



LMC

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

Meeting the Moment

FROM PASTOR LINDSAY

2020 was many things, but for a lot of us, it set our priorities straight. If you cook much, you know that to “reduce a sauce,” you turn down the heat and let it slowly bubble and simmer. It calls for a little patience as you wait for the sauce to thicken and the flavor to intensify and become richer. Last year, we turned down the heat on our ministry and faithfully tended to it while it bubbled and simmered.

As we turn the corner into 2021, there’s no doubt that our identity in Christ has become richer. We have simplified and intensified the flavor of who we are in our community, in our congregation, and in our own relationships with God.

As our **world** grew more tumultuous last spring, we began to ask hard questions as a church about how we were called to show up in the world. We used music, art, and bible stories in worship to help us engage in topics around justice, social sin, grief, and lament. A number of LMC small groups, both established and new, began to dig more deeply into issues of systemic injustice, economics, health care, and racism. While some of us were able to volunteer in person, so many others of us gave money to places that serve our community like Friendship Center and a sister congregation, Trinidad Lutheran. God calls us to be bearers of light and loving servants in a world fractured by sin and LMC dug into the call.

The way we engaged in the call to be church brought us closer as a **congregation**. I’m not going to say that we all joined virtual hands and sang love songs all year (it has been a hard year!), but through youth groups, cottage meetings, women’s ministry, men’s bonfires, book studies, and more, we have shared more honestly and vulnerably about our struggles, mistakes, and fears and we have grown in our faith journeys. We have lost loved ones and grieved together. Something about the pandemic has sharpened our eyes to the fragility of life and we’ve opened our hearts and talked more reflectively about God and God’s movement in our lives and the world. This has strengthened our relationships as a congregation.

All of this has the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit all over it; and inevitably, **our own relationships with God** have deepened this last year. Understandably, without the predictable rhythms of church, some of us have felt out of sync with God but, intentionally or not, we reach out to God as God reaches to us. Again and again, we have come back to the messages like “God is in the wilderness” and “Jesus, Emmanuel is with us.” While it is always easy to “find God” when things are going fine and good, we have retrained our eyes to see God right there in the moments of suffering, pain, and grief—in the moments of the cross.

2020 would have been impossible without our talented, creative and dedicated staff. I give thanks for Liza Micelli, Deaconess Claire Schoepp, and Heather Vanderberg. Additionally, great thanks go to Eron Dupree who continues on voluntary furlough. I am also thankful for Kevin Dill, Don Erickson, Amy Karp, and Leo Meere.

As we look forward to 2021, we will continue to deepen our connections to God and each another. In this journey of faith, we are called to stay on the ride, to trust the trajectory, to know it’s moving and deepening into something better. God is alive in our midst, comforting and leading us forward in radical service to God and to one another.

Blessed Be the Journey,
Pastor Lindsay Mack



WORSHIP

Worship is, of course, central to who we are at LMC. So what happens when we can't worship as we usually do? We adapt. We lean into the gifts that we have, step up to learn new skills, give abundant grace to one another, and trust that God is guiding us in worship -- no matter the form!

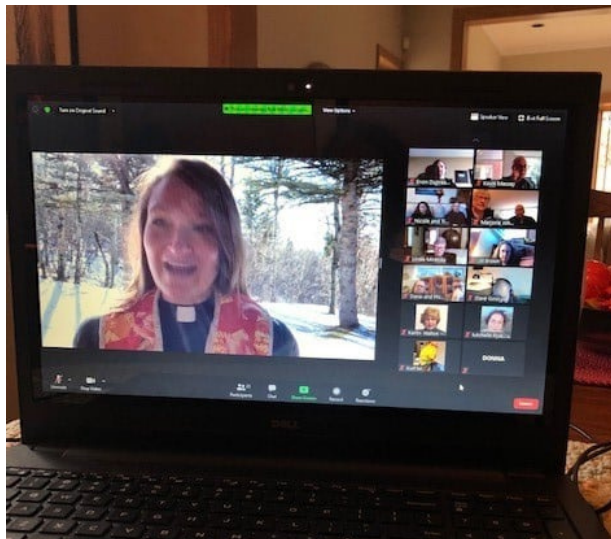
2020 BEGINS: INDOOR WORSHIP

We started 2020 as we have in most years prior, blessing our Church home during an Epiphany worship service planned this year by the LMC High School Youth. We continued through winter celebrating Bold Women's Sunday, participating in special evening Ash Wednesday service planned by our fifth and sixth graders, and starting our Lenten Series "Wilderness."



