Downtown youth group has met only on Wednesday nights. Some of the meetings have been in person and some have been online over Zoom. During the summer, we could gather outside physically distanced. When we met in person, we met in the Main Hall in order to maintain physical distance.

Our ministry has taken on a different shape in 2020. From early morning Zoom prayer meetings with our leaders, to our study of *Coronavirus and Christ* by John Piper, to reading what George Yancy has to say about ethnic harmony, we have done different things than what we had planned during the previous year.

On Wednesday evenings in the summer, we were able to finish out our study in James, through which we learned how to skillfully live out the gospel, as well as completing our two-year survey of the Old Testament.

We have had very few events for the students this year. We were able to do our annual "Bike, Hike & Spike" event and a day in Red Wing, in addition to the 2020 Winter Retreat.

Fruit

It has been a more difficult season to see how our students are growing in their relationship with Christ and discipleship. But we are sure the Lord is on the move. We see students still engaging in great conversation around the Lord and his word and inviting their friends to Wednesday Connection. Some have put together a Bible study resource about the book of Esther. We have also had students get baptized this year.

Closing

What a great year in which to learn to remain flexible! We had made plans to do ministry a certain way in 2020, but it was not an accident that two weeks before the pandemic shutdown we studied this passage at Wednesday Connection:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.—James 4:13-14

These verses have taught me to hold onto the certainty of the gospel tightly and to hold our plans loosely.



Richie Stark

Director for Youth & Family Discipleship, Downtown

2020 Downtown Campus Attendance Statistics

YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP						
Weekly Services	Average Participants		Total Participants		Total Volunteers	
	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>
Middle School	54	--	108	--	24	--
Sr High	47	--	83	--	20	--
Total Sunday School:	101	--	191	--	44	--
Wednesday Connection	Average Participants		Total Participants		Total Volunteers	
	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Fall</i>
Middle School	50	25	100	100	20	13
Sr High	44	30	80	80	23	9
Total Wednesday Connection:	94	50	180	180	43	21

Steven Lee

NORTH PREACHING & VISION

*For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.
He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.—Psalm 112:6–7*

Reflecting on 2020

On March 13, 2020, after Governor Walz’s news conference stated that all events and gatherings should shut down to “flatten the curve” of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bethlehem (like most other churches) suspended all in-person activities indefinitely. I don’t think this has ever happened in our church’s 150-year history. The following Sunday, March 15, 2020, I remember driving to the Downtown Campus to participate in our first of many livestream-only worship services.

I remember the eerie feeling of parking in a nearly empty lot, singing with a small handful of people in the Sanctuary, preaching to an empty room, looking exclusively at the camera instead of into the eyes of our people, and leaving immediately after the service concluded. It was the most unusual Sunday I have ever experienced.

Initially, we were worried that the global pandemic would have a death rate of a few percent and that we’d be doing a dozen funerals every couple of weeks. Thankfully, that never materialized. Even in this pandemic, God was on the move. Our people volunteered by the hundreds to serve others in need. We utilized resources to reach out to our neighbors. There was a renewed sense of “we’re in this together.”

Little did we know that this shutdown was merely the first of many challenges for the year. Worship services would eventually reopen with a capacity of 250 people, but the pandemic was wreaking havoc on mental, emotional, and spiritual health around the world, in our country, and in our local communities. Layoffs, financial insecurity, loneliness and depression, isolation, and widespread fear and anxiety afflicted many.

If COVID-19 was a bonfire of pent-up fear, frustration, and anger, the death of George Floyd and the 2020 presidential election were like adding napalm. Following the death of George Floyd, the fires of anger, fear, and frustration raged for weeks and months and reached several boiling points in the Twin Cities. The 2020 presidential election gave rise to extreme polarization, suspicion, and frustration. Both of these events will be written about for years to come.

This terrible convergence of events reminded us once again that we are dependent on God. Thankfully, we have the good reminder of the psalmist to trust in the Lord our God:

- *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.—Psalm 20:7*
- *In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?—Psalm 56:4*
- *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.—Psalm 62:8*

As Psalm 112:7 stated at the beginning of this report, the righteous do not need to fear bad news. Why? Because our hearts are firm, trusting in the Lord. This is a year when we have been confronted with our need to trust not in riches, prosperity, health, peace, or politics, but rather to trust solely in the Lord our God.

An Opportunity for the Church

For many, this was the most difficult and polarizing year of our lifetimes, but the lasting impact on our world and church remains to be seen. The global pandemic reminds us that the worship and discipleship ministry of the church is, more than ever, *essential* to believers and society. At the North Campus, we sought to accommodate as many worshipers as would come, switching to three services (8am, 9:30am and 11am), broadcasting a livestream service online, and providing overflow seating spaces.

During this year, we renewed our commitment to the Word and prayer. Many participated in our [Bible Reading Challenge](#) (and continue to do so). Prayer deacons sought to help us increase the prayer temperature of the church, having a “Prayer Lab” training. We also held a few all-church opportunities to pray for our country, local community, and leaders in the midst of all the turmoil.

During this pandemic, we also saw the importance and indispensability of Christian fellowship and community. Many of our small groups continued to meet—virtually or in person—in order to pray, study the Bible, and to encourage one another. This was the year of Zoom; we all became quite adept at livestreaming, broadcasting, and holding online meetings. Many ministries—Middle School and High School, Women’s Bible Study, and adult

Sunday Schools—got creative with various virtual and in-person events. Over the summer, we continued to gather at Long Lake Park in New Brighton for worship and teaching.

While many things are important, we are reminded that the church is essential.

One Central Truth to Remember

In the midst of the many challenges we experienced this past year, it is good to be reminded that God rules and reigns, and Jesus is still seated on his throne. Psalm 2 highlights for us Jesus' rule and reign right now:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.—Psalm 2

Any power that attempts to usurp the Lord Jesus Christ from the throne room of God cannot stand. He who sits in the heavens laughs. I don't know what it sounds like for God to laugh, but I want to hear it. God holds his enemies in derision. God has not lost control—however much we may be tempted to think so. God needs only speak, and the whole world will tremble in fear. We know that God will return and break the nations with a rod of iron; Jesus will return with a sword that proceeds from his mouth, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Church Marches Onward

In fact, this is the best time for the Church to rise up by the grace of God. The gospel remains the power of God for salvation, the Church remains as God's institution, the Bible remains as our final authority, the Holy Spirit remains as our empowering strength, Jesus remains as our singular Savior and Lord, and God remains as the ruler of heaven and earth. His kingdom cannot be thwarted, and the Church shall march onward until Christ returns. I don't know what the coming year or two will bring, and yet I am confident that Romans 8:28 will continue to be true: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." King Jesus is on his throne, and God remains sovereign and good.

Miscellaneous Highlights

This year brought a number of milestones and transitions.

- We sent out church planting resident Tom Boyer, along with a number of families at Bethlehem, to plant [Emmaus Church](#) in the White Bear Lake area. We are eager to see how God will use another gospel outpost to reach the lost in that region of the Twin Cities. Pray for Emmaus Church as they recently purchased a building to establish a permanent location, and as they continue to reach out to their neighbors and build community.
- We hired Pastor Aaron Rothermel to serve as the *Pastor of Children & Family Discipleship, North*. We are grateful to God for providing Aaron and bringing him here to serve our children and families. We are also grateful for Tony Cooper, who held the interim role for more than a year so that our ministry continued smoothly.
- We said farewell to Steve Walmsley as he stepped off the North elder council (though he'll remain involved at the North Campus and continue as Bethlehem's *Financial Secretary*), and we welcomed Brian Hanson (professor at Bethlehem College & Seminary) and Jim Jordan (Bethlehem global partner) to the North elder council.
- Marshall Posey, our church planting resident, has been building a launch team to plant another new church in the northwest suburbs of the Twin Cities. We are eager to see how God will reach unbelievers and disciple believers through this gospel outpost. Pray for the Poseys as they prepare to plant this church.

A Personal Word

It has been a personal joy to more regularly minister God's word to the North Campus, along with my fellow elders. As I look back on our Advent series, I am overflowing with joy and gratefulness to God for renewing our collective awe as we reflected on the birth of Jesus. Thank you for entrusting me with the task of regular preaching and casting vision for the North Campus. I don't take that lightly. My wife, Stephanie, and my five children continue to be sources of joy and delight for my soul. And it is sweet to interweave our lives together with yours as we all seek to be faithful to the calling we have all received from the Lord Jesus Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Lee".

Steven Lee

Pastor for Preaching & Vision, North

Dan Holst

NORTH WORSHIP & MUSIC

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.—Psalm 145:17

As 2020 draws to a close, we pause to reflect on God's righteous ways and kind works at Bethlehem's North Campus before and during the pandemic. And we worship *him!*

God provided for the spiritual nurture, musical growth, and worship development of our children through three youth choirs—ably led by Mary Lee (Music Makers, K-Grade 1), Shirley Nagel (Joyful Praise, Grades 2-4), and Becki Warnock (Choristers, Grades 5-12). At year's end, we give thanks to the Lord for Shirley Nagel, who left mid-summer to join Tom Boyer and the Emmaus Church planting team. In doing so, we acknowledge that our lives have been indelibly marked by her faithful and fruitful ministry. Thank you, Shirley, for the decade of leadership given in advancing praise among the next generation!

God's continuing kindness shone through the regular Sunday service leadership of our North worship choir. I summarize the profound servant role that our choir fills as "songs sung in tune with lives lived for the advance of God's praise, here at Bethlehem and beyond." I am especially thankful for Vicki Crabtree, who joyfully and faithfully served as worship choir accompanist. I am also thankful for Kevin Shull, whose 13-year leadership as *Director for Music & Worship, North* concluded this Fall, as Kevin stepped away from this part-time role to better care for his family. Your investment, Kevin, in the lives of so many is appreciated by hundreds who call Bethlehem home! Thank you, Lord, for the Shull family and for Kevin's masterful leadership of large swaths of North Campus worship.

With the abrupt shutdown of public services in mid-March, the essential role that "bread and butter" worship teams played in our corporate music and worship expressions was incalculable. As we began livestreaming our Sunday services, the authentic, joyful, humble excellence of our teams streamed Bethlehem music, prayers, and preaching into the homes of thousands. How thankful I am for the partnership of dozens who voluntarily made livestream worship soar! Since mid-June, these teams have continued to lead our three Sunday services and our Wednesday Connection worship with delighted exuberance. Thanks especially

to Mark Henderson for his continued (18 years and counting!) "anchor keyboard" ministry as accompanist par excellence. And thanks to Grace Ohlendorf, *Lead Administrative Assistant for Worship & North*, whose administrative skill and care served all of you in countless ways. I give thanks to God for Caleb Peterson, who has recently joined the team and is fruitfully serving as *Ministry Assistant for Worship, North*. Corporate worship *together*, Bethlehem, is more deeply cherished following our 12-week live service hiatus; the Lord's kindness shines through your masked faces as you sing, often accompanied by shared tears of joy as corporately we declare his worth! Thanks for making the effort to sing in these less-than-ideal ways.

