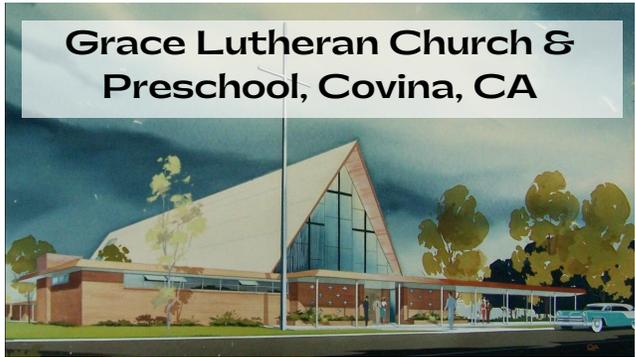
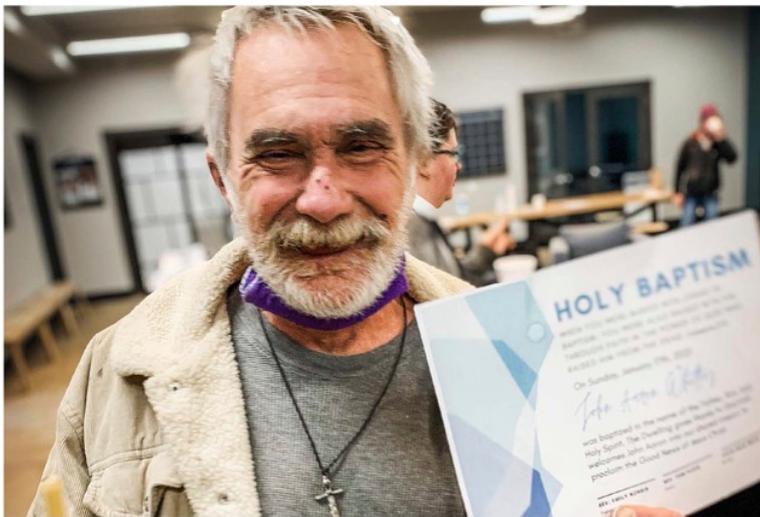


ANNUAL REPORT

2021



Southwest California Synod
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

17880 East Covina Bl.
Covina, CA 91722
www.gracecovina.org



A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP

*Elizabeth
Eaton*

Dear friends in Christ,

The last year has been one of adapting and learning. In many places we have seen vibrant and vital ministry spring forth from changes made due to the pandemic. Digital worship opportunities have introduced to our congregations people who may never have walked into one of our buildings. Many congregations have found new ways to invite people to share their generosity through online giving. And many ministries have found just how vital they are as they continue to serve alongside people in their communities.

The first chapter of James, verse 17, reminds us that “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” Yes, this has been a season of change, but Scripture also reminds us that we serve a generous, steadfast God.

While we stay rooted in God’s enduring, unchanging promise, God also gives us the gifts of creativity and learning. Across all three expressions of the church we have used those gifts to serve God, love our neighbor and share the good news of Jesus Christ. In this time of change, we have opened our arms wider to meet people where they are, living into the reality that we are not defined or confined by the four walls of our buildings.

Through all this, I am so grateful for your generous sharing of creativity, time, talents and resources. All good gifts do come from God, and we are called to share and use those gifts. We have and will continue to answer that call. There is still much change and learning to come, but God’s steadfast love energizes us for the work God is still doing in the world through this church.

Elizabeth A. Eaton

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 23, 2022

17880 E. Covina Blvd. | Covina, CA 91722

Church Office (626) 332-4536 | Preschool (626) 967-5855

www.gracecovina.org | office@gracecovina.org | (626) 332 - 4536 | Facebook & Youtube: Grace-Covina



Grace is a family of believers who gather in the name of Jesus Christ to experience God's love and acceptance through each other. Our intimate community is one where all are welcome, all are accepted, all are filled, and all are sent out to give as they have received.

