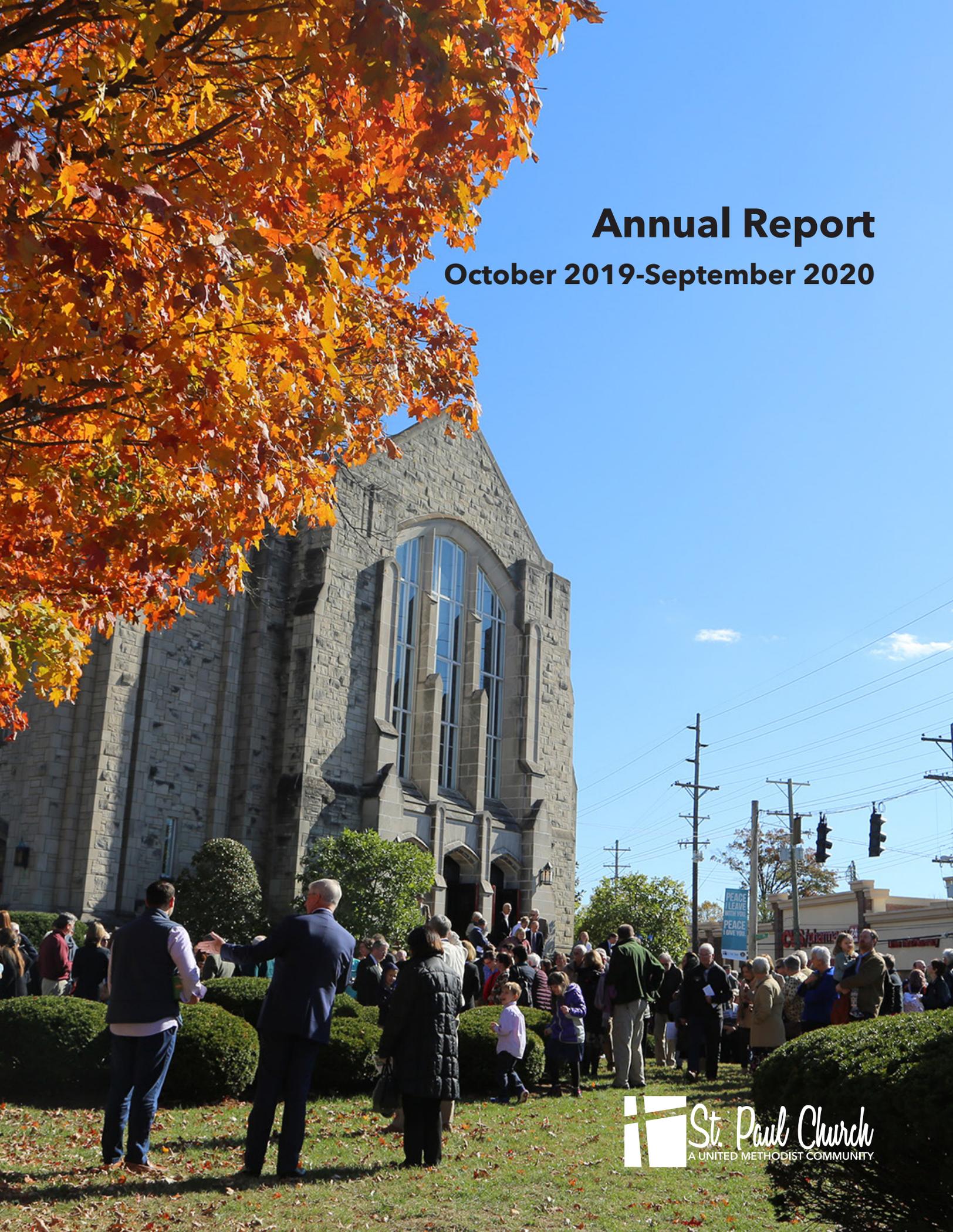


Annual Report

October 2019-September 2020



St. Paul Church
A UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITY

Mountaintops and Valleys

It was a year ago and the sanctuary was full for our Homecoming / All Saints celebration. Friends from far away and many members attended that day. We grieved as names of love ones were read. At the close of the service,



we gathered on the front lawn to hear the old and new bells ring together. When it grew dark, new lights lit the Bardstown Road stained glass window of a resurrected Jesus. The day still lingers in my memory as a highlight in my ministry with you.

