



Niles Discovery Church

Annual Report 2022

In preparation for the Annual Meeting
to be held on May 1, 2022

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Annual Meeting Agenda

Sunday, May 1, 2022

- I. Call to Order: John Smith
- II. Opening Prayer: Pastor Brenda
- III. Declaration of a Quorum: Liz Musgrave
- IV. Approval of Minutes: John Smith
 - Annual Meeting May 2, 2021
 - Annual Budget January 30, 2022
- V. Presentation of Slate: Marilyn Singer
 - Nominations from Floor: John Smith
 - Close Nominations and Vote: John Smith
- VI. New Business: New Moderator
- VII. Installation Service: Pastor Jeff and Pastor Brenda
- VIII. Benediction: Pastor Jeff
- IX. Adjournment: New Moderator

Annual Meeting Minutes

Sunday, May 2, 2021

Call to Order – by John Smith, Moderator, at 11:10 a.m.

Opening Prayer – offered by Associate Pastor Brenda Loreman

Declaration of a Quorum – Cathy West, Clerk, noted that a quorum was present with at least 49 members attending.

Approval of Minutes of past Congregational Meetings

- Minutes of Niles Discovery Church Annual Meeting, May 17, 2020 - **accepted** by majority vote
- Minutes of Budget Meeting of Niles Discovery Church, January 31, 2021 – **accepted** by majority vote

Nominations and Elections

- Presentation of Slate: Sandy Thomas, Nominating Committee – In addition to the nominations published in the Annual Report, Jim Vermazen was nominated as Auditor, and Riki Twist was nominated as a member of the Nominating Committee.
- Nominations from the Floor - **none**
- Closing Nominations
- Election – Slate elected as presented by unanimous vote

New Business introduced from the floor – John Smith, Moderator

- There was no new business. Moderator John Smith did make the following announcements:
 - START is looking at the possibility of expanding worship options to include worshipers being present in the sanctuary starting sometime in the third quarter of the year considered safe by the CDC and County.
 - The “Pray Their Names” art installation is coming back at Niles Discovery Church, hopefully, this month.

Installation Service – led by Pastor Brenda Loreman and Pastor Jeff Spencer

Benediction – offered by Pastor Jeff Spencer

Adjournment – by John Smith, Moderator, at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy West, Clerk

Annual Budget Meeting Minutes

Sunday, January 30, 2022

Call to Order – John Smith, Moderator at 11:00 a.m.

Opening Prayer – Pastor Brenda Loreman

Declaration of Quorum – Liz Musgrave, Clerk

Adopt Budget for 2022

- Financial Report of 2021 – Judy Hollowell, Treasurer
- Presentation of Proposed 2022 Budget – Judy Hollowell, Treasurer
- Discussion (including the opportunity to amend) – John Smith, Moderator
 - Doug Sojourner, earnings might be overstated due to inflation
 - Mark Twist reminded us that the budget is just a roadmap
 - Marilyn Singer brought up Legacy Fund, but we cannot be sure what we will receive from this. Pastor Jeff Spencer told us about asking people in the past to remember the church in their Trusts and Wills. Joy Barnitz spoke on this and the Endowment Funds. Barbara P. King said that if you give to the General Endowment Fund it can be used now.
- Vote – John Smith, Moderator, called for a vote on the Proposed 2022 Budget, and it passed
- Announcements - None
- Closing Prayer and Benediction – Pastor Jeff Spencer
- Adjournment – John Smith, Moderator, at 11:29 a.m.

Nominating Committee's Report

The 2021-22 Nominating Committee consists of Marilyn Singer, Riki Twist, and John Smith. Here is the Slate of Nominations provided for a vote at the May 1, 2022, Annual Meeting.

Niles Discovery Church Officers

Moderator ----- Mark Twist
Vice Moderator ----- Melissa Palleschi
Treasurer ----- Judy Hollowell
Auditor ----- Jim Vermazen
Clerk ----- Liz Musgrave

Standing Ministry Teams and Committees

Ministry of Christian Education ----- Beth Armstrong
Ministry of Evangelism ----- Cynthia Sojourner
Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship ----- Amy Gunnarson
Ministry of Property ----- Ryan Ramseyer
Ministry of Social Concerns ----- Ron Adamson
Ministry of Spiritual Life ----- Val Parker
Finance Committee ----- Barbara P King

Senior Pastor's Annual Report

I sit down to write this report on March 16, one day after a double anniversary. March 15, 2015 was the first Sunday we had worship in our newly remodeled church building at 36600 Niles Boulevard. March 15, 2020 was the last Sunday we held worship at 36600 Niles Boulevard before the COVID-19 pandemic squeezed us into our homes and we started sheltering in place.

The night before that worship service in 2020, a worship service that I encouraged people not to attend in person, and to tune into in a Zoom meeting (it's always a meeting in Zoom), this is the prayer I wrote as part of my evening spiritual practice:

I just finished the final details of the PowerPoint for tomorrow's worship service. While I have a plan, I feel that tomorrow's service is a cypher, and it will be a cypher until after the benediction. I don't know how many people will show up (just a handful, I hope). I don't know how many people will join online (several handfuls, I hope). I don't know what it will be like preaching to (I hope) a mostly empty room. I don't know what it will be like to listen to a sermon preached to a mostly empty room. I don't know if all the technical things will work out for the Zoom-casting of the service—at both our end and at the users' ends. I don't know if the sermon I've written is what people need to hear. Tomorrow's service is a cypher. And it will be until after the benediction.

And still.

And still, I sense your presence, Holy One. I sense your love cascading forth from your very being. I sense you inviting us all to ride your love's current through this valley filled with shadows.

Thank you for you love. Thank you for your invitation. Thank you for the ride. Yeehaw!

Of course, I had no idea how long we would be absent from our building. I had no idea how we would adapt. I had no idea how to organize a worship service on a virtual platform. And none of you knew what it would be like to worship online or how to transform your kitchen tables, coffee tables, and desks into worship spaces.

Somehow, we managed. We learned. We got creative. We found resources and we experimented. And we even found advantages to having services online: Online, people who have limited mobility can attend. Online, people who aren't feeling well can attend. Online, people who live out of state can attend.

Right now, as I write this report, the pandemic is in an ebb. Infections and hospitalizations have fallen. Mask mandates (though still recommended) have been lifted. However, we still have no idea how the pandemic will proceed or when we will get to an "endemic" status with SARS-CoV-2.

We had to reinvent how we do worship and much of the rest of the things we do together that make us church over the past two years of lockdown. As we move into the future with COVID-19, we need to continue this process of reinvention. (For instance, we've had about two months of experimenting with hybrid worship.) Reinvention means change and change can be difficult, emotionally and spiritually. In times of change, it is common for people to want the institutions that represent stability for them—and be church is one such institution for many people—to be unchanging in the midst of these chaotic feelings. The problem is, as society transforms, the church must, too, if it is going to remain relevant and be able to continue carrying out God's mission in the world.

Instead of looking to the church for stability, I think we should look to God for stability. I believe it is God, the Mystery in which we live and move and have our being, that is the firm foundation on which we can stand as our lives and our church evolve.

I don't know what our evolving church will look like in two years, let alone ten. I do know that how we evaluate our ministry will need to change. For instance, the metrics we look at (see the PPRC's Ministry Scorecard on pages 22-23) will shift. I know that what we expect from and how we offer Christian love, care, and support to church members will alter as we figure out how to minister with and to members who live out of state or at a long distance. As we find new ways to utilize the Internet for ministry, our whole notion of "engagement" will change.

I will be on sabbatical for three months this year. The primary purpose of a pastor's sabbatical is Sabbath rest, which I will be doing. I will also be spending time reflecting on these changes and how we might engage with them at Niles Discovery Church. Of particular interest to me is how we might experience church with even less technology. I know that sounds contradictory to what I wrote just a moment ago, though I don't think it has to be. Yes, we need to respond to God's call to ministry by harnessing and engaging the various tools of the Internet. And at the same time, I want to consider how we can be in ministry with less technology.

This curiosity is fueled by two things. First, if you polled our congregation, asking, "When people feel closest to God?" the overwhelming majority would say something like, "When I'm in nature." So, I asked myself, why aren't we doing more church stuff in nature? Second, the climate crisis continues to intensify, and I believe the church has a prophetic role to play in addressing the crisis. Perhaps, I ponder, if we were more engaged with creation on creation's terms, we would do a better job of fulfilling that prophetic role.

In her book [*Braiding Sweetgrass*](#), Robin Wall Kimmerer asks, "How, in our modern world, can we find our way to understand the earth as a gift again, to make our relations with the world sacred again?" I want to investigate how other churches are already connecting with nature, how other churches are helping their members understand the earth as a gift again, and how other churches are making their relations with the world sacred again. And I will look at how these actions are impacting their ability to carry out their prophetic role in addressing the climate crisis. I hope to bring ideas back for us to experiment with.

