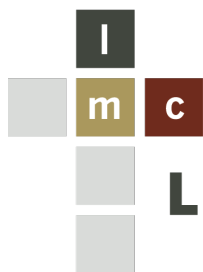




Annual Report 2022



LUTHER MEMORIAL CHURCH

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From Pastor Lindsay

Dear people of LMC,

Last fall, 65 church members responded to the congregational invitation to begin a discussion around our mission statement and values. We met one evening to discuss: Who are we as a congregation? What do we care about? Where are we headed?

There is a part in the story of Noah and the flood where, after 40 days of rain, the ark drifts until finally it grinds to a halt on the top of a mountain. There it sits, awkwardly stuck. Over time, the waters recede, and eventually all the people and animals make their way out. While I'm sure all creatures were glad to be with their feet planted back on the earth, instead of the familiar world they left, before them is a vast, muddy landscape of unfamiliar territory, and they have to figure out what to do. They step out of the ark.

LMC is making our way out into a world that feels different. The difference is due to many factors. Obviously, COVID changed things. But the change reaches beyond COVID. Over the last 15 years, LMC has watched the neighborhood change, and the church has been home to 5 pastors and a number of varied staff. Members have left and joined. And beyond this, our world is changing. For many families, it feels like life is speeding up. Society is edgy and unsettled. Houses of faith, including churches, hold a less prominent place in our communities today compared to past decades. COVID accelerated a change that was years in the making and many people have left or are drifting away from the church, sometimes permanently. It's disorienting and even upsetting for some. It's also energizing and hopeful for others because we've stepped out of that ark into a new and different landscape full of possibilities.

In our fall conversations around mission and values, several themes bubbled up that we will dig into in the upcoming year. The throughlines around our emerging values won't be a surprise to anyone. As a congregation, we cherish relationships, we also care about participating in a church that is relevant to our daily lives, which means we are curious. We are also faithful, humble enough not to completely understand this mystery of God but brave enough to trust God's promise. We will continue to be a place where people encounter God, particularly people who are seeking and unsure. We will also be a church where people are challenged to grow and are transformed, for this is how God transforms our world.

We begin 2023 with an energetic council, motivated staff and our hearts hopeful. We know God's mysterious spirit surrounds, guides and sustains us. Be on the lookout for opportunities to connect for discussion around our emerging core values and imagining what could be.

On my good days and bad, I find God in you all and am thankful. In a year that was personally challenging for me and my family for several reasons, I give thanks for your encouragement, participation, accompaniment and

imagination. I'm thankful to our church council for their presence, support and skill at catching the curveballs that this unusual season has thrown. I'm ever grateful to our faithful and talented staff and contractors for their dedication, creativity and flexibility particularly Jared Beverly, Christopher Drummond, Melissa Ferguson, Bernadette Haugen, Iris Kean, Nichole Martinez, Liza Micelli, Russell Angelico, Kal-El Parra, Sandra Sanchez, and Sarah Swagler.

Blessed be the journey,
Pastor Lindsay





Worship

O give thanks to the Lord; call on his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.

—Psalm 105:1



Winter–Spring 2022

Worship is where we glorify God and spend time together. We started out the year with a round of virtual services as covid surged at the beginning of 2022. As we came back to regular services, we walked the line between reverence and playfulness.

Lenten vespers offered space for reflection and grief, while moments like our Easter Vigil, gave moments of joy and levity through the gift of drama. We explored the theme of “Full to the Brim: An Expansive Lent” during Lent and Easter.

Photos: Palm Sunday (above), Good Friday (left), and the Easter Vigil (next page).



*We walked the line
between reverence and
playfulness.*





Summer 2022

During the summer, we celebrated Earth Day, Juneteenth, and Pride, and we welcomed new members, baptized children, and enjoyed a blended-style worship service.

Throughout the year, we had dedicated streamers who broadcasted our services to our online audience (above).



The Rally Day flood gave us a tangible reminder of our belovedness. Neither rain nor water could stop our potluck, and we started the memorable program year grateful for the new roof on our building.



Fall 2022

In the fall, we blessed the pets (left), experimented with new ways of doing communion, expanded our Playground to the other back half of the Sanctuary to meet the demand for more kids. The choir expanded and involvement went up. In October, we confirmed eight youth (above).

In November, celebrated 125 years of being a church with a party and a visit from our bishop, Yehiel Curry.

In Advent of 2022, we started a new series called "From Generation to Generation."