TRANSITION TO VIRTUAL WORSHIP

Little did we know how deeply into the Wilderness we were headed. We held our last in-person Sunday worship service on March 15. Three days later, on Wednesday, March 18, LMC premiered our first virtual worship with a small group recording the Lenten Vespers in our Sanctuary and our first fully "from home" virtual worship on Sunday, March 22. Less than a month later, we worshipped together in our virtual Holy Week starting with the virtual Palm Parade on Sunday and continuing through worship on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil Saturday, and Easter Sunday.



One of the unexpected silver linings of the move to virtual worship is that we now have a digital archive of almost a year of worship services at LMC that you can access on YouTube whenever you like!

We invite you to take a few moments to go back to the LMC YouTube channel and watch parts of some of our early virtual services.

VIRTUAL WORSHIP (CONT.)

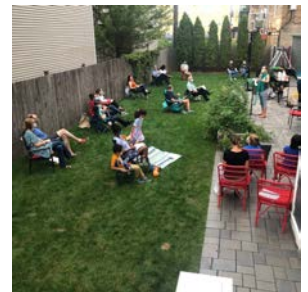
As spring turned to summer, virtual worship became our "new normal," but more change was coming. In summer, as things in our society turned increasingly tumultuous, we leaned into our summer series "Unraveled," which gave us a framework to hold on to God and each other in a broken and grieving world. We incorporated art, music, and stories that spoke to the challenges we faced with both the pandemic and continued racial and political unrest.



With improved weather, we were able to take advantage of our outdoor space to find ways to incorporate baptisms back into worship in a safe, yet sacred way. As restrictions eased over the late summer and early fall, we held a series of three mid-week worship services and took advantage of outdoor



options until the weather finally gave out on us. On October 25, we confirmed our rising Freshmen in a socially-distanced outdoor service at the Cook County Forest Preserve. Despite the weather, we had a beautiful service. The remainder of fall brought Reformation Sunday, All Saints, and a transition into the Advent and Christmas Seasons.

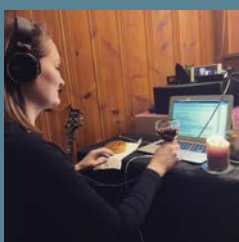


Moving into Advent, we explored what it looked like to live as "Those Who Dream." Many members of the congregation purchased Advent wreaths to participate in the Advent liturgy at home. Christmas brought not one, but two special Christmas programs: "The ABCs of Christmas," created with help from our children and families and "What the Animals Witnessed," written by the kids of Club 56, in addition to a beautiful combined Christmas Eve worship service. More than 60 different people participated in the creation of our Christmas worship services.



A NOTE ON VIRTUAL WORSHIP PRODUCTION

In many ways, despite our physical separation, the transition to virtual worship has allowed our staff to function as a team more fully than ever before. Every single staff member contributes to the execution and presentation of virtual worship service. In addition, virtual worship is a true community effort with many, many different church members offering greetings, music, readings, and prayers in worship while dedicated volunteers do heavy lifting with behind-the-scenes production.



MUSIC MINISTRIES

Music Ministries have evolved greatly in the past 10 months. Under the guidance of Liza Micelli and Eron Dupree, we have transitioned to virtual worship services, leaning into our collective strengths, determination, and love for worship. How can we keep from singing?

MANY WAYS TO MAKE MUSIC

Transition to virtual worship has afforded our Music Ministries the opportunity to explore new music and new technology. Each week brings a blend of traditional and contemporary music with organ, band, solos, and small ensembles. Although music is planned and recorded well in advance, our musicians also remained flexible, adapting service music to address current issues such as their offering of "Senzeni Na?" in the wake of George Floyd's murder this summer.



