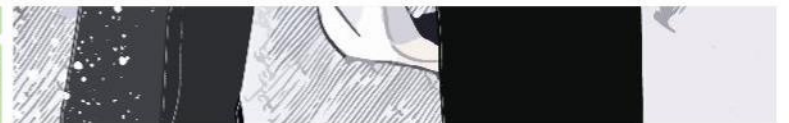


ANNUAL REPORT

— 2020 —



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.





A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear friends in Christ,

This year has been a challenging one! The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the church and society. We have had to shift the ways we engage in ministry from a focus on in-person worship and meetings to livestream worship, virtual meetings and gatherings in the parking lot. We have had to shift to teaching children at home and working from home. We have not been able to travel to see friends or relatives or to celebrate life events. This has also been a time to address economic and social justice issues, to shift our thinking and our way of life.

In times such as this, our baptism in Christ makes a difference and makes us different. Like Christians before us, we recall that God is faithful to God's promises and God's people. We see that God enables us to connect with one another even when we are separated. Shifts in the world invite us to be innovative in how we do God's work and reach out to all ages in making disciples. We see that God is at work not only in our buildings but beyond them as well. We have found new ways to serve our neighbors and reach those in need.

As we experience this time of uncertainty, we sense something new emerging. In many places there are new strategies and renewed energy for ministry, often generated by emerging leaders. We have developed a framework to build on, and now is the time to engage in hard work together. As you do in your congregation, we want our collaborative efforts to be both faithfully thoughtful and sustainable. We want to build up the body of Christ today and for the future.

Looking across the church, I am grateful for your generous giving of time, talents and resources. Yes, God does continue to bless us! God will provide both relief from life's struggles and hope for a stronger church, God's church. We do not need to know how the future will unfold. As members in the body of Christ, we need only trust that God is with us and will provide.

Building up the body of Christ together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The script is cursive and elegant.

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

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." —Ephesians 4:11-16



2020 Annual Report of Grace Lutheran Church

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Chesapeake, VA 23325
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*We are a community
of believers in Christ
called to be servants to all people.*

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A video version of the annual report is available on the Grace Lutheran YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXTK3dXcF51ppAlATyniMpg>

Dear Members & Friends of Grace Lutheran Church,

While 2020 was a challenging year for all of us, we have much to give thanks for, starting with praise and thanksgivings for all the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. As the COVID pandemic took hold in our communities, we did not know what the future would hold for us. But instead of succumbing to fear and anxiety, we adapted. Thanks to the hard work and leadership of Pastor Leslie, Morgan Hatfield, and a dedicated team of volunteers, our worship and music quickly transitioned to digital media. Our Bible studies followed, as did our business meetings. In time, as we better understood how to mitigate the threat of the virus and how to protect ourselves and our community, we reopened our Food Pantry, the pre-school opened, and we cautiously began limited in-person events. And throughout, our faith, given to us freely by the Holy Spirit, held us together as a community of believers, allowed us to continue our mission, and filled us with a truly generous spirit. The same Holy Spirit will lead us and help us as we adapt to the changes that will certainly come. I am excited for our future together, as we work to make a difference in our community.

May the peace of Christ be with you always!

Rich Fraenkel
2020 Council President

Grace Lutheran Church—2020 Council



Back row (L to R): David Pritchard, Jacob Evans, Rich Fraenkel, Alex Cloud, Bob Masters
Front row (L to R): Kathie Rokitski, Wall Anderson, La Quita Opperman, Casey Calkins

Membership

New Members Welcomed

9 Adults
7 Children/Youth

Membership
(as of 12/31/2020)

Baptized 192
Confirmed 161
Voting Members 113

1 Member Died

1 Youth Confirmed



2 Children Baptized



2020 Annual Meeting on Zoom



Pastor Leslie's Report

Virginia Synod & Tidewater Conference Events

- * Weekly VA Synod Rostered Ministers Worship & Check-in
 - * E.P.I.C Conference
- * Gathering of the Ministerium
 - * Boundary Training
- * Served on VA Synod Council
- * Served as a First Call Ministry Partner
- * Monthly Conference Meetings



Continuing Education

- * "Ministry in a Digital Age" Webinars
- * ELCA Coaching Weekly Zoom Conversations
- * Lifelong Learning at VTS—eFormation 2020 Webinars

