

St. John's Lutheran Church
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Elkton, MN 55933
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Let us *consider*
our callings,
let us *reflect*
on our
responsibilities, and
let us *follow*
Jesus Christ

Thomas S. Monson

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

Know Christ, Love Christ, Serve Christ

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SOUTHERN MINNESOTA SYNOD REPORT

A Ministry Report of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA in celebration of the ministry that took place throughout 2016

We join together in giving thanks for the multitude of ways the Holy Spirit is at work through the people and congregations of our Southeastern Minnesota Synod!

DEVELOPING LEADERS

- 2 pastors were ordained
- 3 Synodically Authorized Ministers were approved
- 171 rostered & lay leaders participated in the Fall Theological Conference in November 2016
- 26 active ministry candidates across 6 seminaries are participating in the candidacy process
- 191 congregational leaders participated in the RENEW! event in Spring 2016
- 43 rostered leaders participated in the Emotional Intelligence Workshop

SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS

- 22 congregations took part in Stewardship for All Seasons, utilizing a stewardship coach for a year
- 9 congregations worked with LEAD (Living Everyday As Disciples), receiving a congregational assessment and coaching for a year
- 49 congregations were in the call process
- 23 congregations called a rostered leader
- 532 people attended the Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly

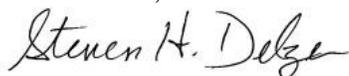
ACCOMPANYING GLOBAL PARTNERS

- 52 congregations partnered with congregations, schools, rural clinics and a hospital in Tanzania & Colombia
- 2 synod representatives went to Colombia for a visit with the Lutheran Church in Colombia and the newly installed Bishop Atahualpa Hernandez
- 2 synod representatives attended the 2016 Latin American Consultation in Lima, Peru
- 1 synod representative attended the ELCA-ELCT (Tanzania) Consultation in Chicago, IL
- 9 dispensaries (clinics) were visited as part of a synod-sponsored assessment in Central Diocese, Tanzania
- The South Sudan Operations Team was formed which includes representatives from the five Southeastern Minnesota Synod South Sudanese worshipping communities

GIVING

- General benevolence supported ministry happening in the synod, throughout the ELCA, and the world:
 - \$491,000 for Developing Leaders
 - \$566,000 for Equipping Congregations
 - \$180,000 for Accompanying Global Partners
- Special giving opportunities accomplished:
 - Over \$110,000 given or pledged to South Sudan to build a Lutheran Center and support Rev. Wal Reat as a missionary
 - \$168,000 to ELCA World Hunger (through September)

Peace in Christ,



Steven Delzer, Bishop

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR LIZ

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15: 4-5

As I have reflected on the past year, it is so evident that in our mission and ministry, Christ abides in us and calls us to live in that promise that we don't ever really do anything apart from Jesus. The image of Jesus as the vine and we being among the many branches helps us to remember that everything we are a part of is given life by Christ working within us. In worship, in service to others, and in hospitality shown, we help share the love of Christ to all whom we encounter.

Some of the significant themes and fun events that we were blessed to be a part of in 2016 were:

Learning the new setting 6 liturgy from our ELW Worship Book. Thanks to all who helped us to learn it and for the persistence of the whole congregation as we continue to become familiar with the liturgy and sing it with more confidence.

Hosting the Good Earth Village Summer Staff Commissioning Service and providing them with lunch.

The birth of a new event that we have talked about for awhile—The Stock the Shelves Italian Dinner and Serenade. With homemade lasagna and lots of special music groups performing, we had a wonderful night (despite the rain) with community members and St. John's folks. All profits went to the Southland Area Food Shelf in Adams.

The annual Ham and Beef Supper was another success as we all came together to reach out and serve so many people from the area.

Putting our hearts and hands to work for God's Work. Our Hands Sunday in September. We rolled bandages for Global Health Ministries, colored pictures for nursing home residents, and got the church yard and cemetery cleaned up.

Providing the funds for a new sidewalk and steps that now safely lead us from the parish hall to the cemetery road.

Hosted groups and family gatherings in our parish hall, as well as the Synod church librarian group.