Because of challenges unique to choral music during a pandemic, we made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend our choir programs. Nevertheless, our choir members participate regularly in virtual worship serving as cantors and occasionally presenting ensemble music and our Children's choir enjoyed a special summer session with video curriculum produced by Eron Dupree.

Over the course of the year, we have changed the way that music is recorded, experimenting with different forms of technology and doing some in-person production when it was safe to do so. The methods may change, but the musical gifts, freely given, and the dedication of our many musicians are constant and are a testament to the love of music in worship at LMC!

TRANSITIONS

In August, Director of Choirs Eron Dupree announced his intention to take a voluntary furlough. We are grateful that Eron remains involved at LMC, regularly attending our Zoom worship gatherings.

Organist Leo Meere submitted his resignation in September. Christopher Drummond is currently playing organ for LMC on a contract basis.



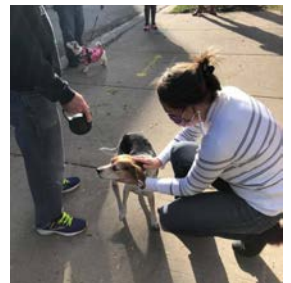
A heartfelt thank you to our many, many production volunteers!

FAITH LIFE

There are many ways that we come together to grow our faith, support one another, and continue the work of our church even as the opportunities to be physically together remain limited.

BLESSING EVENTS

While similar to things we often do in worship or as events, the Blessing Events provided opportunities for in-person, socially distant community touch points when large gatherings weren't possible. They were small in scale, but warmed the hearts of those who attended or made them happen. The virtual Christmas tree blessing also reached folks from our community who had moved away from Chicago. It is good to remember and strengthen the ties that remain when we're formed by worship and service in the same congregation.



COTTAGE MEETINGS



Fall 2020 saw 58 LMC members and 12 facilitators come together for informal cottage meetings. The cottage meetings gave everyone a chance to (re)connect and lean on one another for spiritual and practical support.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

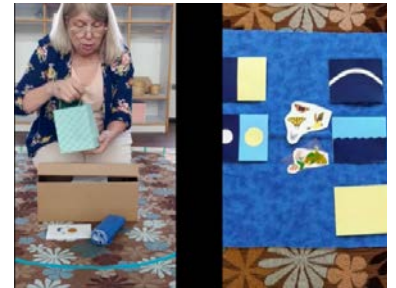
Faith groups at LMC continued their programming throughout 2020, often by shifting to virtual platforms and/or meeting in person when able under public health guidelines. Some groups that remained active included:

- Lunch with Luther
- Tuesday Evening Small Group
- WELCA Small Groups
- Women's Ministries Virtual Gatherings
- Wired Word
- Men's Fellowship Events

FAITH LIFE

CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY

The Child, Youth, and Family Team fosters spiritual growth from birth through high school while also supporting parents. This year, we were already preparing for a different kind of Sunday School year with Deaconess Claire on maternity leave through the spring of 2020 when the best laid plans were shaken by the global pandemic. Members of the Child, Youth, and Family team flexed and stretched to attend to the needs of the families at LMC by providing virtual Sunday School options.

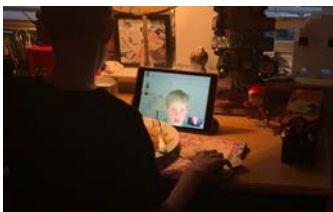


The start of the pandemic coincided with Deaconess Claire's leave and staff worked together to implement resources from a sister synod as well as Lenten resources from Illustrated Ministry that were distributed on Wednesdays with a revamped and rethemed Wednesday update.

Upon Deaconess Claire's return, the team spent much of summer reimagining Sunday School to a virtual format and creating beautiful, tangible resources in the form of Story Boxes. So many people assisted in the creation and delivery of both the physical and video resources. Deaconess Claire can now add "video editor" to the many roles she plays at LMC!