On Parental Leave from May 4- June 28

1 House Blessing

1 Memorial Service

1 Wedding Officiated



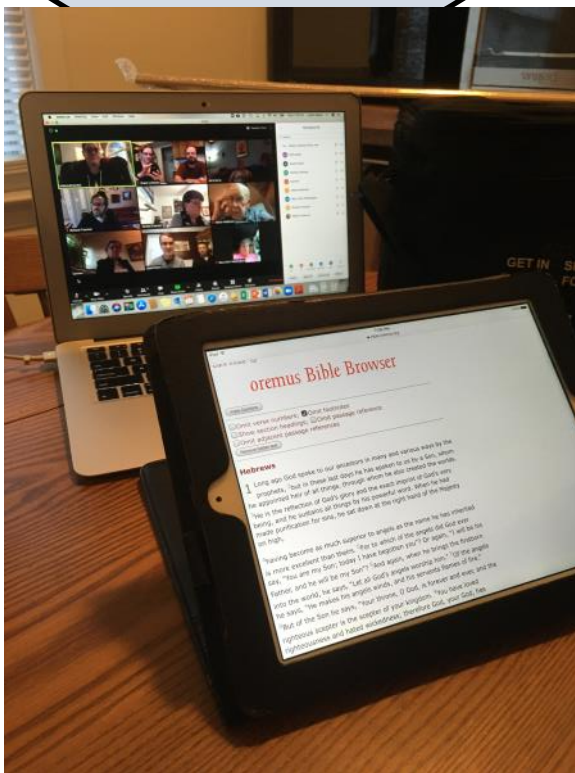
Christian Education



Christian Education (all on Zoom starting in March)

- * Adult Sunday School
- * Children's Sunday School
- * Youth Sunday School
- * Brown Bag Bible Study
- * Wednesday Night Bible Study

The Children's Sunday School Class recorded a **Christmas Pageant**, which was written by Joy Baltero and premiered to the congregation on Zoom.



There was no Vacation Bible School in 2020, due to COVID-19

Women's Ministries

Ladies Lunch was held in January & February, but was then put on hold due to COVID-19.



Sister-Sisters met bi-monthly for fellowship and Bible Study. For most of the year, this happened via Zoom.

The **Women's Christmas Lunch** was held on Zoom

Property & Maintenance

Major Projects of 2020

- * Windows were added to doors of the Preschool Director's Office, Pastor's Office, and the Conference Room
- * The Big Cross in front of the building was repainted
- * The window over the organ, which had been cracked for years was replaced
 - * All exterior doors were repainted
- * A pathway was installed from the parking lot to the back door of the Education wing
 - * The playground equipment was replaced

Men's group met most months for a potluck breakfast and work around the church.



Food Pantry

The Food Pantry distributed **111,356 lbs of food** to **3,529 individuals**.

The need for food is great, and we are **averaging 27 families** receiving food each week.

Beginning Balance: \$9,796.17
Amount of Donations: \$8,234.50
Expenses: \$6,122.71
Ending Balance: \$11,907.96

We have a dedicated group of **10 volunteers on Mondays** for distribution and **8 volunteers on Fridays** to pick up food.



The Food Pantry distributed **tooth brushes, tooth paste, bars of soap, and wash clothes** to clients to promote good hygiene with the help of a **\$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant**.

31 Christmas Baskets were distributed to families in need in the community with the help of a **\$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant**.

The Food Pantry received a **\$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant** to help restock the shelves after Christmas.

The Food Pantry received a **\$2,000 donation from the Stanley Blaxton Foundation** which is located in Chesapeake. The donation assisted with purchasing a new freezer and purchasing food from the Food Bank.



Due to COVID-19, the food pantry was closed from the middle of March through June. After making several changes to better mitigate the risk to our volunteers and clients, the pantry re-opened in July.

Other Outreach

Mission Support
(offerings passed on to VA Synod and ELCA)

\$23,112
(~10% of our income)

\$100 in donations were passed along to **ELCA Good Gifts**

Household items (toilet paper, soap, etc.) were distributed to members of the local community with the help of a **grant from LDR and the VA Synod.**

Over 100 toys were collected and donated to **Toys for Tots.**

The Threaders did not meet most of 2020 due to COVID-19.

The Book Ministry was not able to distribute books for most of 2020 due to COVID-19.

School Supplies were distributed to members of the local community with the help of a **\$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant.**

3 Prayers Shawls were distributed

We collected items and tied no-sew fleece blankets for **journey bags** for children in the foster care system.

