



2022

annual report

stLUKE

Presbyterian church

www.stluke.mn

From Phyllis

Normally, you would find words of greeting from Pastor Brennan Blue here, but at the end of 2022 Brennan left us to follow his passion for environmental justice in a statewide nonprofit, Great River Greening. I am glad that our community had five years together with him, strengthening our shared passion for social and environmental justice. I felt that passion as we worked to reintroduce native plants and trees in our woods; I felt it as we put finishing touches on our community kitchen. I feel it as we continue to make our spaces more welcoming for both our congregation and our community partners. And I am grateful to be able to say that we have strong staff and lay leadership in place for the year to come.

Phyllis Messenger, Clerk of Session, pmessenger@umn.edu

From Nora

As I consider the year of ministry behind us, one word comes to mind: community. It has brought great joy to see the ways that our community has shown up for each other again this year. When I begin worship on Sunday morning by saying, "it's an honor and privilege to welcome everyone to worship today," I am speaking from a place of remembering the 18 months of preaching in an empty sanctuary to only a video camera. Now that we are gathering together in person again, it's difficult to find words that accurately do justice to the love and hope I feel each week. I do not know every hurdle or pitfall we will encounter in 2023, but am confident we will find our way through together.

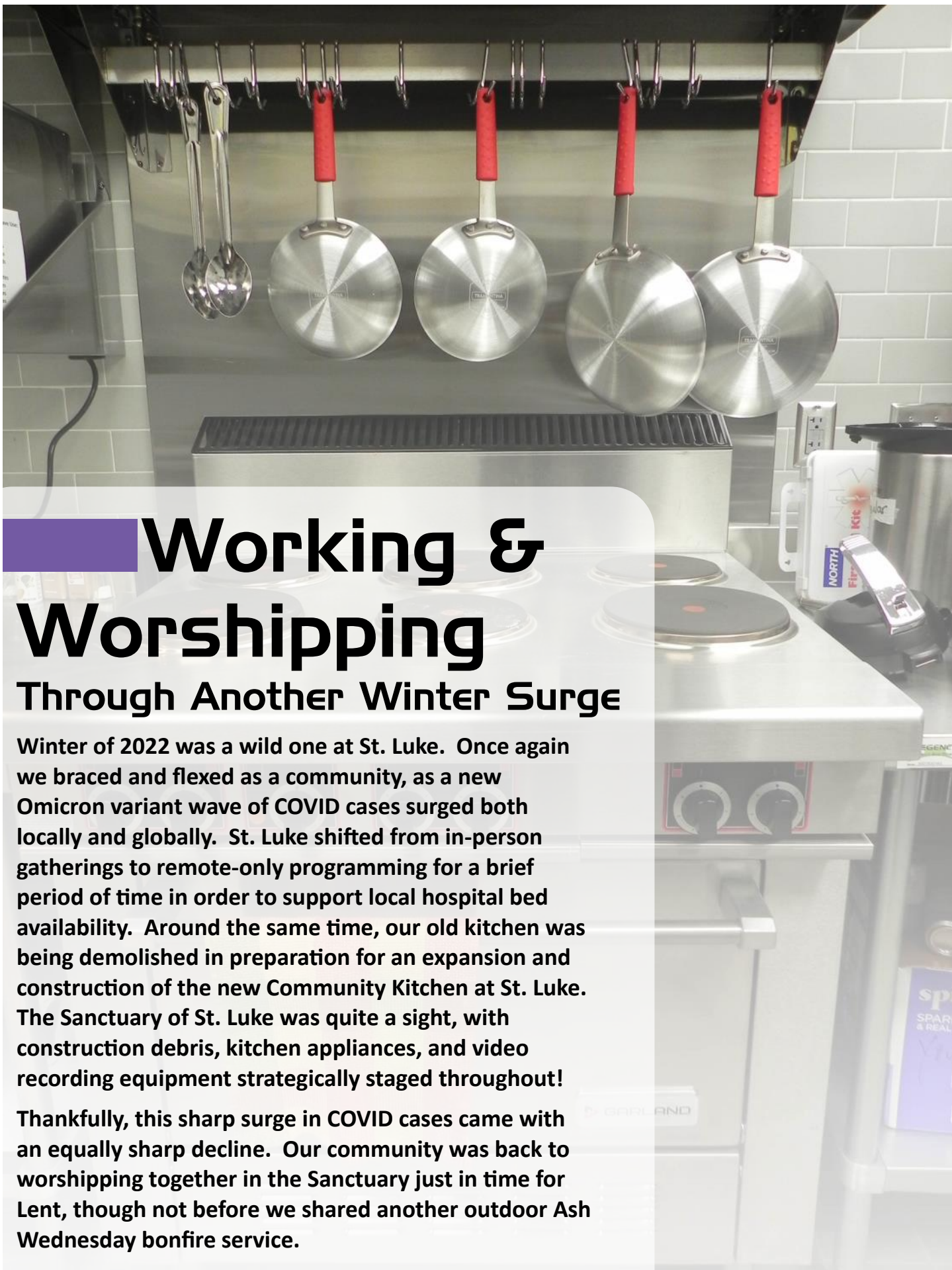
Rev. Nora P. Elliott, Associate Pastor, nora@stluke.mn