Baptisms

In 2022, we were blessed to have baptized seven children.

Thank You

Through it all, the people served as sacristans, lectors, acolytes, assistants, banner bearers and more. We continue to cherish our beloved traditions, liturgy, while experimenting with new ideas. We give our thanks and praise to God.





Youth and Children

“Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

—Mark 10:14b



Staff Changes

Youth and Children's Ministry had quite a 2022! The staff shifted with Nichole Martinez moving to an assistant role and working specifically with Club 56 in March. In May, Sarah Swagler moved into the Director, Youth and Children's Ministry. In September, we welcomed Kal-El Parra as the Intern, Youth and Children's Ministry.

Youth Group

After things calmed down with COVID, youth group got back together in full swing, having met a few times virtually over the winter. In April, seven of our youth (pictured above, left to right: Sebastian R., Eve M., Olivia P., Claire S., Anya H., Aiden T., Maddux S.) participated in a weekend-long HOPE (Harnessing Optimism Program Experience) Retreat at Lutherdale.

Our summer was quieter and we made time to go out for mini-golfing and ice cream together. In July, we blessed our graduate class of 2022—Teresa N., Cathy N., Joe P., Caelyn P., Michael H., and Ellie L.—before sending them off to the next chapter of their lives.

The autumn picked back up with Wednesday evenings spent baking cookies for the Night Ministry (right) and preparing for events such as Trunk or Treat. On Wednesday, December 28, we instituted a new tradition and welcomed back our college-aged young adults to church for brunch.



Children's Ministry

Children's ministry saw exciting things such as an egg hunt and bounce house at Easter, face-painting and games at Rally Day to kick-off the year (left), and our 2nd Annual Trunk or Treat which occurred on Saturday, October 30 (on opposing page). LMC welcomed over 100 neighborhood and church children to gather treats at congregation member's trunks.

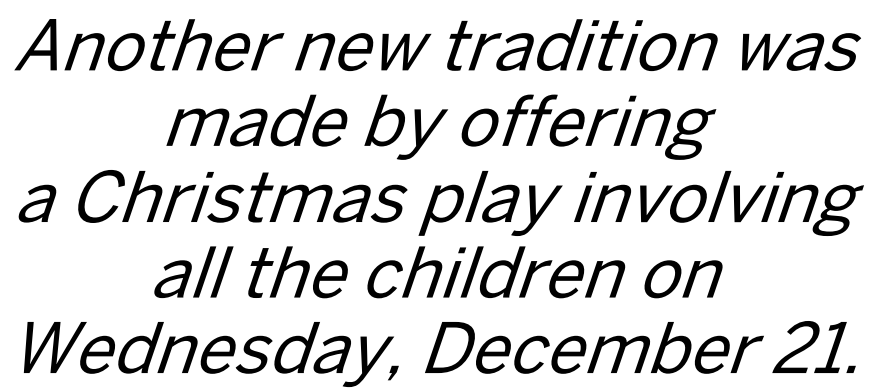


Sunday School

Sunday School had an amazing fall semester and tried new things! Our early childhood children continued to use Montessori-based Godly Play as the foundation of their curriculum (below). For our 2nd–6th graders, we divided the curriculum into three sessions: session 1 was “Building Faith through Play,” session 2 was “Dancing our Faith,” and session 3 was “Preparing a Christmas Play.” The 2nd–6th-graders helped make LMC’s 125th anniversary special by presenting a dance during worship from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (see the cover image for this section).

Sarah would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who make LMC a safe and loving environment for our children! Here’s to a new year!







Music

O sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.

—Psalm 98:1a

Online Worship

First, 2022 was quite a year! In spite of the citywide breakouts of COVID-19 in January, LMC would not be deterred! We began the year with a Zoom service singing Epiphany carols led by the dulcet tones of Christopher's living room organ. Pre-recorded services followed using both traditional and praise band (pre-recorded) music.



Screenshots from our Epiphany service on YouTube.



Cantors, *Schola*, and Choir

When we could safely gather again, we continued to be led by our (masked) cantors and *Schola*. In the fall of 2022, we tried a series of Sundays led by a “Pick-up Choir” of new and more experienced singers in an effort to safely gather while being more inclusive and open. Shortly thereafter, with the COVID-19 infection rates decreasing citywide and the Church Council’s decision to make masking during services optional, Christopher revived the full parish choir, which has also grown with some new members. It has been a blessing to be able to gather everyone together (safely), to share our gifts of music in worship, and to finally be together again! Many thanks to our team of dedicated, resilient cantors, singers, and musicians who offered their ministry of music to lead congregational song in online and in-person worship during a year touched by the pandemic and constant change.