What I've been excited about.... The way in which our congregation so generously gives to those in need. For instance, the \$300 donation to World Hunger, the donations to the Southland Area Food Shelf, as well as our missionary support and benevolence giving to the ELCA.

What I lament for 2016...This is a hard one since I am grateful for so many things. One thing I do lament is not being able to find much interest in opportunities to grow spiritually. Bible studies and book groups don't seem to have much of a draw and our Lenten services last year really struggled. I will take some of the blame for this, but I am so curious what kinds of things that groups of you would be interested in. The branches need to stay grafted to the vine. Christ the vine will not let us go, but apart from the vine we can do nothing. What might those opportunities for growing spiritually look like for us as we seek to grow in our faith day by day?

I am grateful for...a wonderful, thoughtful, generous, fun-loving congregation to serve. St. John's is a healthy family-size congregation with deep roots and loving hearts. You embody faithful hospitality, support of our children and care of those who may not always be able to be with us in worship. Our WELCA group continues to show God's love to others through the making of quilts and layettes and the support of many missions locally and globally.

I am so grateful for our Sunday School kids, their families and those who have given of your time and talents to teach. Thanks for another wonderful, Spirit-filled Christmas program this year! Our Confirmation kids make every Wednesday night a joy for me, and I absolutely love it when we have kids in worship on Sunday mornings! Thanks parents and grandparents for bringing your kids to worship. It one of the greatest gifts you can give them!

What I hope for in 2017....a vision of how we hear God's call for us as St. John's Lutheran Church and how we might best live out that calling joyfully, with purpose and with hope. Jesus reminds us that *"Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."* We may not know just what that will look like for us in the coming year, but we can certainly count on one thing: Christ's abiding presence in our lives and in our service to our neighbors near and far. May God bless us with open hearts and minds as we "Know Christ. Love Christ. Serve Christ."

MINISTRY

HIGHLIGHTS



The sale of mum plants raised

\$251

for the Austin Welcome Center!



FEED THE HUNGRY

220 pounds of food donated to the Southland Area Food Shelf

\$606 raised by the Easter Breakfast for Cancer Research and the Southland Food Shelf!



\$566 raised by the Stock the Food Shelves Italian Serenade!
(read more about it on page 9)



18 pieces of dress fabric with thread donated to Lutheran World Relief.
(read more about it on page 8)



52 layettes donated to Lutheran World Relief!

SPOTLIGHT ON STEWARDSHIP

WELCA

- 41 Quilts, 6 pieces of dress material with thread, 21 layettes and \$25 for trucking were given to Lutheran World Relief.
- 6 prayer quilts were given to our graduating seniors.
- 2 quilts made by WELCA were given to the Austin Welcome Center.
- 21 bibs were made and given to Catherwood Child Care Center.
- 125 diapers were made - most being used for the layettes.
- Cancelled stamps were saved for mission work in Australia and greeting cards were saved for Adams D.A.C.
- God's Work, Our Hands, members of WELCA along with other members of the congregation and Sunday School made bandages for Lutheran World Relief.
- Blankets were collected to be given to the Austin Welcome Center.
- WELCA collected money through the year to be given to the Southland Food Shelf.
- Circles I & II, and members of our congregation and WELCA collected items for personal care kits sent to Lutheran World Relief.

CIRCLE I

- 12 pieces of dress material with thread was given to Lutheran World Relief.
- Remembered shut-ins and ill members.
- Gave no-bake sale money to hurricane relief.
- Gave Christmas offering to Waseca Flood Relief.

CIRCLE II

- 31 layettes, 11 lap robes, 3 baby afghans, and 15 scarves were given to those in need.
- Greeting cards were saved for the Adams D.A.C., and cancelled stamps were collected for mission work in Australia.
- 85 scarves were donated to the Salvation Army.
- 25 scarves and some layettes were given to Rachel's Hope.
- Shut-ins were remembered with cards & visits.
- Donated \$71 to the Adams Food Shelf.
- Remaining funds were donated to St. Johns' General Fund.

STORIES

FAMILY MATTERS

By Carmen Howe (introduction by Lisa Dietrich)

As we all know, it has been a long-standing tradition to serve oyster stew and chili following the Christmas program each year, and in 2016 I learned just how much it means to the members of our church when I threatened to cancel it.