Third and Fourth graders are using their own curriculum based on the Beatitudes from Illustrated Ministry. While we cope with Zoom fatigue, we continue to adjust and adapt to fit their needs.



Flexibility has also been a hallmark in the upper grades. Club 56, Confirmation, and the Youth Group continue to meet, transitioning between virtual and in-person programming as public health guidelines (and the weather) allow.

In August, we accepted the resignation of Youth Director Don Erickson. Since then, Pastor Lindsay and a few dedicated volunteers have continued to support our Confirmation and High School Youth, providing guidance and connection and being consistent faith role models in a topsy-turvy world.

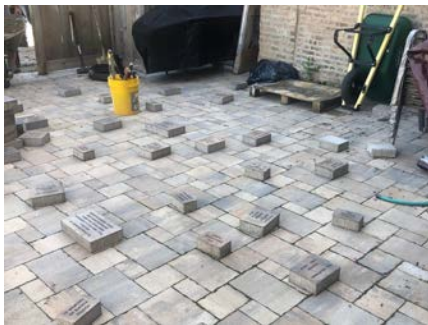


OUR CHURCH HOME

A constant refrain this year has been "the building is closed, but the church is still open." And, yet, our church building remains a vital connection point for our LMC Community.

PREPARING FOR OUR EVENTUAL HOMECOMING

Our dedicated Property Team continues to ensure that our building will be ready for our eventual return. Major projects this year included a combination of masonry work and extensive tree-trimming to prevent deterioration and water damage. We are so grateful that this work was completed before an unprecedented derecho storm hit the Chicago area on August 11. Despite widespread damage in our neighborhood, our building did not sustain any water damage and our trees remained completely intact!



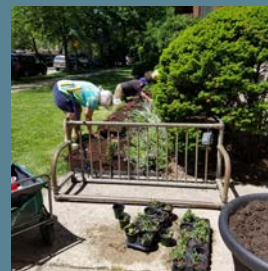
The installation of the memorial pavers was completed this summer and enjoyed by the groups that met in the backyard during the late summer and early fall. Other backyard improvements included staining the backyard fence and the addition of patio furniture and a patio heater - all of which were generously donated!

The empty building also afforded the team time to address lingering problems with the LMC boiler. Ultimately, the boiler was completely disassembled, repaired, and reassembled by our long-time boiler contractor.



A NOTE ON BUILDING USE

Ordinarily, you will find a community or nonprofit group using space in our building almost every day of the week. Not so this year. Lincoln Square Fencing continues to use space as they are able. In addition, Music Together held in our backyard in the late summer and early fall. Otherwise, though, our building has largely been empty. We do have eyes on the building regularly with staff, property team members, our cleaning service, and fencing monitoring any issues that need addressing.



Volunteers kept the garden beautiful and the main sign up to date!

REACHING OUT

In her sermon at the last in-person worship of 2020, as the world shut down around us, Pastor Lindsay told us, "While we will still be connected, in the absence of our physical church gathering, we will be called. . .to go and be the church to our family, neighbors and friends." We continue to find ways to reach out.

ADDRESSING RACISM

The pandemic was not the only cause for lament in 2020. As spring turned to summer, light shined on the latent racial inequalities and systemic racism in our country following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. As we prayed for the families of victims of violence and police brutality and for change to come to our country, we also began to look inward, to see where God was calling us to self-reflect and grow as community and congregation.

For Juneteenth, our Faith and Justice Team created a week of virtual events to celebrate Juneteenth with action, uplifting the Black community and amplifying Black voices. Activities for the week included a virtual "verzuz" battle, a reading of "Juneteenth for Maize," a day dedicated to supporting Black-owned businesses, resources for researching legislative priorities and ways to affect systemic change, and a viewing and discussion of "The 13th," a documentary by Ava DuVernay.

We continued working over the summer as six small groups dug into "I'm Still Here" by Austin Channing Brown and "Raising White Kids" by Jennifer Harvey and we had a wonderful time getting to know a predominantly Black Chicago neighborhood on youth-led tours with My Block My Hood My City.

Our commitment to antiracism work continues into 2021 with "We Belong to Each Other," a three-part introduction to antiracism facilitated by the Faith and Justice AntiRacist Action Group.