Our hearts continue to grieve the sudden loss of our long-time friend and volunteer North Campus orchestra conductor, Jeremy Kolwinka. Jeremy was the volunteer partner and friend that every worship leader dreams of—servant-hearted, manifestly accomplished, unreservedly happy, deeply caring, and Christlike in humility. Jeremy the man and Jeremy the musician impacted the lives of thousands. He is, and will continue to be, deeply missed. Thank you, Bethlehem, for the ongoing ways in which you care for Jeremy's wife, Joan, and their children, Owen and Erin. Two weeks after the death of Jeremy Kolwinka, the North Campus orchestra was scheduled to play in our Sunday services. As a prelude piece, Jeremy had chosen to conduct an arrangement of the hymn "My Jesus I Love Thee," the final verse of which begins:

*In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright.
I'll sing with a glittering crown upon my brow ...*

Such is Jeremy's unending experience of delight in the presence of the Savior he loved, worshiped, and served.

I have had the immense privilege of partnering with North Campus deacons David & Jenny Fuller and Laurie Walmsley to advance a passionate pursuit of the Lord in prayer at the North Campus. God is creating a satisfying hunger for himself through prayer, and these "prayer deacons" have listened to the Lord and led us well in classes, prayer ministry, and prayer gatherings large and small.

Personally, Liz and I will celebrate 38 years of marriage in February 2021. Milestone and miracle! God's kindness shines through Liz's love and life in innumerable ways. Our fourth child, Anders, will graduate from Irondale High School in May. Our other three children—Anika, Erik, and Mariana—are married. Two live out of state; one has children. In these things we rejoice and give daily thanks to the Lord. As a family, we marked and mourned the homegoing of my mother, Virginia Holst, on December 19, 2020. Thank you to all of you who reached out with sincere expressions of condolence. We received every one of them as love from God refracted through the lenses of your lives.

The year 2020 will be remembered for many things. May we remember and revel in the kindness of the Lord for his goodness to us despite difficulty and distress.

Reveling with you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Holst".

Dan Holst
Pastor for Worship, North

Sam Crabtree

NORTH SMALL GROUPS & ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

... *Called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.*—1 Corinthians 1:2

Activities

As with other ministries, many events were canceled on account of government restrictions this year, including Men's Breakfasts, the Small Group Leader Appreciation Dinner, funerals, and weddings. Nevertheless, the Church moves forward.

Highlighted Ministry

- Held three orientations for new leaders of small groups
- Hosted four Small Group Leader training meetings
- Produced *LAMBgram* (seven editions), a newsletter for small group leaders
- Conducted a Small Group Connect event (a “non-luncheon” this year), aiming to match North Campus members with small groups
- Supervised or taught three Membership & Baptism classes
- Taught four sessions of the Abundant Grace Sunday School class
- Mentored seminary student Nathan Mudd—Nathan is now teaching in the Abundant Grace class—and two other men
- Engaged in four DAWGs (Days Alone With God)
- Preached the funeral for Wally Szszech
- Participated in the March for Life at the Capitol with North Campus folks
- Represented Bethlehem at the inaugural service of Emmaus Church (church plant)
- Served as chairman of Bethlehem College & Seminary Board of Trustees. This year was a challenging one that included a transition to online instruction, presidential transition planning (ongoing), and staffing transitions. Yet, the school has the highest enrollment ever, with solid donor support.
- Note: For the first time in four decades of pastoral ministry, I did not preside at any weddings. On account of governmental restrictions, many weddings involved only immediate family members. Vicki and I attended a couple weddings.

Routine Elder Opportunities

- Weekly Sunday pre-service prayer meetings, many conducted by Zoom. The service time changes and transition to the prayer deacons' Sunday morning prayer gatherings concluded the pre-service prayer meetings for a season.
- Baptisms
- Welcomes
- Pulpit prayers
- Membership/baptism interviews
- Quarterly Strategy Meetings
- Getting Acquainted With Bethlehem class presentations
- Monthly contact of an assigned cadre of members

Speaking Venues

- “Tabletalks” for Bethlehem College & Seminary
- Bethlehem North Campus Sunday sermons
- Family Life Radio
- Christine Chappell podcast and Matt Tully podcast
- Wednesday Connections at Long Lake Park

What God Has Done (Fruitfulness)

Spiritual fruit can be hard to measure. Here is some unsolicited anecdotal evidence from the past year.

“Thank you for your steady, faithful commitment to our big God, to the beauty and glory of Jesus, to Christ's bride and her maturity, to marriages and families, to gospelizing the lost and the believing, to fighting for justice—especially God's right to our worship, to pure Christian harmony around Christ that transcends all cultures and colors, and to loving my own family and the hundreds of other families at Bethlehem.” (10/26/2020)

“Your notes of encouragement will never make me weary—they truly spur me on to good works and a deeper love for our Lord.” (12/2020)

“Words cannot express my gratitude for your time helping me through leadership issues. Thanks for so many years of faithfulness at Bethlehem.” (pastor of a church in another state)

“I wanted to express my sincerest gratitude for your pastoral care and shepherding. It was a pivotal time in my walk with the Lord, and he did a lot of heart transformational work by his grace and through the Holy Spirit during that time and beyond. I’m so grateful to be a sheep in Bethlehem’s flock and know that the pastors all desire the flock to know, trust, and cherish the Great Shepherd most of all.” (9/9/20)

“You are a very special man of God, and I thank God for you and how he used you to mentor us, uphold and strengthen us through your prayers.” (10/2020)

“I am thankful that you are my pastor. You are funny and you always take time to talk to me.” (11-year-old, 10/2020)

“Thank you for your excellent leadership of the Board of Trustees yesterday and today. You focused, inspired, and empowered us to make changes that contribute to greater delivery of value to the people that the school was created to serve.” (9/18/2020)

“Thank you for your message last night. You have an incredibly rare gift to say profound things that are meaningful to mature believers and understandable to young children—in few and powerful words. It is always a joy when you teach and pray.” (6/18/20)

“A couple weeks ago you didn’t just say ‘hi;’ you took the time to ask how I really was. You listened and specifically prayed for those ‘boulders’ and spoke truth. Thank you for modeling ‘side by side’ living within our church ... that changes the culture of our church. Thank you for doing that and for encouraging my heart and mind that day and now.” (2/2020)

“For all the cards you’ve written, for the depth of love felt by so many people, for the words of affirmation towards me and my loved ones, for the humor that lightens heavy moments, for the good you bring to diversity in [gatherings], for the willingness to take charge or serve silently, for carrying burdens alone or vulnerably sharing your personal hurts, for shepherding, caring, and ‘friending,’ I just wanted to say thank you.” (1/3/2020)

Hopes for Next 12 Months

- More holiness, Christlikeness
- More North Campus small group leaders, more small groups, and more members participating in them
- Clarified adult discipleship and recruitment of capable teachers
- Healthy transition to new administration at Bethlehem College & Seminary

Prayer Requests

- Wisdom and love
- Enabling grace for Vicki
- Recuperating shoulder

Personal

- Relocated our residence from urban Minneapolis to Blaine
- Shoulder surgery, punctured and collapsed lung followed by surgery and hospital stay—grateful for seven decades of breathing
- Wrote a daily note to Vicki
- Journalled 378 pages of biblical reflections
- Led a small group, co-hosted by Vicki



Sam Crabtree
Pastor for Small Groups, North

Brian Liechty

NORTH CARE & COUNSELING

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.—2 Corinthians 6:8–10

In the passage above, Paul is giving a defense of his apostolic ministry to the Corinthians. He's helping them see that he has remained faithful to his calling and conducted his ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the evidences he provides is that he is "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." In other words, though he grieves the challenging circumstances, opposition, and suffering he has faced, he continues to find joy in God through Christ.

In many ways, I think this is something that each of us can relate to. After all, 2020 has been a hard year. Whether indirectly or directly, we've all been impacted by a global pandemic, racial unrest, and political tension. And yet, in spite of such challenging circumstances, opposition, and suffering, we too can find joy in God through Christ. So what has this looked like for Care & Counseling here at the North Campus? How have things been hard and yet good? How have we been "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"?

Counseling One Another Initiative

We launched a "Counseling One Another" initiative at the North Campus in Fall 2019. As part of that initiative, 48 of our adult small groups began working through a study called *Side by Side* by Ed Welch. By God's grace, most of those groups were able to finish the study before the pandemic shut down occurred.

In fact, as small group leaders gathered in early March, it was encouraging to hear various testimonies of how God used this particular study. One leader shared, "Our group just started, and this was the perfect material to begin with." Another leader shared, "We've been meeting for years, but this study helped us to go deeper with one another than we ever have." Praise God that he used this study to help our church develop more meaningful relationships and lovingly counsel one another from God's word.

In addition to the *Side by Side* study, we also led three Counseling One Another seminars (September 2019, November 2019, and February 2020). By God's grace, each seminar reached capacity with 128 registrants as we gathered for a time of teaching, small group discussion, and personal application. To this day, we continue to hear how God used these seminars to equip people to personally minister his word.

Sadly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to complete the final two seminars scheduled in March and April, addressing mental health struggles and sexual brokenness. However, as we turn the corner to 2021, we are hopeful that we might be able to host these seminars in the future.

North Counseling Team

In 2020, we continued to see a significant need for formal counseling. With health concerns, job loss, and the ongoing uncertainty of living in a pandemic, many struggled with isolation, anxiety, and depression. Thankfully, our team of lay counselors were able to shift from in-person sessions to online Zoom counseling as needed and we were able to provide counseling to more than 50 individuals and couples.

Among those who received help was a woman I will call Dorothy, who for many years struggled with an eating disorder and deep-rooted legalism. In time, the gospel began to take more root in her life, and she started to grasp God's forgiveness, love, and grace for her. The week she concluded counseling she sent me a note sharing about her experience and how much her counselor helped her to turn to Jesus for help and hope. She shared that many things had changed in her life, but perhaps the most significant change was her view of God. Overflowing with joy, Dorothy said, "I didn't know God was so much better than I imagined." We praise God for the opportunity to minister to Dorothy and to many others.

Marriages in Crisis

Over the past year, we continued to minister to marriages in crisis. Whether couples were facing adultery, sudden loss, or domestic abuse, we were able to come alongside these struggling marriages through a team approach involving our *Care Coordinator for Crisis Care, North*, Kirsten Christianson, various counselors, elders, and others. Though these situations were some of the most challenging and things didn't always end as we hoped, we were grateful that God helped these teams to expose darkness, provide loving accountability, and speak the truth in love. One woman I'll call Terry, who had faced significant emotional and verbal abuse from her husband, shared with us in tears at the end of the process how grateful she was for our help. She remarked that in all of her years in the church she never experienced such tangible and practical care. She went on to share, "I wish I grew up in a church like this where the body of Christ rallied around people and loved them like you have loved me."

We praise God that though this year has been full of challenges and sorrows, nevertheless because of God's past and present work in Christ, there is much in which we rejoice!



Brian Liechty
Pastor for Care & Counseling, North

Vince Johnson

NORTH NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders.—Colossians 4:5

The verse above summarizes the heart of the “Gospel Befriending” effort these past two years at the North Campus. The Lord has continued to build this verbiage and vision as a real part of our culture. We truly want to influence those in our lives who are without Christ. May this vision and application continue to grow in 2021!

Team

My Neighborhood Outreach team includes Jacque Boldt, who assists me with administrative tasks but also practically helps lead the whole effort. Daniel Bouchoc serves as my ministry assistant, and he focuses on various projects alongside Jacque and me. I am indeed blessed to serve with these talented and fervent saints.