For the record, it was not a threat that I felt good about by any means, but in my role as council president, I felt I had no choice. The date of the program and supper was drawing near and I simply did not have time to coordinate the effort, so I sent out an SOS email to the congregation with the threat of cancelling the supper part of the Christmas program, and from here I will let Carmen Howe tell the story as published in the January 2017 edition of The Messenger newsletter.

I wanted to share an amazing story of stewardship that I witnessed over these past two weeks at St. John's. It all began with the oyster stew and chili supper. It appeared that we had no one in charge of the supper. Lisa Dietrich sent out an email to everyone explaining the situation and my daughter Courtney said, "Well, if it means no chili and oyster stew supper then I will do it because I'm not willing to give that up."

Well, as her mother, I was so proud and decided that I would get the ball rolling and answer that email. That is when the volunteers just started rolling in - one email after another with donations of money, time and talent. The supper was planned and all donations in tact in a matter of two days.

The stewardship did not stop there. The night of the concert I noticed that the young adults of the congregation joined the Sunday School in sharing the Christmas story. That was so wonderful to witness.

After the concert, everyone came for fellowship and to enjoy the chili and oyster stew and what happened after that brought tears to my eyes. People were bringing their bowls up to be washed and asking, "What can I do to help?" Some people grabbed dish towels to help while others took down tables and put chairs away. We were cleaned up and home by 7:00 pm that night. It was the most heartwarming night of stewardship all the way around and that folks is what I love about my church family!

I found out later that another family was ready to step up and take charge of the oyster stew and chili supper but Carmen and her daughters beat them to it, which also speaks to what a remarkable church family we have!

In the end, the oyster stew and chili supper raised \$682 to be used to repair the back wall of the balcony.

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.
For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does
not have another to help. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*



COVER THEM WITH LOVE!

By Lisa Dietrich

Ever since I started putting the Annual Report together, WELCA and the Circles have provided impressive lists of their stewardship accomplishments for the year, which always includes fabric and thread given to Lutheran World Relief. Every time I type that into the report, I wonder why send fabric and thread? Wouldn't it be more thoughtful to send clothes? Well, you know how sometimes when you lose something; you find it while looking for something else? I had a similar experience as I was looking at the Lutheran World Relief website and stumbled upon the story behind the donation of dress fabric and thread.

Turns out, Lutheran World Relief calls them "fabric kits" and as taken from their website, describes these kits as follows:

*You've maybe heard the analogy about teaching someone to fish...
well you can help teach a person to sew and provide the tools to earn
an income and break out of poverty. Project Promise Fabric Kits are
used in vocational training programs to teach young men and women
useful, marketable skills. Cover them with love!*

With a little more looking, I found that in 2016, 17,138 fabric kits were delivered to countries around the world, of which, 9,759 were shipped from Minnesota warehouses. That is 56% of the total...go Minnesota! 1,740 went to Burkina FASO (I had to Google this one to find out it is a country in Africa, formerly known as Upper Volta); 2,460 were shipped to DRC (another Google search told me this is the Democratic Republic of Congo, also in Africa) and 1,558 went to Peru.

St John's WELCA and the two circles do not stop at just donating the fabric and thread, they also donate money for shipping and the Lutheran World Relief website notes that it takes \$1 to ship one fabric kit.

We will never know how many lives are impacted by these simple fabric kits, but we know that at least 18 lives have been given an opportunity for a brighter future.

*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends,
even though they are strangers to you.*

3 John 1:5



GODS WORK, OUR HANDS ...THE SEQUAL

By Norma Klaehn (introduction by Lisa Dietrich)

We have had some very productive Sundays over the past few years with our participation in the ELCA's God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, but Norma Klaehn proves that it doesn't have to stop there. Here is her story...

In 2016, we needed to make flannel diapers for the layettes. It takes four diapers per layette, so we ordered a bolt of 27-inch wide flannel from Hancock Fabrics in Rochester, which was the only source we could find, and it was picked up by Carol Lantow. We also asked Dr. Mary Fargen if she needed diapers for her trip to Haiti. She did, so I began looking for funding.

