# 2021 Annual Report



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# Mission Management

As we track the progress of WHC's mission over the course of 2021, we find the expected sets of goals and action steps. Unique to 2021 however, are the significant outside factors that forced fast-paced reassessments and adaptations to almost every element of our congregational life.

As we approached 2021 our goals were to:

- Continue critical ministry with the lessons learned from 2020.
  - \* Achieved with significant new learning, see more below.
- Given that an assumed "post-pandemic period" might begin in the summer or fall of 2021, encourage the resumption of any vibrant programs that struggled during 2020.
  - \* Achieved where possible, but clearly the post-pandemic era has yet to begin.
- Given the significant shift in pledging at the end of 2020, attempt to determine if the change is lasting or merely related temporary conditions, or both
  - \* Achieved. Additionally, we accomplished a significant rightsizing of our budget.
- Complete a process to discern Strategic Priorities for the coming years.
  - \* Achieved.
  - ♦ Identified important tasks to be addressed by specific Ministry Teams:
    - » Clarify our organizational structure
    - » Reaffirm our commitment as a mission church
    - » Refine our sweet spot in worship
    - » Define the highest and best use of our facility
  - ♦ Discerned a Strategic Priority for the entire congregation and all Ministry
    Teams:
  - » Deeper relationships are vital to future discipleship and mission. Go Build Relationships!

Of course, these goals were only half of the story of our mission in 2021.

At the most basic level a church is a community engaged for discipleship, worship, caregiving, and mission. Yet in 2021, engagement posed a series of ever-changing challenges. For example, in the first half of the year, most of our congregation chose to engage online; during the latter half that was reversed. Yet there were always some of both. Over the course of 2021, our congregation, our Mission Partners, and even ministries that share our building, made choices about if, when, and how to participate. Those choices were based on any number of criteria that were constantly changing due to information and feeling at the time. Simply put, learning and relearning how to engage took significant amounts of time and energy for all leaders in our congregation. This became one of our greatest success stories of 2021 - we accomplished the incarnational task of meeting people where there were: in-person, online, outside, at home, etc.

The historic events of 2021 affected nearly all of our programs, initiatives, events, and even individual relationships. In the midst of all that, what we accomplished together was nothing short of incredible. Certainly, we made mistakes and relationships were strained, but we adapted well and have become greater students of grace. The simple truth is that we accomplished what we did because of the power of God displayed in the humble service and steadfast love shown by so many in our family faith. Especially during a year filled with so many challenges, we were deeply blessed by the dedication of our Ministry Teams, Elders, Deacons, and Staff.

Throughout this Annual Report you'll read more highlights about spiritual growth, community, and mission. What needs to be said at the outset, is that these lights shine out all the brighter from a year that had more than its share of the shadows of weariness and uncertainty. In the following pages and in your own reflections of 2021, keep an eye out for demonstrations of generosity, spiritual gifts, and the grace we learn from God's sacrificial love.

# Mission Management, continued

A word about what's next.

2021 emphasized how little we can know and control. Here's something we do know and can control (with God's help).

- 1. A life-giving relationship with Jesus is central to the healing of all human brokenness.
- 2. Jesus' essential command the key to remaining in connection with Him is living in sacrificial love with others (John 15).

Yes, WHC has for decades emphasized the importance of relationships. Now is the time to see that foundation put into new action. Now is the time to prove the power of God's love when it's practiced in the midst of significant challenges to Christian fellowship, mission, and evangelism. For all that we need biblical truth and faithfulness; it will be love for God and one another that holds us steady in 2022. For all that we need a willingness to join God in Mission; it will be love for God and neighbor that paves the way for changed hearts and changed lives. Our mission in 2022 hinges on the hugeness of what God is doing in our hearts. May God grant us a love that is big enough to listen, to learn, to give and receive forgiveness, to stand in the gaps, and to walk into the unknown.

# **Caregiving Ministry**

### **West Hills Caregiving Ministries**

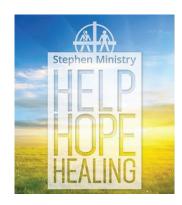
In everything we do, our focus is to be present, listen, and be unconditionally Christ-centered. Caregiving Ministries is one of presence, a ministry of listening, a ministry that is unashamedly Christ-centered. Our ministry area continued to look for new ways to provide care for the congregation in 2021 while under the Covid pandemic. We were appreciative of technology to aid us in carrying out our work.

Caregiving Ambassadors: Led by Cheryl Havekost, Connie Huck, and Ginny Jansen. This group continued to care for our members. It is the goal of each Caregiving Ambassador to have regular contact with their care receivers. The quiet work of the Caregiving Ambassadors makes such a difference in the lives of so many. Caregiving Ambassadors did not meet in person. The three Caregiving Ambassador Deacons kept in contact with their respective lists of Ambassadors and with each other through modern technology.

Practical Needs: This ministry area was led by Mary Turner, Myrtle Heise, and Deb Johnson. Ministry volunteers worked quietly behind the scenes to meet the various needs of homebound communion; hospital calls – phone calls, cards or in-person when able; baby ministry; Meal Train and transportation team. Due to the Covid pandemic, we followed ever-changing guidelines to fulfill the ministry needs.

Stephen Ministry: Led by Bill Spiecker, Cathy Voshell, and Laura Meyers. This quiet, confidential ministry touches lives behind the scenes. Stephen Ministers are trained lay people who listen and walk beside others providing one-on-one Christian care during difficult life circumstances. We had two active linkings in 2020. We utilized an email prayer chain to address the joys and concerns of the congregation in addition to those shared during live worship. We had six Stephen Minister trainees, and one

Stephen Minister attended refresher training. Both Cathy and Laura successfully completed the Bridge Leader's Training Course to equip them to begin and lead Stephen Ministry.



**Groups Ministry:** Small groups or covenant groups have been a part of West Hills for many years. Deacons Candy Glasgow, Mary Jirak, and Sheryl Overby were there to assist when someone was looking to join a group, if a group wanted to add new members, or had other needs.

**Grief Ministry:** We minister to families who have lost a loved one during the year. A series of books were sent out at specific intervals throughout the first year of the loved one's death under the direction of the Stephen Ministers. During the Christmas season, when losses are especially difficult, a grief gift was distributed to each person who had lost an immediate family member.