There are so, so many people who have stepped into leadership to help us reinvent the church, getting us through the COVID-19 crisis. While I don't think the crisis is over, I think we're headed that way. And so, I offer my deep thanks for all who helped us get this far and for all who will help us continue to experiment and invent our future as we continue to be a church that, following the example of Jesus, welcomes all people, grows in our relationships with God and each other, and serves our neighbors near and far.

Peace,

Pastor Jeff
March 16, 2022

Associate Pastor's Annual Report

It was mid-March as I sat down to begin my annual report—a month of many anniversaries. As you'll read in Pastor Jeff's report, March is the anniversary of us moving into our "new" church building, and the anniversary of our very first hybrid worship service just before we began sheltering in place (I can hardly believe it's been two years). On a personal level, it's the anniversary of my birth, and the anniversary of my relationship with Mike Foster. It's also the anniversary of the beginning of my ministry at Niles Discovery Church, when I was called to serve as your Associate Pastor and Teacher nine years ago. As I enter my tenth year here, I continue to be truly grateful to be serving this church.

Just as the 2020-21 program year was a year of transitions and new learning, the 2021-22 program year has also provided fresh challenges to our church community. One of the ministries I had undertaken in 2020-21 because of the pandemic was managing the music ministry for our Zoom worship services. In September of 2021, anticipating our ability to initiate hybrid worship and bring the choir back, we hired Michael Morales to serve as Interim Music Director, and I was able to step back from managing and selecting music for worship after a full year of doing so (we thought it would only be six months—go figure!). I was grateful to have been able to add this to my portfolio, but I'm even more grateful to have Michael as part of our worship team. He brings excellent musicianship and fresh energy to our music ministry and worship life, and I'm looking forward to seeing how our music ministry blossoms under his care.

One of the areas of my portfolio that has continued to be a struggle to manage well during this time of ongoing pandemic has been evangelism. This due in part to the fact that we have had no functioning Ministry of Evangelism Team for nearly two years, and the fact that I haven't yet figured out the best way to connect with Zoom attenders one-on-one during a pandemic. Fortunately, some folks have stepped up to reinvigorate our evangelism efforts, and I look forward to working with them to bring a rebirth to this vital ministry of the church.

One of the metrics I track as part of our evangelism efforts is attendance (it should be said, however, that attendance is not the only important metric!). Despite the pandemic and our long stretch of time worshiping only on Zoom, our attendance has continued to be strong. We had an average weekly attendance of 114, which has increased from an average of 97 for the previous year. One reason I believed this increase happened is that we continue to offer spiritually nurturing and sensory-rich worship, whether we are worshiping on Zoom only, in-person only, or in the hybrid worship we've been offering since January 2022. Offering hybrid worship means that folks who ordinarily would miss worship because of illness or travel or moving away are able to participate no matter where they are. At this point in the year, roughly two-thirds of our weekly attendance is on Zoom, while one-third is attending in person. Although those percentages may shift as pandemic conditions shift, I anticipate that hybrid worship is here to stay.

Another attendance-related metric that I pay attention to is the number of first-time worshippers to our Sunday service. The rule of thumb from church consultants is that in order to maintain steady growth, a church must have at least as many first timers in a year as the church has weekly average attendance at worship. In 2020, we had 96 first timers (which was a significant increase from the year before), roughly the same as our weekly attendance of 97. This year, we had a significant decrease in this metric: 52 first timers, compared to average weekly attendance of 114. Although I'm thrilled about our strong worship attendance, I hope that a reinvigorated evangelism program

will help us get those first-timer numbers back up where they belong (to read all the numbers we've kept track of from year to year, check out the Ministry Scorecard on pages 22-23.)

In this year of pandemic whiplash in our personal lives and in the life of our congregation (Let's eat in a restaurant; back to take-out only. Masks off; masks back on. Hybrid worship; back to Zoom-only), I believe we continue to not merely survive, but to truly thrive. We thrive because we are flexible, open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We thrive because, as a congregation, we have become accustomed to reinventing ourselves and embracing new technologies and new ways of being the church in our times. We thrive because we keep our focus on the things that really matter: following Jesus, welcoming all people, growing in our relationship with God and each other, and serving our neighbors here in Niles and out in the world.

Thanks be to God for this church, for its mission and values, and for each of you.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Brenda
April 2022

Moderator's Report

May the Peace of Christ be with you and yours. When I began this journey as Moderator in December 2019, after the McConville's moved to New Mexico, little did I know what lay ahead or what challenges we as a congregation would face over the next two and a half years. In less than four months the "Shelter In-Place" order was issued, and we began to learn how to live with COVID. 2021/22 continued to be a challenge for us all, but with the grace of God Niles Discovery Church has grown and prospered throughout the previous year. Many of us are choosing to be in the building for worship, practicing social distancing and wearing a mask. [MK1][JS2][BL3] Both Sybil and I contracted Covid in January 2022, even with being double vaccinated and boosted, but now are fully recovered. The Corona Virus has affected just about every aspect of our lives, not always for the worst. We continue to move through this pandemic with hope and love for a better tomorrow for us all. Our Pastors continue to pivot in leading the congregation to new ways of experiencing the worship of God with some very innovative means.

The Niles Discovery Ministry Teams, Christian Education lead by Beth Armstrong, Social Concerns lead by Alta Jo Adamson, Hospitality lead by Melissa Palleschi, Spiritual Life lead by Val Parker, and Property lead by Diane Harvey along with Mark Twist Vice-Moderator and Judy Hollowell Treasurer make up the Cabinet for Niles Discovery Church. This Cabinet, together with over 30 ministry team members has led us to very rewarding year, while allowing us to live out the Niles Discovery Mission: Following the example of Jesus, welcoming all people, growing in our relationship with God and each other, and to serve our neighbors near and far. We are very lucky to have all these dedicated people working for our Church.

A few accomplishments from our Ministry Teams:

- **Ministry of Property Team:** Improved the Audio/Visual equipment to improve our streaming ability and bring us into the 21st century; installed a new light in the front parking lot; work parties have kept our church looking great; has kept our Church safe and secure in these trying times
- **Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship Team:** Created activities that helped enforce a sense of community for us all – the Zoom Halloween Party and “Secret” Valentines; became an integral part of our worship services every week as “Cyber Greeters” and then Worship Attendants; serves Hospitality Hour after services on the patio
- **Ministry of Social Concerns Team:** Continues to find success with the monthly special offerings; supports two children in school with the recycling program; collects for Giving Seniors Hope and Laguna Commons Holiday gift cards, etc.
- **Ministry of Christen Education Team:** Continued to work with the youth throughout the year in creative ways
- **Ministry of Spiritual Life Team:** worked to ensure that worship services were well organized and effective
- Judy Hollowell, in her first year as Treasurer, reviewed our finances. She did an outstanding job of communicating with the Finance Team and Cabinet.
- We have continued working with Tri-City Volunteers Food Pantry, Clean Start Mobile Hygiene Unit that we host in our parking lot on Monday and Wednesday afternoons every week and hosted a Safe Parking Site for five vehicles for the first time.

In June 2021 we again hosted the “Pray Their Names” art installation of 160 hand-painted wooden hearts displaying the names of Black victims of racially charged murder, often killed at the hands of police. Many Church members assisted in the execution of the install. The Project was conceived by local pastor and public-school teacher Rev. Katie Morrison. It is the product of the concerted efforts of a volunteer community workforce during this moment of reckoning of the nation’s centuries-old history of systemic racism brought to the forefront by the May 25, 2020, killing of George Floyd.

The annual Pledge Campaign in the fall, led by Mark Twist was successful in reaching out to our members and gaining support for our Church for 2021. The letters, calls, and sermons all combined to make for a great outcome.

We are finding ways to continue to congregate together yet at a distance. Pastors Jeff and Brenda, with Mark Twist are showing us new ways to worship. Nilis Discovery Church is a strong and prosperous community. The leadership of our Pastors, Ministry Teams, and members will continue to Shepard us throughout the coming year. We should all look forward to growing in our understanding of God’s word and living our lives with Christ’s example.

Submitted by,
John Smith

Vice Moderator's Report

March 17, 2022

Redefining the Way of Doing Church

During the pandemic, I worked with the Pastors, the Ministry of Property Team, and the Ministry of Spiritual Life Team to develop the way we do church during the pandemic as well as defining the way we will be doing church once the shelter-in-place is lifted.

My primary focus was setting up ways that allowed people who, for whatever reason, were unable to attend church in person. Working with Mark Twist and Bill Palleschi, we consulted with Byron Miranda of Avimo, an Audio/Visual professional, to evaluate our current A/V system to determine what changes needed to be made.