A lot has happened since last year. We experienced staff transitions, heartbreak and misunderstandings. In March, the mountain top of homecoming was followed by a season of traveling in the valley of a pandemic. We ceased in-person worship and our community went into lockdown. Protesters filled our streets and front lawn calling for racial justice. We are still seeking healing from the events of this year.



Through it all, the light of Jesus continued to shine. If you drive by St. Paul on a dark night, you will see the figure of Jesus illuminated in our stained glass windows. It is a sign of hope.

Jesus shows up at the intersections of our lives. With the light of our windows, we give witness to the one who blesses us. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

We need a blessing, some reassurance that all shall be well. There is so much right now that is out of our control. Yet, one thing we can control is our response. I am grateful for those who have responded with generosity and grace to these mountain tops and valleys.

On the light post in front of St. Paul is a banner with these words, "Let us not grow weary in doing good." It is a verse from Galatians 6:9. The rest of that verse holds a promise, "...for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." God is at work in our lives to make all things new. I want to encourage you to not give up in doing good with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.



The pages of this Annual Report speak to the impact of your gracious spirit. Thank you again for all you have offered. We will need a generous response in order to continue the ministries of St. Paul. Please take a moment and let us know that we can count on your support by filling out a commitment card. We are grateful for the ministry we share.



Grace to you,
Pastor Darren

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

In a year when it seemed that we could not count on any kind of norm to soothe us, the worship and music ministry at St. Paul has, by God's grace, found new ways to bring us together as the family of God. We turned our worship spaces and homes into recording studios and found new ways to do worship through streaming and social media. Whether it was through weekly worship or special events

like Music Camp, worship continues to be a way we are bound together and brought to the throne of God. We look forward with eager expectation to being together again all in one place, but until that day comes we will continue to find new ways to worship and make music together.



25+ members in the Chancel Choir



14 members in Bells of St. Paul Handbell Ensemble; the group attended the Area 5 Spring Ring of the Handbell Musicians of America held in Louisville in March with over 300 other ringers



500+ songs of faith sung
100+ Bells, chimes, and other instruments played
1200+ in attendance for Christmas Eve 2019



40th Anniversary Louisville Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival
2000+ in attendance
300+ performers and behind the scenes participants



In March, the pandemic required that St. Paul transition from live, in-person worship to virtual and "live-streamed" worship.

10+ musicians, lay readers, pastors, and families worked an average of 25 hours per week producing videos for virtual worship



SPIRITUAL FORMATION

"God is at home. It is we who have gone for a walk." Meister Eckhart

As people of faith, we know that God is always with us, as close as our breath. And yet we often feel God is distant and we long to draw nearer to the one who knows us fully and loves us unconditionally. Drawing close is really a matter of just opening our eyes and hearts, paying attention to the Christ in our midst. Spiritual growth and formation occur in those moments of awakening to God's presence. The Spiritual Formation Team seeks to provide opportunities through retreats, book studies, worship experiences, guided meditation and prayer groups, devotional materials for Advent and Lent, and hands-on ministries such as prayer beading for people to create some quiet space to draw close to God and to each other as we grow in love and wisdom. These practices equip

us to reach out in service to God's Kingdom in our world.

In this unusual year of pandemic when our eyes have been opened in new ways to the suffering of our black brothers and sisters, the Spiritual Formation team felt the call to pray for racial justice in our community, and to discern through the study of our history as a nation and a church what actions we might take to repair relationships and build up the whole body of Christ. This prayer focus has led us to reach out to other ministry teams and initiate partnerships in Smoketown with Coke Memorial UMC and Smoketown Family Wellness Center. In the words of Howard Thurman, "God is at work expanding the boundaries of our hearts."