Christmas Stockings: Intergenerational teams divided up and completed safe contactless delivery of 23 Christmas stockings that were made, decorated, and donated by Linda Springsted. The stockings were filled with small gifts donated by Caregiving Ambassadors, Deacons, and congregation members. Caregiving Ambassador Deacons coordinated the Christmas stocking event.

# Caregiving Ministry, continued

#### Restructure December 2021

As part of looking for new ways to provide care, we have implemented a restructure of Caregiving Ministries into three ministry areas.

#### 1. Stephen Ministry

This quiet, confidential ministry touches lives behind the scenes. Stephen Ministers are trained lay people who listen and walk beside others providing one-on-one Christian care during difficult life circumstances. They provide grief books to those at WHC who have lost a loved one. This is a series of 4 Stephen Ministry books that are sent during the first year after the loss.

#### 2. Caregiving Outreach

- Caregiving Ambassadors: Outreach to our care receiver members/friends of the family.
   It is the goal of each Caregiving Ambassador to have regular contact with their care receivers.
- Hospital/Rehab Outreach: Church volunteer makes contact with the person who is hospitalized or in a rehab facility through phone calls, sending cards, and when able, in-person visits.
- Newborn Outreach: Church volunteer makes contact with the family who had a new baby and delivers a gift from the Church.
- Meal Ministry: Ministry provides a few meals to someone recovering from an illness/surgery or upon request. We have chosen to utilize the website Meal Train to coordinate this ministry.

• **Small Groups:** Provide assistance when someone is looking to join a group, if a group wants to add new members, or a group has other needs.

#### 3. Homebound Ministry

- Homebound Partners: Linking with our homebound members/friends of the family to provide regular contact through phone calls, sending of cards, and when able, inperson visits.
- Homebound Communion: Delivery of communion in person when able to those who have responded 'yes' to the monthly call asking if they would like to receive communion.
- **Homebound Rides:** Provide rides to West Hills Church for Sunday services.
- Christmas Stockings and Grief Ornaments: Coordinate logistics of making, filling, and delivery of Christmas stockings to our homebound. At that same time, coordinate delivery of grief ornaments to those at WHC who have lost a loved one during the previous calendar year.

Caregiving Ministries has been resilient in the face of year two of the pandemic. We have found creative ways to provide care and were able to convey the love of Jesus.



Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:26)

2021 was a year of listening, innovating, experimenting, and adapting in children's ministry. We have learned much in the past two years, most importantly that children, families, and children's ministry leaders deeply value their relationships with each other and within the big West Hills family. 2021 was a time for exploring a variety of ways to support and grow in our relationships with one another and with our steadfast God, inspite of the frequently shifting circumstances.

As we entered 2021with the pandemic ongoing, preschool and elementary children met in **Kids Connect Small Groups** every Sunday morning on Zoom to learn about the Beatitudes.

During Lent, the small groups used Adam Hamilton's study, 24 Hours That Changed the World, to learn about the events of Holy Week. Along with the rest of the congregation, families were invited to be part of the hands-on **Journey Through Holy Week** prayer walk experience.



In May, West Hills again partnered with parents to present special, personalized **Bibles** to all five of our second graders. The excitement of learning to use their own Bible is a much-anticipated milestone in each child's faith journey.

Several wonderful highlights of 2021 took place in the summer. The warmer weather, vaccines for adult and teen leaders, and masks for kids allowed us to offer old favorites and try out brand new ways to bring generations together to build faith and relationships.

Summer Sunday mornings brought **Kids Connect Small Groups together in person** on our playground to play and learn Bible stories. While kids and leaders were diving into the stories and relationships, parents and grandparents also found themselves gathered to tell their own stories and reconnect. It was GOOD to see each other, to spend time together in person, and to thank God for glorious weather almost every week!

On summer Sunday afternoons, an all-ages small group called **Faith Explorers** met on the playground after worship for a picnic and prayer before hitting a local hiking trail to connect with God and each other in nature.



On Saturday, June 12, the front steps of West Hills Church were transformed for a VBS Family Fun Day. At the opening ceremony at Knights of North Castle, Armorer Will, Sparky the firebreathing dragon, and Pastor Carolyn trained and knighted 60 kids and adults for a quest. The knights went searching for the King's armor at three tent-shaded stations where they heard Bible stories, learned about the armor of God, played games, and did crafts. By the time the knights arrived at a cookout-style banquet, they had discovered that the King's armor helps us "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power." (Ephesians 6:10)

Another highlight of the year came July 30 — August 2, at **#famcamp21**, **weekend camp for the whole West Hills Church family**. 46 people from 14 households spent a weekend relaxing, worshipping, and building relationships

# Children's Ministry, continued



together at Camp Calvin Crest. A blend of free time and gathering times made space for people both to get away and to come together. The group learned ways to connect with God, each other, and the world through camp-style worship and a variety of activities, including campfires, hikes, archery, swimming, relaxing in hammocks, crafts, games, and owl sightings.



Fall was another exciting time as we **resumed our long-standing Crosswalk ministry on Sunday morning**. As more families began to worship in the sanctuary, the Family Ministry Moment team grew in leaders and in creativity, often asking kids to help them illustrate the sermon text. During the summer and fall, we also experimented with a nursery hospitality model, offering the nursery as an added livestream worship space where families could go if their child needed a sanctuary break. A team of talented sewers finished creating colorful, personalizable sermon swag bags to help us welcome kids into the worshipping family.

After a summer of Sundays where kids and adults connectedregularly in a variety, it was rewarding to see the West Hills Church family come together at the **Fall Fun Fest** on September 26. The familiarity and comfortable friendships built all summer were plain and properly celebrated when the ice-cream truck brought treats for everyone. Table conversations and Human BINGO helped people of all ages learn new things and begin or renew friendships with our church family.

Crosswalk's outside adventures ended in October when the weather turned cold. Inside, the **newly remodeled lower-level welcome center** is serving just as we hoped it would — as a space for people to connect with one another. This space, which was in the beginning stages of an update when COVID started, is now nearly complete with the addition of seating, lighting, coffee station, coat rack, and display shelves to highlight resources for families. This area has come to fruition because of the vision and skill of many talented people, including Beth Anderson, Don and John Good, Sara Jansen, Ed Leach, Jack and Jim Pagel, and Charlie Wenck.