There were a couple of attempts in July 2021 to produce a hybrid service and these helped us to better understand the technology needed to continue such services. The COVID-19 Delta variant forced us back to online-only worship, but we continued to develop strategies for when hybrid services could resume.

In December 2021, I applied for the position of Technology Director and was hired in January 2022. As an employee of the church, I was required to resign from the position of Vice-Moderator. Mark Twist stepped up in my stead to finish the term.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Thomas and Mark Twist

Clerk's Report

April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022

Baptisms:

Julie Marian Ballard April 4, 2021

Weddings:

Shaler Campbell and Yan Gong July 3, 2021

Funerals and Memorial Services:

Dorletta Larsen August 7, 2021

New Members added to Membership Roll:

Confession of Faith:

Julie Marian Ballard May 2, 2021

Reaffirmation of Faith:

Marigem Buenaflor McMeen May 2, 2021

Peter Folger Wilson May 2, 2021

William Chestnut May 16, 2021

Transfer:

From Associate Member to Participating Member:

Members removed from Membership Roll:

Death:

Dorletta Larsen June 24, 2021

Marjorie Fremont September 1, 2021

Marilyn Burnam September 15, 2021

Transfer:

Request:

From Active Members to Inactive Members by action of Cabinet:

From Inactive Members to Alumni by action of Cabinet:

Correction to the 2020-2021 Clerks Report:

Word came to the church office in June 2021 that Shirley Dunlap, an Inactive Member of the congregation, died on March 27, 2020. She has been removed from Inactive Member status by death.

Treasurer's Report

The 2021 Financial Report and 2022 Budget were presented at the January 30, 2022, Annual Congregational Budget Meeting. Please see that report (available in the church office) for details. Financial reports are reviewed each month with the Cabinet. All reports are subject to approval and audit.

Submitted by,
Judy Hollowell

Auditor's Report

The Niles Discovery Church Cabinet had adopted and revised the "Financial Goals and Policies" (FGP) to establish a framework to oversee the financial affairs of the church. This audit attempts to review the practices to ensure they conform to the goals and polices outlined in the FGP. The previous Treasurer has shared her notes from preceding audits which were quite helpful. The FGP has been frequently updated to clarify its meaning.

I sampled disbursements made by check and electronic transfer to ensure they were properly reviewed, approved, and recorded in the NDC accounting system. I reviewed bank and investment account statements for evidence of reconciliation and review. The bookkeeper has a well-organized documentation of each expenditure selected for review.

Since the Covid lockdown began, donations are received by mail or through online giving. The system of record keeping utilizes the church accounting software and hardcopy records of each donation received. Church members and friends of the church who make pledges receive quarterly pledge statements so they can see their contributions were received and applied to the designated purposes.

In conclusion, I believe the financial controls are well thought out and carefully applied to ensure that the resources provided are utilized as intended and that the Finance Committee and Cabinet are kept well informed.

I would like to thank our bookkeeper Cecilia Le for her patience in explaining the details to an auditor who had had little prior exposure to the operation of this church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Vermazen, Auditor

Director of Technology

None submitted.

Interim Director of Music

None Submitted.

Ministry of Christian Education Team

The Ministry of Christian Education Team has been eagerly awaiting the time when in-person worship and therefor Sunday School were safe to resume. In the meantime, we have been trying to keep contact with the children and keep them engaged through efforts like Zoom with the Kids, celebrating our graduating seniors, the continued purchasing of Heifer animals, Advent devotionals and craft supplies, and this year's Confirmation class. In addition, the annual School Supply Special Offering, Tri-city Volunteers Toy Party, and 4th grade (and older) Bible presentation on Zoom have been successful.

Our Sunday School teachers have brought their cleared worker status up to date, confirmed vaccination status, signed up for Sundays to teach, and are ready to work with the kids as families are feeling ready to return to in-person worship. To date, the Preschool class has been the most attended. We hope that more families will be ready to return to in-person worship as the weeks progress.

Our team consists of Beth Armstrong – Chair, Ingert Svård, Barbara P King, and Denise church.

Respectfully submitted by,
Barbara P King

Ministry of Evangelism Team

The Ministry of Evangelism Team does not have a chair and has been largely inactive this year. No report was submitted.

Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship Team

This was another Challenging year for the Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship Team. However, we drew on the successes of the prior year of Zoom activities, and we focused on similar events. Our goal was to keep us connected – both new and old members through these events and programs. In January of 2022 Niles Discovery Church transitioned to a Hybrid worship format, providing both in-person and Zoom options.

This year we:

- Continued the Zoom Greeter Program from April through December. With return to In Person Worship in January of 2022, the duties of Zoom Greeters were taken over by Zoom Ushers.
- Alison Kieft created a craft kit to include in the Easter 2021 bags distributed to all the children in the church by Ministry of Christian Education Team.
- Created a Worship Attendant Team in June 2021, in anticipation of returning to church starting in July. Unfortunately, Covid numbers began to increase again, and the church returned to Zoom only worship in August. With the return to In Person Worship in January the teams of four attendants for each Sunday were reactivated in January 2022 as a combination Greeter/Usher team.
- A Second Annual Zoom Halloween Event was held with contests for Best Cakes, Best Costumes and Best Hats. There was also a sing-along lead by the Henrie-Gekov Family Singers. Craft bags were again created by Alison Keift and assembled and distributed by MHF to all the children in the Church.
- The Secret Valentine Event was so popular in 2021 that we decided to hold the event again in 2022. The rules were the same, everyone that signed up was a Secret Valentine for another person and both sent and received a Secret Valentine. The Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship Team also sent valentines both physical cards and ecards to those in the church that did not sign up for the Secret Valentine Event. We wanted everyone to experience God's All-encompassing love.
- Fellowship coffee hour after church restarted on February 13, following the Secret Valentine Reveal at the end of the worship service. We have continued to have fellowship time with

cookies, coffee, tea, juice, and hot cocoa on the patio after worship each Sunday. On March 20 there was a special coffee hour to usher in spring.

- The Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship organized all the Boards and Teams to create a Welcome Home Basket for Roy Aiden Lucey-Cose, who spent his first months of life in Kaiser Neonatal. We also began a program to welcome all new babies in the church with a Lap Quilt and a Fisher Price Ark Set or Fisher Price Nativity Set. Penny Williams and Shirley Sargent were recipients this year.

Your 2021-2022 Ministry of Hospitality and Fellowship Team members have been Amy Gunnarson, Vicky Kean, Alison Kieft, Melissa Palleschi, Riki Twist, and Marilyn Vermazen.

Submitted by,
Melissa Palleschi, Chair

Ministry of Property Team

With the continued pandemic and social distancing, the Ministry of Property Team has had the opportunity to complete quite a few projects in the building. What has transpired in the last year has been incredible.

Here are some highlights to report:

- Entered into a new rental/service agreement for the office copier
- Revised the Facility Use Policies and fee schedule with final Cabinet approval
- Revised the three Facility Use Applications into a single form
- Audio and visual upgrades for our sanctuary to enhance both in person and streaming worship experiences by adding an A/V mixer, choir microphones, video cameras, and updating the microphones that were using outdated frequencies
- Fairway Heating replaced a defective blower fan motor in the storage room heater
- Recommended Cabinet to approve the PG&E offer to pay us for the natural gas pipeline easement under the east parking lot, and renting “squirrel hill” lot for three months to store materials and equipment
- Hired R Pro Electric to wire and erect an additional parking lot light in the west parking lot
- Installed a waterline to water the five new oak trees between the sidewalk and west parking lot

In addition, the Team has continued to:

- Monitor and secure the building and grounds
- Manage the office equipment

- Manage the IT and AV systems
- Manage the church building records
- Manage the parsonage property
- Manage the church storage space
- Point of contact and coordination for:
 - Weekly cleaning service
 - Weekly landscape service
 - Required inspections for the fire alarm and sprinkler systems
 - Annual inspections and servicing of the HVAC system
 - Church and parsonage property insurance
 - The fire and burglar alarm system

We wish to thank all the members of the MoP Team for their contributions of time and talent: Bill Palleschi, Ryan Ramseyer, Diane Harvey, John Smith, Tom Gunnarson, and Mark Twist.

Yours in Christ,
Mark Twist and Diane Harvey

Ministry of Social Concerns Team

The Ministry of Social Concerns Team included Rich Godfrey, Rich Gallegos, Judy Zlatnik, and Alta Jo Adamson – Chair. This year all meetings were conducted via Zoom. Some of our programs were enhanced by this necessity and others were hampered.