Personal

Kathy and I celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary in August. I am so thankful that God blessed me with this amazing partner in ministry back in 1985! This year I continued working toward a degree in biblical counseling from Westminster Theological Seminary with a class in apologetics. First Peter 3:15 captures the call to be ready to give a reason for our faith when asked. This class helped equip me for listening and learning about an unbeliever’s worldview so that I can more lovingly and effectively respond with the gospel. I’m hoping to incorporate some of this learning into a new course for our ongoing befriending efforts.

Welcome Team

The COVID-19 pandemic definitely affected our various welcome ministries serving on Sunday mornings. Many normal leaders and volunteers chose to follow services online, which meant we needed to do things differently. The Lord helped us to recruit new volunteers for a single door greeting system, use an innovative RSVP check-in process carried out by fewer ushers, and continue security, the Info Booth, and our Getting Acquainted With Bethlehem class. Dan Johnson gets a special mention as our acting coordinator for ushers, as he was willing to step in when things got tough.

Special Neighborhood Outreach Efforts

Ralph Reeder Food Shelf

When we first heard about the coronavirus, we asked the North Campus congregation to respond if they would be willing to help with various needs related to the virus. The response took my breath away. More than 100 people let us know they would be willing to help. We contacted these folks after the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf asked if we could run deliveries of food to community members who were unable to pick up their own. A small group of North Campus people now takes care of the weekly deliveries of food to people in the Mounds View school district.

This year, instead of the normal Thanksgiving Food Drive collection, we asked people to donate funds. North donated \$12,800 dollars for the food shelf! The director of Ralph Reeder was blown away by this gift.

ESL

Our English as a Second Language ministry, led by Chrissy Kline, used online tutoring to continue the blessing of language help and gospel outreach. Before COVID-19, about 100 students were being tutored. After the shutdown, about 50 students and tutors continued in weekly tutoring. One innovation was the use of topical classes online via Zoom on the American government, American slang, academic writing, and business English. Over the Christmas season, we gave a Christmas gift to each student, which included a copy of *Christmas Uncut*, which is a great evangelistic book linking Jesus’ birth to the gospel and the cross. A number of tutors went through this book with their students in the month of December. Two students that we know of became Christians in 2020. Praise God!

Most of the international students we work with are completely isolated and alone. The pandemic, the rioting in Minneapolis, and political tensions between the United States and their countries of origin have left many of students feeling unwelcome, frightened, and alone. In many cases, their tutor is one of their few friends in the U.S.—in some cases, their only friend. Students have been deeply touched by the care the tutors have shown by reaching out to them when most of the country is unaware they are here.

'Shield616'

The **Shield616 program** is an opportunity to support the local police department by pairing each officer with a support group from the North Campus for relationships and encouragement. Jon Hedger, a fourth-year Bethlehem Seminary student, invested his internship in helping us assess current needs in this ministry and begin the process of recruiting new support teams for officers who do not have one.

New Move-In Letter

Jacque Boldt researched and executed the sending of a quarterly note of welcome and invitation card to the recent move-ins located around the North Campus. We're eager to welcome our new neighbors and to provide our church details and worship service information.

May Jesus continue his great work of love for those in need of the gospel and compassionate ministry around the North Campus!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vince Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "J".

Vince Johnson
Pastor for Outreach, North

Pam Larson

NORTH WOMEN'S MINISTRY

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.—Colossians 1:17–18

We all know 2020 has been quite a year. But as in every season, Jesus is supreme and is holding everything—including us—all together.

Winter

Our North **Women's Bible Study** continued in Galatians, with a teaching team consisting of Jacque Boldt, Julia Dembeck, and me. Nearly 160 women participated in this Bible study. **MOMS** continued strong with 65 women and 91 children, led by Heather Haas and Kelly Vranjes.

I hosted a brunch for our **Titus 2 Mentors** in my home, and we experienced a sweet time of refreshment and encouragement. We praise God for this spiritual mothering ministry.

Plans for our **Spring Conference** fell apart due to the coronavirus pandemic. For many women, this was not the only disappointment. All of our lives changed due to stay-at-home mandates. But ministry continued, although it took on different forms, including online Zoom sessions. Events were canceled, yes. But our core priorities of ministry have remained strong and are pointing women to Jesus and the hope to be found only in him.

Spring/Summer

Throughout this season, we adapted to new ways of ministering. **Women's Bible Study** on Galatians concluded with multiple online options. In the summer, various groups met via Zoom or in backyards to discuss the 1 Peter sermon series. **MOMS** speakers recorded messages from home so they could be posted online. **Titus 2** mentors met via Zoom to pray and encourage each other, some reporting their groups have had better attendance via Zoom than previously in person.

Groups of women met via Zoom to pray, and our Facebook **North Women's Prayer Group** grew in numbers and in loving care for one another, lifting our sisters' needs before the throne of grace. The **North Women's Ministry Team** prepared for the Fall season of ministry, surveying our North women and brainstorming new options.

Fall

MOMS began this Fall with a new Monday evening option in addition to Tuesday mornings with more than 60 women attending. **Women in Missions** is transitioning to be campus-specific and has also pivoted to meeting online. A most wonderful benefit has resulted: We've been able to connect with global partners on the field and pray for them over Zoom!

Women's Bible Study on Colossians began in September. Abigail Dodds, Amy Katterson, and I provided teaching, and we offered many options for participation. Classes met in person at church, and we also had groups meeting online, one in-person home group, and many women studying along with us independently. Nearly 170 women participated, including our Mandarin-speaking sisters. (Thanks to Jin Zhang for translation.) Teaching messages were livestreamed on Facebook and posted to our new YouTube channel. Women were encouraged to trust Jesus in every season. Jesus keeps everything from falling apart! *He* is the controlling and unifying force in nature!

So in times of uncertainty and even despair, we can have hope and confidence that he hears us, is working *for* us and *in* us. Our King of kings is supreme over all.

Because he is sovereign, we can be filled with hope. There is *no one* like our God. *No one* like Jesus.

With joy in serving the North Campus,



Pam Larson
Minister for Women's Ministry, North

Aaron Rothermel

NORTH CHILDREN & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

“For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”—Jeremiah 29:10–11

The book of Jeremiah has been a consistent reflection for me this year. The events of Jeremiah’s day were bleak, far graver than what we face today, and yet God had a plan. God’s plan of redemption gives us hope. Far too often, Jeremiah 29:11 is used as a glib promise of prosperity, but that should not obscure the real hope it provides in seasons like the past year. God has plans for welfare and a future hope for all—in Christ. Unshakable hope, extending into eternity. Annual reports are testimonies of God’s faithfulness for posterity, to give glory to God and tell future generations what God has done.

God has been doing incredible things. He has sovereignly sustained our church through shutdowns, the fog of a pandemic, and the challenges and uncertainty of a staff transition. Tony Cooper served with faithfulness and excellence this past year, joyfully carrying out the interim role. God provided in gracious ways through Tony, and his contributions will not be forgotten.

Ministry During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This year, ministry began as normal through March 8, with church services transitioning to online exclusively on March 15. Sunday School and Wednesday Connection elementary classes ended after Sunday, March 8, and Wednesday, March 11. When we could no longer meet in person for our Wednesday program, Tony Cooper partnered with Dan Holst to create an 8-week video series on the Beatitudes, from late March to mid-May. Parents were encouraged to watch these videos with their kids.

With the return to in-person gatherings, our Nursery has been consistently offered since June 7, without a single case of COVID-19 transmission due to this ministry! Carmen Tomaszewski has led her team well, including Karen Angelo, Claire Olson, Maggie Sporleder, and Ruth Lindstrom. These women have been joined by other key volunteers, who have served faithfully, even serving at more than one worship service when needed. We also held three Child Dedication Services (January, July, and October) for parents to dedicate children to the Lord.

Sunday Preschool and Wednesday Connection classes resumed this Fall! Claire Olson has been pulling double duty, leading Sunday and Wednesday Preschool teams. We are grateful for the joyful and servant-hearted leadership

that she demonstrates. We have stellar volunteers, who continue to serve with excellence in this strange season. I’m thankful for them all—too many to list by name—each of them is greatly appreciated.

Pastoral Transition

Tony Cooper served as our *Interim Director for Children & Family Discipleship, North*, for most of this year. Tony led the team with enthusiasm and joy, navigating ministry during stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19. Much of 2020 was spent with a Bethlehem search committee interviewing candidates to fill the pastoral role for Children & Family Discipleship. During the October Quarterly Strategy Meeting, the church called me to serve in this role, and I began on November 29.

Our family is thrilled by this transition. We have already been blessed by the staff, the elders, and the members we have met thus far. This move was a move toward “home” for us, and we are excited to reconnect with our roots, having grown up in the area. And grandparents are thrilled to have the grandchildren nearby.

Bethlehem’s North Campus has been blessed with an incredible team. I am thankful for the legacy that Gil McConnell left behind, and I’m thankful for the team he built. Each of the staff (Lulu, Carmen, Claire, Karen, Maggie, Ruth, and Maddy) is very gifted, and their faithfulness is evident. Lulu Robinson has been a *tremendous* help; she brings excellence to her work and is invaluable to the team, as I am learning the ropes. Carmen Tomaszewski brings seasoned wisdom and leadership to the Nursery Ministry. Claire Olson has a faithfulness that is evident in her work and the wearing of many hats. Maddy Pearson brings a contagious passion for the Disability Ministry that she has led this past year.

God has been faithful, and I am looking forward to what he has in store for the years to come!



Aaron Rothermel
Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship, North

North Campus Attendance in 2020

* Denotes the timeframe of Sept 2019–March 2020

CHILDREN'S CLASSES*			
Weekly Services	Age Group	Total Children	Total Volunteers
Sunday 9am	<i>Preschool–Grade 5</i>	161	31
Sunday 11am	<i>Preschool–Grade 5</i>	246	59
Wednesday Connection	<i>Preschool–Grade 5</i>	210	35
Weekly Service Totals:		617	125

NURSERIES			
Weekly Services	Age Group	Total Children	Total Volunteers
Sunday 9am	<i>Nurseries A–D</i>	103	196
Sunday 11am	<i>Nurseries A–D</i>	91	64
Wednesday Connection	<i>Nurseries A–D</i>	41	26
Weekly Service Totals:		235	286
Special Events: MOMS		101	32
Special Events: Women's Bible Studies		35	18

DISABILITY MINISTRIES
Regular 1:1 Buddies (Aides): 4
His Works Sunday school: 13 Students, 4 Volunteers
Children & youth with significant disabilities on our radar at the North Campus: 50
Respite Nights: 3, average of 3 participants, 2 families, 3 volunteers

OTHER EVENTS & MINISTRIES
Total number of babies born or adopted: 38
Parenting Through the Years Sunday school class: 16 families*
Child Dedication class: 11 families
Children Dedicated: 21
Family Discipleship Drive-Through Appreciation Event: 90 attendees
North Trail Life - Woodlands (Grades K–5): 41 participants and 9 leaders
North Trail Life - Navigators/Adventurers (Grades 6–12): 14 participants and 11 leaders

Ben Katterson

NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

"I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."—Isaiah 46:11

Surely we have seen the Lord perform his great purpose this year. Throughout difficulty worldwide and within our own ministries, we have seen the Lord continue to accomplish his own purposes. I bless his Name for his work among the North Campus Middle School students and their families.

Regular Programming

We continued our study of Genesis in the beginning of the year. On Sundays, we dug into each text by teaching both the breadth of the context and the depth of each section. On Wednesdays, we delved more deeply into the gospel application. Students wrestled through identity and worldview issues and were learning to walk with the Lord in the text. We held our final all-church Winter Retreat, focusing on union with Christ, where "what is ours is his, and what is his is ours." Before the pandemic landed in March, we were also, by God's grace, able to host a purity night event, which aimed to equip parents and students for a conversation together about their sexual purity.