November brought **Grateful Grab Bags** to the spiritual formation offerings for the West Hills church family. 25 take-home bags packed with reflection questions, games, and activities gave 75-80 people a way to have fun and be transformed by gratitude.



In December, **Cookies and Cocoa** brought kids and adults together for a festive evening of service and fellowship. The WHC Advent devotional included contributions from children, teens, and family groups. **Advent resources** for families included Advent BINGO, Advent ornaments, and Faith@Home pages in

# Children's Ministry, continued

the devotional. The ministry year ended with the sweet video of voices of a dozen **children reading Luke 2** for the Christmas Eve worship service.

Each of these opportunities was possible because of the many **passionate**, **visionary**, **hard-working leaders** who faithfully love and serve children and their families. One of these leaders, Nursery Coordinator Erika Hanna, completed 17 years of faithful, joyful servant leadership in the nursery as she began graduate coursework to prepare for her next calling.

In a year filled with shifts in format, and leadership, and exciting emerging opportunities, we were guided by the truth that **God's steadfast love endures** through all times and circumstances. We were blessed to see evidence of that all through the year.

As we look forward to 2022, we are ready to join the whole church in leaning into the truth that deeper relationships are vital to future discipleship and mission. We anticipate new ways to make Sunday worship more accessible for young people and their families, a family fun weekend VBS with Group's HayDay theme, the resumption of a traditional nursery ministry, and our second all-church family camp in the fall. In short, we are excited to continue to find ways for children and adults of all ages to **Go Build Relationships!** 









# **Mission Ministry**

#### Check your mail!

I admit I can be a bit of a procrastinator. Two Sundays in a row, Pastor Carolyn Grice reminded me that I needed to check the mail in the Mission box in the mailroom at church. So, I finally did check the box – it had been a while, so there was quite a bit of mail from West Hills' mission partners. Most of it was "end of year" type of stuff thanking us for our faithfulness in supporting their ministries. But it also included lots of updates and wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I did not realize until I started reading all the greetings and updates just how hungry I was to hear what the Lord had been up to in His kingdom. Unlike me, God is not a procrastinator! Card after card was filled with stories of hope and answered prayers. God had indeed been busy! He was using His servants in amazing ways to not only spread the Good News, but to bring food to the needy, medicine to the sick, and school books to children, just to name a few things.

Here in Omaha, the ministries of **Heartland Hope**, **Abide**, and **Good News Bears** supplied families with much-needed assistance and programs that helped adults and children alike with resources to learn and grow. Other local partners like **Young Life**, **InterVarsity**, and the **International Friendship Center** were reaching out to students and immigrants to tell them about God's unwavering love for them. Through **God's Gift Shop**, we also raised money for the **410 Bridge** and Christmas gifts for families in the Westgate neighborhood.

Our international partners had been busy as well. Because of their obedience to the call of God and with financial help from West Hills, organizations like For His Children (Ecuador), Navigators, 410 Bridge (Haiti), Aid International Christian Women of Vision (AI-ChrisWOV, Cameroon), and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) were able to provide help in times of great need.

West Hills helped the 410 Bridge bring aid to the people of Haiti who had to contend with a devasting earthquake. We also helped For His Children provide a home and badly needed therapy for orphaned children.

As I continued to get caught up with our mission partners, my heart warmed with gratitude even as tears welled up in my eyes. God was indeed at work! One thought, in particular, has stayed with me and given me much comfort. As Dr. Hanni Hanna spoke to a group of faculty and dignitaries in Cairo upon his installation as the new president of ETSC, he said that God often works "behind our backs," which was his way of saying God is at work whether people see it or not and his task, as president of the Seminary, is to enable people to work to find out what God is doing and join Him.

Of course, it doesn't hurt to check your mail either!



Rebuild to main hall and new facade lighting to sister church in Cairo, Egypt





# **Spiritual Formation & Discipleship**

The Spiritual Formation and Discipleship (SF&D) Ministry serves the body of West Hills Church membership and friends of the family. The ministry is designed to give opportunities to build and strengthen participants with their faith walk and understanding of the will our Father has for us. In other words, we help you to find your calling, adhere to spiritual disciplines, and lean on God's Word in your daily lives.

2 Corinthians 3:18 – "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with everincreasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

SF&D consists of subgroups, all working together to equip our church to be on a journey with the living Christ, opening our hearts to a deeper connection with God. These groups are:

**Celebrations/Senior Ministry:** This group, led by Hal Capps, provides opportunities for seniors (of any age) to gather together and bond over events, outings, and perhaps a chance to share a meal together. With the pandemic, these events have been put on hold. However, Hal continues to assess opportunities with the hope that events can be planned again in the near future.

SF&D committee: This committee works together to find discipleship classes that can enhance our knowledge of God and His will for us. A curriculum is developed for Sunday morning classes and other class offerings throughout the week from time to time. Although the pandemic has set us back these past few years, we have offered consistent Sunday morning classes since June of 2021. We continue to assess Wednesday night programming with the hopes that 2022 can reignite our interest for class offerings. We have also adapted to some "at-home" offerings as well, as we learn new technologies. Members of this committee are Karen Jarvis, Jane Loeck, Doug Stout, Julie Zimmerman, Gloria Zinn, and of course, under the guidance of Dr. Carolyn Grice. Trink Traudt had spent a great deal of the year with this committee as well.

Women's Ministry: Women's ministry is led by Jane Loeck. This ministry is always active with Wednesday morning classes, Wednesday evening classes, and Thursday morning study. Some of these classes were impacted early in the year by the pandemic, but all three have strongly reassembled as the year has drawn on. Women's ministry also provides opportunities for women to gather together in spiritual retreats. 2021 was filled with three silent retreats, all organized by Linda Springsted. Last but not least, Angie Arner continues to keep the women informed through regular she-mail.

Men's Ministry: Men's ministry is tentatively led by Bob Drake. This ministry has come alive again as we moved further into 2021. Tuesday morning men's Bible study continues to be active with a strong core of men. Given the pandemic, the traditional Men's Game Day, Fish Fry, and Pancake Breakfast were not offered in 2021. We continue to assess these opportunities as we move forward into 2022. We did have a group of men who gathered this fall for the first Men's Night Out with the intent of continuing this event in 2022. We also had a group who gathered to serve the church on clean-up day this past fall.