Loving the Earth: Caring for God's Creation - retreat at Valaterra - brought together **23 participants**, one of whom stated, "This was the perfect place to have this crucial conversation about caring for creation."



Embracing Woe and Wonder with Joe Grant. These retreats drew **20 and 27 participants**, respectively. Together, they explored how woundedness and awe shape and widen our hearts and minds.



Prayer group for racial justice had 10 faithful members who prayed for reconciliation in our community and beyond.



About 400 Star Words were distributed on Epiphany Sunday.



150 Lenten Devotional guides distributed.

Guided Meditation: 2 groups, 12 regular participants, 7 years



Longest Night Service—20

"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near." Is 55:6-7

DISCIPLESHIP

At St. Paul, members and friends are invited to practice discipleship and strengthen their faith through classes, small groups, and reading resources. Through these practices, individuals continue their journey into the heart of God. God works through the Spirit as we participate in practices and experiences that transform our hearts to become more Christ-like.

Our 2019-20 Wesley Night series offered five studies, which included "Building Resilience," "From Strangers Into Neighbors," "Experiential Spiritual Practices," "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," and "Seasons of the Soul."

WESLEY NIGHT

25-70 attendees per night
3 fall programs
2 spring programs
21 shared meals



Despite the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 10 small groups have continued meeting, either virtually or in socially-distanced in-person gatherings. A few of those include the "Vine & Branches" and "Bruised Reed" Sunday school classes and the Women of the Word Bible Study.



Several short-term small group classes/studies have taken place including:

Of Bears and Ballots, a book study led by Pastor Darren
"The Epistle to the Philippians," a Bible study led by Pastor Dustin
"Exploring the Historical Roots of Racism," a class led by David Green
Small Business Big Heart, a reading group led by author Paul Wesslund

We are also updating our Small Group Directory to reflect the new situations of our small groups and classes.

Due to the generous bequests St. Paul has received, we have been able to provide much needed repair, updating, and maintenance to our facilities. These include:

Boiler Replacement: Failing seals and components on the old boiler required the purchase of a new one. The Trustees voted to replace the unit with a new one and installation is almost complete as of Oct. 2020. Cost: ~\$160,000



Camera Installation: Due to arson at one of our church entrances and increasing security concerns with vandalism, the Safety Team and Trustees elected to install 15



security cameras on the grounds of St. Paul. These include motion detection and high resolution recording. These enable prevention of future issues, response as things occur, and documentation of future events. Cost: \$25,344

Air Conditioning Units Replacement: The aging A/C units for both the chapel and the sanctuary needed replacing. The chapel units have been replaced and new units for the sanctuary and room 309 have been ordered. Cost: ~\$30,000

Four leaks were repaired in the Gym roof.

TRUSTEES

CHILDREN

Children are a vital part of St. Paul. They are our contributors, attendees, and members. These children are part of the church now, not just the future, and for this reason, it's vital that they feel valued and connected at St. Paul. The Children's Ministry Staff, with support from parents, provides opportunities for them to connect and grow in their faith. Mary Paige Taylor, Director of Youth Ministry, and Janet Sewell, long-time Youth volunteer, have teamed up to continue the work previously begun in teaching children about Jesus and living a life following Christ.

The Children's Ministry Staff isn't just committed to the kids who run around St. Paul, but rather,

all of God's children. That's why you can often find the team planning opportunities designed for all kids in the community. This past year, they hosted their annual Fall Festival and Breakfast with Santa. In the world of COVID, the team continues to plan ways for the children to be connected with one another and with Jesus, such as our first annual Family Movie Night, a socially-distanced Fall Festival, and an upcoming PJ Party with Santa. These community events provide another avenue to bring people from different walks of life together and share in the Christian community.



Music camp July 2020
Virtual and in-person combination,
video production of *Malice in the Palace, the Story of Esther*

12 in-person participants
15 virtual participants
4 adult leaders
5 youth assistants



Fall Festival 2019



Fall Festival 2020



Movie Night 2020

Campfire Stories

VBS was replaced by a virtual Campfire Stories

5 parables from the Bible
15 participants - 6 from out of town, 2 new children



Campfire Stories

Who? Rising 1st-7th graders
When? August 3-7
Where? Wherever you are comfortable*



*Each "camper" will receive a Campfire Stories activity bag, including a craft and/or activity for each day that relates to the parable.