Surprisingly, can and bottle collection has continued to rise. Rich Gallegos has done a wonderful job again this year, collecting redeemable cans and bottles and turning them in to Tri-Ced in Union City – despite the limited gatherings in the building. MSC has once again been able to pay for both our Jamaican girl and El Salvadorean Boy from the proceeds. The team was even left with a substantial surplus, enabling us to contribute to the St. James School in Africa.

Rich Godfrey has kept us informed on the struggles of the St. James Orphanage and School, and we are waiting for a good time to make another presentation, hopefully in-person, for the whole congregation. In the meantime, our surplus can and bottle money will be given to them.

Puente de la Sur was designated as our ministry's November offering this year. The ministry retains the privilege of choosing the designated recipient each year. Judy Zlatnik will continue to select people to present the special offering each month.

Judy has been gathering information on native peoples of the US with special emphasis on the Bay Area. To this end she and Rich Gallegos have planned trips to visit various local sites. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, these trips have not come to fruition. The postponed planned trips include the Sagorea Te' land trust property, Hearst Museum of Anthropology, and Ohlone Cafe. Hopefully these can be accomplished when both we and the organizations resume in person meetings.

Randy Fewel and Judy are exploring participating in the Interfaith Coalition for Justice in the Jails. They have been collecting information and attending informational meetings. At present their participation is limited.

As we have done in the past, gift cards were given to the residents at Laguna Commons during the Christmas Season.

Even though we have not been able to do the traditional kinds of outreach we have done in the past, we are finding alternative ways to continue our ministry. We look forward to more normalized meetings in the coming year.

Submitted by,
Alta Jo Adamson, Chair

Ministry of Spiritual Life Team

In April 2021, the congregation was still worshipping via Zoom. We had a short (two service) stint at hybrid services in the fall, but due to the rise of the Delta variant of COVID we had to return to Zoom-only worship to close out the year. There was one exception, a hybrid service early on Christmas Eve.

On January 9, 2022, we were able to move to an all hybrid service model. This has allowed those who were comfortable coming into the church building to be able to do so and those who wished to stay worshipping via Zoom could.

Through all of this the Liturgical Art sub-committee has continued to be involved with the décor in the sanctuary. They continuously provide a beautiful backdrop to the inspired sermons.

For a great deal of the past year, the Pastors have been using Worship Design Studio. This has given them themes and ideas which they share with the MSL Team.

One of the biggest changes for the MSL Team was figuring out how to serve communion safely. Now communion is served in individual cups that include both bread and grape juice. These are picked up before entering the sanctuary. The best part: it's all compostable – so it can go in the appropriate bin.

The MSL Team is still involved in helping with the details of special services. We made the decision to leave some of these services on Zoom, to make life easier for our Pastors and Jim Thomas, our new Tech Guru.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Valerie Parker

Care Team

Unfortunately, due to the continued pandemic, life for the Care Team has remained quiet. We have connected with a few people by phone. Our prayers are that in 2022 we will be able to rebuild the team and that visiting those who need us will be safer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Valerie Parker

Finance Committee

Members: Tom Gunnarson, Judy Hollowell, Barbara King, Bob Monkman, Beth Rasler, and Michael Thomson

The 2021 Financial Report and 2022 Budget were presented at the January 30, 2022, Annual Congregational Budget Meeting via Zoom. Please see that report (available in the church office) for details. Financial reports are reviewed each month with the Cabinet. All reports are subject to approval and audit.

Submitted by,
Judy Hollowell, Treasurer

Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC)

The Pastor Parish Relations Committee is one of the six standing committees of the church. Its membership is appointed by the Cabinet, with its members asked to serve three-year terms. The current committee is comprised of Ken Rasler (term ended in June 2021); Inger Svaerd (term ending in June 2022); and Leonard Lloyd (term ending in June 2023) and, of course, our pastors.

The PPRC meets, at least, every other month, with additional meeting scheduled if needed to fulfill its charge: “to encourage healthy relationships between the Pastor(s) and members of the Church and within the Church.” We are pleased to say that, despite all the challenges we have faced personally and as a community, relationships within the church between members and our pastors are, as far as we can tell, healthy. We are concerned that our pastors have continued to work many, many hours beyond their official calls during this year of pandemic. At the same time, we recognize that our pastors’ work has been deeply appreciated by our congregation.

We take it upon ourselves each fall to compile data about our church in a “ministry scorecard.” See pages 22-23 for these data points. We think they show interesting trends and clarify some of the ways the pandemic has impacted our ministry.

Ministry Scorecard	9/1/2013	9/1/2014	9/1/2015	9/1/2016	9/1/2017	9/1/2018	9/1/2019	9/1/2020	9/1/2021
Average weekly attendance for year ending Sept. 1	83	68	75	86	82	78	77	97	114
Total number of "Participating Members"	120	130	129	120	137	128	129	119	121
Total number of "Associate Members"	12	6	4	2	5	4	5	6	6
Total number of Active Participants ("Active" means worshiped at least 5 times or gave money in past year.)	175	177	160	210	244	185	218	205	234
% of Active Participants who can articulate a clear sense of vision and purpose for the church (PPRC will look at "Active" list and guess who can.)	144 people 82%	133 people 75%	139 people 87%	125 people 59%	191 people 78%	137 people 74%	155 people 71%	171 people 83%	164 people 70%
% of Active Participants active in the full life of the church ("Full life" means worships at least 12 times and gave money and is in a small group in the past year.)	55 people 31%	52 people 29%	66 people 41%	73 people 35%	67 people 35%	77 people 42%	87 people 40%	90 people 44%	70 people 30%
% of Participating Members who have been members for fewer than 2 years	18 people 13.6%	7 people 4.02%	6 people 3.75%	24 people 20%	29 people 21%	15 people 12%	10 people 8%	10 people 8%	6 people 5%
% of Active Participants who are under age 40	39 or 22%	31 or 18%	21 or 13%	30 or 14%	41 or 17%	24 or 13%	41 or 19%	37 or 18%	44 or 19%
% of Active Participants who are not European-American	9.7%	11%	15 or 9.4%	14 or 6.6%	25 or 10%	16 or 9%	18 or 8%	22 or 11%	24 or 10%
% of budget dedicated facilities	19.90%	25%	15.34%	20.91%	18.57%	17.74%	19.47%	18.63%	19.69%
% of budget dedicated to staff	65.20%	69%	72.51%	73.09%	71.62%	77.16%	72.91%	73.10%	72.13%
% of budget dedicated to other ministry	14.90%	6%	12.15%	6%	9.81%	5.10%	7.62%	8.27%	8.18%
Special Offerings giving:	no count	no count	\$ 14,300.00	\$16,311	\$16,073	\$17,542	\$18,750	\$24,132	\$19,116
Other non-budget giving - total given*	no count	no count	\$135,756.16*	\$67,250*	\$30,384	\$14,589	\$20,446	\$46,537	\$15,665
Non-budget giving - number of ways (including spec. offerings)	no count	no count	17	15	28	28	29	20	20
Number of externally focused ministry opportunities vs internally focused management opportunities (ministry opportunity = caring for others; management opportunities = caring for institution. PPRC will make a list annually.)	25 ministry 20 management	34 ministry 23 management	31 ministry management	42 ministry 30 management	46 ministry 31 management	48 ministry 34 management	53 ministry 40 management	52 ministry 38 management	38 ministry 36 management
Number of followers on Facebook fan page	107	147	185	248	253	291	344	404	429
Number of followers in Facebook group	49	53	66	77	82	88	93	110	120
Number of community ministry partners (do stuff with hands on; or have members on boards etc.)	22	26	35	38	57	58	62	63	65
Number of community ministry partners we only give money to	10	12	10	9	12	13	7	11	14

Ministry Scorecard	9/1/2013	9/1/2014	9/1/2015	9/1/2016	9/1/2017	9/1/2018	9/1/2019	9/1/2020	9/1/2021
Number of ministry "failures" (new ministries that didn't work; old ministries that ended)*	3	4	9	4	5	5	7	9	19
Number of new ministry "successes" (new ministry launches during year that are working as of Sept. 1)*	1	5	4	3	4	5	11	9	7
Number of continuing education hours by pastors (not include personal study/reading weeks)	68	88	70.5	79.5	114	60.5	87.5	156	201.75
Number of entry points into the faith community (small groups, worship, website, etc.) (PPRC will create a list each year.)	13	21	32	33	36	36	41	44	40
Number of subscribers to "This Week"	88	106	115	132	143	150	153	163	166
Number of subscribers to "eBell"	175	199	214	250	262	262	255	264	260
Number of subscribers to "Prayer Requests"	90	96	100	109	111	115	113	114	114
Number of subscribers to "Second Saturday Documentary Series"	1185	1036	954	945	960	958	971	948	921
Number of subscribers to "Adult Sunday School"	9	13	17	18	deleted	-	-	-	-
Number of subscribers to "Citizens Against Hazardous Oil Trains" (Now "Tri-City Climate Action")	no count	no count	no count	no count	77	83	82	108	114
Yahoo! Group membership (2019-20, changed to Google Group)	no count	92	92	no count	91	83	83	52	53
Online giving units (any giving)	n/a	8	9	7	7	16	30	41	60
Online giving units (giving regularly)	n/a	1	3	3	5	4	6	23	33
Number of self-identified 1st time worshipers			58	96	50	47	59	96	52
* Other non-budget giving - total given includes: 9/1/15 & 9/1/16, giving to construction/angel gifts									
9/1/20, includes giving for solar/electrical upgrades at parsonage									
* Ministry Failures and Successes: 9/1/21 numbers may be skewed because of pandemic									

Personnel Committee

The NDC Personnel Committee is comprised of our pastors, vice moderator, chairperson of the Ministry of Spiritual Life, and the chairperson of the Ministry of Property. Together, they meet to discuss/resolve issues such as selecting persons to hire and determining their compensation. Meetings have been on an as-needed basis, and they were busy this past six months.