Library Ministry: As you may know, the library and the resource room are chock full of study materials. Linda Springsted continues to keep up those rooms for your use. She also maintains the downstairs library as well. Linda, with some valued help from Gloria Zinn, went through a painstaking process during the pandemic to update and re-catalog books, studies, movies – a plethora of materials available for use by the congregation. A Big Thanks for their efforts. Should you need help searching for a resource, I am sure Linda would be happy to point you in the right direction.

# Spiritual Formation & Discipleship, continued

I want to raise a special thanks to all those who have been willing to share their knowledge by leading study groups, whether it is on Sundays or any other day of the week. Knowledge brings forth greater faith in each of us.

Finally, a HUGE Special Thanks to Heather Hipp and all the staff who helped organize meetings, classes, and events. Heather has been at the odd end of many last-minute requests and has always shined in helping the SF&D ministry in its efforts.

All-in-all, our teams continue to work together, searching for ways to keep Spiritual Formation and Discipleship vital and provide opportunities to strengthen our focus on God the Creator and build disciples that bring glory to Him who gave us life. As believers, we all have a role to play to advance God's plans with a loving and serving heart.













# **Support Ministries**

As I began to write this update of Support Ministry work during 2021, I reviewed my reports from the previous five years. It struck me how every narrative centered around some profound change that West Hills was undergoing and how we repeatedly stepped up to meet those challenges with God's grace. Appropriately on the feast of the Epiphany, as I write this, I then came to the realization that "change" has been, and will always be, a constant at West Hills and in each of our lives. But beyond just the secular understanding that "...the only constant is change" is the realization that the true constant above all else is God. Throughout all of our challenges, He has provided the gifts in all forms we required and the hope which continually sustains us.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 was again a profound force for 2021. While we had hoped to be back to "normal" early in 2021, it continued to affect the church and ministries for the entire year. It became apparent that the impact to West Hills (like so many other churches) will remain for some time, so changes to streamline and reduce costs would be needed to maintain ministry levels. Some of these changes included replacing the workroom photocopier and mailing equipment that do an outstanding job of meeting all our needs at half the cost. We also worked with American National Bank and vendor Elexio on upgrades to streamline our giving and banking systems and processes.

2021 did allow greater levels of "in-person" meetings and events at the church, both our own ministry groups and the return of some outside groups such as BSF (Bible Study Fellowship) and AA. Our gratitude to Don Good and Ricardo Lopez for their attentiveness to ensuring everything was ready to go within changing guidelines and properly cleaned afterward.

One of our greatest blessings has always been our volunteers! In 2021 these precious folks were an even greater gift as we faced reductions in other resources and a number of significant

unanticipated projects. By far, the largest of the 2021 projects was the replacement of the primary sanctuary HVAC system. Jack Pagel, the Building & Grounds Team (Don Glasgow, Al Jansen, Ed Leach, and Terry Topolski), and the Finance Committee (Mike Overby, Matt Huck, Tim Weller, and Laura Meyers) devoted hundreds of hours in requesting, reviewing, and deciding on all aspects of the project from scope of the work and vendor quotes, to cost stewardship and funding options. It was an outstanding team effort that culminated in the selection and great work done by Waldinger Corporation. Through it all, kudos to John Good for the hours spent as the liaison between the ministry teams and vendors and then overseeing the work to ensure everything was done as requested and all concerns were resolved.



With the onset of colder weather, the need to replace the HVAC system for the adult education wing was realized. As with other HVAC issues, congregation member Joel Anderson (who owns Anderson Comfort) once again stepped up to help and completed the work. Thank you, Joel! for your work on this project and the many, many times you have given assistance, input, and direction on the many, many HVAC issues the church encounters regularly.

Thank you to Peggy Shirley, Greg Schuchmann, and Ginny Lakin, who helped with covering the front desk. They are a wonderful first impression

# Support Ministries, continued

to the world of the West Hills spirit. Thank you to Rosa Norman for overseeing their scheduling, conveying any special projects, and keeping the staff informed in case of any absences.

Having a beautiful prayer garden was such a blessing during the spring and summer months as more folks began to return to Sunday Worship. What a special place to meet for fellowship following each service. We are so grateful to the leaders of the gardening team, Jack and Pam Culek and Tim and Kelly Briggs, for their hard work during the spring rains and summer heat to provide such an inspirational space.

More folks returning in person has meant more time preparing the facility using COVID-19 guidelines. It has also allowed the opportunity to catch up on minor maintenance and seasonal cleaning. Thank you to our Men's Ministry group for their tremendous participation and to those that helped at the "Fall Work Day" this year. We have a large property, and their help is critical to ensuring everything is maintained and shipshape. Thank you also to Dick Frandeen, who has taken on the ministry of vacuuming the sanctuary each week!



Over the course of the year, there were several instances where the strength of youth and willingness to reach new heights was called for. A great example was putting together the scaffolding used to set up our large Christmas tree in Geneva Lounge or to change light bulbs in the sanctuary. Thank you to John Good Jr, Tyler Layton, and Alex Carabantes, who came to our rescue for these lofty challenges on numerous occasions.



As 2021 began to draw to a close, the church was transformed once again into a place of beauty and radiance in celebration of our Savior's coming! This glorious transformation was due to hours and hours of work by Peggy Kelley and her decorating talents. Peggy's talents and efforts were also present with the Holy Week/ Easter displays. She is a tireless worker each week, getting the fellowship supplies organized and ready for every Sunday Worship. THANK YOU, Peggy!!

As we begin the great work of 2022, to which we are all called, we understand there will be challenges and obstacles. There always are. Nevertheless, I find inspiration in the words of Saint Peter concerning the spirit in which each of us is called to meet these certain challenges that lay ahead...

"... all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." 1Peter 3:8-9

God bless!

#### **Sunday Morning Worship**

The "bread and butter" of what we do revolves around Sunday morning worship. We have a committed group of volunteers who assist in worship by:

- singing or playing an instrument
- leading in prayers and readings
- running sound, worship slides, or cameras
- serving as greeters or ushers
- helping with seasonal decorations

We are blessed to have **Kathy Leach** as our staff accompanist. Through playing the piano or organ, she enhances our worship with her musicianship and keyboard skills. More importantly, she is humble in serving and is always thoroughly prepared for each rehearsal and worship service.