Grace is not a place for those who feel they have found everything they need regarding their faith journey. The people of Grace feel that we are on a journey that is always progressing. We feel that we are called to walk together, as no one should ever have to walk alone. So no matter where you are in your personal journey, no matter what you believe, how sure or unsure you are, no matter where you feel your place in life is, you are always welcome at Grace.

Grace is a community of support and a community of strength. We gather to help one another through the rough times and to celebrate good times. Our community prays for one another. It is part of our duty as people of faith to lift up each other's joys and sorrows. We offer to each other what God has so greatly blessed us with - ourselves, our time, our possessions - all signs of God's gracious love.

2022 Church Council

President | Judy McGee
Vice-President | Johna Stienstra
Secretary | Brenda Noriega
Treasurer | Robert Ordenez

Members-at-Large
Diana Alley | Cindy Skolaski | Dave Brown

Volunteer/Committee Chairs

Financial Secretary | Sandy Streeter
Worship Committee | Brian Akey
Prayer Group | Bonnie Larini
Altar Guild | Vicki Jacobs
A.C.T.I.O.N. Food Pantry Liaison | Cheryl Miller

Church Staff

Pastor | The Rev. Steve Otte
Director of Worship & Music | Jeffrey Saltonstall
Custodian | Amber Brown
Office Administrator | Samantha Henderson

Prechool Director

Christy Arreguin

Southwest California Synod

The Rev. Brenda Bos, Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop

Council Positions Open for Election on January 23, 2021: President; Secretary; Member-at-Large

Committee/Other Positions Open for Election on January 23, 2021: Financial Secretary; Nominations Committee; Audit Committee

Pastor's Report

Greeting Grace Family and Friends,

As 2021 has come to an end, it is once again time to reflect on yet another year in the life of Grace Lutheran Church. This is the sixth one of these year end reports that I have penned, which also means the fifth anniversary of my ordination and call to serve Grace have passed. It has been an amazing almost six years serving God and you all at Grace! But nothing could have prepared me for the last two years and the challenges of a global pandemic.

Last year at this time I reflected on the first year of the pandemic and the challenges faced at Grace and in our own lives. I could have never imagined I would be duplicating that theme in 2022, but here we are. Because we have been living under the cloud of Covid for so long, it may seem all too normal and easy to forget what life was like prior to March of 2020. It has only been seven months since we returned to worship in our sanctuary, having spent well over a year with outdoor or online worship. I am so thankful and appreciative that we are able to worship together in our sanctuary! I am not sure how much longer I would have been able to preach to a cell phone in an empty sanctuary.

Although worship has returned (with those tiresome masks) the rest of our life together has remained 'on pause.' We have yet to resume our occasional fellowship events (I was poised to bring home a third chili cook-off medal when the pandemic hit!), we have not been able to host the Easter Egg Hunt or Trunks of Treats since 2019, and the plan to fund the facility renewal fund and actually use those funds has been mostly on pause because of the uncertainty of our finances and the impact the pandemic could have had. These are just a few examples of the impact Covid has had, and a reminder of what life was like prior to the virus.

Yet, despite the challenges there have been a number of things that we ought to celebrate and thank God for. I am very thankful for your faithfulness in supporting the Church, the Preschool, and the Action Food Pantry during the past 21 months. Giving has always been though to be directly tied to attendance in worship, but that proved not to be the case as we experienced more consistency and generosity with your offerings! I also continue to rejoice in how many of you have stayed connected in spite of having less opportunities to meet in person. We also continued our benevolences in 2021 to local, national, and global ministries both directly to some and through our offering to our Synod and the ELCA. We have also become fairly adept with our use of technology. And one of the things I am most appreciative for are the staff members and those who give and have given their time and talents in service to God at Grace Lutheran. There are far too many to name and I hope you all have heard from me how thankful I am!