Our Cabinet agreed that NDC needed to plan for the return to in person worship by hiring a Director of Music. Without our choir being able to gather and evaluate any candidate, the position was categorized as interim until the choir can literally give voice to the choice of Director. The Personnel Committee was pleased to have found Michael Morales to serve as the interim. He is a multi-talented musician and performer, as you have seen during worship.

Our next undertaking this fall was to re-classify all employees, except the pastors, from being paid as salaried to hourly. This came about after a webinar from our insurance carrier, Church West, reminded us about recent California labor law changes. No longer can employees be seen as contractors. Budgeting for the costs for our employees for each year will be interesting.

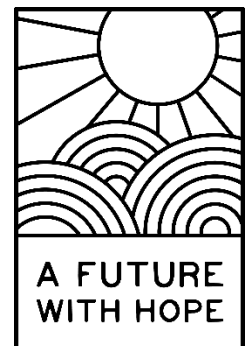
Another position we needed to hire became the Tech Director. This is a new staff position needed to assume the operation of the audio and visual production during worship as we navigate a hybrid worship experience in the sanctuary and on Zoom. It is important to have many computer skills. After a lot of advertising, a candidate was hired on a probationary trial, but he was not up to the task. Fortunately, the best candidate to take over the work as the Tech Director from Jim Thomas was Jim Thomas! Hopefully, he can chronicle what buttons and knobs need to be activated during worship so that the production duties can be filled by volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Thomas and Mark Twist

Stewardship Committee

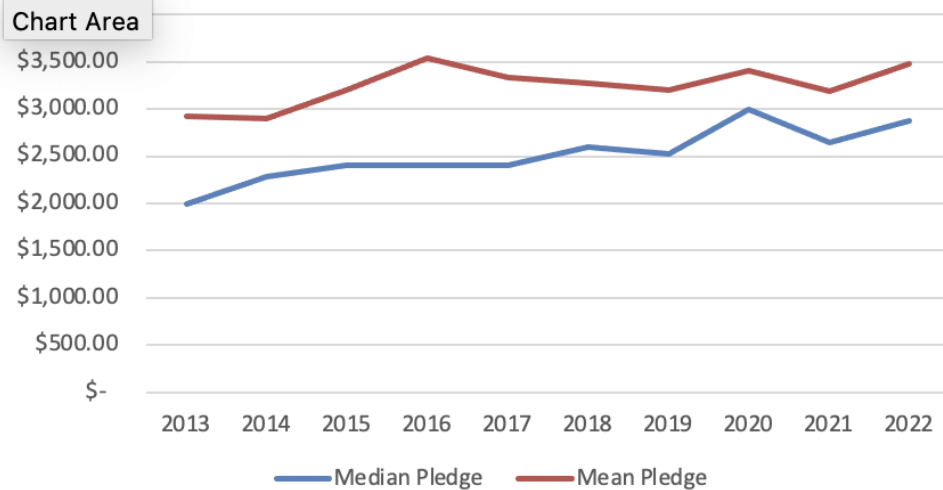
The fall annual pledge campaign focused on the theme, "A Future With Hope." We recognized the sense of exile many were feeling after a year and a half of sheltering in place, holding all our church worship services and meetings on Zoom. We remembered that the Biblical stories of exile also include stories of return, and that there is also a third movement: being sent back out into the world for the sake of our neighbors and creation as a whole. This is how we build *A Future With Hope*.

Our congregation's response to the pledge campaign was to make 78 pledges, totally \$271,536. This financial support underwrites our ministry during 2022.

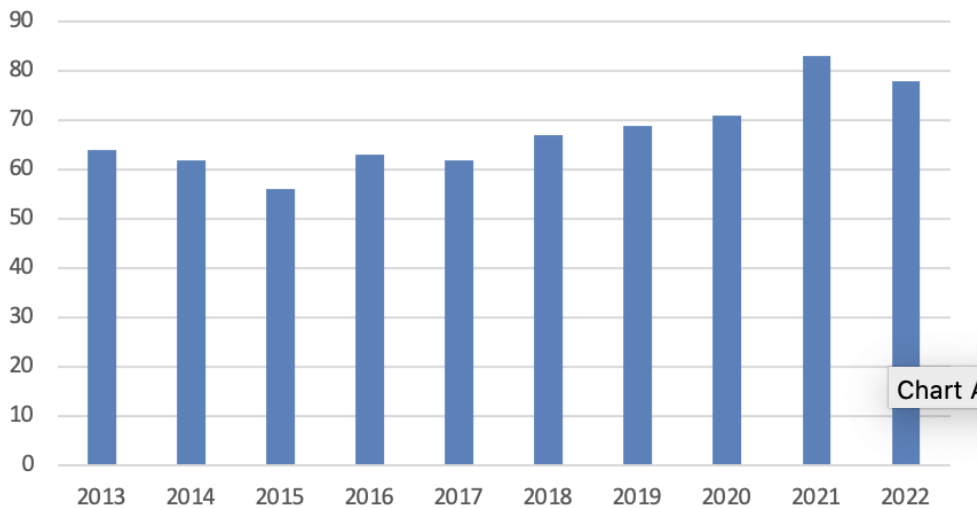


The pledge total is the largest since the merger that founded Niles Discovery Church. The total number of pledges is the second highest. More details are in the charts below.

Median and Mean Pledges



Number of pledges



Respectfully submitted by the Fall 2021 Niles Discovery Church Stewardship Committee, Mark Twist, John Smith, Marty Williams, Pastor Jeff Spencer, and Pastor Brenda Loreman

Green Team

It was an active year for The Green Team. We applied to align Niles Discovery Church with the [United Church of Christ Environmental Justice Ministries Creation Justice Church](#) and the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\) Green Chalice Church](#). We were awarded accreditation for both these programs in April 2021.

In 2021, Leonard Lloyd led our pledge to plant 1000 trees over 10 years in our effort to join the [One Trillion Trees](#) initiative. Lynn Miller, a member of the church Green Team and leader at Tri-City Urban Forest Alliance (TUFA,) directed all our activities for subsequent tree planting. We reported last year that during the winter quarter, we, and other church members, including many of our youth, planted and nursed 275 Oak acorns and Buckeye nuts to healthy seedlings. Later in the Spring, we had a work party where we successfully transplanted the seedlings to larger containers at the TUFA nursery. 97 of the nursery trees were then adopted for planting at Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area, the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose property in Fremont, and the City of Newark. In the autumn of 2021 and winter of 2022, we participated in two large efforts, with the City of Fremont. We, along with others at the church and a student group, participated in a tree-planting training conducted by Lynn. The training was at NDC, where we planted 5 Coast Live Oak trees, which Green Team members are watering for two years while they get established. After that, several NDC members reported that they were inspired to purchase over 500 trees as holiday gifts to be planted in forests. Many thanks to the Ministry of Property for their support of these trees, especially Mark Twist for all his help with trenching, digging, and placing a sprinkling system. Empowered with this training, we helped administer, check in, and supervise student and corporate volunteers, who planted 80 California native trees (Coast Live Oak, Blue Oak, Valley Oak, California Buckeye, and Western Redbud) at Sabercat Creek in Fremont. Additionally, along with other TUFA volunteers, Green Team members supported and supervised the planting of 114 trees at two schools, Parkmont Elementary and Washington High in Fremont, the Civic Center in Newark, and a large Fremont neighborhood.