Related to the pandemic and worship, we began the year using only recorded videos in place of congregational singing in our services. Meaning: the worship team recorded the videos during the week, and then we played them during Sunday worship. Those worshiping in-person were discouraged from singing with any of the congregational song videos. As noted later in this report, that practice changed on April 4, Easter Sunday.

#### **Pickleball**

Hey! Why is **pickleball** included in the worship and music report? When you're in the midst of a pandemic, you adapt, which sometimes means trying new things. We offered pickleball as a way to counter the drudgery of the pandemic and the winter blues. In February, we hosted three one-hour intro sessions on a Saturday morning. Since that time, there were only a couple of weeks in 2021 when the pickleball court in the gym wasn't used. In the fall, we even experimented with a round-robin league on Monday evenings. Twelve people participated in the league. Along with the benefits of being physically active, friendships and relationships were strengthened, and we started using a part of our building that had been underutilized.



#### Fab Feb Fun

In 2020, we started hosting Zoom fellowship gatherings as a way to have some fun and connect with others during the pandemic. In 2021, we offered this Zoom event: **Fab Feb Fun**. Of course, participants were encouraged to wear their favorite beach attire, which many did. This event consisted of games and live music. To go with our beach theme, Candice Hill Zoomed in from Kansas City and warmed us up by playing the steel drums for us.

## **Following Jesus Lenten Study**

In February, we began a six-week study on Henri Nouwen's book, **Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety.** For this small group, we met via Zoom. There were 17 people enrolled in this group. Since we were meeting via Zoom, this made it possible for others not connected with West Hills to participate. We had participants from Des Moines, Iowa, Lebanon, Tennessee, and one from Omaha who was not connected with a church.

### **Worship Intern**

Anna Hollingsworth was back with us during the spring semester as a worship intern. Her internship with us began in September of 2020. During Lent, she created a four-week mini worship video series, **Worship in the Wilderness**. Each 15-20 minute segment included scripture, music, and prayer. She also created and led a night of worship in May. As she did in the fall of 2020, Anna served in various ways, including capturing and editing video,

# Worship Arts & Music, continued

singing and playing keyboard with the worship team, and running audio, media, and cameras in worship.

#### **Holy Week**

Once again, due to the pandemic, we were working with limitations on what we could effectively offer. We did publish an eightday Holy Week Devotional Guide. We also created an on-demand worship video based on the **Seven Last Words of Christ**. This video included scripture, prayers, images, and music for reflection played by a cellist. For Good Friday, we offered a Service of Darkness. In this service, we retraced the final steps of Jesus prior to His crucifixion. The service included scripture, music, and art. Easter Sunday was a milestone for us during the pandemic. Since Sunday, March 8, 2020, this was the first worship service that all of the music and singing (including congregational singing) was live. 56 **Sundays** had passed since we last had all live music in a worship service!



#### **Crossroads Connection**

On Sunday, August 15, we hosted the **Crossroads Connection** ministry. This included a worship service at 6 pm and a meal served at 7 pm. The last time we hosted this ministry was pre-pandemic on February 9, 2020. Due to the pandemic, this ministry had to shut down for several months. Once they started again, they had to reconnect again with the inmates and with the churches that had been supporting this ministry. They are still in a rebuilding mode. As a reminder, Crossroads Connection assists prison inmates transitioning to life outside of prison.

#### **Dylan Mortimer**

On Sunday, September 19, **Kansas City artist Dylan Mortimer** was our guest speaker in worship. He shared about his faith in God, even while battling cystic fibrosis and undergoing two double-lung transplants. We also had six guest musicians for this service, including a 5-piece horn section.



#### **Thanksgiving Worship Service**

This report would not be complete and flagged if we didn't include a few words about this long-time favorite service: the Thanksgiving Worship Service. This service is traditionally held on the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. Last year, because of COVID-19, we were only able to produce an on-demand video for this service — which didn't include pie! We were back this year offering a live worship service and a pie fellowship that followed the service.



# Worship Arts & Music, continued

#### **Hearing Assist System**

In November, a **hearing assist system** was installed in the sanctuary. This was an important addition that we made available to those who had difficulty hearing parts of our worship services. We initially started with four listening devices, and we have already added two more units. This new system has been well-received by those who have been using it.

### Hanging of the Green

We were back this year with a live **Hanging** of the Green. Last year, due to the pandemic, the service included a mix of recorded and live musical elements. Because of fewer restrictions, we had more musicians participating in the service, as well as many more participants assisting with the decorations this year. Many thanks to Peggy Kelley for the time and talents she shared with us to make this service possible.



#### **Advent Devotional Guide**

This was our fourth year in a row to publish an **Advent Devotional Guide**. The guide included 24 writers of various ages, including writers who represented a few of our local mission partners. There was also a "Faith @ Home" segment for each of the four Sundays of Advent, which included reflections and several activities that readers could do during the week.

#### **Worship Elder**

Many thanks to **Dan O'Reilly** who has served these past three years as the **Elder for Worship**. This is not an easy role to fulfill in normal times, it is especially challenging when you're attempting to help determine the best practices for worship during the ever-changing landscape of a pandemic. Dan's **encouraging words** and **signature laugh** were good for the soul these last few years.

Dan is handing the baton off as worship elder to **William Scheopner**. We're looking forward to the ways that William will help shape the worship ministry over the next three years.

# Youth & Young Adult Ministries

This year has seen some exciting things in the youth and young adult programs at West Hills. In the winter and spring, the 406 Youth Group and the 406 Youth Leadership Team met weekly via Zoom. The Confirmation students used some innovative technology to create a recorded Ash Wednesday service for people to use at home to mark the beginning of Lent. The Youth Group partnered with adults, kids, and families to design and create the **Journey Through Holy Week** prayer garden experience that lasted from Palm Sunday through Easter.

Summer brought a variety of opportunities for youth and young adults. West Hills Mission and Family Ministries worked together to partner with InterVarsity throughout the summer, and the 406 Youth Group met outside for Monday Fundays, 406 Youth Group, and Sunday morning small groups called 406 JourneyGroups.