Building Use Groups

- * Alcoholics Anonymous
- * American Sewing Guild
- * Good Mourning Support Group
- * Tidewater Alliance of Composers
- * Up Center: Social Skills & Autism Group

Members/friends were encouraged to do service projects at home for **God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday.**



Stewardship

We coordinated **Cottage Meetings** (Dec 2019-Jan 2020) in which all members of the congregation were encouraged to meet with a small group at the home of one of the Stewardship committee members to talk about stewardship in general and specifically how each member can be supported in their efforts giving of their time, talents, and treasures.

The Stewardship Committee sent out **personally written notes to each household** of Grace to check in and to request the submission of stories about how they had shared their time, talents, and treasures during COVID-19.

Coordinated and hosted two **American Red Cross blood drives**, on May 30 collecting 24 units of life saving blood and on Oct 31 collecting 27 units.



American Red Cross

Thank you!



Grace Lutheran Church

Sponsor Group

October 31, 2020

Date of Drive

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 27 | 4 |
| Total Number of Donors | First Time Donors |
| 27 | 81 |
| Units Collected | Potential Number of Lives Saved |

When you made the decision to host a blood drive, you helped change lives.

© 2018 The American Red Cross | 191011

Worship & Music

Special Worship Services

Ash Wednesday (attendance: 48)
 Maundy Thursday (attendance on Zoom: 34)
 Good Friday (attendance on Zoom: 40)
 Animal Blessing
 Service of Lament & Hope
 Family Christmas Eve Service (attendance on Zoom: 37)
 Candlelight Christmas Eve Service (attendance on Zoom: 39)

Bell Choir, Praise Team, and other special music was put on hold due to COVID-19.

Average Sunday Worship Attendance (In-person/Pre-COVID)

| | |
|---------------|----|
| Early Service | 33 |
| Late Service | 35 |

The average Sunday Worship attendance on Zoom was 60.

Newly hired **Minister of Music, Morgan Hatfield,** jumped in with both feet on January 1st. The specifics of his position drastically changed because of COVID-19.



Guest Preachers

The Rev. Jean Bozeman
 The Rev. Dennis Buchholz
 The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick
 The Rev. Dr. John T. Myers
 The Rev. Debra Thompson
 The Rev. John Wertz

We fasted from **Holy Communion** March 22nd through the end of September, but resumed celebrating the sacrament during Zoom Worship in October.



Youth



1 youth & 1 adult attended Winter Celebration

Other VA Synod youth events were cancelled or held on Zoom due to COVID-19.



The youth helped collect **690 items** for the Food Pantry as part of the **Souper Bowl of Caring** with the help of a \$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant

A blue poster with yellow and white text. At the top, it says "THANK YOU!" in large yellow letters. Below that, it says "Grace Lutheran Chesapeake Youth's 2020 Collection raised: \$416 and 690 food items". A large "2020" is in the background. At the bottom, it says "February 2, 2020" and "souperbowl.org". There is also a logo for "SOUPER BOWL OF CARING".