Pandemic Adaptations

The pandemic does not get the last word. While all of our normal programming came to a screeching halt for a season when we could not gather, the Lord gave energy and joy and creativity to begin using untapped technologies with more acuity. I recorded short videos on various psalms, and we began to have virtual gatherings online. These connection points became essential, and many young people remarked on their joy in participating. These videos and gatherings continued throughout the summer.

Summer

It proved challenging to facilitate students' connecting and growing in relationships over the summer. However, the Lord was pleased to lead us in creative solutions. We were able to organize grade-specific bike rides and geocaching and to alter the usual 8th Grade Day Away. This event was adapted from a day-long trip to Duluth to a day-long hiking trip in Interstate Park. These solutions allowed us to maintain precautions related to the spread of COVID-19 and still partake in activities together as we studied the lives of Joseph in Genesis and Elijah in 2 Kings.

Fall Programming

In the seasonal transition to Fall ministries, the Lord provided more creative solutions. Youth began meeting on Sunday evenings as well as on Wednesday evenings in locations around the church that would allow for meeting almost exclusively in "pods" or small groups of students. On Sundays, we continued our three-year trek through the Bible, picking up in Exodus and ending in Judges. We adapted our Wednesday teaching using the Swedish Bible Method to focus on the sermon text that would be subsequently preached. Our Awaken Fall Retreat also became an animal of different stripes. The nights were spent at home, and the days were planned to allow for mask-wearing and activities in small groups.

The year 2020 unfolded with the slow but unstoppable march of the pandemic. It began in a small area of China and marched throughout the world. But this year will not go down in the annals of eternal history as the year of COVID-19. Many years before this, the coming of the good news of the gospel began in the small town of Bethlehem. It has spread and keeps spreading throughout the world like leaven, relentless and effectual. Even in our little corner of Minnesota, the Kingdom where Jesus Christ reigns is spreading in the hearts of young people. May they see Jesus and be saved to savor and spread the supremacy of Jesus for the joy of all peoples.



Ben Katterson
Director for Middle School & Family Discipleship, North

Jon Nowlin

NORTH YOUTH & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.—Psalm 145:17

Relentless kindness was the banner flying over 2020. In a challenging year that required creativity and faith, the Lord—in his kindness—orchestrated so many good things.

All-Church Winter Retreat: In Christ

On the weekend of January 31–February 2, students in Grades 6–12 and leaders from all three campuses joined together for the Youth Winter Retreat at Lake Geneva Christian Center in Alexandria, Minnesota. The Lord took us deep into the heart of the gospel as we focused on union with Christ. God gave grace to our speaker Nick Roen (*Ministerial Director for Adult Discipleship & Outreach, South*) to help students grasp that, “if we are ‘in Christ’ through faith, then what is ours is his and what is his is ours.” God blessed us with safety, tons of winter fun, and sweet times of connecting with him. This final all-church retreat was also an opportunity to celebrate God’s work through years of cross-campus collaboration and an opportunity to transition into a new season of campus-specific retreats in the future.

Art Equipping & Virtual Gallery

Well before the pandemic shutdown, in God’s kind providence, he stirred up an idea from volunteer leaders among us to host an art-equipping event with Chris Powers (the founder of *Full of Eyes*). On Saturday, March 7, Chris joined us from Ohio via Facetime to teach artistically inclined students how to look into the Scriptures, see Jesus, and then “sing” for joy through their chosen artistic medium. Following that gathering, more than 20 students signed up to create and share their art. Our intention was to display their work at the high school Easter outreach event in early April. Little did we know that these equipping seeds would bloom in the midst of a stay-at-home quarantine season, giving students a mission to display Jesus through an online gallery. God was at work stirring up worship, despite our isolation, both in the creation and the viewing of these Scripturally-saturated pieces.

Student Service Team Graces: Sunday Nights, A Welcome Event, and Sunday Together

Much of the Lord’s kindness to our group in 2020 flowed through the Student Service Team (SST). As gathering restrictions loosened in the summer, God was nudging one of our largest groups of students to apply for this team in order to be equipped and serve their fellow students. As Fall approached, our staff spent many hours discerning

how Fall programming would work within the scope of the governor’s orders. The Lord used a High School junior from the SST to suggest Sunday nights as a possible youth gathering time. This idea moved forward and became a time for biblical worldview instruction and one of the major connecting points for students in a restriction-filled year. The SST was also at work over the summer, seeking to plan a restriction-friendly, in-person event to welcome the group into a new school year. God led and empowered them to create an outdoor, team-based event with a powerful student testimony in September. In late December, after restrictions ramped up again, the SST met to share how they were dealing with COVID-19 challenges and to pray. This meeting birthed a student-initiated, student-led gathering called Sunday Together. The group’s efforts included competition, worship in song, a student panel, and prayer. It helped students focus on Jesus, the true source of hope, in the midst of challenging days.

Awaken: At Church

Our volunteer leaders and staff team were also used by God in phenomenal ways this year, especially at the Awaken retreat. This Fall retreat, traditionally hosted in local homes, pivoted to take place at the North Campus. Each group spent Friday evening and all day Saturday in small group pods. Each pod was given their own room at church, which small group leaders transformed into a homey meeting place with carloads of items—twinkle lights, bean bags, lamps, plants, and much more. The students enjoyed a new competition of Live Clue and bonfires in the parking lot as well as the traditional Awaken elements of worship, time together in the Scriptures, and prayer. God’s kindness was seen in many ways as he helped us connect and gave us impeccable health through the event.

It is a great encouragement to look back and see so many evidences of grace in this past year. Only the Lord knows the full extent of his work among our students at home and at church to stir up the obedience of faith for the spread of his fame. May his work and his purposes endure!



Jon Nowlin
Pastor for Youth & Family Discipleship, North

2020 North Campus Attendance Statistics

YOUTH MINISTRY				
Weekly Services (2019–20 School Year)	Average Participants	Total Participants	Average Volunteers*	Total Volunteers
Middle School Sunday School	69	102	17	26
Sr High Sunday School	96	140	24	31
Total Sunday School	165	242	41	57
Middle School Wednesday Connection	61	92	13	15
Sr High Wednesday Connection	67	110	14	19
Total Wednesday Connection	128	202	27	34

**Not every classroom volunteer was accounted for. Numbers are most likely higher than reported.*

Other Events & Ministries Attendance Statistics
Middle & High School Winter Retreat (Jan 31–Feb 2): 288 students, 72 leaders (all-church)
8th Grade Day Away (Aug 3): 19 students, 4 leaders
Senior Day Away (Sept 12): 12 students, 4 leaders
Middle & High School Awaken Retreat (Oct 23–24, 2020): 147 students, 36 leaders

Dave Zuleger

SOUTH PREACHING & VISION

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Matthew 11:28

Unprecedented

The word *unprecedented* was used an unprecedented amount of times in 2020. Rightly so. As I look back on 2020, it is a year of being “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10) in strange and sweet ways. We know that our Sovereign Lord was on the throne, declaring the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and therefore we know he was pursuing us with goodness and mercy (Psalm 23:6) every day of 2020 in all its sorrows and joys.

We encountered myriad new realities this year. The pandemic and politics—and the policies of both—revealed deep things in the hearts of the people of God and refined us in fresh ways, even if it was painful. These changes weren’t only apparent in our trips to run errands and the way we went about spending time together—they became part of how we engaged in church life as well.

None of this was easy or normal. In the beginning of the pandemic, policies seemed to change hour to hour and then every few weeks after that. Yet, as the world around us shook, our God remained unshaken. As our routines of life slowed to a halt, the mission of God did not stop. As everything around us changed, our Lord remained the same yesterday, today, and forever. We leaned into these truths as we sought to continue to “spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.”

Unprecedented Flexibility & Love

I took a week off between Christmas and New Year’s, and as I took time to reflect on the past year of leading our staff and ministering with our elders, gratefulness to God filled my heart for the way our South staff and elders responded to the pandemic. The amount of flexibility, extra time planning, and love that was displayed for Christ makes me happy to be on this team.

- Our Operations Department, including Media and IT, and preachers and worship teams shifted quickly to facilitate livestream worship services to keep Bethlehem connected March–June.
- All sorts of online discussion groups, prayer groups, and connections with staff and elders took place as the pandemic wore on.

- Daily devotionals were offered by various pastors to love and lead people of all ages in these hard times.
- Phone calls were made through member and regular attendee lists to check in on people as we were separated.
- Elders checked in with their assigned households more than ever before.
- Wednesday Connection transitioned online with recorded segments of teaching and worship.
- Vacation Bible School transitioned online for our kids during the summer.
- We held additional outdoor, masked, and socially-distanced prayer meetings to stay connected to each other and to the Lord.
- Many people logged hours and hours of planning, fact-checking, considering, and shifting plans when South in-person services began again on June 21.
- Hours were spent on informative emails, registrations, seating assignments, and other preparations for South worship services to happen week after week.
- A nursery team was willing to dive in with us as soon as we opened back up in June.

For all involved, these days were stressful times as we figured out how to lead, care for, and equip the South Campus. Yet, I saw the ministry done with excellence, joy, and hope at every step. It wasn’t perfect, and there have been plenty of bumps along the way, but the effort that flowed from wells of love for God and his people was earnest and fruitful.

As we look forward to the new uncertainties of 2021, I’d like to list all of the South staff members and elders here for you to pray for daily as we continue to do our best to lead this church. I *love* this team:

Elders: Terry Kurschner, David Livingston, Phil Nelson, Bruce Power, Nick Roen, Chuck Steddom, Peter Thorpe, Daniel Viezbicke, Alan West, Dave Zuleger, Bill Zwicky

South Staff:

- Ashley Brown, *Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*
- Ethan Bruneau, *Coordinator for Media Ministries & Systems*
- Rachel Dyvig, *Lead Administrative Assistant*
- Erica Halmar, *Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*
- Nathan Metcalf, *Ministry Assistant for Middle School Discipleship*
- Joshua Oakley, *Coordinator for Children & Disability Ministries*
- Nick Roen, *Ministerial Director for Adult Discipleship & Outreach*
- Steve Rinde, *Coordinator for Facilities*
- Jolene Rossiter, *Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*
- Kim Schiller, *Coordinator for Kitchen Ministries*
- Carol Steddom, *Pianist & Worship Assistant*
- Chuck Steddom, *Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development*
- Stacy Thorpe, *Ministerial Coordinator for Care & Counseling*
- Daniel Viezbicke, *Pastor for Youth & Family Discipleship*
- Sarah Vogel, *Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*
- Dave Zuleger, *Pastor for Preaching & Vision*
- Emily Zwicky, *Administrative Assistant for Women & Children*

Unprecedented Service Among Each Other

One of the hardest parts of my role is that I often know some of the hardest struggles going on in our body. And one of the greatest joys of my role is that I often know some of the greatest acts of love that go on among our body.

We experienced many needs this year, some related to the COVID-19 pandemic and some not at all. It was a joy to see the people of God step up to love one another as a blood-bought family this year. Meals were made, needs were met, people were loved, finances were helped, and the gospel was displayed. It's a joy to be a pastor in a place where people long to serve one another in these ways.