June was full of action, with youth intern Libby Whitlow beginning to connect with students each week at the three weekly summer opportunities



for middle and high school students. A few students participated in the **Faith Explorers** small group hikes with their families. The 406 Youth Band supplied live music at the West Hills Block party.

In July, six middle and high schoolers and two leaders went on Christ for the City's **Urban Plunge mission trip in Omaha**. Six youth and young adults and their families enjoyed #famcamp21 at Camp Calvin Crest on the last weekend in July.



August brought the end of summer programming and a chance for youth to tell the congregation how they grew in faith during the summer at Youth Sharing Sunday.

In September, West Hills Mission and Family Ministries worked together to host the annual **InterVarsity Labor Day Cookout**. Around 100 students from UNO, Creighton, and Metro Community College came to West Hills to enjoy food, fun, and friends on the front lawn.



In October, the 2021-22 Confirmation Experience began with a retreat for students and their families at Camp Calvin Crest. The high school JourneyGroup learned about Faith in an Anxious World.

The Youth Group wrapped up 2021 with a **Christmas party** with games, prizes, and food.

As we look forward to 2022, we are excited for Neon Night, Confirmation Sunday, the summer mission trip and camp, and the chance to get together with other church youth groups for worship and game nights.



## **WEST HILLS CHURCH**

# Operating Fund Statement of Financial Acitivities Years 2020-2022 Actual to Budget

	Budget 2022	Actual 2021	Budget 2021	Actual 2020
REVENUES				
Contributions Revenue				
Pledge	705,000	811,673	843,000	903,841
Plate	5,000	1,060	10,177	5,020
Total Contributions Revenue	710,000	812,733	853,177	908,861
Total Other Revenue	12,000	5,878	10,000	7,314
Ministry Specific Revenue*	28,500	27,807	27,110	27,278
TOTAL REVENUE	750,500	846,418	890,287	943,453
OPERATING EXPENSES				
Personnel				
Pastoral	123,420	123,420	123,420	122,045
Staff	398,580	487,048	523,559	469,355
Total Personnel	522,000	610,468	646,979	591,400
Program Ministries				
Church Leadership	3,000	2,343	8,350	1,429
Spiritual Formation	8,255	4,084	8,415	3,824
Caregiving	1,900	1,468	2,115	2,439
Youth	13,995	8,931	17,155	13,809
Children	17,050	11,776	14,770	18,260
Worship	12,250	13,691	14,500	25,324
Property	103,000	136,495	121,600	119,499
Mission Ministries	49,050	70,052	66,211	65,733
Administration	70,000	83,865	90,192	101,736
Total Program	278,500	332,705	343,308	352,053
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	800,500	943,173	990,287	943,453
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) from Operations	(50,000)	(96,755)	(100,000)	
Extraordinary Revenue **				
Release of reserve funds	50,000	100,000	100,000	
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		3,245		

<sup>\*</sup> Activity fees and designated gifts specific to ministry areas; for example: Youth Commitment Offering, Silent Retreat registration fee, or mission trip participation fees.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Operating fund reserves available in 2021 due to receipt and expenditure of PPP program funds in 2020 for payroll and utilty costs.

# **Pastoral Staff**

	Budget	Actual	Budget
	2022	2021	2021
Salary	67,600	67,600	67,600
Housing	12,400	12,400	12,400
403B	2,000	2,000	2,000
Effective Salary	82,000	82,000	82,000
Cont Ed	4,000	4,000	4,000
Cell Phone	960	960	960
Board of Pensions*	30,340	30,340	30,340
SECA Allowance	6,120	6,120	6,120
Total Pastoral Salary	123,420	123,420	123,420

<sup>\*</sup> The Board of Pensions rate for 2022 is 37.0% of pastor's effective salary.

## Paid annual leave:

- 4 weeks vacation
- 2 weeks study leave
- 1 week "service to the larger church"

# Fund Asset Balances at December 31, 2021

# (American National Bank)

Operating Fund:				
Cash Balance	\$ 277,416			
Spirit Fund		(27,984)		
Miscellaneous Payab	les Due	(21,745)		
Funds due to Prograi	ms	(10,000)		
Net Ca	sh Available at 12/31/21		\$	217,687
Capital Fund:				
	Balance at 12/31/21		\$	304
Memorial Fund:				
	Balance at 12/31/21		\$	24,713
Congregational Emergen	cy Fund:			
	Balance at 12/31/21		\$	4,504
			Ψ	4,004
Total All Funds:			\$	247,208

# WEST HILLS CHURCH Capital Fund Statement of Financial Acitivities

Balance 12/31/20			\$ 74,670
REVENUES			
Transfer from Operating Fund	\$	61,355	
General pledge gifts	\$	629	
Interest	\$	5	
TOTAL REVENUE			\$ 61,989
EXPENSES			
Waldinger Co sanctuary HVAC	\$	136,355	
TOTAL EXPENSES			\$ 136,355
FUND BALANCE - Surplus(Deficit) - 12/3	1/21		\$ 304

# Appendix A

# **2021 ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

### **OVERALL SUNDAY WORSHIP ENGAGEMENT**

	Weekly Avg	<u>Annual Total</u>
In-person	96	4,896
Live-stream/online*	119	6,069
	215	10,965

SPECIAL SERVICES **	<u>2021</u>
Carolyn's Ordination	28
Good Friday	75
Thanksgiving Eve	66
Hanging of the Greens	61
Christmas Eve	167

# <u>TOTAL WORSHIP ATTENDANCE</u> (including Special Services) 2021: 11,362

<sup>\*</sup> Online/Live-stream viewership based upon number of "unique" devices logged-in to watch online video via live-streaming, vimeo, or WHC website during initial week of worship service. (Sun-Sat)

Estmated viewers per household at 1.5 - 2.0.

<sup>\*\* &</sup>quot;Special Services" attendance shown is in-person only.

# **Clerk Of The Session Report**

2021 Elders: Beth Anderson Matt Huck Linda Schuchmann

Dan O'Reilly Gary Anders Peggy Kelley
Mile Overby Steve Burgess Faren Lofgren-Anderson

Mile Overby Steve Burgess Faren Den Glasgoer Rick Mason

Greg Schuckwann was the Clerk of the Session. Mike Afferi was Business Administrator.