The Green Team led the congregation to participate in the [Fremont Green Challenge](#). This was kicked off in the spring and continued throughout the Summer of 2021 led by Sandra Wong, with support from Bee Newell on prize incentives. In April, Patrick Journey, a consultant to the City of Fremont, explained the Green Challenge to reduce climate impacts, and how to navigate the website. We covered three major areas of the Challenge: Transportation, Home Energy Use, Food & Waste. We educated the congregation about these topics by holding three monthly special meetings with expert speakers after church in June, July, and August. We had *Kairos* Moments focused on these themes, wrote newsletter articles for *The Bell*, and posted information in “This Week At NDC” announcements. Patrick Journey presented measures of good success after the Challenge ended.

We continued our ministry of [A Kairos Call to Action](#) with periodic *Kairos* Moments which are documented on our [Green Team Ministry web page](#). *Kairos* Moments range from personal stories of members of our congregation’s connection to nature and concern for Climate Change with specific measures that individual households could take to examples of issues outside of our church on environmental justice (e.g. “Stop Line 3”) and preservation of our Earth’s natural resources (“Save Newark Wetlands.”) We would love to hear other voices speak their *Kairos* Moments. Marilyn Singer

has been instrumental in helping the Green Team reach out to NDC members to offer *Kairos* Moments to share.

Climate experts agree that collecting solar energy as an alternative energy source can help us reduce our dependence on burning fossil fuels. Collecting solar energy from our rooftops to generate electricity is one way in which individuals can help. Bill Palleschi, our NDC home rooftop solar expert, along with Mark Twist, Rich Godfrey, John Smith, and Ron Adamson demonstrated in Sacramento and San Francisco regarding the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) proposal to rewrite the [California Net Energy Metering \(NEM\)](#) contract between current and future home solar users. The current NEM reduces homeowners' utility bills by paying the homeowner for the excess solar energy supplied back to the grid by their home system. The new NEM agreement would significantly decrease the economic benefits to current and future home solar owners. Bill will continue to forward relevant emails from the Solar Rights Alliance to 25 Fremont homeowners who have installed rooftop solar systems encouraging them to be aware of the actions being taken by the CPUC to change these NEM agreements. These actions included signing online petitions, calling the Governor's office, leaving voice messages, and calling the CPUC to leave messages.

This April, the Green Team is planning to participate in person at the [City of Fremont Earth Day celebration](#). If our application is accepted, we will have a table alongside Tri-City Urban Forest Alliance and Tri-City Ecology. We will feature Sunflower seedlings and a coloring activity for kids in order to demonstrate urban gardening and the importance of pollinators such as honeybees. We will provide information on rooftop solar and [Third Act](#). In the coming year, we plan to bring Bill McKibben's new mass action, [Third Act](#), to the congregation with education and conversation.

Many thanks to the members of the Green Team: Susie Claxton, Bee Newell, Helen Boyer, Leonard Lloyd, Iris Nicholson, Marilyn Singer, Rich Godfrey, Lynn Miller, Bill Palleschi, Vaishaly Jaiprakash, Julie Ballard, Jan Quilici, Sandra Wong, Ron Adamson, Beth Rasler, Tarrah Henrie, and Joy Barnitz.

Respectfully
Susie Claxton, Green Team Leader

submitted,

Homelessness Taskforce

The Homelessness Task force is a special ministry team of the Ministry of Social Concerns. Our goal is to implement programs that help address the needs of the homeless, provide education and information about homelessness issues, and work with community partners in addressing challenges that arise while providing this much needed ministry.

The Little Free Pantry

Location: Close to the church's front door

The little free pantry is a mini pantry movement that activates neighbor engagement with food insecurity. This movement is a grassroots, crowdsourced solution to an immediate and local need. Whether the need is for food or to need to give, the mini pantries help feed neighbors, therefore nourishing neighborhoods. Niles Discovery Church established its own little free pantry in 2020.

The NDC “Little Pantry” has been a quiet success story this past year. It accepts gifts of food and sometimes clothing which disappear almost as fast as they are placed on the shelves – items anonymously given and taken with no questions asked.

Once a week, Tri-City Food Bank allows us to pick up three boxes of food which are put in the cupboard on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to coordinate with the Clean Start Van. All the rest of the food comes from church members and our friends who support the effort.

People are invited to put nutritious non-perishable food and fresh fruits into the pantry. Some bring some spray cleaner and a rag and tidy it up. We are serving the needs of people who count on us to help on a hungry day. The pantry’s door is always open for business.

Other actions

During the 2021-2022 term, members of the taskforce have supported the little free pantry and met a couple times online to discuss other opportunities to serve the community.

On June 3, 2021, Amanda Yates of Abode Services reached out to the taskforce to ask for assistance in setting up a site to provide COVID-19 vaccinations. This request was forward to Jeremy Goodier, Spiritual Care Coordinator at Washington Hospital Healthcare System who took over handling the request.

On October 6, 2021, Erica Thompson, who used to work with Abode services as their family services coordinator, called to request assistance with one of the families that was part of her caseload. This family was currently in supportive housing, had the opportunity to move into a rental home, but needed help with the deposit. Erica spoke of how hard the mom in this family has worked to go back to school and retrain herself as a Medical Assistant. She reached out because she remembered that we have helped Abode families in the past. The taskforce met and approved a \$1,500 donation from the taskforce funds towards the family’s deposit of \$5,000.

On December 16, 2021, Hanna Toda South/East County Homeless Services Regional Coordinator Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless contacted the taskforce to set-up some community events that would provide COVID-19 testing and vaccination during the Clean Start program at the church. We established the dates of March 2, and April 6, 2022, for these events.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jim Thomas

Liturgical Art Special Team

This year has been marked by challenges as we explored creating a “hybrid” worship space where those in the sanctuary and those online experienced a shared sacred experience that was filled with meaning for all. The Liturgical Arts Special Ministry Team (LAST) used existing materials to create installations for each season. Key contributors were Pastors Brenda Loreman and Jeff Spencer, Sandy Thomas, Mark Twist, John Smith, Diane Harvey, Cindy Sojourner, Karen Moody, Ginny August, Marilyn Singer, Joy Hurst, Liz Musgrave, Riki Twist, and the artists who created the fabric and other materials we used.

- **Eastertide 2021:** featured the Easter banner first introduced in 2019
- **Pentecost:** featured the flame banner draping the communion table
- **Ordinary Time:** *Gift of the Dark Woods* series welcomed folks back into the sanctuary – only to have us immediately retreat to the safety of Zoom as the Delta wave of the COVID pandemic washed over us. The sanctuary was adorned with Lenten quilts with branches affixed to them, the Lenten “cross banner” was displayed behind the cross and the communion table featured a wooden labyrinth to symbolize the path of our journey through the “dark woods” of the pandemic. For the Season of Creation and Stewardship our focus was on the communion table and chancel as we remained in Zoom worship.
- **Advent:** *The Inn* series featured lanterns and a nativity scene accompanying the advent wreath on the communion table with a blue starry banner behind the cross; the Advent/Lent quilts adorned the sanctuary walls, and the nativity scene was in the entry way.
- **Epiphany:** “*I Am Not Okay*” series featured the blue banner with “waves” at the bottom behind the cross while the “*Difficult Words of Jesus*” featured three banners installed behind the cross including the question mark and the comma banner.
- **Lent:** a simple installation, with purple runners on the communion table, no banner behind the cross and the Lenten/Advent quilts on the sanctuary side walls.
- **Eastertide 2022:** features the Easter banner behind the cross and the butterfly crosses on the sanctuary side walls.

Respectfully submitted by,
Joy Barnitz

Adult Sunday School

As a group, we search for deeper understanding and openness to discussing a range of topics. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have gathered as a group of about 10 people on Zoom each

Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. The group selects books to study by vote. Our goal is to alternate between books on theological topics, those dealing with social issues, to books that challenge our Christian faith. The group is designed to allow members to feel safe speaking frankly about their struggles, beliefs, and individual faith journeys. We seek to create a respectful place where everyone can be open and honest.

This past year's book studies have included:

[*Holy Chaos: Creating Connections in Divisive Times*](#) by Amanda Anderson

[*Learning to Pray*](#) by Father James Martin

[*Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God*](#) by Kaitlin B. Curtice

[*Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*](#) by Richard Rohr

[*No God but God: The Orgins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*](#) by Aslan Reza

Respectfully submitted by,
John Zlatnik

Chartered Organization: Scouts of America Troop and Pack 112

Pack 112

Niles Pack 112 is a co-ed pack of children aged kindergarten (5) through mid-fifth grade (10-11). We primarily draw our scouts from Niles and Vallejo Mills Elementary, but also have members from Azeveda Elementary, Kimber Academy, home schools, and other public and private schools in Fremont.