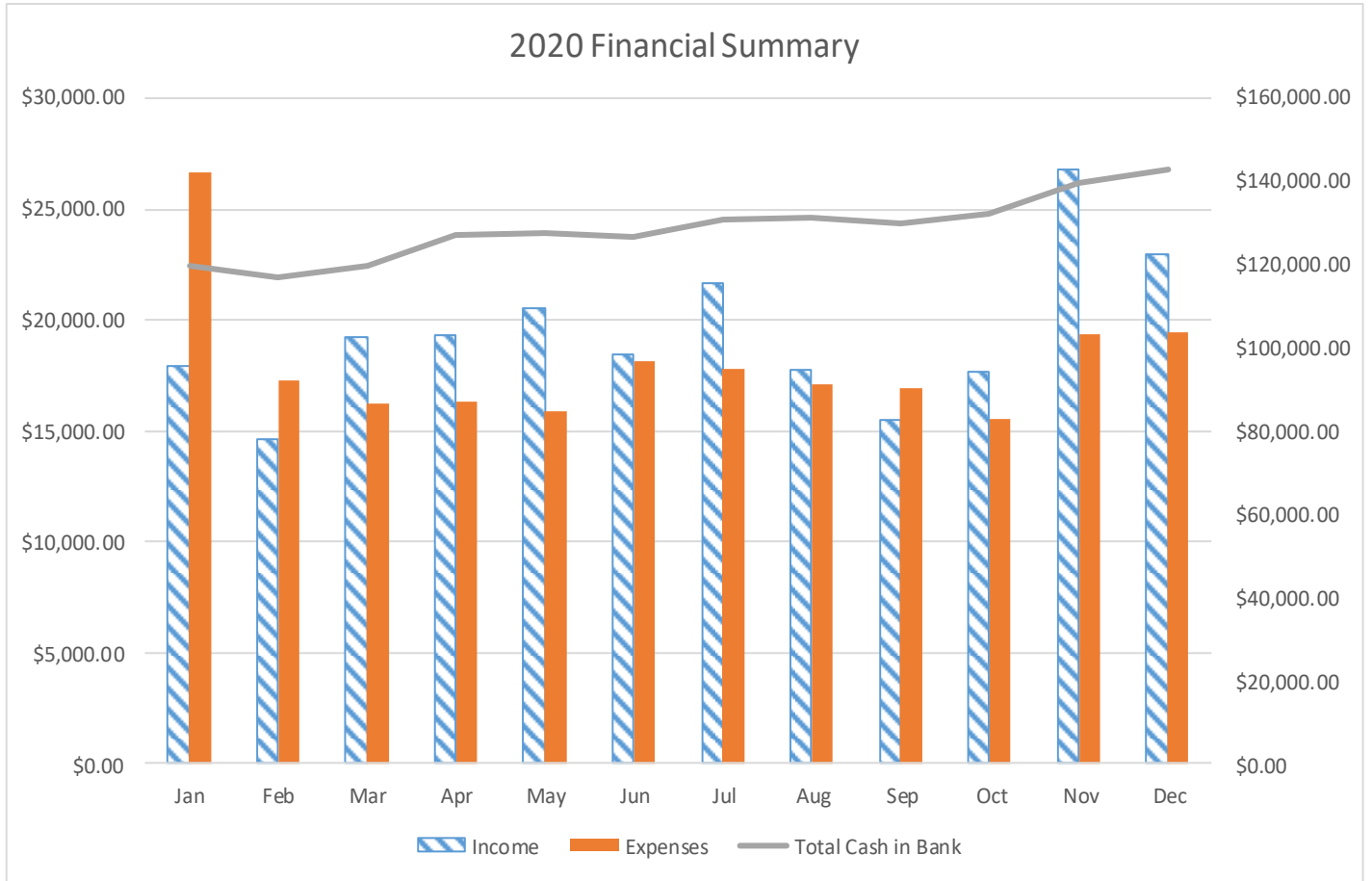
THANK YOU!
Grace Lutheran Chesapeake Youth's 2020 Collection raised:
\$416 and 690 food items
Thanks to your efforts this year, more dollars have been raised, more lives have been changed and the nation has seen the impact of people working together to help those in need. Thank you for working to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.
SOUPER BOWL OF CARING
souperbowl.org
February 2, 2020

The youth raised **\$416 for the Food Pantry at the Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper**, thanks to a \$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant.



Financial Report

Numbers below are as of December 31, 2019



Notes about 2020 Financial Summary:

- * Large expense in January was the purchase of the new copier
- * Large income in November was partly due to cashing out a Life Insurance gift to pay for the A/V Upgrade in the sanctuary

Restricted Fund Balances

This money is included in the "total cash in bank" numbers in the graph above

Hubert Memorial: \$11,612
 Growing in Grace: \$33,466
 Memorial Fund: \$417
 Sabbatical Fund: \$5,000

Endowment Fund

Balance as of 12/31/2020:
 \$139,540.20

Mortgage

Beginning Balance: \$47,389
 Ending Balance: \$ 31,537



Grace Preschool

COVID-19 cut the 2019/20 School Year short in March 2020.

The Preschool reopened in September 2020 serving 20 children (ages 2-5), following strict protocols for sanitation and social distancing.



Offering a Preschool Program during a Pandemic meant keeping things simple, and adapting some of our traditions. The social-emotional development of children and their academic readiness for Kindergarten remained our primary focus.



Our Toddler Room got new furnishings and materials.



Our colorful **new playground equipment** was designed for active young learners. Fresh air and unstructured, active play was an important part of every day.



Weekly Chapel lessons, Bible stories, and songs helped us learn about God's love!



Children collected canned food donations for the Church Food Pantry and created art to share with Seniors in the community and Meals on Wheels.