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As a reminder to all St. Lukers, formal Session minutes, ministry team reports, and our annual financial report may be obtained at any time by contacting the church office. [office@stluke.mn](mailto:office@stluke.mn) | 952-473-7378







# Working & Worshipping Through Another Winter Surge

Winter of 2022 was a wild one at St. Luke. Once again we braced and flexed as a community, as a new Omicron variant wave of COVID cases surged both locally and globally. St. Luke shifted from in-person gatherings to remote-only programming for a brief period of time in order to support local hospital bed availability. Around the same time, our old kitchen was being demolished in preparation for an expansion and construction of the new Community Kitchen at St. Luke. The Sanctuary of St. Luke was quite a sight, with construction debris, kitchen appliances, and video recording equipment strategically staged throughout!

Thankfully, this sharp surge in COVID cases came with an equally sharp decline. Our community was back to worshipping together in the Sanctuary just in time for Lent, though not before we shared another outdoor Ash Wednesday bonfire service.

# Spring Back Together

Spring found St. Luke reflecting on both the joys of returning to in-person programming and the hardships of navigating life amidst traumatic world events. Serenity and wisdom wove in and out of our Lenten programming, as we considered how to continually take the “next right step” in our spiritual journeys.



Soon, winter’s chill and Lent’s reflective season gave way to the busy blossoming of Spring. We celebrated Holy Week with a special Easter Vigil service on Holy Saturday, engaging many of us in blending art, nature, movement, and liturgy. This was followed by a grand Easter celebration with the joyful tones of the St. Luke choir – a welcome return after another pandemic winter! Our grounds restoration work progressed by leaps and bounds as we removed several dead and diseased trees, unearthed scores of invasives species, established new trails, and seeded our first section of native woodland species. All too soon, the school year came to an end and it was time to honor our graduates. This year’s Baccalaureate Sunday included the bittersweet blessing of honoring Minister of Worship Arts Will Rand, who graduated from St. Olaf and moved to the west coast after three cherished years with St. Luke.



A man in a white shirt is speaking into a microphone at a podium. On the podium, there is a book titled "Unimpered Choir" and a lit candle. In the background, there is a brick wall and a large wooden cross. To the left, there is a pink backdrop with yellow lilies. A purple rectangular graphic element is on the right side of the text area.

# Summer & Serious Grounds Work

Summer was a season of serious work and fun on the St. Luke grounds. The busy preparation work of spring set the stage for St. Luke's big planting day and the release of our Grounds Restoration strategic vision. On the first Saturday in June, St. Lukers and community friends gathered to plant 65 trees, 212 shrubs, and 440 herbaceous plants throughout our grounds. It was both a major undertaking and major success! Meanwhile, small teams of lay leaders were busy at work nurturing the Division of Indian Work food garden; partnering with the City of Minnetonka on new rain garden plantings; and launching a new "Eco-Club" program for children and youth. Clearly, the St. Luke grounds have emerged as a significant site for mission and ministry in our church.

The hustle and bustle outside was paired with a wonderfully reflective journey inside, as St. Luke shared in a summer sermon series built around the poems that inspire us. Several St. Lukers read, shared, and reflected on intersections of faith, spirituality, and poetry (including Evelyn Headen, pictured here in conversation with Pastor Brennan). This summer also saw several baptisms and a number of meaningful memorial services in the life of our congregation.