45 combined children
in three different
children's choirs



In the wake of the pandemic, Sunday school and Children's Church were replaced by Family Worship Packets.

52 packets handed out or mailed each month



KICS+ Tweens meets every 2nd and 4th Sunday to do a service project, share in a short Bible lesson, and be in fellowship with one another.



YOUTH

The youth at St. Paul have many different personalities and interests, but one of the clearest ways you can see their commonality is in their willingness to be like Christ. When asked how they can love their neighbors in their community, the students have countless answers that range from volunteering at a local Ronald McDonald House, participating in a canned food drive, volunteering to help with our own Children's Ministry events, and much more. Again and again, these youth move beyond their comfort zones to share the love of Christ. They do not sit idly by, nor do they complain, when they're called to put their faith into action.

In the world of COVID-19, our programming has had to be adjusted for safety, but thanks to the work of Sunday Night volunteers and Youth Ministry Team, both led by Mary Paige Taylor,

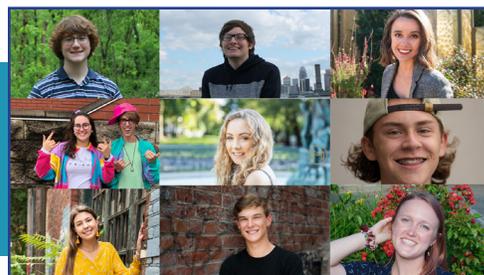
Director of Youth Ministry, a new plan is in place. The youth have learned

how to prioritize the wellness of themselves and others, but still find ways to be in fellowship with their groups and with their neighbors outside of their community. They also dive deep into discussion with one another on Sunday nights. They don't shy away from the tough topics, but instead keep pushing for more answers and more ideas to be created. They are dedicated to living their faith and exploring their spirituality and should be encouraged as they continue to say yes.



6 confirmands were supported by 6 Friends in Faith

9 seniors supported by lots of friends and family



Youth Retreat 2019: 38 participants 8 chaperones



47 youth choir participants

COVID-19 Consequences

The Youth Fusion and Belize trips were canceled for 2020, but we plan to do those trips as planned in Summer 2021!

Likewise, the 2020 Youth Retreat was postponed because of COVID-19.



43 youth regularly attend on Sunday evenings

CHRISTIAN ACTION

In early 2020, a group of St. Paul members who wanted to live their faith by making a difference on some of the most difficult issues facing the church and society, formed a group they call Christian Action.

During the course of the year, Christian Action held and supported work to call attention to racial justice, the climate crisis, and United Methodist Church policies on same-sex marriage and ordination. The group is not a formal part of the St. Paul leadership team structure, but coordinates closely with the church and staff, and has started regular Zoom meetings every other Wednesday at 7 p.m. The meetings and its membership are open to all.

The group first organized in January around the issue of Methodist doctrine on same-sex marriage and the ordination of gay clergy. Its first activity was holding a series of Sunday-morning informational meetings on the proposals related to those policies that were set to be considered at the United Methodist General Conference. The conference has since been postponed due to the coronavirus.



6 sessions
~60 attendees
per session

Christian Action also applied to become a Reconciling Community. That's a recognition by the Reconciling Ministries Network designating that the members of the group believe all members of the congregation should be



welcomed in the same way. In June the Christian Action group was approved as a Reconciling Community, making it the 7th Reconciling group in Kentucky.

Climate crisis action

In January, Christian Action also focused on

environmental issues, beginning with a screening in McAdams Hall of **"The Call of the Forest."** Nearly 200 people came to watch this documentary about how trees could reduce global warming. The Friday evening included displays by local community groups that encourage the planting and care of trees.