As word spread that we needed funds for diapers for missions, responses came in. Marshall Church made a donation along with Gerald Meier who also gave funds. Gerald and a friend went down to Iowa to a fabric shop and bought numerous ends of bolts of white flannel, which he donated. I also received a phone call from Hancock Fabrics asking if I still want diaper flannel. I told them yes, so Tam Klaehn picked it up for us. A resident where I live, Avene Nolte, asked a cousin in Iowa who has a Hancock store in her town, and she donated a bolt.

I can make the diapers on my serger, so there was no problem there, but I needed help in cutting them, especially when handling a bolt of fabric. So we, 8 residents of Cedar Court Apartments, formed a cutting party and in two mornings we cut 190 diapers - over 60 for St. John's, over 30 for Marshall, and 97 for Dr. Mary. We may be old, but don't count us out. So many from various faiths, areas, and abilities were involved, and when Dr. Mary returned, she gave us a party! GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS.

*And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance,
so that by always having enough of everything,
you may share abundantly in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8*



INSPIRED BY PIZZA

By Lisa Dietrich

Berne, Minnesota, as described by Wikipedia, is an unincorporated community in Dodge County, located near the junction of State Highway 57 and Dodge County Road 24 (about 20 miles northwest of Rochester.) The community of Berne is deeply rooted in its Swiss heritage as evidenced by its name that is after Bern, Switzerland.

For over 50 years the members of the Zwingli United Church of Christ hosted an annual celebration and tribute to their heritage called Swissfest, but then they decided to try something new and to say this new idea was a success would be an understatement.

In 2012, members of Zwingli started serving pizza, made from scratch and baked in an outdoor wood-fired oven. On any given Wednesday evening from June through August, this event can draw people by the hundreds and the proceeds from selling pizza go to help the church and various charities.

A couple of years ago, Doug and Linda Johnson made the trip to Berne for some pizza and while there, Linda noticed how people were enjoying their pizza and the music in the picnic-like setting and it occurred to her that perhaps St. Johns, with its beautiful setting conveniently located just off Interstate 90, could also offer something like this. But rather than just tell people about it, she offered pizza money for someone else to experience it for themselves. So, Jon and I and Barb Stephenson loaded up our lawn chairs and headed for Berne.

When we arrived, we almost turned around and came back home because of the number of cars that lined the roads and that were parked in a grassy area across the road from the church, but we decided to stay and check it out.

We waited for just over an hour for our pizza, but it did not seem that long because we were entertained by the people watching. From sitting on blankets to the four women who set up a table and chairs, complete with a table cloth and a vase with flowers, wine glasses and a bottle of wine, everyone there was making it their own fun experience. It was amazing.

The council did discuss the feasibility of doing something like this at St. Johns, but in reality, it was just *too good* of an idea, meaning, if we drew crowds like they were drawing in Berne, we would not have the manpower to keep up. There was also concern in the cost of building and maintaining an outdoor pizza oven.

But Linda is not a quitter. She continued to give it some thought and in 2016 took her inspiration from the Berne wood-fired pizza, switched up the menu and the “Stock the Food Shelves Italian Serenade” was born. A good friend and neighbor to St. John’s, Jeannine Guern, volunteered to make lasagna and with the help of a small group of volunteers from St. Johns, a date was set and plans were put into motion. All that was needed was one of those beautiful summer evenings. The weather did not cooperate as it rained ...steadily, just as the weather forecast predicted, so the event was moved indoors to the parish hall.

The rain did not dampen the spirits of those who were there to serve or those who attended as it wasn’t long before the parish hall filled with a joyful atmosphere thanks in part to the area musical groups, from high school students to retired teachers, who provided the serenade portion of the evening with some great and festive music.

This event not only made for a fun evening, it also raised \$566 for the Southland Area Food Shelf and the leftovers fed 88 people at the Salvation Army!

So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9



THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

By Lisa Dietrich

This story does not highlight one of St. John’s accomplishments in 2016 but rather, it highlights a lesson I learned in 2016. I am including this story ... because I can and it provides some insight into why I threatened to cancel the oyster stew and chili supper.