I do not imagine any of us can predict what 2022 will bring after the last two years, and that makes planning a bit of a challenge. One thing I will be doing is spending more time emphasizing the facility renewal fund and our aging facilities. Remember two years ago in 2019 at our Congregational Meeting we approved and committed to raising the necessary funds to proactively replace and repair things like our doors and parking lot, electrical panels and A/C units, an aging roof and old plumbing.

Pastor's Report (cont'd)

I realize we ask much of you all just with our regular giving, but we are asking everyone to go an extra mile for a few years. It is vital to the future of Grace, but also a sign of trust and hop in God that we will continue to serve our community for decades to come. I expect that we will be doing some of those upgrades in 2022 with the funds we do have, but we need all of you to help if we are going to complete all the projects that need to be done.

Even with some uncertainty, what I, and we, can count on is God's continuing and ever-present grace and love. God has been faithful and steadfast to Grace for well over six decades! All that we have and have ever done is all thanks to Him. And I will continue to encourage us all to fulfill the call our Lord places on His churches not just proclaim the Gospel with our words but to also proclaim the Gospel by our actions.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Steve

President's Report

Happy New Year Grace Family!

As I sit here and review the 2021 year, I can say we started off kind of rough; still working through the lingering effects of the Covid-19 "winter surge," we all soon learned to lean into a "new normal" in our daily lives. For some of you, there was loss of life and for some, new lives added to your families. Here at Grace, we were able to celebrate Easter Sunday together in person, after a year apart, but it was a bit longer before we could be back in the Sanctuary.

Throughout this 18 – 24 month-long ordeal of COVID, you all have been so faithful to our God and the church family. It is such a blessing to be part of a church family that loves God and each other so deeply. Your faithfulness to the ministry of Grace has allowed us to continue the ongoing business of Grace, and to ensure that we were able to open our doors when the time was right. For that, the Church Council and I thank you. It looks like we will end the year again without a deficit: a testament to your tithing and giving.

This past year, many things needed replacing. Our office computer and the overhead projector officially died and were replaced. The computer used for the music and visuals during worship died and was replaced. The printer in the office is being replaced, as it too is dying. We were able to complete these purchases with some good price hunting and with our FRF – Facility Renewal Fund monies. Other projects that we were able to complete included: upgrading the electrical box for the Fellowship Hall and installing air conditioning thanks to a grant from the SWCA Synod; installing a protective cage around the air conditioner (to protect the copper wires from being stolen); and an electric security gate for the preschool. Some projects that were not elective - like the plumbing leak into the Preschool's Room 3 - took a couple months to remedy.

President's Report (cont'd)

We also acquired a MEVO camera, tablet, and tripod in order to be able to live-stream Sunday services to Facebook and upload an edited version to our Youtube channel, in order to allow friends and family who can't join us in person to worship with us.

For the 2022 year, I am sure we will see another new normal. We all are going through something that has not been seen in 100 years. Change is a constant in our daily lives, however one thing for us as Christians never changes, and that is God's love for us. We are His, He has claimed us, and He is with us through EVERYTHING. Knowing this has been such a comfort to me during some of the more uncertain times of this pandemic. I pray that you will cling to this knowledge in your own life and will always find comfort and peace in His Love.

To the Grace Family, I will be stepping down as your President in 2022. I thank you for your love and support over the last few years. It has been my honor and privilege to serve God and the Family of Grace in this way. I will continue as a member of Church Council, just not as your President. Please continue to keep the council members in your prayers as we discern God's will for Grace and make the best business decision we can for Grace.

Stay well, stay safe, and be blessed beyond measure,

In His Service
Judy McGee
Church Council President

Director of Music & Worship's Report

No lists this year, so there's that.

2021 began with the announcement that our organist, Pedro, was moving to Maryland. He was a huge part of the worship team, and he has been missed.

UPGRADES!