COVID has continued to prove difficult for Pack 112 to manage. Our numbers have taken quite a hit with the continued social distancing and difficulty in finding meeting spaces. With the schools not doing in persons events through December of this year, recruitment for new scouts has come to a standstill. Just a few years ago the Pack was almost 100 scouts strong; now we are just nine – seven boys and two girls. We hope that the loosening of restrictions and ability to meet in person again will help with our spring and fall '22 recruitment. And this “return to normalcy” will bring a surge of new scouts – ready to find adventure leadership, and their best selves – our way.

Our outdoor hiking program (Trail Trekkers) has continued strong throughout the pandemic. These hikes are held during a specific month and there is a Pack rock to geocache to prove you did the hike. Our way of getting the scouts outdoors and trying to stay pandemic friendly.

With such low numbers, many of our scout dens are just one scout and their parent leader. Obviously, this makes scheduling meetings exceptionally easy. The pack does have one den that has managed to keep itself together, a Webelos den (fourth grade boys) that has managed to stay six strong. This group met in person outdoors in the fall, with a few Zoom meetings due to

inclement weather, and then returned to meeting at Niles Discovery Church when the opportunity arose.

Summer brings even more opportunities for our scouts. Day camp, weeklong scout camps, and family camping programs are all back in action.

Just like everything in this world, the world of scouting has an ebb and a flow. Right now, the Pack's tide is out. However, I see the waves getting stronger and I know the water will again rise.

Yours in Scouting,
Mikele Kearney, Committee Chair, Treasurer, Den Leader Pack 112

Troop 112 – Mid-Fifth Grade through 18 years old (Boys)

When scouts go back to school in person, they go back to scout meetings in person. We had to be creative about locations occasionally, but the Niles Discovery Church patio was almost always available.

Despite the pandemic, our membership has continued to grow, with scouts joining us from various packs in the region. I continue to find myself impressed with these scouts and the creativity they have in “fixing” the pandemic meeting problem. Or just making it work to their advantage. I suspect the confidence acquired from this brainstorming, communication, and collaboration and being advocates for their own advancement will stay with them throughout their lives.

We were able to get back on those trails and do some camping. Sumer of 2021 took us to Wente Scout Camp Reserve for a week of normal scout summer camp things. It was glorious. We've had several local overnight camps and are planning a one-night backpacking campout for the beginning of spring break. Scouts love being outdoors.

Submitted by,
Sean Smith, Scout Master Troop 112

Daytime Fellowship Group

None submitted.

Lap Robe Tying Group

None Submitted.

Monday Morning Bible Study

The Monday Morning Bible Study has met on Zoom since the COVID-19 pandemic started. Participation continues to be higher than before the pandemic when Bible Study was meeting in person. The group plans to continue to meet on Zoom, largely because meeting on Zoom eliminates commute time.

The Bible Study typically looks at the primary scripture upon which the sermon will be based six days later. Reading the passage, examining it, and discussing how it touches (or could touch) our lives. Because the scripture passaged studied will be preached on in the future, the Bible Study becomes a sermon preparation of sorts – both for the preacher and the participants.

The Monday Morning Bible Study also serves as a supportive fellowship group. Participants share informally we gather, and the sharing becomes more personal as we explore how the scripture connects to our lives. Everyone is welcome at the Bible Study each Monday 11:00 a.m. to noon. Register at bit.ly/mmbsreg.

Peace,
Pastor Jeff

Puzzle Exchange

For many in the congregation, jigsaw puzzles became a relaxing way to pass the time during the ongoing pandemic. After completing all their own puzzles, the idea of swapping puzzles was formed. Permission was asked and granted to set-up a table near the doors in the fellowship hall to store and display the puzzles for exchange. And just like the “loaves and fishes”, they began to multiply; for every one puzzle that left the table, five were donated by the puzzling fans to the ever-growing assortment. Most of these multi-pieced works are almost brand new and all of them are complete.

Just as the first round of puzzles had come full circle, there was an infusion of new puzzles from new donors. In the interest of keeping things manageable, several bags of puzzles that the group was finished with were donated to a group of retirees from Fremont that are now living in Mexico.

The exchange occurs on Fridays at 1:00 p.m., a time chosen when none of the staff would be present (to limit exposures). So far people have come one at a time, masked, picking puzzles from the table by the door and dropping off used puzzles. This endeavor would not be possible without the help of Judy Hollowell, Beth Rasler, and Barbara Phelps King.

Submitted by,
Alta Jo Adamson

Abode Services: Home Warming / Rapid Rehousing

Home Warming / Rapid Rehousing is an Abode Services program that helps eligible people move into permanent housing. This project grew out of the Winter Relief program of the then named, “Tri-City Homeless Coalition” in 2011. It is comprised of over a dozen ambassadors from various faith organizations in the Tri-City area.

Due to the pandemic, in-person meetings were discontinued. We communicated via email over the course of the year. Abode focused on supporting those who were in temporary housing. The program was able to place a couple of families, however, and the resources needed for those costs were covered by other churches.

In September 2021, \$287 was donated to Abode Services.

Jean Morgan (Abode Director of Community Outreach) had scheduled an in-person meeting for January 28, 2022, but due to the climbing rate of the Omicron virus, canceled and began looking into creating a Zoom meeting later in the month. Unfortunately, no subsequent meeting was arranged.

We hope to resume our work with the Home Warming / Rapid Rehousing program in September 2022.

Submitted
Jim Thomas

by,

Cyber Geezers

At its core, Cyber Geezers is a meeting of individuals that are trying to keep up with the ever-changing technological times. If you use a computer, tablet, smartphone, pad, or electronic device

and need help, join the meetings on Zoom. The monthly topics are varied and usually generated by the attendees.

Cyber Geezers is the creation of Fred Gotthardt for SIRs, Sons In Retirement, and then expanded to include Niles Discovery Church. Jerry Sabo took over the group a few years before Fred passed away. The group meets once a month on the first Tuesday following the third Wednesday of the month. The Zoom meeting link is published in This Week at Niles Discovery Church email.

We are a non-discriminatory group: MAC and Windows PC users can both find the help they need to solve their problems. Some of the topics Jerry covered this past year included:

- Cutting the Cable: Leaving Cable TV and Going Streaming
- Cyber Security
- Recognizing Bad Emails and Websites
- How to Start Your Digital Photo Album
- Creating Folders and Organizing Your Data or Pictures
- Why is a Password Program Useful?
- Virtual Private Networks aka VPNs

Participants share their experiences, problems, and headaches. Jerry has even created an extensive library of videos comprising all the previously covered topics and more. If you search [YouTube for Cyber Geezers](#), you can find some of Jerry's helpful videos.

Submitted by,
Bill Palleschi

Greater Niles Village

Greater Niles Village is a community of neighbors who share their skills and support to navigate the challenges and opportunities of aging. We provide services to those in need; plus, educational, and social programs to engage neighbors - helping everyone to avoid isolation and stay engaged with the community.

Board of Directors:

Kathy Steel-Sabo – Chairperson
Jan Quilici - Corporate Secretary
Iris Nicholson – Treasurer
Barbara King - Membership Chairperson,
Bookkeeper
Patty Allen, Book Group Leader
Pat Finch - Member at large
Susan Meadows - Newsletter & Eblast Editor

Standing Committees:

Outreach & Publicity
Helping Hands (services)
Finance
Membership & Volunteers
Technology

Social and Service Members – 45
 Member and Community Volunteers – 25
 Direct Services provided - 190

Types of Services: Health & Wellness (including Weekly Wellness Calls) – Home Maintenance – In-home Assistance – Meals, Groceries & Supplies Shopping/Courier Services – Pet Care – Rides for medical and other needs

Communication: Regularly published The Greater Niles Village Gazette, and special “eBlasts” like instructions to seniors on completing the 2020 census forms and Fremont’s Redistricting Workshops

Online activities (due to Covid-19): We began online ‘Gatherings’ once or twice a month with the following topics: The Way We Were: Memoir writing workshop – Vaccinated? What Now? – Radiation, Nuclear Power & You – Medicare for 2022 – Self-Driving Cars – Travel experiences – Reduce Your Carbon Footprint – Connection Celebration and Cookies – Engaging in Climate Action with Bill McKibben.

Interest Groups: Book Club, Memoir Writers Group, Take Charge of your Tech, and the Culture Club continued regular meetings via Zoom. The Culture Club selected streaming productions like “[Water by the Spoonful](#),” by Quiara Alegria Hudes and movies like “[Tick, Tick...Boom!](#)” by Jonathan Larson to watch and then discuss. The Book Group read a variety of books written by diverse writers such as [Harlem Shuffle](#) by Colson Whitehead, [In Pursuit of Disobedient Women](#) by Lynsey Addara, and [Klara and the Sun](#) by Kazuo Isiguro. Members are slowly resuming some in-person activities in one another’s back yards and are eager to activate more interest groups when in-person meetings are permitted.