# Coming Together for the Great Fall Push



Fall was a time of joy and vibrancy at St. Luke, with a wide variety of programmatic year offerings returning for the first time since the start of the pandemic. The staff of St. Luke celebrated the gift of “planning things that we actually believe will happen!” This included the return of several cherished rituals: our blessing of the backpacks, Come Together Sunday, regular choir offerings, monthly Communion celebrations (pictured here, in the Columbarium Plaza), and a variety of educational offerings for all ages. Our new Community Kitchen received far more activity, with a joint Eco-Club and Division of Indian Work led salsa making venture, followed in October with a congregation-wide soup potluck supporting our annual “Trunk or Treat” event.



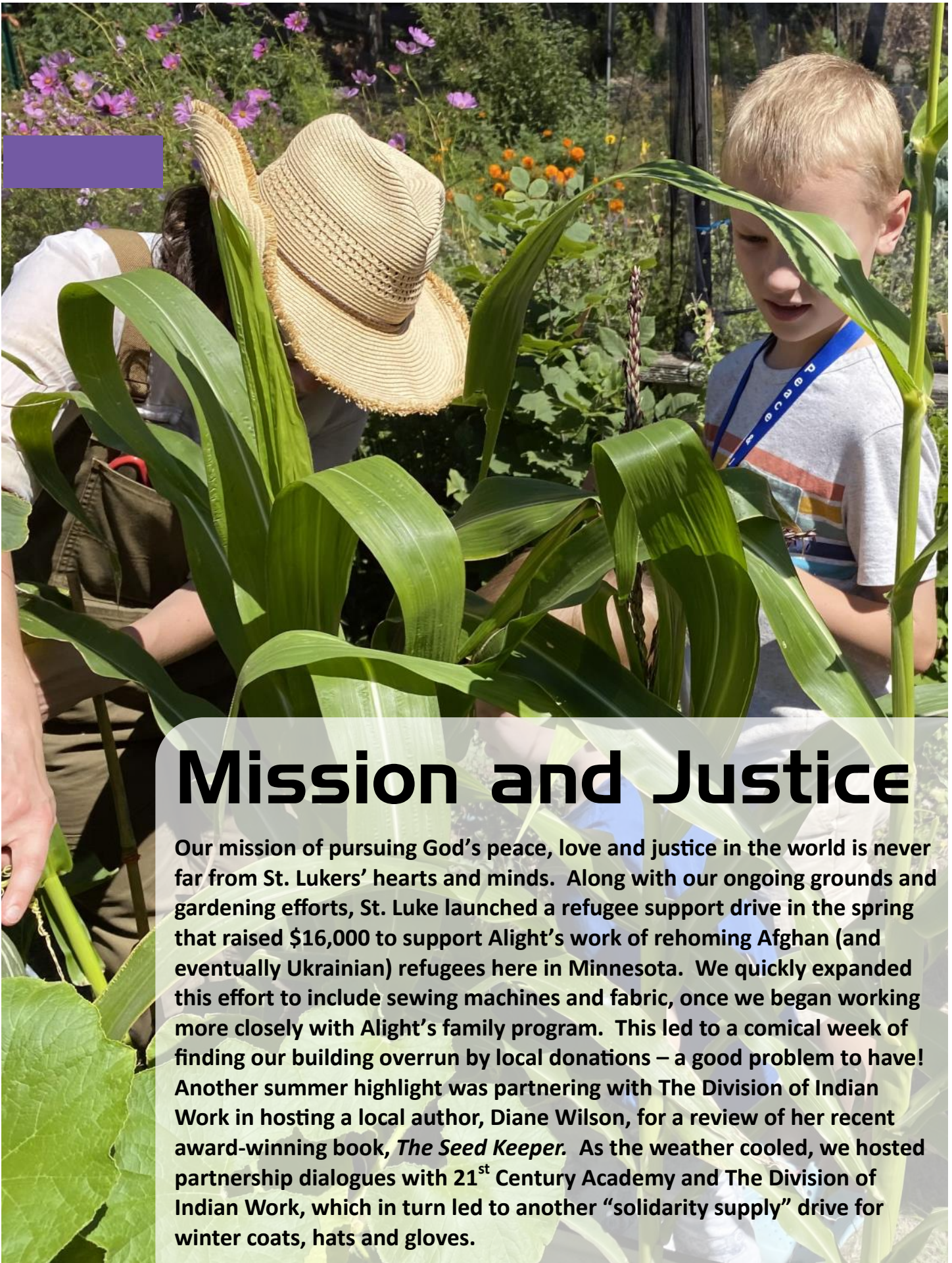


# Faith Formation

It was another unique year in the lives of our youth and children as we began to rebuild relationships that had been strained and broken by the pandemic. Eighteen months is a lifetime when you're young. For many of our youngest this year meant learning all over again how to interact and be together with compassionate care. Our Whole Lives, Dungeons & Dragons, Outdoor Sunday School Stump Circle, and Eco-Club all operated as frameworks for our youngest to grow freely and reconnect with each other letting their own spirit soar.