As we moved into the sanctuary for worship again, we realized how faint the picture was with the projector. Eventually, it got so bad that we just stopped using it and went with a more detailed, printed bulletin. Discussion was had over whether we should replace the projector with a new one, or go with TV monitors. We decided to go for the monitors; however after evaluation; we learned that wasn't possible, so we went with a new projector. I literally had tears in my eyes the first time I saw the picture. We also replaced the old worship computer with a new Chromebook laptop. I'm still learning how to use it and the Slides app. So when you hear just a single note followed by an audible, "Ok..." from behind the organ, that may be why.

Director of Music & Worship's Report (cont'd)

Midway through this year we stopped doing the prerecorded worship services since we were allowed to be inside again. However we also felt that this left a void for people that either had grown accustomed to or preferred to have an online worship experience with Grace at home. Initially we tried streaming using the worship service using a tablet on a custom mount that Ken had made. The video and sound quality were rough, to put it politely. We had to do better.

Enter the MEVO. After going over many options, we may have found the most user friendly and cost effective system for livestreaming the services. For the most part it works really well, with very few exceptions. Like Christmas Eve, because of course it didn't work for Christmas.

Too bad too, we had an actual little choir for Christmas this year. Maybe we will try that again in the future. Just be ready for Lindi Otte's proactive recruiting in March.

All in all, we had to learn a lot this year, and we are looking forward to the blessings that God has in store for us in 2022

Jeffrey M. Saltonstall
Director of Music Ministries

Grace Praise Band:

Jeffrey M. Saltonstall – guitar, bass, and vocals, Johna Stienstra – percussion and vocals, Lindi Otte – guitar and vocals, Mitch McCabe - guitar, Milo McCabe - drums, Marty Spradly – drums

Psalm Team:

Brian Akey, Jeffrey M. Saltonstall, Johna Stienstra, Lindi Otte, Mary Encabo

Grace Recording Team:

Samantha Henderson - Lead video editing and publishing, Spencer Otte - Lead video and audio recording, video editing, Jeffrey M. Saltonstall and Johna Steinstra – second unit video and audio recording.

Worship and Music Committee Chairperson:

Brian Akey

Special thanks to Geek Squad from Best Buy in Hastings Ranch for acquiring and setting up the new worship projector; to Johna Stienstra for helping with the new worship computer; for the volunteers manning the MEVO; and to the choir volunteers for Christmas Eve.



Preschool/Infant Care Center Director's Report

2021 was our 46th year in ministry for preschool and 6th year for our Infant Care. During this time we have been able to provide a caring, learning Christian environment for our community's children.

It has been a trying time for most people and businesses during the pandemic, but we continue to move forward and do the best that we can. Staffing has been challenging this year, but our current staff is doing a fantastic job and pitching in working longer hours as they are available.

Our usual holiday events were cancelled due to the pandemic.

In September we had a leak in the crib room of our infant center. Thank God after seven weeks, all repairs were completed and put back to much need use. As an extra layer of security, in November we installed a coded mechanism to the front gate. Only with people with the code will be able to enter the facility.

We are very thankful to the many people who give their time to help in caring for our pre-school. Dave Brown has been instrumental in keeping things going around our facility and is a great leader with a kind heart. Wendy Snyder continues her gracious monthly donation for the gardener here at the pre-school. Thank you to our church and congregation for your continued prayers. We are blessed by God's graces.

Please continue to pray for the end of the pandemic, success and safety of our church and school.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Arreguin
Pre-School Director

Minister of Education's Report

This is my annual report for the Grace Lutheran Preschool and Infant Care Center. It has been a much better year than last, but we are still very cautious with COVID as well as visitors coming to the campus.

Miss Christy, our Director, has worked diligently throughout last year and this year. We are currently at four teachers, as well as Miss Christy. We are blessed with our Director and the group of teachers we have. Our enrollment is at about 20 families in the preschool and about 9 families in the infant care center.

All of the usual events and festivities of a normal year have not happened. Church services at Grace have returned to indoors in the sanctuary with masks while indoors. There has been no Sunday school for the kids as there have been no kids, so we miss them and the services Amber Brown performed for us as the Sunday School Director.