My 2016 holiday season started out with a trip to Arizona so that Jon and his siblings could spend Thanksgiving together. Although it would be the start of a holiday season that quickly felt as if it was getting away from me, it was a fun trip and one that will be cherished more with each passing day. As life marches on and we have families of our own who begin to have families of their own, it is not always easy to get together with our siblings for an afternoon, much less the days we were afforded on this trip. There was enough time to reminisce, play games, go site seeing, and simply enjoy the company of one another.

Taking a red-eye flight (thanks to our top-notch travel agent Bubba ☺), we arrived home early on a Monday morning, and the following Saturday, Jon and I left for a work-related trip to Key Biscayne, Florida. Leaving bitter cold temperatures behind, one should not complain about a trip to Key Biscayne in December, especially when staying at a luxury resort that was possible only because my employer, not I, was picking up the tab; but, I

returned home to a partially decorated Christmas tree (thanks to two grandsons who did a fine job of decorating the lower third of the tree) and a Christmas village that had only made it out of the boxes prior to leaving for Florida and were strewn on the floor rather than arranged on the shelves. With a to-do list at home and at work that seemed endless; it felt as if Christmas was quickly slipping away.

I love Christmas. I love everything about Christmas. The smell, decorating my home, the spirit of giving and good will that permeates amongst people despite the pressures they are feeling, Christmas movies, Christmas songs, and most of all what gives meaning to Christmas...the birth of Christ. I've convinced myself that collectively, this is what defines Christmas.

With my long to-do lists, there was no time to stop and enjoy the essence of Christmas and as a result I became increasingly frustrated. I had been chasing Christmas since coming back from Arizona and it was becoming evident that I was not going to catch up. I was not going to find time to enjoy all that I thought defined Christmas. That is, until I attended the Christmas Eve service at Zumbro Lutheran Church in Rochester to watch my daughter and her family play the role of Mary, Joseph, two really cute little shepherds, and staring as baby Jesus (pacifier and all), my first born granddaughter.

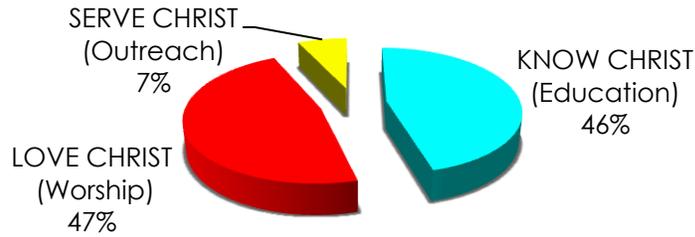
Upon entering the church, adults were given candles and the children were given bells. The church service began with the song, *Oh Come All Ye Faithful* and in that moment as the sanctuary filled with the sounds of the pipe organ, the voices of those singing, and bells ringing to no particular beat or rhythm, I realized that during the entire time I was trying to chase Christmas in an effort to catch up, Christmas was simply waiting for me to slow down and rejoice in it. As I felt a peaceful serenity over take me, I knew that checking things off my checklist had no part in it.

So I leave you with this – Do not let Christmas be defined by traditions and to-do lists, but rather let the gift from God define Christmas and be the reason for the season.

*“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
which means. “God is with us.” Matthew 1:23*



INVESTMENT IN MINISTRY



EXPENSES	TOTAL EXPENSE	KNOW CHRIST (Education)	LOVE CHRIST (Worship)	SERVE CHRIST (Outreach)
Austin Welcome Center	358			358
Benevolence	2,100			2,100
Bulletin-Projector	1,200		1,200	
Conventions	535	178	178	178
General Supplies & Other Expense	2,334	1,167	1,167	
Good Earth Village	640		240	400
Hormel Institute	303			300
Insurance	7,167	3,583	3,583	
Janitor	2,016	1,008	1,008	
Lawn Mowing/Snow Removal	1,900	950	950	-
Missionary	1,200			1,200
Organist & Mileage	2,195	1,098	1,098	
Other Donations	132			132
Pastor's Expense	77,633	38,817	38,817	
Repairs and Maint	3,584	1,792	1,792	
Southland Food Shelf	303			303
Utilities	6,355	3,178	3,178	
World Hunger	481			481
Worship Supplies & Other Exp	916		916	
TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENSE	111,352	51,770	54,126	5,452
Miscellaneous	250	83	83	83
Devotional Expense	509	509		
Contributions/Stewardship	1,957			1,957
TOTAL WELCA	2,716	592	83	2,040
ELCA Disaster	190			190
Waseca Flood Relief	50			50
N.H. Program	75			75
Stewardship	16			16
TOTAL CIRCLE 1	331	-	-	331
Gifts	85			85
Food Shelf	72			72
Stewardship	35			35
TOTAL CIRCLE 2	192	-	-	192
Sunday School Supplies	96	96		
TOTAL MINISTRY EXPENSE	114,686	52,458	54,210	8,016