Congregational Music for the 9am Service

For 2022, worship continued to incorporate an expansive array of musical resources that represented a generous swath of human experience. Thus, in addition to the red hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, we sang new texts from the ELCA hymnal *All Creation Sings*, spirituals and gospel music from the ELCA African-American hymnal *This Far by Faith*, chants from the communities of Taizé and Iona, as well as psalmody and hymnody from our ecumenical and interreligious partners.



*It has been a blessing to be
able to gather everyone
together (safely).*

LMC Band

The LMC Band continues to bring an eclectic mix of pop, contemplative, hymns, and even some rock into our worship.

In August, the LMC band said goodbye to Liza Micelli as she left for grad school. Throughout the fall, the band was volunteer led with some occasional support from professional musicians.

In December, LMC hired Russell Angelico to lead the band and the ministry finished the 2022 year with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the year to come!







Community

“For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.”

—Matthew 18:20

Meeting in Person

Over the last year, we have been deepening our connections with each other. We saw a particular turn as folks began to participate in worship and Sunday School again more regularly in the fall (below). We started up our 10am coffee hour again.

Small groups including our Church Council, choir, and band began to meet more regularly and in person.



In addition, LMC members met in Bible studies, women's spirituality groups, and occasional men's groups as well.

**We have been
deepening our
connections
with each other.**



*It turns out that
experiencing God's
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and in our relationships
has been good for us.*



We have a small and mighty group of volunteers helping to organize and orchestrate a community meal on the first Wednesday evening of the month.

We tried out a return to some events, including a Juneteenth event, Pre-Thanksgiving Meal (left and right), and Fair Trade and Bake Sale and even some community meals connected to our mission and vision (below).

It turns out that experiencing God's presence in community and in our relationships has been good for us.





Our Church Home

I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe of you.

—Psalm 5:7



Caring for Our Building

During the summer, we did tuckpointing on the exterior of the building.



Bathrooms

The LMC Property Team refurbished the bathrooms on the second and third floors.



Dropbox

The Property Team also installed a helpful dropbox in the counting room door.



Cameras

The LMC Security Team upgraded our safety measures by installing a number of cameras around the property.

Thank You

Thank you to all of our volunteers who helped keep our building in great shape in 2022. Thanks also to everyone who worked on the lawn and the flowers, sharpened pencils, organized closets, set up bulletin boards, decorated for Christmas, scrubbed the pots, organized the candles, and so much more. LMC wouldn't be what it is without your help!



Staff

Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart.

—1 Samuel 12:24a

A woman in a white robe with a colorful, abstract design on the front, holding a book, stands in a church. A man in a red and white checkered shirt and dark pants stands next to her, looking at the book. The church interior features stone walls, a large stained glass window, and a wooden altar.



At the end of the summer, we said goodbye our beloved band director, Liza Micelli (left), and began the long search for a band director. In the intermediary, band members showed up to lead the congregation in worship and eventually, Russell Angelico (right) stepped in as an interim band director. In December, we hired Russell as our permanent director.



LMC organist Christopher Drummond also stepped up into an internship role (below).

In addition, thanks to our custodian Sandra Sanchez for coming to help on Sundays for coffee hour and other events at the church (right).





Outreach

Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

—John 12:26

Serving Our Community

We helped our local community in a number of ways in 2022. We started having regular blood drives (left), and we continued to use our Free Little Pantry (right).

We shared our space with a local AA group, and we opened our building to visitors for Chicago Open House.

We collected supplies for refugee families and raised money for The Friendship Center at our Pre-Thanksgiving Meal (below). We also contributed to the Coalition of Welcoming Churches, the Night Ministry, and Apna Ghar.

In addition, our efforts reach beyond Chicago, as we gave benevolence to the synod, which goes to support ELCA disaster relief as well as international service.



Thank You!

We offer thanks to all our volunteers from throughout the year. This church wouldn't be what it is without you.

We offer thanks to all who donated in 2022. Your generous support makes our ministries possible.

In addition, we offer a special thanks in memory of Bob Jones, one of our beloved saints and a longtime member of LMC, who left the church a generous bequest of \$10,000 from his estate. We are grateful for his gift and his legacy.