Please continue to remember the Preschool and Infant Care Center as well as Grace Lutheran Church in our prayers.

In His service,
Dave Brown

Prayer Group Report

The prayer group has had a very busy year. Throughout the COVID Crisis and inability to meet in person, we were able to maintain contact with each other and most of all the Faith that God remained was with those on our prayer list.

Meetings of the group are at 10:00 a.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month in Room 6. Prayer requests should include a diagnosis, or reason for need, and will be in our list for about 4 weeks unless we receive a monthly update on condition. We would like to be informed of ongoing need in the case of a terminal or long lasting illness.

Also, please notify us of any death so that can pray for the family. Please feel free to request prayers anytime by phone, text, or email.

I, personally want to thank the prayer group for their dedication and availability to our congregation. Gathering in prayer is exemplary of our Faith. God is always there, when we reach out to him.

Please know the group is available for all requests anytime day or night. Requests should indicate if you wish the need for prayers are to be kept confidential and not published in the Sunday bulletin. An example of these needs may be an addiction, marital, or any issue that is not to be discussed outside of our group, but that our group will equally be praying for. We will always support our Grace congregation.

Send requests by email to blarini@hotmail.com or at (626) 926-3084, submit on the web at www.gracecovina.org, or write the request on the attendance cards on Sunday morning.

Submitted by
Bonnie Larini

A.C.T.I.O.N. Food Pantry Report

This has been another challenging year for the A.C.T.I.O.N. Food Pantry due to the necessary changes needed to comply with the COVID pandemic protocols.

Our clients have doubled. We now serve approximately 50 – 60 clients every day we are open. Because most clients are collecting for their households, that means we are feeding about 200 people. Each client is provided with a nutritionally balanced box of food valued at over \$100.

During the year we also have three special distributions. We gave out 287 Easter baskets with complete ham dinners; 347 Thanksgiving boxes with complete turkey dinners; and for Christmas we passed out over 300 tamale dinners.

A.C.T.I.O.N. Food Pantry Report (cont'd)

We need to thank many people and companies that allow us to continue this vital community service.

Thanks to our member congregations who have realized the increased need and have in turn increased their food and monetary donations.

Thanks to the City of West Covina who gave us a \$30,00 grant for the fiscal year 2020-2021 and a \$20,000 grant for the fiscal year 2021-2022.

Thanks to Porto's Bakery for continuing to provide us with bakery products every night.

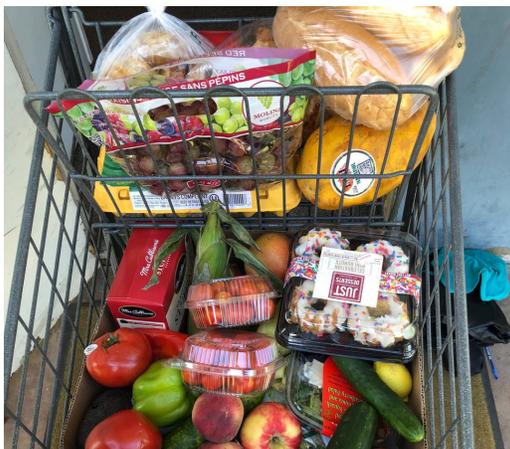
Thanks to our grocery store suppliers, who have substantially increased the amount of food they donate to us. Their generosity, plus that of Porto's, has allowed us to expand our program to providing food to various homeless shelters, food banks, and other organizations that provide meals to the needy.

Last but not least, a very special thanks to our volunteers, managers, and board members for their continued hard work and support. We would not have this wonderful ministry without them.