MINISTERIALS

MEMBERSHIP

Baptized Members: 231

Confirmed Members: 142

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Sunday Worship Average: 39

Lenten/Maundy Thursday: 119

Easter Worship Service: 91

Christmas Morning: 20

NEW MEMBERS

None

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

Neil & Judy Johnson to Marshall Lutheran, Adams

Karen Hall, Danelle, Karlie, & Brittany to St. Augustine Catholic Church, Austin

BAPTIZED

None

CONFIRMED

Joshua Yunker

WEDDINGS

4

FUNERALS

1

EVENT FEES

WEDDINGS

	MEMBERS	NON-MEMBERS
Use of Parish Hall	Free	\$250
Custodian – Parish Hall Reception	\$100	\$100
Women’s Service Group (cooking potatoes, making salads, warming of food)	\$1.00 per person planned*	\$2.00 per person planned*
Pastor	\$100	\$125
Marriage Preparation Materials	\$35	\$35
Use of Sanctuary	Free	\$150
Rehearsal, License, Wedding Fees	Informal wedding services may be rehearsed in the church shortly before the service. Weddings involving several attendants should be rehearsed beforehand – ordinarily late afternoon or early evening the day before the wedding. It is important that everyone in the wedding party be present. This is also the deadline to have the wedding license and payment of the wedding fees as noted above. Please make checks payable to St. John’s	

FUNERALS

	MEMBERS	NON-MEMBERS
Pastor	\$100	\$100
Use of Parish Hall	Free	\$250
Custodian – Parish Hall Setup/Cleanup	\$100	\$100
Women’s Service Group	Free Will Offering	Per person planned *: \$1.00 if family member of deceased is a member of the church; \$2.00 if neither deceased nor family members are members of the church.
Use of Church Sanctuary	Free	\$2.00 per person

***An additional 25 cents per person for extra preparation group. This fee does not include the cost of the food to be served, but includes the cost of making sandwiches and punch. The women’s service group may ask for an additional amount if there is an exceptional amount of work.**

CHURCH DIRECTORY

COMMITTEES AND VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

CHURCH COUNCIL

Council Member	Term	Term Expires:
Jon Dietrich, President	1 st	January 2020
Jack Klaehn, Vice President	1 st	January 2020
Jane Johnson, Secretary	1 st	January 2019
Tim Harrison	2 nd	January 2018
Del Mees	1 st	January 2018
Randy Stephenson	1 st	January 2018
Diane Hammermeister	1 st	January 2019

BOARD OF EDUCATION

	Term Expires:
Vicki Wilson	June 2018
Kasey Simonson	June 2018
Tim Harrison (Council Representative)	January 2018

AUDITING COMMITTEE

	Term Expires:
1) Carmen Howe	January 2018
2) Sally Vietor	January 2019
3) Carol Lantow	January 2019

CEMETERY BOARD

	Term Expires:
Randy Stephenson (Council Representative)	January 2020
Jack Klaehn	January 2019
Vance Wilson	January 2019

BUILDING MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

Jon Dietrich	January 2018
Del Mees	January 2018

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1) Randy Stephenson	2) Tim Harrison	3) Jack Klaehn	4) Jon Dietrich
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2017 CONVENTION DELEGATES

Jon & Lisa Dietrich

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Financial Secretary	Barb Stephenson
Treasurer	Lisa Dietrich
Sunday School Co-Superintendents	Kasey Simonson/Vicki Wilson
WELCA President	Linda Johnson
Alter Guild	LaVonne Siewert
	Mary Jo Sheely
	Leigh Gray
	Kasey Simonson