Resilience in the Pandemic: At Greater Niles Village’s September 2020 Annual Meeting, we announced that our theme for 2020-21 would be “Thriving in the digital world.” Little did we know that digital meetings would become our pandemic lifelines for staying in touch with friends, seeing our doctors, and even our tax preparers. GNV – like villages across the US – “pivoted” from in-person activities to online meetings and regular phone calls to lift our spirits. Village members learned how to use digital devices, log on for Zoom and GoogleMeet, and coach one another about turning on cameras and ‘unmuting.’ “Can you hear/see me now?” has a whole new meaning.

To counter the potential isolation of Villagers due to the pandemic, GNV increased our communication frequency with multiple monthly e-blasts (versus a once-a-month newsletter), providing a steady stream of information for Villagers about available social activities and practical support. Thanks to Susan Meadows and Doug Avery, GNV’s website was reimaged, with new content that is easier to navigate and up to date. GNV’s email newsletter, “The Greater Niles Village Gazette,” is a quick read, highlighting upcoming news and activities. Articles in the Gazette usually link to longer articles with more information on GNV’s website that readers can access at any time.

Over and over, Villagers brought their knowledge and experience to enrich GNV. We continue to notice and be excited about the range of Villagers’ interests and passions. Villagers connect over the things we care about – the thorniest issues of our times: COVID, social justice, and the climate crisis alongside great escapes: travel adventures, uplifting musicals, and a great martini.

We wish to thank Niles Discovery Church for its continued support. We look forward to being able to resume our use of the Fellowship Hall for meetings in the future.

Submitted by,
Barbara P King

Retirement Reinvention Group

None Submitted.

Second Saturday Documentary Series

Through this second year of the pandemic, we have mastered the art of a socially distanced documentary screening and discussion. We stream the films during the Second Saturday Zoom and have the discussion, led by a subject matter expert, immediately after. It has been determined this is the closest we can get to the pre-pandemic format. Our mission remains true:

“On the second Saturday of each month, we show a documentary film that shines lights on topics that affect your life -- often in ways you never would have imagined.”

Here is a list of the diverse group of documentaries with a quick summary from the past year:

- *The Nuclear Option* – Five years after the Fukushima disaster, the future of nuclear power is in question. Join engineers as they embark on an unprecedented cleanup and investigate new nuclear technologies that would prevent future meltdowns.
- *I am Greta* – Greta Thunberg, 15, starts school striking for the climate. She skips school and sit outside the parliament to show the politicians that if they don't care about her future, why should she? A film about acting to stop climate change before it's too late.
- *The Devil We Know* – Citizens in West Virginia take on a powerful corporation after they discover it has knowingly been dumping a toxic chemical -- now found in the blood of 99.7 percent of Americans -- into the local drinking water supply.
- *Racially Charged: America's Misdemeanor Problem* – An expose of how this country's history of racial injustice has evolved into an enormous abuse of criminal justice power. 13 million people a year – most of them poor and people of color – are abused by this system.

- *Kiss the Ground* – Activists, scientists, farmers, and politicians turn to regenerative agriculture to save the planet's topsoil, and combat climate change.
- *Blue Vinyl* – Join filmmaker Judith Helfand as she embarks on a journey to uncover the health and environmental risks associated with the widely used plastic polyvinyl chloride, also known as PVC. Used in everything from house siding to designer clothing, PVC is the most popular plastic in America. Helfand's quest takes her from Long Island to Louisiana and then halfway around the world to Venice, Italy, in search of the truth behind the vinyl curtain.
- *Let's Make Money* – an Austrian documentary by Erwin Wagenhofer regarding aspects of the development of the worldwide financial system, claiming that elitists economically exploit the rest of society, especially in the developing world, but also in western nations.
- *Bomb Harvest* – Australian bomb disposal expert Laith Stevens trains a young team of Laotians how to deal with bombs left over from the secret war with the United States.
- *The Price of Freedom* – A look at the gun violence epidemic in America and the role the National Rifle Association has played over time. Featuring interviews with government leaders, NRA representatives and people whose lives have been personally touched by gun violence.
- *Economics of Happiness* – People from six continents call for economic change by having re-regulation of trade and finance.
- *Beyond the Politics of Life and Choice: A New Conversation About Abortion* – For the first time in the three decades since it became law, Roe v. Wade might be overturned by the Supreme Court. While politicians exploit the abortion issue to energize their “base,” other people of all persuasions wrestle with deeper questions and concerns. This documentary defuses the issue, changes the tone, and creates a space where both sides can explore ways of bridging the divide and moving forward together.

Submitted by,
Mikele Kearney

Disciples of Christ Delegate Report

As your Niles Discovery Church delegate to The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada, I attended the 167th Annual Gathering via Zoom on Saturday, April 24, 2021. After the Gathering, Introduction/Welcome, Opening Devotion, Greetings, and Staff Reports; we had a Business Meeting. At this meeting the 2022 Budget was passed, and we elected the slate of new officers. The meeting concluded with a Worship Service (since this was DOC, of course it included Communion), a Benediction by the Regional Minister President (the Rev. Dr. LaTaunya M. Bynum), and Adjournment. I also attended two Zoom workshops. The first one was on “Global Missions” (6/15/21) and second on “Justice Commission” (6/23/21).

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Musgrave

United Church of Christ Delegate Report

Niles Discovery Church is one of the 31 churches of the Bay Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ. Both delegates attended the business meetings, where budgets are approved, representatives selected, and priorities established. All meetings have been held online. The big event at the Conference level was the sale of beloved Camp Cazadero, along with a service of release of the property to its new purpose. The proceeds have been invested with the denomination's funds. The Bay Association Executive Board has undergone a re-visioning process and is launching a website in the near future that will help inform folks about what other churches nearby are doing. The Board is hoping this will spark collaborations among churches.

A short video on the church's activities as a UCC Just Peace church was submitted for the Synod held in the summer of 2021. The video is on the Niles Discovery Church YouTube channel at: <https://youtu.be/27Xl72fh40o>.

Respectfully submitted,
Val Parker and Joy Barnitz



Service of Installation of Officers and Ministry Team Chairs An Affirmation of Ministry

LITANY OF MINISTRY

Leader: Within the whole family of God on earth, the church appears wherever believers in Jesus Christ are gathered (including in cyberspace) in his name, and God graces the church with leaders equipped for its work by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today we rejoice in the rich blessings of God as represented in the leaders who have been called to Christ's service and who now acknowledge this calling by dedicating themselves to Christ's servant ministry. The Apostle Paul reminds us that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.

People: There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.

Leader: There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us for our particular service.

People: The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

Leader: Christ is like a single body, which has many parts.

People: It is still one body even though it is made up of different parts.

Leader: If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share in its happiness.

People: All of us are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.

ACT OF COMMITMENT

Leader: People of Niles Discovery Church, you have just elected Officers and Ministry Team Chairs, the leaders of our church. You did so because they have been called by God, in accordance with the faith and order of this church, to serve among us. They have accepted their call and are with us in witness to their willingness to serve.

Newly elected leaders, my siblings in Christ, it is an honor to be entrusted with the responsibility for particular service in the ministry of the church.

Having prayerfully considered the duties and responsibilities of your ministry, are you prepared to serve with the help of and for the glory of God? If so, please "I do" and/or use the "thumbs up" reaction button in Zoom..

Do you promise, relying on God's grace, to exercise your ministry diligently and faithfully, showing forth the love of Christ? If so, please "I do" and/or use the "thumbs up" reaction button in Zoom..

Members of this household of faith, you have witnessed the promises of our siblings in Christ who have answered God's call to service. Though we cannot hear everyone, let us nonetheless affirm aloud our intention to live in covenant with them.

People: We gather in celebration of the joy that is ours to be partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We promise to love you, honor your leadership, and assist you that together we may be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

Leader: Let us pray.

Loving God, source of all blessings, give these your servants grace and power to fulfill their ministry. Make them faithful to serve, ready to teach, and constant in advancing your gospel. Send your Holy Spirit on them that they may serve among us with honor and faithfulness. Help them to be diligent in their duties that your church may prosper in the mission you place before it. May their example prove worthy for all of us to follow, as we are united in Christ's ministry, to the glory of your name.

All: Amen.

PRONOUNCEMENT

Leader: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the people of Niles Discovery Church, I rejoice to announce that you are installed in your respective positions.

Closing Song: "Welcome (Let's Walk Together)"

*Let's walk together for a while and ask where we begin
to build a world where love can grow and hope can enter in,
to be the hands of healing and to plant the seeds of peace,
Singing welcome, welcome to this place.
You're invited to come and know God's grace.
All are welcome the love of God to share
'cause all of us are welcome here;
All are welcome in this place.*