It has been a very busy and fulfilling year. Thanks to God for providing us with the wisdom and strength to do this work.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Miller
Board Secretary



2022 Budget

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
PROPOSED BUDGET 2022

	Budget <u>2021</u>	Budget <u>2022</u>
Income		
Envelope Offering	142,200	138,800
Non-Envelope Offering	1,000	970
Initial Offering	100	100
Preschool Donation	9,000	9,000
EGM Rent	7,800	18,200
Apostolic Assembly	4,050	5,400
AA/Alanon	600	0
Food Pantry Benevolence	3,250	3,500
Food Pantry Electric Reimb.	5,100	7,000
Total Income	173,100	182,970
Expenses		
Wages / Salaries	40,000	39,000
Payroll Taxes	3,060	3,000
Pastor's Salary	12,000	13,800
Pastor's Housing	46,000	46,000
Pastor's Professional Expense	200	200
Pension, Medical Insurance	17,400	17,600
Supply Pastor Wages	0	450
Workers Comp Insurance	1,750	1,300
Live Scan	200	0
Continuing Education	500	500
Total Personnel Costs	121,110	121,850
Advertising	0	0
Dues & Subscriptions	0	0
Office Expenses/Supplies	500	250
Supplies	250	100
Conferences	2,000	1,000
Parish Education - Adult	700	500
Parish Education - Child	0	100
Offering Envelopes	0	350
Bank Charges	350	350
Paypal Fees	0	400
Website	350	350
Worship & Music	1,000	1,000
Telephone	3,250	3,250
Computer & IT	300	200
Taxes & Licenses	0	0
Total Operating Expenses	8,700	7,850

2022 Budget (cont'd)

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
PROPOSED BUDGET 2022

	Budget <u>2021</u>	Budget <u>2022</u>
Building Maintenance	0	0
Property Taxes	2,400	2,500
Security	900	950
Gardening	2,640	3,000
Janitorial Supplies	1,500	1,000
Pest Control	1,020	1,020
Insurance	5,900	5,900
Utilities	20,000	21,000
Equipment Repairs	0	0
Total Facility Costs	34,360	35,370
So Cal West Synod	6,600	8,400
Central City Lutheran Mission	0	0
Food Pantry	3,250	3,500
Lutheran Disaster Reponse	0	0
PLTS Seminary Fund	0	0
Missionary Support	0	0
Local Benevolence (Ben Lomond)	0	0
Other Benevolence Expenses	8,000	6,000
Total Benevolence	17,850	17,900
Total Expenses	182,020	182,970
Net Surplus	-8,920	0

Change and the need for creativity have become constants over the last year and a half in many aspects of life, including the church. This was the case for **Living Christ Lutheran Church** in Flagstaff, Ariz., even before a global pandemic caused many of us to rethink what it means to be church. Generosity from all three expressions of the ELCA (the churchwide organization, the Grand Canyon Synod and members of Living Christ) helped turn a congregation “on the road out of town, near the mall” into an online presence reaching over 500 people a week from Phoenix to the Philippines. (Read more about Living Christ in the current issue of “**Stories of Faith in Action**” at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).)

Many other congregations have found new ways to connect both when in-person worship was impossible and when congregations began to return to their sanctuaries. Generosity, especially through Mission Support, helped us find and support these new ways of being connected. Early in the pandemic, ELCA Worship launched the “Worship in the Home” webpage, with Scripture, hymn links, prayers and reflections for each

Sunday. These resources were and continue to be used in congregations across the ELCA—even at **Sitka Lutheran Church** in Alaska, whose members printed and hand-delivered “Worship in the Home” resources to fellow members without internet access.

Change and creativity have taught us many things. As Pastor Sandra Rudd of Sitka Lutheran Church noted, “The pandemic was a stark illustration of the fact that the church is not a building. A lot of people say that, but we didn’t fully know it until we didn’t have a building to use. We learned that there are many ways to be connected as the church.” Throughout the pandemic, the ELCA has changed and adapted, doing ministry in new and creative ways, because of the generosity of its members. Even now, you may be gathering in a new way for your annual meeting, to discern how you will steward the gifts shared generously with your congregation to do ministry in your community and beyond. As you have these important conversations, remember that your gifts of time, talent and resources have helped create new spaces beyond our walls and buildings where we continue to worship, serve and love God and each other.

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