# Mission and Justice

**Our mission of pursuing God’s peace, love and justice in the world is never far from St. Lukers’ hearts and minds. Along with our ongoing grounds and gardening efforts, St. Luke launched a refugee support drive in the spring that raised \$16,000 to support Alight’s work of rehoming Afghan (and eventually Ukrainian) refugees here in Minnesota. We quickly expanded this effort to include sewing machines and fabric, once we began working more closely with Alight’s family program. This led to a comical week of finding our building overrun by local donations – a good problem to have! Another summer highlight was partnering with The Division of Indian Work in hosting a local author, Diane Wilson, for a review of her recent award-winning book, *The Seed Keeper*. As the weather cooled, we hosted partnership dialogues with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Academy and The Division of Indian Work, which in turn led to another “solidarity supply” drive for winter coats, hats and gloves.**





# Advent & Worship Arts

Worship remains a vibrant and formational experience at St. Luke. We continue to gather, sing, pray, and interpret our faith in light of local and global happenings. In 2022, this included the ongoing creative project of adapting worship to meet ever-shifting pandemic dynamics. As a result, this year found our community worshipping indoors, outdoors, and remote-only, depending upon the season. While change, challenge and uncertainty are rarely celebrated guests, we continue to enjoy finding new ways to adapt our treasured rituals. Outdoor Sunday School and Communion may be here to stay, no matter the season!

It was a gift to host Holy Week, Easter, Advent and Christmas in-person once again: our first full year of hosting these high holy days since 2019. This, of course, included the exuberance of our annual Christmas Gift Making Workshop (pictured above) and Children's Christmas Pageant.







# Adult Ed &

## Evolving Educational Offerings

Hats off to the Adult Ed Focus Group (AEFG) that planned and organized over a dozen adult ed mods in 2022. Mike Breckenridge, Evelyn Headen, Liz Martin, and Connie Bell all worked with Pastor Nora to discern offerings that were timely, but also blended challenging and uplifting content. Leveraging the experience of our community, we offered topics such as “How to Navigate Difficult Covid Conversations with Family” and “A Deep Dive into the Pine Ridge Support Ministry.” The AEFG served both in-person and remote audiences on zoom with new technology.

As we look to the future, the AEFG is prepared to pivot to meet the needs of an ever-changing church landscape. Members are still invited to coordinate and schedule adult education presentations with Pastor Nora, but the focus of the AEFG will now be looking to cultivate more in-depth programs that span several weeks. The first of such offerings will come during Lent (February 26 – April 2), when Pastor Nora will lead a fresh take on a Bible study, called Gratitude & Grace: A Journey with Sacred Community.







# Looking Ahead

What comes next for St. Luke in 2023? Lots! Pastor Nora has a calendar up on her wall of her office that fills her with excitement for all the sacred moments our community will share together this year. Here's a sneak peak:

- Ash Wednesday Bonfire kicking off a Lenten sermon series called Reclaiming Virtue, leading to a Holy Week with three unique services
- Spring Dialogue Sermon Series uplifting member ministries
- An interim pastor to welcome and share the blessings of our community
- New member classes
- A Youth Sunday service on Mother's Day welcoming a new class of Confirmands into full membership
- Fundraising for an intergenerational trip to Alaska to serve low income native peoples
- Renewed small group dinner program
- A Christ the Servant service project for worship

And much more...



**12** crockpots of soup and chili serving **100+** people at our fall Trunk or Treat potluck gathering

**100+** coats, gloves and hats collected for our winter donation drive

Over **200** gifts made at the Gift Making Workshop this year

**58** poems shared during our summer sermon series

**\$98,500** of outbound mission, giving and mutual aid

**3** baptisms and **10** saints blessed on All Saints' Day

**7** EcoClub classes teaching **12** children to tend a garden

**37** graduates from **5** cohorts of an OWL Sexuality and Faith program, aged **6 - 83**

**717** native trees, shrubs and flowers planted and **4,500** sq. ft. seeded with native woodland species