BISHOP'S REFLECTIONS: VIRGINIA SYNOD MINISTRY AND MISSION IN 2020

FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Since, then, we have such a hope [through Christ Jesus] we act with great boldness . . . (2 Cor 2:13)
Because we are saved, called and empowered by God who is FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING, we are free to be and do likewise!

2020 was a year of remarkable change, loss, and growth for our Synod.

We began the year gathering around the Synod for the E.P.I.C (*Effective Practices for Innovative Congregations*) events, gathering over 250 leaders together at St. Paul, Hampton, Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg, and Christ, Roanoke for conversation and learning. At the time, we did not know that the E.P.I.C events would be among the last large in-person Synodwide gatherings in 2020.

In response to the pandemic, the Synod Office recommended suspending in-person gatherings for a few weeks to help flatten the curve, but sadly what we hoped would be a short pause quickly became an extended time of physical distancing that continues today.

While the pandemic may have paused indoor worship, the creativity, boldness, and faithfulness which emerged in 2020 was remarkable. In a matter of weeks, congregations embraced digital ministry and began offering worship online, opening the door to new ministry opportunities. We hope to help expand digital ministry in our congregations and Synod in the years ahead.

The Virginia Synod and the Churchwide organization provided grants for feeding ministries and technology. Congregations and individuals from around the Synod provided Wifi for Minnick School Students and Bibles for our newest congregation, Micah Street Church in Fredericksburg. Synod Assembly was cancelled, but Power in the Spirit, Youth Events, and the Gathering of the Ministerium moved online. Even though we were not in the same physical space, we were the church together.

While 2020 has left me feeling more generally constrained than anytime I can recall, I have realized that we have the freedom to be bold in our witness to the Gospel. As I look around the Synod, I see remarkable creativity and faithfulness.

- ✓ COVID-19 has dominated our lives and changed our world in many ways. The Office of the Bishop has consistently made recommendations to the Synod and applied those standards to our Staff to gather **ONLY** when necessary and always as safely as possible. Currently we are urging congregations to maintain digital gatherings *only* as this most deadly wave of the coronavirus sweeps over our nation. **HOLD ON** dear Synod! Stay vigilant in your commitment to love your neighbor and care for those most vulnerable in our communities. I believe that after a few more months of vigilance to stay safe and protect others we will safely gather again in-person!
- ✓ The political and social divisions in our country have also been present in our congregations. As a church, the ELCA clearly teaches that abuses of power anywhere must be named and resisted by the church. Even as we speak against injustice, I am proud of our rostered and lay leaders who have insisted our differences need not divide us, but lead us to follow Jesus as we listen and learn from one another.

- ✓ We have commemorated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA; the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women of color and 10th anniversary and full inclusion of our rostered LGBTQIA+ siblings. We are a much stronger, more capable church because of these long overdue actions. Our Synod is richly blessed and committed to greater diversity and justice.
- ✓ 2020 has offered many opportunities for growth in our awareness of the painful injustice racism, sexism and prejudice inflict on us and our siblings. I am proud of our ELCA and Synod for calling all of us to greater understanding and bold action to end racism and injustice.
- ✓ The ELCA has reshaped the Churchwide ministry and mission based on the conviction that members, congregations, synods and the churchwide organization can best work together... focused on proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus in a church that is Welcoming, Thriving and Sustainable. The goal is, “to activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.”
- ✓ Our mission partner institutions and agencies all faced remarkable and troubling challenges in 2020. We pray for the important ministry they provide.
- ✓ We are served by remarkably gifted and dedicated servant-leaders in the Office of the Bishop! I give thanks to God for these partners in ministry and mission every day!

Many things about this year have led to significant restrictions and losses we will continue to grieve. With the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a lot of hard work, however, we have also found ways in every corner of our Synod and Church to reinvent or reform our ministry and mission to meet the challenges of these remarkable times. Exciting ministry is taking place from the smallest parish to the churchwide offices.

We, in the Office of the Bishop, treasure your partnership in the ministry and mission we share in the Virginia Synod. Thank you for your continued support, wise counsel, and ongoing prayers.

No doubt we have much left to do to be a more FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING church, but I’m proud of our accomplishments and commitment to faithfully follow Jesus and lead the way in the Virginia Synod.

In Christ, though restricted in many ways, we are *free indeed!* May our Lord continue to bless all in this new year.

Peace!
 Bishop Bob Humphrey
 Virginia Synod, ELCA



FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America