Mike Overby was Treasurer. Peggy Kelley chained the Hominating Committee.

## **Membership**

Active w	eraters luxury 1, 2021	40			
Gaire.	Transferred from other churches	D	Lessos Transferre	d to other churches	1D
	Received by Profession of Faith	D	Deaths		2
	Reaffirmation, or Confirmation	D			
	Received by Baptism	D	Other: Reviewed i	rem reits	31
	Tetal Gains	D	Total Lesse	s	49
Active o	erobers lanuary 1, 2622	360	Septions:	Infant Baptions	D
				Youth Baptisms	D
Active Fr	riceds of the Family	64	Westings:		3

# <u>Baptisms</u>

nenc

# Weddings

 June 26, 2021
 Ray Huck & Colette Shareyfelt
 commony conducted offsite

 July 24, 2021
 Steve Dostal & Audra Vernbrock
 Paster Andy Hamer

 December 18, 2021
 Chris Wonzy & Nikki Burns
 Paster Andy Hamer

#### Deaths

Note: Cantles reported over of active numbers for reporting to prodytory, and constitute to the secular in the report above. Deaths of forces numbers and friends of the family are active visiting in the seculty helicin.

Bud Wells	January 2, 2021
Teen Johnson	January 15, 2021
Peg Ziegler	May 22, 2021
Darlene Burbain	June 25, 2821
Kerry Ault	July 25, 2021
Bob Jirak	November 13, 2021
Louis Livingston	December 1, 2021
Barb Westcott	December 30, 2021

# Annual Congregational Meeting, January 31, 2021

West Hills Church held its Annual Super Supper and Congregational Meeting on January 31, 2021. The meeting was held via Zoom.

Some members joined in at 6:00 pm to visit and catch up as they munched on various food items.

At 6:30 pm, Pastor and moderator Andy Hamer began the meeting by welcoming everyone, reviewing some Zoom considerations and procedures. Pastor Carolyn Grice opened the meeting with a prayer.

A music video was shown for all to see and sing along with.

Clerk of Session, Greg Schuchmann, announced a quorum was present. An estimate of 94 members joined the Zoom meeting of the congregation. 74 Zoom windows were opened, with many showing multiple people viewing. Greg then presented the minutes from congregation meetings held on January 26, 2020, found on pages 23 & 24 of the 2020 Annual Report noting these minutes were approved by the congregation at the November 15, 2020 meeting of the congregation, which was called to elect the new class of leaders. A motion was called for to accept the minutes (found on page 25 of the 2020 Annual Report) of that Congregational Meeting held on November 15, 2020, to elect Deacons, Elders, and Nominating Committee. The motion was seconded. Corrections and questions were called for. No corrections were necessary. A vote was called for. The motion passed by common consent.

An entertaining video hosted by Marti Bloes and Heather Hipp of the sad state of the church staff was shown.

Andy presented the Ministry Area Reports and noted staff appreciation of years of service to West Hills Church.

The goings-on of the church staff continued in a second video.

Dan Travaille, Elder for Finance, reviewed the Fund Asset Balances as of December 31, 2020, found on page 17 and the West Hills Operating Fund Statement of Financial Activities Years 2019-2020 Actual to Budget found on page 18. Dan noted corrections to the Operating Fund sheet to include a change to the 2021 Budget

Pledge Revenue from 833,000 to 843,000 and to Ministry Specific Revenue from 37,111 to 47,111. Dan explained that the actual pledges total \$711,000. The additional \$100,000 is the Faith Promise portion of the pledged revenue. In 2020, we received 163 pledges. In 2021, 125 pledges were received, which is about 25% less. Dan also explained that the loan West Hills Received from the CARES Act is considered a liability until the loan is officially deemed a grant. To become a grant, West Hills submitted documentation that the loan money was used as prescribed. Dan responded to questions, including affirming that the Mission Budget was fully expensed. Pastor Hamer was asked to leave the meeting while the congregation discussed his call. Pastor Hamer assigned Pastor Carolyn Grice to be the moderator in his absence, and Pastor Grice asked Dan to continue with reviewing the Pastor Salary and Benefits found on page 19. There were no changes made to Pastor Hamer's Salary and Benefits, so a vote was not necessary. A question regarding the Continuing Education Line was asked and explained. And it was noted that the percentage for the Board of Pensions remains at 37%. The congregation did offer a vote of confidence. Pastor Hamer was asked to rejoin the meeting and resumed as moderator.

The continuing saga of the state of the West Hills Staff continued in a third video segment.

Andy shared his thoughts on the state of the church (only interrupted once by Marti).

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded. The motion carried.

Andy closed the meeting with a prayer, and a final music video was shown.

Andy offered a benediction to which those in attendance responded with "Alleluia. Amen."

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Schuchmann Clerk of Session

# Congregational Meeting October 10, 2021

Announcements of a congregational meeting were made in Thursday Thoughts, on media screens, and verbally during the services. The meeting was held on October 10, 2021, following the 10:00 am service. The meeting was a hybrid meeting with some members of the congregation attending in-person in the sanctuary and others attending remotely via Zoom.

Pastor and Moderator Andy Hamer called the meeting to order and stated the meeting is called for the purpose of presenting pandemic impacts to the budget, the new Strategic Priority, and to hand out proposed changes to the WHC Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation.

Andy opened the meeting with a prayer.

### A quorum was present.

Pastor Hamer reviewed the process for participants attending this hybrid meeting explaining those in-person should raise their hand or speak up while those attending remotely should wave a hand or hands, be sure to un-mute themselves, and speak up.

#### **Financial State of West Hills Church**

Mike Overby, Elder for Finance, thanked those in attendance and on Zoom for sticking around to attend the meeting. Mike defined his position as Elder of Finance to be a liaison to the congregation. He commented that 2020 had been a unique year. The pandemic has changed the world, the way we conduct our lives, the way we do church, and leaving a degree of uncertainty.

The Session felt that since West Hills is in the budget season planning for 2022 now would be a good time to share where the church is financially. A slide was shown presenting a portion of the Operating Results Year To Date. As of Period Ending September 30, 2021 we are (-\$32,529). The last quarter of the calendar year has historically been the largest giving quarter, with approximately 25% of giving completed. To complete obligations, Cash Reserves are being used.