RECONCILING IN CHRIST

LMC maintains membership in Reconciling Works and is a Reconciling in Christ Congregation supporting full participation for all people. 2020 saw the adoption of a new RIC logo, further recognizing that representation matters.



REACHING OUT

PARTNERING ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In 2020, we continued to offer support as we are able to The Friendship Center and The Night Ministry, two organizations addressing hunger in our community (among other issues). In the spring, we ran a matching gift campaign raising over \$8000 for The Friendship Center.

Missing our annual Pre-Thanksgiving Dinner, LMC members came together to prepare a Pre-Thanksgiving Dinner for Friendship Center Clients. The community came together again just weeks later to assemble 102 blessing bags with hygiene supplies for the Friendship Center community.



Have you seen our Free Little Pantry? Take food as you need; leave food as you are able. The pantry is a Faith and Justice initiative and is entirely volunteer led.

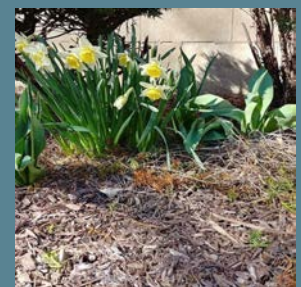
LMC has provided monetary and/or in-kind gifts to other organizations including:

- Lutheran Disaster Relief
- Trinidad Lutheran Church
- Apha Ghar
- WINGS
- Concordia Place Wishing Stars
- My Block, My Hood, My City
- Weiss Memorial Hospital

This list is not exhaustive and does not include gifts given by small groups.

NEW PLATFORMS

2020 found us exploring new ways to reach out to one another and our community. We quickly adopted Zoom not only as a meeting platform, but also as a connection tool with weekly worship "watch parties" and as a platform for special-focus events. We also adopted new social media tools. LMC's Instagram went live on April 3 and we ran our first Facebook Ad to promote our Christmas Eve worship services!



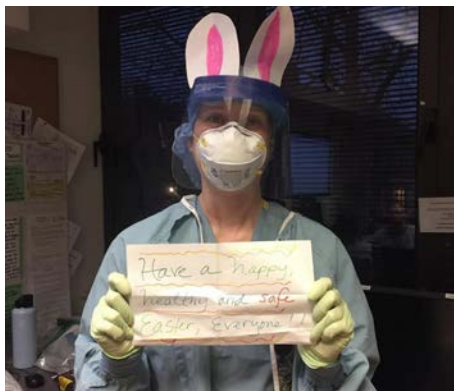
Our first Instagram post

CONTINUED CONNECTION

2020 was a year of continued reinvention. As conditions changed throughout the year, we adapted and readapted the ways in which we "do church." Keeping connection in our community was vital for the spiritual and mental health of our membership. Early in the year, when we were still able to meet in person, we enjoyed our annual Chili Cook-Off, an LMC movie night, a special pierogi making event, and the connection that comes with weekly coffee hour and One Stop Wednesday dinners. As the pandemic hit, we kept connection however we could. We wrote notes to homebound members, we gathered virtually for small groups and met outside when we were able. Church looks different this year, but it is still a community of people worshiping and serving God together while supporting one another and their community.



COMMUNITY



2020 LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE TEAM

TOIETTA DIXON, PRESIDENT
EMILY MOEN, VICE PRESIDENT
MELISSA BUSCH, SECRETARY
LARRY GEHRKE, TREASURER

COUNCIL

AUDREY DOWNS
KIM GLASFORD
DAVE GOSS
ROB KLEIN
BILL PHELPS
MATT VOLMERDING

STAFF

PASTOR LINDSAY MACK, PASTOR
LIZA MICELLI, DIRECTOR OF CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC
MELISSA MUELLER-FERGUSON, FINANCIAL
ADMINISTRATOR
DEACONESS CLAIRE SCHOEPP, DIRECTOR OF
CHILD AND FAMILY MINISTRY
HEATHER VANDERBERG, DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATION



LUTHER MEMORIAL CHURCH

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