One area of ministry I'd love to highlight along these lines is our Deacon Ministry. Our deacons are passionate to meet the practical needs of our people, and I've seen them organize and plan in really sweet and consistent ways. Here is a list of our deacons; would you continue to pray for them daily?

Deacons: Greg Gee, Mary Hendricks, Mary Horning, Jack Olwell, Marilyn Olwell, Bonnie Williams, Denny Williams

Unprecedented Changes to Our Structure and Worship

20/20 Vision

Toward the end of 2019, the elders proposed a vision for church life that we called the "20/20 Vision." This was a vision for campus-specific live preaching and campus-specific Quarterly Strategy Meetings.

In July 2020 (in the middle of a pandemic!), we voted on job description changes for Jason Meyer, Steven Lee, and myself, and transitioned each of us the role of *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* at our respective campus. The vote passed at a high percentage.

Fueled by Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5, these changes grew from a desire among the elders to keep a close watch on and carefully shepherd the flock among us. Over the course of several years, our ministries had become more and more campus-specific. Our strategy for care and discipleship had become campus-specific. Our outreach attempts were geared to our local communities. Therefore, it made sense for us, who were in close proximity and doing life together, to hear from our own *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* regularly and have "family meetings" where we could discuss and vote on our current membership matters, leadership, and other areas specific to our campus.

Personally, I have loved this new opportunity to preach week in and week out, and I am eager for South Campus Quarterly Strategy Meetings to take on their own flavor and family feel.

During this pandemic, it has been my great, joyful privilege to speak from the word of God to this dear South congregation from 1 Peter and the book of Acts. I love preaching not because of the position itself, but because I love studying God's word, I love God's people, and I love shepherding God's people through God's word. I trust in the sufficiency of his word to meet us where we are and shepherd all of us toward fuller devotion and commitment to King Jesus.

It's also been a joy to see other elders step into more teaching and preaching at the South Campus as we begin to own these areas of care for our people all the more. Would you pray for me regularly as I seek to study God's word and share wise, careful, loving, and bold exhortations and encouragements for our blood-bought South family? I want to be humble, courageous, and faithful.

Weekly Communion

Another significant change in 2020 was instituting **weekly Communion** at the South Campus. It has been sweet each week to take a moment to examine our hearts individually and corporately and then come to Jesus together to plead for fresh grace in this picture of the gospel. I look forward to it every week!

Fresh Faces and Fresh Graces

We have had a year with new staff and staff doing new things!

In June, Nick Roen transitioned to become our *Ministerial Director for Adult Discipleship & Outreach, South*. Nick is a “Swiss army knife” of ministry and a good friend. It has been a joy to watch him begin to thrive in his new role as he seeks ways to reach out to our neighborhoods, inspire evangelism and neighborly love, and partner with other ministries for the sake of the Name. He is doing good work and obviously leading us well in worship in partnership with Pastor Chuck.

Nick’s former position of *Lead Administrative Assistant, South*, is now filled by Rachel Dyvig. Rachel came on staff in the middle of the pandemic and has helped run our Sunday morning operation. She keeps me organized and helps me look ahead to what is coming up. She is a gift of grace to me and the whole South Campus and is exceeding every expectation in her role. We are very grateful for the fresh grace at the South Campus through her ministry.

At the close of 2020, Ruth Chavis finished a **fruitful ministry** at the South Campus. Ruth set up the Women’s Ministry to continue to thrive as she stepped away. And now from among us, God has provided Holly Nelson, a woman with 15 years of women’s leadership experience, to serve as the *Minister for Women’s Ministry, South*, in 2021. God has been good to us through Ruth, and we are expecting his fresh grace to us through Holly Nelson.

Looking Forward

My hope for the South Campus in 2021 is that we would be all-in with our commitment to our **Acts Ambition** together as a family. I want to see us finding rest in Jesus alone and committed to making disciples who love God with all their hearts and love their neighbors as themselves. May we be a people devoted to the Word, to prayer, and to care for each other and for the unbeliever, open to the Spirit’s work.

Yes, 2020 was unprecedented in many ways. But, what was so unbelievably familiar and predictable was God’s faithful new morning mercies and promise-keeping to his people because of the blood of Jesus. We are a blood-bought people—a family—and God has been faithful to keep us, work in us, and work through us.

I’ve sensed a growing expectation of evangelism and the presence and power of God among us as we’ve begun to preach through Acts. I am praying that God continues to fan that flame as we live lives of liturgy around King Jesus—breathing in the word of God and breathing out prayer—individually and together. There is one Name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). That Name is Jesus. He was faithful to us in 2020, and I am praying that we will be faithful in spreading that Name in 2021.

Leaning in and expecting more with you,



Dave Zuleger
Pastor for Preaching & Vision, South

Chuck Steddom

SOUTH AND DOWNTOWN WORSHIP & MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!—Psalm 99:1–3

Livestream Worship

This has been a year like no other in Worship Ministry. In March, as in-person worship services came to an abrupt halt, we began to broadcast our worship service through the means of the internet. Rather than three separate campus-specific services, we broadcast one service from the Downtown Campus, where our ability to capture and broadcast the service was the strongest. Each campus's worship team took their turn in a three-week rotation, both leading worship and preaching. This pattern of worship leadership continued until each campus began its own live worship services in June and July.

Many new COVID-19 pandemic regulations immediately affected our worship. In order to socially distance according to government standards, we were limited to 10 people on the platform each week. This meant that choirs and instrumental ensembles were not able to participate, and only a core instrumental team could be accommodated week to week—all this to limit the exposure of our people to the coronavirus.

For Holy Week services, we created a hybrid worship team with leaders, singers, and players from each of the campuses. This was done to share leadership resources and also to encourage the people of Bethlehem that we are one church. It was great to have the opportunity to worship with Dan Holst, our North Campus worship pastor, and Tyler Stitt, our Downtown Campus worship leader.

New Responsibilities

As of June 1, I was asked to give oversight and leadership for Worship Ministry at both South and Downtown campuses. The main goals of this role were to maintain the Worship Ministry at the South Campus, develop the Worship Ministry Downtown, provide all-church worship leadership when needed, and mentor and train René González (Downtown elder and worship apprentice), with the aim of René's assuming the full-time worship responsibilities Downtown within the next year or two. Although I have served on staff at both South and

Downtown campuses and am familiar with each, I am constantly reminded of the uniqueness of each of the campuses.

Taking on this new set of responsibilities would not be possible without my wife, Carol, who works as *Worship Assistant, South & Downtown* and schedules worship teams at both campuses, along with Nick Roen, René González, and Chyinghtawng Zau Naw, who lead worship when I am rotating between campuses. Lord willing, as COVID-19 restrictions ease, we will be able to develop choirs and instrumental music to enhance our corporate worship vision and values.

Ministry Development

In addition to my weekly work with CityJoy, I am working with our Downtown staff to develop a diaconal ministry that cares for our widows, widowers, and single-parent moms. We are assembling a structure with which to provide crisis care and ongoing maintenance care for our vulnerable widows. We want to help with both the spiritual and physical needs of this precious demographic of our people, firmly believing that to care for our widows and orphans is a biblical mandate for the church. Pray with us as we develop this vital area of ministry.

In the grace that Jesus supplies,



Chuck Steddom
*Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development,
South & Downtown*

Nick Roen

SOUTH ADULT DISCIPLESHIP & OUTREACH

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.—Psalm 16:11

I began my present role in adult discipleship and neighborhood outreach in June of this year. What a strange year to step into a new ministry. The essence of adult discipleship and neighborhood outreach involves interactions with people, and interactions with people were precisely the thing that 2020 made difficult. Nevertheless, the Lord proved his faithfulness. Even when our physical presence together proved impossible at times, this past year could not hinder our fellowship in the presence of the Lord.

Our small groups had to get creative with their meetings over the past nine months. In the time when gathering in homes became more difficult, gathering online over Zoom proved to be an adequate—though not equal—substitute. Yet during this time, it seemed that many of our small groups became the blood-bought family to one another that we speak of at the South Campus. Needs were met. Requests were prayed over. And although the small group ministry looked quite different, there were lots of requests to join a group! Many of our group members continued to discuss the weekly sermon together, and the truths of 1 Peter and Acts were driven deeper into their hearts. I am *deeply* grateful to God for our wonderful small group leaders.

When groups were able to meet in person, we started a men's group to go through the book *Sexual Sanity for Men*. Led by Phil Nelson and Gabe Castro, this band of brothers has taken seriously the call to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision to the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14). The group continues to meet and is well attended. We also hosted a men's breakfast event just before the strict gathering restrictions went into place, when we shared our vision for men's discipleship. It is so encouraging to see our men strive for holiness side by side until they meet Jesus face to face.

In the Fall, we restarted our Wednesday Connection teaching times (with appropriate safety protocols), with a series on “Loving Your Neighbor,” followed by a series on “Church Essentials.” “Loving Your Neighbor” was a wonderful opportunity to consider how to love our neighbors as ourselves and to care about our neighbors and our neighborhoods as Christ commands. Our “Church Essentials” series coincided with the beginning of our sermon series on the book of Acts. Since we see the birth of the church in Acts, we wanted to learn what a local church

is and how it should function. Both of these classes proved sweet reminders of the blessing it is to be a blood-bought family on a mission to love each other and the world.

We continued our strong relationships with outreach organizations in our community, such as Amnion Pregnancy Center, 360 Communities, and Arrive Ministries. In addition, when the school year resumed with much uncertainty regarding in-person and/or online schooling, we were able to send an encouraging letter to all of the principals of our South suburb public schools. We simply wanted them to know that we were praying for them and that we as a church care about the well-being of their students. Our prayer is that this simple letter might yield open doors to conversations and future ministry in a school system that needs the love of Christ.

For me, a personal outreach highlight was our Advent outreach with door hangers to share with neighbors. More than 200 door hangers printed with our Advent and Christmas Eve service times, church information, and Scripture verses were placed on doorknobs all over the South suburbs. It was so encouraging to see pictures and hear stories of our South folks spreading word of the incarnation of Christ into our broken world. On December 24, we were able to conclude our Christmas Eve service with a candle-lighting ceremony as we sang “Silent Night.” My prayer is that many who received those door hangers were able to tune into the livestream and see that picture of the light overcoming the darkness.

In all of these ways and countless others, God once again proved that even in the darkest of circumstances there is fullness of joy to be had at his right hand. As we march into 2021, we know not what the future holds. But we know that though many sorrows may last for the night, the joy of the Lord comes with the morning (Psalm 30:5).

It is a privilege to serve our South Campus family.



Nick Roen
*Ministerial Director for Adult Discipleship
and Outreach, South*

Stacy Thorpe

SOUTH CARE & COUNSELING

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.—2 Corinthians 1:3–4

I'm grateful for the opportunity to look back at all the ways God has worked this past year and to see his faithfulness despite it being such a difficult year.

Equipping

At the beginning of the year, Alan West and I led a Sunday School class through the curriculum from the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF) on "Uncovering Shame & Guilt." In this class, we explored the difference between guilt and shame and how Christ dealt with both of them on the cross. I also enjoyed presenting on this topic at a counseling class for Bethlehem College & Seminary in January.

This year, the South Campus became a partnering church with CCEF's School of Biblical Counseling. Our partnership agreement allows us to host their classes on site and offer the courses at a discounted rate. In the Fall semester, we offered our first class, "Dynamics of Biblical Change." This course is all about how God's word connects with our lives and how change happens. We had 11 students participate in the course, and it was exciting to see them further equipped for ministry to others.