The budget process continues to look at where we are/where we will be and where expenses can be reduced further. Last year (2020), we had \$100,000 in PPE Funds available that we do not have this year (2021). The upcoming Stewardship Campaign will dictate future planning decisions.

We should re-imagine our members and how we do church. 11% cannot come entirely from programs.

The projection for this year? West Hills has always lived up to commitments. We remain optimistic. Planning this year will look different. We will continue to practice Good Stewardship and expense reduction. Giving is down, but expenses are also down. We saw surplus giving in 2018 and 2019 but not in 2020. Membership in 2018 was at 513, 495 in 2019, 410 in 2020.

The Capital Fund is for capital investment. This year we replaced the large air-conditioning unit. The fund balance is currently \$204. The memorial fund balance is \$24,000. The Emergency Fund is \$4,000. Our cash reserve stands at approximately \$200,000. We are not in a need to borrow.

Question about the Angela Davis Account, which was established over 30 years ago.

West Hills is encouraged to pray for the direction of the church and for how to conduct worship services.

Andy offered a prayer to wrap up this portion of the meeting.

#### **New Strategic Priority**

#### STRATEGIC DISCERNMENT

Mission
Core Values
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (we are here)
Experiments
Adaptions

# Congregational Meeting October 10, 2021, continued

### 4 important tasks

- Clarify organization structure
- Reaffirm our commitment as a mission church
- Find our sweet spot in worship
- Define the highest and best use of our facility

During the discernment process of working on Strategic Priorities, instead of a few things surfacing, we kept ending up with one — relationships. West Hills has a historical sense that this is a relational church. The things we want to do hinge on relationships.

# Deeper relationships are vital to future discipleship and mission. - GO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS -

We should also be intergenerational. The new elder position will focus on bridging the intergenerational gap. To build into what was a strength and could be again.

#### **By-Laws / Articles of Incorporation**

A group has reviewed these, piecing together the original documents, meeting with legal and the presbytery, and updated them. A 30-day notice to the congregation is required before a meeting can be called to approve any changes. Approval by the congregation will be called for at the next congregation meeting in December, where the next class of deacons, elders, and nominating committee will also be decided. Copies of the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation were provided.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion carried.

Andy closed the meeting at 12:28 pm with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Schuchmann Clerk of Session

Andy Hamer Pastor and Moderator

# Congregational Meeting November 21, 2021

Announcements of a congregational meeting were made in Thursday Thoughts, on media screens, and verbally during worship services. The names of those being nominated were listed in the Sunday Morning Services Bulletin. The meeting was held on November 21, 2021, following the 10:00 am Service. This was a hybrid meeting with some members of the congregation attending in-person in the sanctuary and others attending remotely via Zoom. 60+ members attended in-person, and 17 attended online.

Pastor and Moderator Andy Hamer called the meeting to order and stated the meeting is called for the purpose of electing Deacons, Elders, and members of the Nominating Committee to the Class of 2024 and to approve the proposed Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation of West Hills Presbyterian Church and to approve the proposed Amended and Restated By-Laws to Govern the Congregation of West Hills Presbyterian Church.

Andy called the meeting to order at 11:25 am and opened the meeting with a prayer.

#### A quorum was present.

Pastor Hamer reviewed the process for participants attending this hybrid meeting, explaining those in-person should raise their hand or speak up while those attending remotely should wave a hand or hands, be sure to un-mute their devices and speak up. Procedures also included the process of approval by common consent.

#### **Approval of the Church By-Laws**

Discussion: Do we currently follow what is written up in Article XIX regarding the Board of Deacons appointing a Deacon for the Nominating Committee and the Congregation electing the Ruling Elder and four (4) representatives. Yes. Definitions of terms used are from the Book of Order. Term Communicant Member is not

defined in the current book of order. Baptized members (infants and those who are not active) and Active Members are someone who has professed their faith and is active in worship and workings of the church.

There were no objections to accepting the Proposed Church By-Laws, so they are approved by common consent.

# Approval of the Church Articles of Incorporation

There were no objections to approving the Proposed Revised Church Articles of Incorporation, so they are approved by common consent.

#### **Approval of Nominations**

The congregation showed appreciation for the work completed by the Nominating Committee with applause.

Nominated to serve as Elders: Boyd Dingman, Elder for Building and Grounds; Chris Hanna, Elder of Children and Youth; Elder of Intergenerational Impact, Marti Bloes; Candy Glasgow, Elder of Membership; and William Scheopner, Elder of Worship and Music. And Marilyn Moore, Deacon of Caregiving Ambassadors. (three open Deacon positions remain.)

Nominated to serve as **Nominating Committee at Large: Peg Shirley and Dan Travaille.** The nominations for Deacons, Elders, and Nominating committee were submitted from the committee, so a second to the motion was not necessary. Nominations from the floor were called for. There were none.

Pastor Hamer asked if there would be any objection to approving the nominees as a slate. There were no objections to approving the nominees as a slate. Approval was made by common consent.

# Congregational Meeting November 21, 2021, continued

The vote was called for, with members being asked if they had any objections to any or all of the slate of nominations.

There were no objections. The nominations were approved by common consent.

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded and carried.

Andy closed the meeting with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Schuchmann Clerk of Session

# **Staff Listing**

Accompanist Kathy Leach

Administrative Assistant/Receptionist Rosa Norman

Assistant to Pastor/Communications Heather Hipp

Custodian Ricardo Lopez

Facility Coordinator John Good

Director of Church Administration Mike Alfieri

Director of Family Ministries Jessica Scheopner

Director of Worship & Music Kevin Gibson

Maintenance Don Good

Pastor Andy Hamer

Youth & Young Adult Coordinator

Luke Burns

# **Elders Holding A Position in 2021**

Building & Grounds Don Glasgow

Caregiving Karen Lofgren-Anderson

Finance Mike Overby

Membership Linda Schuchmann

Mission Steve Burgess

Music & Worship Dan O'Reilly

Children's Beth Anderson

Youth Beth Anderson

Nominating Peggy Kelley

Personnel Gary Anders

Spiritual Formation Rick Mason

Stewardship Matt Huck