~200 attendees
~ 10 tree-friendly organizations

Christian Action continued focusing on the climate crisis by meeting with a group named "100% REAL" (Renewable Energy Alliance of Louisville.) That group helped pass a resolution through the Metro Council committing Louisville to transition the city to 100% clean energy by the year 2035. Christian Action planned a November virtual Zoom meeting called "100% REAL Good News." That event was aimed at helping the city implement the renewable energy resolution, and was co-sponsored by 100% REAL and Interfaith Power & Light.

Support for Racial Justice

As part of Louisville's reaction to the racial unrest that gripped the US early in the year, Christian Action worked with St. Paul staff to co-sponsor the Interfaith **Prayer Vigil for Racial Justice and Renewal** that was held June 7 in Central Park.



In the summer and fall, several Christian Action members attended a 7-part virtual seminar, "Exploring the Historical Roots of Racism," presented by St. Paul member David Green.

To find out more about the Christian Action group or to become a part of it, contact church staff or Paul Wesslund at paulwesslund@gmail.com. Or you can visit the [Christian Action page](#) of the St. Paul website.

RESILIENCE

In October 2019, the Resilience team continued and concluded a Wesley night series, Building Resilience in Children and Youth, featuring guest speakers on a variety of topics including cyber safety, depression/anxiety, and difficult conversations.

**Building Resilience
in Children and Youth**

Wednesdays This Fall!

September 11 • 6:30pm - Screening of *Paper Tigers* film

September 18-October 23 • 7:00-8:00pm - Sessions on:

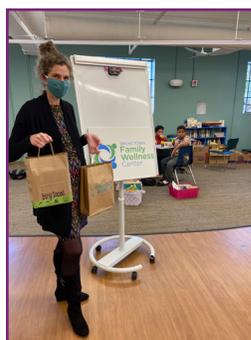
Conscious Discipline • Confidence • Anxiety • Meditation • CyberSafety • Difficult Conversations

 **StPaulChurchKY.org**

A Sunday school gathering convened to study *Suffering and the Heart of God*, by Diane



Langberg; the class will soon be studying *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*, by Lisa Sharon Harper. Resources were compiled for the church website; a section in the church library is now dedicated to books related to trauma-informed care and resilience.



An exciting collaboration began between St. Paul and the Smoketown Family Wellness Center, a pediatric office that seeks to support and foster resilience in patients, families, and the community.



Our team is mostly made up of physicians and nurses who are members of St Paul. And two members are retired teachers. The year has been a challenging one because of COVID. Much attention has been shifted from blood drives and clinics to tracking the virus and recommending ways to keep our congregation safe as it relates to in-person services and use of our building by outside groups. I want to thank members of the team for the many hours of discussion and feedback.

- Marilyn Helvey



HEALTH & WELLNESS

MISSIONS

Despite the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Paul members have continued to spread the love of God throughout our community and beyond. Our "Every Month a Mission" drives have collected everything from diapers to dishes in support of those in need. St. Paul members and friends have

provided food, clothing, and other necessities through our Resource Center. They supported Portland Promise Center during our first-ever online donation drive and auction, provided blankets and household items to under-served individuals, and brought joy to Waller-Williams kids and families.



In December, we hosted an Alternative Gift Fair, allowing St. Paul members to donate to worthy causes in someone's name. We were able to donate the following:

- Heifer International: \$1,585.00
- Esther's House: \$602.00
- St. Paul Resource Center: \$594.00
- United Methodist Children's Home: \$370
- St. Paul Good Samaritan Fund: \$194.00

Every Month a Mission

Waller-Williams School: 144 Thanksgiving boxes for students' families and **156 Christmas stockings** for students

MIHOW diaper drive, hosted by the SPAMS: **4,833 diapers** and **12,133 wipes** for the Baby Pantry at Henderson Settlement

Blanket Louisville: 88 blankets and throws

Faith Quilters - 88 quilts for Project Linus

Portland Promise Center online fundraiser and auction: **\$12,000**

Kentucky Refugee Ministries dish drive: **Approximately 350** coffee cups, glasses, dishes, and silverware

La Casita: Dozens of face masks, feminine products, and other items, plus \$500

Esther's House: A carload of household items and gift cards



Our second annual Stop Human Trafficking Conference, hosted by the St. Paul United Methodist Women, drew dozens of guests who learned about recognizing and addressing human trafficking in our community.