This Spring, a group of people and I went through Ken Sande's gospel-centered training "Relational Wisdom 360." This course helped us grow in wisdom and skills as we seek to love God and love others.

Marriage Mentoring

We are in the second year of our marriage mentoring ministry, and I'm so grateful for all those involved. We currently have seven mentor couples meeting regularly with younger couples for the purpose of building relationships and encouragement in God-glorifying marriages. This is a ministry I would love to see grow with more mentor couples equipped to disciple younger married folks and those moving toward marriage.

Counseling

In the counseling ministry, we have seen God comfort the grieving and hurting, sustain those that are suffering, reconcile and restore relationships, and change hearts from sin to faith and love. It is such a joy and privilege to witness these things, and I am deeply encouraged to see the faith on display in these dear people. On behalf of all those counseling, we earnestly desire your prayers for wisdom and for God to continue to do the work that only he can do in people's lives.

I am full of gratitude for all the ways I see people at the South Campus seeking to care for one another and walk through hard things together. And at the same time, I pray for more of the Spirit's equipping to make the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:16).



Stacy Thorpe

Ministerial Coordinator for Care & Counseling, South

Ruth Chavis

SOUTH WOMEN'S MINISTRY

"See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."—Colossians 4:17

This is an emotional report to write this year, as it is my last one. I retired in December with the confirmation from the Lord that I have fulfilled the ministry that I received from him. God has been so very faithful to me, not only in the last four and a half years that I served in the role as *Director for Women's Ministry*, but in all of my nine and a half years on staff at Bethlehem Baptist Church.

God called me to this role to lead the South Campus Women's Ministry in the transition from a centrally-administered ministry across three campuses to a campus-specific ministry. God has been so faithful. He has built a strong foundation for ministry with the leadership of Bible studies, MOMS, Titus 2 mentors, the Tuesday "A.M." Women group, the Treasuring Christ Crafters group, and the women's ESL class. I am so grateful for these leaders—not only for their faithful leadership but also for their friendship, love, encouragement, and for how they reflect Jesus and love others. I know Jesus more because of these precious partners in ministry.

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought us this year, ministry to women has continued, because viruses do not stop God.

Bible Study

The Winter/Spring semester brought 45 women to study God's word in two studies: Genesis in the Jen Wilkin study and Exodus in the Precept study.

This summer we were able to offer an in-person and Zoom video study, "Anointed, Transformed, Redeemed: A Study of David."

During the years of 2019 and 2020, I led a group of women through the Charles Simeon Trust First Principles course. This Fall, we launched our first study with our own South Campus teaching team that rotates in preparing a lecture each week. We have adapted the Precept study of Ephesians for this class. Across the in-person Wednesday morning class, Wednesday morning Zoom group, and Monday evening in-person class, more than 50 women have been able to study God's word. Truly the highlight of my week!

I thank God for these sisters in Christ who partner with me on the teaching team: Beth Davitt, Eileen Kurschner, Martha Pohl, and Kristina Tuttle. I am grateful to continue to serve on this teaching team when our study resumes in February.

MOMS (Making Our Mothering Significant)

This year's theme comes from our sermon series on the book of Acts and the book of Ephesians, "Women of the Word—With the Spirit on the Move." The theme verse is Ephesians 3:16, "That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being."

This year's group is a small but special group of young mothers. I thank God for the consistent leadership of Angela Mellema and Kristi Redler.

Titus 2

The mentoring ministry has grown this year. I trained a few new mentors in August, and new groups were formed. Titus 2 remains a sweet ministry of older and younger women meeting in groups and walking through life together. Personally, in my Titus 2 group, I learn more from the young women than what I impart to them!

Mentors who served this past year are Jolie Amberson, Priscilla Amberson, Erin Carlson, Beth Davitt, Jean Deming, Darcy Enthoven, Celeste Glassel, Jewel Klugherz, Karin Livingston, Maria Nelson, Karen Power, Lynn Quam, Jolene Rossiter, and Evie Wykstra.

Groups

God has blessed the women at the South Campus with other opportunities for small group fellowship and growth in their relationship with their Lord.

- Tuesday "A.M." Women has been faithfully led by Laur Weisensel for many years. Laur also is my "Facebook administrative assistant" and is usually a step or two ahead of me!

- Treasuring Christ Crafters is a group that began a couple of years ago and is led by Pam Buckner. This group meets monthly for a variety of crafts and sewing projects, some of which include banners for the church and items that are needed for women coming out of abusive situations.
- ESL is a group of Russian women who meet before Bible study each week to grow in their understanding of English and Scripture. Jeanné Shadduck has faithfully led this group for years.

Events

In lieu of a Fall retreat, we had committed to hosting Nancy Guthrie’s “Biblical Theology Workshop” in September. Due to COVID-19, this has been postponed and rescheduled for September 24–25, 2021.

We had planned to have a Christmas Gathering with a theme from John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Unfortunately, the governor set new restrictions on social gatherings and food service in November, so we had to cancel this event.

Ministry Team

All the things I have written about in this report would not happen without the grace of God, the leaders named above, and these precious women who serve on my ministry team: Beth Davitt, Eileen Kurschner, Angela Mellema, Karen Power, Kristi Redler, Kristina Tuttle, and Emily Zwicky (my administrative assistant). Their wisdom, prayers, and partnership are very good gifts from the Lord.

Personal

As I reflect on the past nine years of ministry, I recall transitions, highlights, and heartaches—such is life. God proved himself faithful over and over again, and he has blessed me in so many ways. I have had the joy of working not only with the South Campus staff, but also with the staff at all three campuses and with the South Campus elders. Because I worked in different capacities over these years, I know everyone at the South Campus personally. What a gift this body of Christ has been to me!

I thank God for my husband, Bill, who has been my greatest support and encouragement. He is retiring this year as well. We plan to winter in Florida for a few weeks, and then we’ll see how the Lord leads us in this new season of life. God is good, and he has good things planned for us, one of which is to spend more time with our four adult sons and their families.

I would never have imagined that God would choose me to know him personally or to serve him in his Church in the ways I have. I am so grateful to him and for all of you who have made my time here such a joy.

God bless you,

Ruth Chavis

Ruth Chavis
Director for Women’s Ministry, South

Joshua Oakely

SOUTH CHILDREN & DISABILITY MINISTRIES

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God. ... The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.—Psalm 146:3–5, 10

As I reflect on this past year, it has been filled with many changes, canceled events, and inconveniences. However, as I have served the people at the South Campus, one thing has been my anchor in the midst of stay-at-home orders, various health precautions, civil unrest, national elections, and ever-changing guidelines affecting how we do ministry—the anchor of God’s sovereignty. A lot of things have changed or been canceled this year, but God has not changed, nor has he been canceled. Therefore, as the psalmist proclaims, blessed is he whose help and hope is in the Lord, who will reign forever. We are not in control, but we look to and put all our hope and trust in a God who is and always will be in control!

Sunday School

While our Sunday School classes look a little different this year, we continue to work our way through the Bible as we use The Gospel Project curriculum. Although we had to stop meeting in March, we were able to begin meeting again this Fall and have moved our classroom learning from Sunday mornings to Wednesday evenings, temporarily rebranding it as “Wednesday School.”

It has been such a blessing and joy to me to go through the Old Testament with the children and to see all of the pointers to the New Testament, when Jesus would come to accomplish our redemption and salvation and right our relationship with himself.

Family Devotions

In mid-March, our buildings closed due to stay-at-home orders and gathering restrictions. I had hoped to begin providing devotional content to families in the summer, but with Sunday School on pause, I started putting together a weekly video of myself to walk through *The Gospel Story Bible* with the children. I also encouraged parents to purchase *Long Story Short* by Marty Machowski, which complements *The Gospel Story Bible* and provides resources for parents.

My plan going forward is to continue doing these videos when we take a break from Sunday school over the summer months. My hope is that, while families often travel or are

not always able to be with us over the summer, this would be something that is useful for parents wherever their family might be.

Vacation Bible School

Of all the things we do with the children during the year, I think VBS is one of the most looked-forward-to events of the year. We get to spend a week together learning the great truths of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, have a great opportunity to invite our friends to church, and spend joy-filled times of worship and fun together.

This year, however, I feared that the ever-changing circumstances and guidelines would prevent us from having VBS. However, our God continued to show that with him all things are possible! Therefore, with the help of some amazing volunteers and a rockstar media team, we were able to film VBS, put together bags for the kids with gear and craft supplies, and broadcast it over the internet via live-stream. To my excitement and God’s glory, we had at least 84 children (including some of Bethlehem’s global partner children) participate in our summer VBS.

Disability Ministry

If the pandemic has taught me anything, it’s that when you are stuck at home and disconnected from others, it can feel very isolating and lonely. For many families affected by disability, in various ways their lives have felt disconnected even prior to a worldwide pandemic closing things down and limiting gatherings.

Therefore, when Joni & Friends of Minnesota asked if we wanted to partner with them to pilot “Christmas Baskets of Blessings” for families affected by disability, I said, “Yes, let’s do it!” I was amazed at the generosity of others who donated time, money, and items to not only fill the baskets but also to deliver them and care for the families receiving them. I am already considering ways we can make this a regular part of who we are as a church by not just seeing those in need but serving them in tangible ways as we seek to love one another as Christ first loved us.

Website

One of my long-term goals has been to have a dedicated website up and running for children's ministry at the South Campus. My hope is that it would be a convenient place for families to go to find all the information they might need related to what we are learning in Sunday school, registering for VBS, viewing past video lessons, and more. While it has taken a lot of time and effort by many, I am happy to report that, as of the end of September, it is live! If you haven't already checked it out, please do so. It can be found at childrensouth.bethlehem.church.

Closing

In our last Wednesday class before Christmas break, we learned about King David (1 Samuel 16-17).

- We learned that David was *chosen by God* because he was a man after God's own heart.
- We learned that God's king is *measured by the Lord's standard*, not the world's.
- We learned that God's king *trusts in the Lord's deliverance*.
- We learned that God's king *won* an improbable *victory for the Lord and his people*.

We then reflected that all that is true about David and what was accomplished ultimately had nothing to do with David and everything to do with the God he served.

Therefore, while I might have a part in seeing the discipling of the next generation here at the South Campus, ultimately it is not about anything I do but has everything to do with the God whom I serve. So would you join me in praying that God would be with me to keep me faithful and filled with his wisdom, as I continue to devote myself to him, in the hope that all the children at South Campus would come to know him as their King of kings and Lord of lords? Because the Lord will reign forever to all generations!



Joshua Oakley
Coordinator for Children & Disability Ministries, South

Daniel Viezbicke

SOUTH YOUTH & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."—John 9:35–39

Throughout the last year, Jesus continued to open eyes that students might believe in him. The year 2020 was, in many ways, *challenging*. Perhaps that's the understatement of this or any year for so many of us! But it served to set into stark contrast the varied grace of God at the South Campus. Whether in new professions of faith, baptisms, students joining the church as members, or limited (but still sweet) retreats and events, Jesus was glorified in this past year.

Tangible Graces

The tangible graces were numerous. The Winter Retreat in early 2020 was bittersweet; it marked the last time that the youth of Bethlehem's three campuses would be together for a retreat. But it was very sweet too: Nick Roen and Gabe Zepeda, both from South Campus, led the retreat in teaching and singing respectively, as we learned about the Christian's union with Christ.

During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, we met with mixed success online over Zoom and by other means. Throughout the summer, we played games and met in person with restrictions, and we ended the summer with an "Amazing Race" across the South metro. We focused on the expectation and coming of Jesus in the Gospel Foundations curriculum, both in person and on the South Campus YouTube page, and we connected in other informal ways. We also kicked off the school year with a one-day outdoor Fall Retreat, which was attended by more than 60 students and volunteers.

In the Fall, we said goodbye to Allison Steddom as she transitioned to the Downtown Campus for a new role with youth there, and we said farewell to Jonathan Schroeder as he pursued a new career serving his country. In their place, Nathan Metcalf came on staff to particularly serve Middle School students. We continue to look for a second hire to specifically serve young women and their families at the South Campus. Would you pray with us to that end, that the Lord's will would be done in a new hire?

Intangible Graces

We also experienced the intangible evidence of grace: Students growing in the understanding of God and his word, committing themselves to faithful prayer in the midst of the pandemic, thinking biblically about justice and mercy, and wrestling anew with the true claims of the Scriptures. We're so grateful to God for all the volunteers who served at various points throughout the year—many of whom have faithfully served for many years.

Would you pray that as we discover and return to rhythms of grace in 2021, the Lord would continue to do much work among us, that students and families at South Campus would grow in grace, and that we would boldly pray and boldly speak the Name of Jesus in our communities south of the river?



Daniel Viezbicke
Pastor for Youth & Family Discipleship, South

Keith Anderson

SENIOR ADULTS

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.—James 1:27

Listed below is what you should have expected the *Ministerial Coordinator for Senior Adult Ministries* (for all campuses) to have done last year and what actually happened in 2020:

- *Visit the hospitalized, shut-in, and sick senior members and regular attendees of Bethlehem and others as requested by staff or family.*
In March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to hospitals, senior residences, and even most church activities came to a screeching halt. In 2019, I was able to visit 46 individuals with multiple visits each. In 2020, I was able to visit two seniors, due to caution at hospitals and care facilities regarding the coronavirus. Home visits were held in seniors' driveways or front lawns, sitting in lawn chairs!
- *Coordinate monthly Senior Sojourners events.*
Sojourners met in January, hosting author and Global Partner Rachel Pieh Jones, and in February Helen Siegel, daughter of a Holocaust survivor, told of her and her mother's tragic but amazing experiences. The rest of the year's Sojourners meetings were canceled, preventing us from hearing Pati Kachel's presentation of Katharina von Bora Luther and many other special meetings.
- *Champion seniors in all aspects of church ministry.*
Having stepped off the elder council the year prior, I did not have that platform; however through weekly staff and pastoral meetings, seniors maintained a proper and constant presence before the staff.
- *Coordinate the annual Christmas cookie delivery.*
Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Christmas cookies couldn't get distributed, but in their place my wife, Mary, assembled bags of purchased goodies, which we then distributed at physically-distanced spaces.
- *Coordinate the annual Easter memorial flowers.*
Seventy-three members donated flowers in memory of their loved ones, and teams of volunteers from each campus were able to bless three senior facilities with Easter flowers for their residents to appreciate in their commons. Thank you to all who donated an Easter flower!
- *Plan, coordinate, and assist with funerals as requested.*
Celebrating the end of life was challenging in a pandemic, especially for the families and loved ones for the 18 who passed into glory this year. Several services were held. More memorial services will follow as COVID-19 restrictions loosen.
- *Process check requests for senior Sunday school donations.*
One area thankfully not impacted by this disease!
- *Serve as the contact person for requests for Bible study leaders in off-site senior facilities.*
Senior facilities are not currently allowing these types of gatherings.
- *Champion missions opportunities to seniors.*
As we like to say, "Jesus first, missions always." Our seniors' classes regularly host global partners in their classes online via Zoom. Classes also maintain contact with their supported global partners and encourage regular prayer support.
- *Attend weekly pastoral and staff meetings.*
Habitually attend remotely, currently being held online via Zoom.
- *Record above activities in the church database.*
This is a very time-consuming, yet important, task. This has not always been kept up to date as it should have.

Other Items to Note

Senior adult Sunday School classes continue to meet—albeit online via Zoom!

In 2020, two GriefShare groups provided support for people recovering from the loss of a loved one. These 13-week groups include a series of videos and discussions, supported by a very useful workbook. Those who have attended gave positive comments about this biblically-based grief tool. The second series of the year was totally conducted online on Zoom.

The White Cross women's group continues to sew blankets for new moms and to complete other projects. MaryAnn Burnes leads this ministry at the Downtown Campus twice monthly, September through June. Although they had to stop meeting in the Spring, due to the pandemic, they resumed in the Fall.

Those who attended the Bethlehem youth group in the 1960s continue to enjoy staying in contact. Our next 1960 Bethlehem Youth Group Reunion is scheduled for next summer on August 19, 2021.

As this report is being written, the first COVID-19 vaccines are being administered to Minnesota medical staff. Virtually everyone has been impacted by the 2020 pandemic. Seniors have been the most affected, with the largest percentage of deaths occurring in long-term nursing facilities. Our seniors have had to survive the separation, quarantining, and “social distancing” which

prevents attending church, social events, and family gatherings—most without the ability to “Zoom.” Like others, seniors need to be with others, and they have experienced loneliness being “locked in.” Please pray with me that God would end this pandemic soon and he would receive glory for its ending!

If you have stayed with me and read this annual report this far, you are unusual! If you are the first person (staff excluded) to tell me that you have read my report, I'll give you a \$5 bill. I will gladly give it to you, but I'm guessing it may stay in my pocket!



Keith Anderson
*Ministerial Coordinator for Senior Adult Ministries
(and Baby Boomers)*

Tom Steller

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

BETHLEHEM COLLEGE & SEMINARY

“... Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”—Matthew 28:20

This is my last annual report for Bethlehem Baptist Church. On August 1, 1980, Bethlehem started paying me for doing what I have loved doing for 40 years. On August 1, 2020, I transitioned from being a vocational pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church to being a global partner sent by this church that I love. I will continue serving Bethlehem as an elder and teaching at Bethlehem College & Seminary (1–2 courses a year in Minneapolis and 2–3 courses a year in Cameroon). For this next chapter of my life, I am serving as the *Director of Theological Education—Cameroon* with [Training Leaders International](#), which was birthed from Bethlehem more than a dozen years ago.

So, amid the pandemic and all the difficulties of 2020, God has given me a wonderful year as I experienced his provision and enjoyed his help as I encountered new ministry challenges.

By God’s amazing care, Bethlehem College & Seminary has continued teaching our cohort-based undergraduate and graduate courses in person in the classrooms, being helped out by Zoom, as needed. God has provided financially so the school could survive and thrive amid so much pandemic-inspired economic hardship in our country and around the world. Our founding president, Dr. Tim Tomlinson, is retiring after more than two decades of superlative leadership at both The Bethlehem Institute and Bethlehem College & Seminary. What an honor it has been to work side by side with Tim from the beginning and with the Spirit-empowered teaching and administrative staff that he has overseen. This staff is an amazing blend of veteran and younger scholars and of gifted administrators. To watch Rick Segal continue to inspire a small but growing army of generous donors, Jason Abell be the glue that holds everything administrative together, and Dr. Brian Tabb masterfully shape the academic maturing of the school, has filled me

with confidence as I transitioned from the President’s Cabinet to focus my attention on helping to shape our emerging [extension site in Yaoundé](#), Cameroon, under the leadership of Dr. Dieudonné Tamfu (TBI class of 2010). In the midst of all this, I marvel that Dr. Chris Bruno (TBI graduate of 2004 and current faculty member) has been led to begin establishing an [extension site in Hawaii](#) to bring this educational resource to regions of the Pacific.

With Dr. Tomlinson announcing his retirement, much of 2020 included in its focus a search for our next president. When it was announced that Dr. Joe Rigney was the choice of the search committee, I was sitting in my little room in Cameroon where I had been teaching for most of the Fall semester. Amid an abundance of riches in potential candidates—several of whom were Bethlehem College & Seminary graduates, all of whom I would have been delighted with—I rejoiced that Joe was the choice. I remember the first time I met Joe—it was at a small theology conference we held at Bethlehem. His articulate questions and mature interactions made me wonder what God had for his future. Shortly after our first encounter, we went to a baseball game together, where I was surprised to find out that he was the grandson of Bill Rigney, the Twins’ manager in the early 70s. But as you can see the [school’s announcement](#), there was much more behind this decision than his connection with my favorite baseball team. I’m thrilled that Joe has been led to step into Tim’s giant shoes and lead our school, hopefully for decades to come.

Finally, let me share some 2020 statistics from the college & seminary that are compiled by my ministry partner of 34 years, Connie Kopischke.

During the Year 2020

Bethlehem College & Seminary saw 49 students earn a degree:

- Associate of Arts: 5
- Bachelor of Arts: 12
- Bachelor of Theology: 4
- Master of Arts in Exegesis & Theology: 16
- Master of Divinity: 12

We've had 296 individual students (including special students), who have taken classes for academic credit during 2020 (at all campuses):

- Yaoundé, Cameroon: 9
- Memphis, Tennessee: 17
- Minneapolis: 270

Our student body in Minneapolis includes students from 37 states and 12 international students from Canada, El Salvador, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Singapore, and Vietnam.

With gratitude for the past and joyful anticipation for the future,



Tom Steller
Bethlehem Global Partner

Paul Poteat

MINISTRY TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”—John 15:16

It’s hard to take a moment to put 2020 into words, let alone under 1,000 of them! At the beginning of this year, I began talking with Reid Jilek, one of the Campus Outreach staff, and Pastor Ken Currie about a new role that I was offered to serve within Campus Outreach on a national level. This year seemed like a good time to transition the leadership of Campus Outreach at Bethlehem to Reid, who has been on staff for 11 years and truly has the heart of a Campus Outreach staff leader. As these discussions and plans were progressing, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and all the clarity and forward movement took a befuddled and necessary break. However, even with the unprecedented realities affecting our world, city, and campuses, it still made sense for Reid to step in as the *Director of Campus Outreach Minneapolis* this summer (see their *2020 Annual Report* at cominneapolis.org). That meant the Fall was a season of transitioning out of a ministry and team that I have been a part of for 17 years! I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you at Bethlehem for the incredible support, prayer, and encouragement that Campus Outreach and I have received since we arrived in 2003. As I begin to work with other churches in the United States, it is clear that Bethlehem is unique in its partnership with Campus Outreach.

My new role will have me serving with Campus Outreach in the Midwest. I will help provide support, training, and oversight for eight Campus Outreach directors, who oversee ministries in Lexington, Kentucky; Louisville, Kentucky; Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis; St. Louis; Peoria, Illinois; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and, of course, Minneapolis. What is even more exciting is that my wife, Samantha, will be working with me to help shepherd and develop the women on staff in each of these CO regions. We both feel prepared for this step, thanks to our time ministering on the campus here in Minneapolis as well as our time serving at Bethlehem. In this transition, we plan to stay in our house, stay at Bethlehem, and I will (thanks to your recent vote) continue to serve as an elder at the Downtown Campus.

Our girls are doing well; Maddux is 12 and Sophie is 10. Attending school online during the pandemic has been challenging for both of them. It’s been humorous to see them go from a time when they asked God that they’d “be sick” so they could miss school to a time of asking God for everyone to be healthy so they could attend school! The things we take for granted, right?