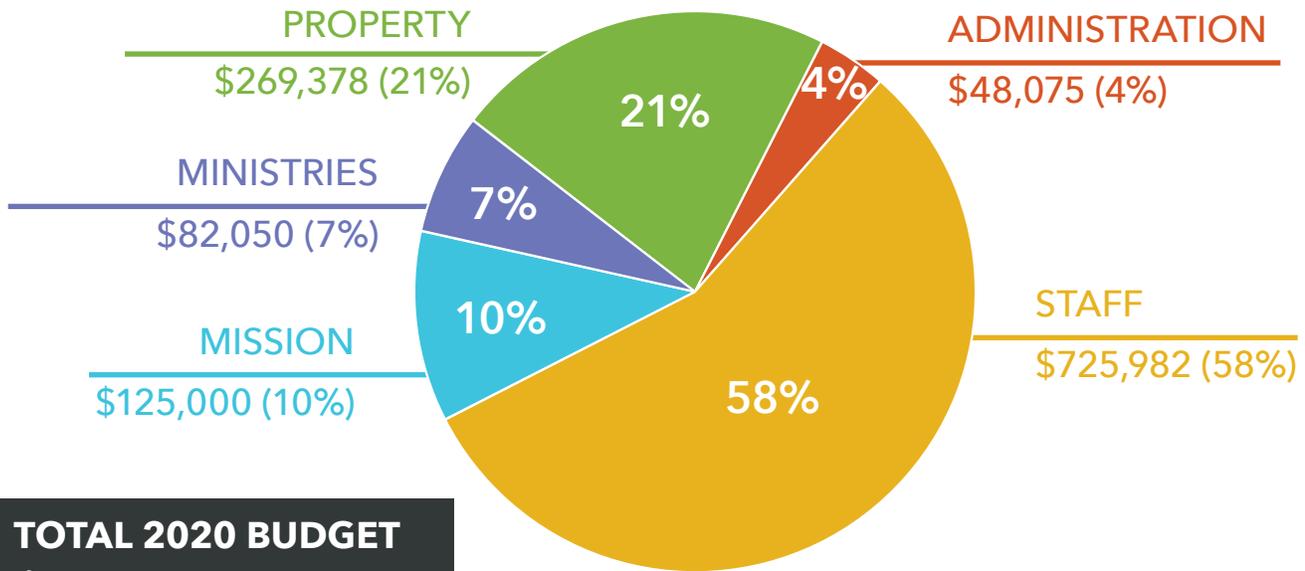
Resource Center went mobile in 2020!

In late 2019 into early 2020, the Resource Center was serving an average of 40 guests. But when the pandemic arrived, we had to stop providing hot meals and showers inside the building. So the RC evolved into a "Mobile Pantry" supplying 4th Ave. UMC, Highland Community Ministries, South Louisville Ministries, and others with food, clothes, and TARC tickets. We still have people who drop by almost daily and we continue to help them.



Finances

2020 BUDGET OVERVIEW



TOTAL 2020 BUDGET
\$1,250,485.53

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KENTUCKY CONFERENCE

St. Paul's contributions to the Kentucky Conference fund mission and ministry happening in our region, nation, and world, such as: camp and retreats, college ministries, natural disaster relief, and minister education.

\$110,000

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY MINISTRIES \$5,000

HEARTLAND DISTRICT \$10,000



ENDOWMENT AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020 \$1,271,614.95

NON-BUDGETED GIVING BY ST. PAUL MEMBERS

The St. Paul community went above and beyond in their giving this past year. On top of donations made directly to St. Paul, this community also supported the following with extravagant gifts: Smoketown Health and Wellness Center, Portland Promise Center, Waller-Williams School, trustee projects, and countless acts of generosity.





Campfire on the Lawn
November 2019



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