Lastly, I chose John 15:16 as a verse for this update as it is a reflection of both the past and the future for my life and ministry. In 2003, eight Southerners came to Minneapolis to begin Campus Outreach, asking God to bear much fruit and for that fruit to remain. Now, in 2020, the team is composed of 30 Midwesterners, the original Southerners are gone, and hundreds of students’ lives have been impacted for Christ and for deep joy in God. Now, as Samm and I transition to a new role within Campus Outreach, we are asking God that we would bear much fruit, as there are 41 churches throughout the world who are asking for a Campus Outreach ministry (much like Bethlehem did back in 2001). However, we are also hoping that the fruit would remain, grow, mature, and hold fast to Christ, who is the Head, so that the world would see the life-changing reality of the gospel. Blessings to you and thank you so much, Bethlehem!



Paul Poteat
Elder; Director for Campus Outreach (2020)

Steve Walmsley

CONTRIBUTIONS

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.—Psalm 62:5–8

The year 2020 presented us with significant personal and societal challenges. In the face of them all, our Lord and Savior has been our leader, our comfort giver, and our unshakable refuge. Thank you for being a fellow laborer with Bethlehem through the grace our Lord Jesus Christ has given. Thank you for your prayers, financial gifts, and other practical offerings from what God has supplied to you that allowed Bethlehem to minister to many through these challenges!

Contributions toward Bethlehem's "Fill These Cities: 25 x '25" general operating budget fund in 2020 totaled \$9,333,431. This total is a 9% decrease from 2019 budget contributions that totaled \$10,300,316. While we saw a decrease in giving, we also endured the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected us all in many ways. Most notably, 2020 included 12 Sundays in the Spring with no in-person worship services, followed by five Sundays with some campuses holding limited-capacity services and 25 Sundays with all campuses holding limited-capacity services. We are so thankful to the Lord for his gifts of skill and technical ability to offer livestreamed services throughout these 42 Sundays. In addition to budget fund giving in 2020, special designated gifts of \$143,636 were given toward the "Funding the Filling" existing mortgage reduction fund and were applied against our existing mortgage balance, along with our 7.5% budgeted mortgage payments. The ongoing "Fill These Cities: 25 x '25" initiative through 2025 means that our general budget fund giving is synonymous with and continues to include funding for the "25 x '25" initiatives.

The livestream-only services and limited seating at many live services meant that utilization of online giving grew dramatically in 2020, with 65% of all contributions being made through our online giving portal via Bethlehem's website, Bethlehem's mobile app, and text-giving options. Setting up recurring giving schedules via the online portal is a helpful way for donors to remove the weekly or monthly check-writing process from their schedule when they anticipate a regular, recurring amount to be given. Online donors are also encouraged to contribute via their bank account (ACH) rather than credit card to assist in reducing Bethlehem's electronic transaction fees and avoid potentially incurring personal financing charges against their credit card's balance.

In 2020, a total of 3,710 families, individuals, and organizations gave recorded contributions to the general budget, short-term ministry programs, Campus Outreach, and other ministries of the church. This number includes 2,192 donors from 1,985 families contributing to the general budget fund.

Remembering God's personal provision in 2020, join us in praying for him to bless Bethlehem's ministries this coming year, and consider how you can take part financially to serve others near and far, for the glory of his great Name.



Steve Walmsley
Financial Secretary

Tim Brinkmann

CHURCH TREASURER: BUDGET, INCOME & EXPENSES

They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.—2 Corinthians 8:5

The year 2020 was a year of financial instability for Bethlehem, mainly due to the global pandemic. Both giving and spending were below last year. Total giving in 2020 was \$9,333K. The budget was set at \$10,400K, but actual spending was \$9,952K, as the staff managed expenses to be below budget.

2020 Highlights

- Contributions were down \$968K (9.4%) from 2019.
 - » Nearly \$1.5M was given in December, consistent with prior years.
 - » More than \$1.1M (12% of our total) was given in the second half of the month (December 14–31).
- Bethlehem received a \$1,338K grant/forgivable loan under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which enabled us to keep our staff fully employed and engaged in ministry and also to end the year with a surplus.
- Net spending was down \$235K (2.3%).
- At year-end, outstanding external debt was \$8,154K.
- Our line of credit was at zero as of December 31, 2020.
- Total cash for all funds was \$3,203K as of December 31, 2020.

In 2020, the regional CPA firm Clifton Larson Allen commenced an audit of our 2019 financial statements. Their audit report will be made available when completed. Additional unaudited financial detail for 2020 is provided on the following pages.

If you have any questions related to the finances, please contact the church office, and we will be happy to answer them.

Tim Brinkmann
Church Treasurer

Bethlehem Baptist Church

2020 Operating Fund (unaudited)

	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE
General Contributions	9,333,431	10,400,000	(1,066,569)
Worship	348,285	397,641	49,356
Vision & Preaching	638,637	676,763	38,126
Media	486,986	384,867	(102,119)
Upreach	1,473,907	1,459,271	(14,636)
Family Discipleship	1,029	3,000	1,971
Nursery	80,594	129,702	49,108
Children	340,410	385,475	45,065
Middle School	209,673	249,962	40,289
High School	269,808	292,636	22,828
Disability	41,326	58,971	17,645
Library	22,333	24,893	2,560
Small Groups	306,896	306,979	83
Men	(12)	2,300	2,312
Women	163,372	214,365	50,993
Seniors	43,417	47,269	3,852
Counseling	227,672	263,300	35,628
Inreach	1,706,516	1,978,852	272,336
Leadership Development	493,710	490,803	(2,907)
Outreach Support	453,186	454,650	1,464
Neighborhood Outreach	292,416	323,567	31,151
Hispanic Outreach	4,676	5,914	1,238
Church Planting	361,406	381,211	19,805
Ministry Mobilization	135,605	185,404	49,799
Global Outreach	1,890,373	1,972,404	82,031
Outreach	3,631,372	3,813,953	182,581
General Administration	149,667	140,422	(9,245)
Office	106,422	118,299	11,877
Human Resources	86,048	119,667	33,619
Accounting	141,686	177,975	36,289
Giving	142,508	123,800	(18,708)
Communications	218,840	256,587	37,747
Information Technology	276,249	265,982	(10,267)
Building & Property	1,926,530	1,889,118	(37,412)
Kitchen	40,620	44,074	3,454
Four-plex	(1,025)	0	1,025
Undeveloped Property	52,989	12,000	(40,989)
Support	3,140,533	3,147,924	7,392
Net Expenditures	9,952,328	10,400,000	447,672
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(618,896)	0	(618,896)

Bethlehem Baptist Church

Net Assets/Cash/Loans (unaudited)

FUND	BEGINNING NET ASSETS	2020 SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	ENDING NET ASSETS
Cash			
Operating Fund	703,135	564,511	1,267,646
Helping Hand	177,696	35,928	213,624
Campus Outreach	384,880	288,169	673,049
STMM Projects	219,341	44,364	263,705
Designated Projects/Other	359,631	425,142	784,773
Total Cash	1,844,683	1,358,114	3,202,797
Fixed Assets	24,928,110	(1,066,811)	23,861,299
Current Assets/(Liabilities)	37,060	(283,932)	(246,872)
External Debt			
Mortgages	8,562,171	(548,119)	8,014,052
BGC Loan: Mesken Property	158,736	(19,095)	139,641
Line of Credit	-	-	-
Total External Debt	8,720,907	(567,214)	8,153,693
Net Assets	18,088,946	574,585	18,663,531

Bobby Ratliff

CHURCH BUSINESS RECORD

*In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.
And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.—Hebrews 8:13*

The congregation of Bethlehem Baptist Church held six business meetings in 2020:

- January 26, Quarterly Strategy Meeting
- April 26, Quarterly Strategy Meeting
- July 26, Quarterly Strategy Meeting
- September 13, Special Congregational Meeting
- October 18, Quarterly Strategy Meeting
- December 13, Annual Meeting

The outcomes of these meetings are summarized in the topics below.

Officers, Elders, Deacons, and Ministers

- On January 26, Bethlehem called René González (Downtown Campus) and Nick Roen (South Campus) as non-staff elders.
- On July 26, the congregation approved the “20/20 Vision” pastoral staff structure and the following title and job description updates: Pastor Jason Meyer’s role was changed to *Pastor for Preaching & Vision, Downtown* (previously *Pastor for Preaching & Vision*). Pastor Steven Lee’s role was changed to *Pastor for Preaching & Vision, North* (previously *Lead Pastor, North*). Pastor Dave Zuleger’s role was changed to *Pastor for Preaching & Vision, South* (previously *Lead Pastor, South*). Pastor Ken Currie’s role was changed to *Pastor for Strategic Implementation* (previously *Pastor for Downtown and Strategic Implementation*).
- On October 18, Bethlehem called Aaron Rothermel as *Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship, North*. In addition, Bethlehem called Tom Steller as a non-staff elder. The congregation approved a position change for Pastor Brad Nelson to serve as *Pastor for Global Outreach* (previously *Pastor for Global Outreach Short-Term Ministry Mobilization*).
- On December 13, Bethlehem called Brian Hanson and Jim Jordan as non-staff elders, North Campus. In addition, Bethlehem called Tim Brinkmann and Steve Walmsley as deacons, all-church. The following staff elders were reaffirmed: Sam Crabtree (North), Ken Currie (All-Church), Jon Grano (All-Church), Brian Liechty (North), Jason Meyer (Downtown), Brad Nelson (All-Church), Jon Nowlin (North), Jared Wass (Downtown), Dave Zuleger (South). The following non-staff elders were reaffirmed: Darin Brink (Downtown), Tom Dodds (North), Don Hoffert (Downtown), James Lecheler (Downtown), Paul Poteat (Downtown), Bruce Power (South), Rod Takata (Downtown). The following deacons were reaffirmed: Julie Barmore (North), Sarah Bowe (North), Scott Brueske (All-Church), Liz Stein (North). The following administrative positions were elected for a one-year term: Steve Walmsley as *Financial Secretary*, Tim Brinkmann as *Treasurer*, Bobby Ratliff as *Church Clerk*.

Constitution and Bylaws Revisions

- On October 18, the congregation approved an amendment to the [bylaws](#) to allow electronic meetings for congregational business meetings. The item now appears under Bylaws Article V Meetings Section 2 For Business. See [Proposed Bethlehem Amendment for future Electronic Meetings](#) for more details.
- On December 13, the congregation approved an amendment to the [constitution](#) to formally establish “campuses” and allow for campus-specific business meetings. The changes can be seen in Article 4, Leadership and Organization. In addition, the congregation approved an amendment to the bylaws for the same purpose. The changes can be seen in Article 2, Church Government and Article 5, Meetings. Both amendments can be seen in the [Proposed Campus Amendment](#).

Budget

On January 26, Bethlehem approved the elder-recommended 2020 operating budget of \$10,400,000

Mortgage Updates

Bethlehem Mortgage for North Campus

- \$1.47M principal balance as of September 30, 2020
- Reduced by \$296K YTD

Bethlehem Mortgage for South Campus

- \$6.68M principal balance as of September 30, 2020
- Reduced by \$119K YTD

Church Membership

At the end of 2020, the membership roll stood at 2,536. Over the year, church action removed 317 members and welcomed 150 new members.

Deaths of Members in 2019

- Harold Augustine
- Marilyn Bohne
- Robert Burge
- Don Klatke
- Jeremy Kolwinska
- Lynda Oatley
- Marlin Olson

Bobby Ratliff
Church Clerk