

Pastor's Report

Holy Covenant Congregational Meeting 2023

(This report also includes the Worship Ministry, Education, and Pastoral Care reports.)

Holy Covenant has continued to live stream worship via YouTube. We have had to adapt and rework processes from time to time, and have discovered what does and does not work well on livestream. It has proved to be an extremely useful tool, however, as not only do we have people watch at the time of worship from a distance, or if they are ill and cannot come to worship, but we also have people who watch it later in the day or even later in the week.

We had several special worship services this year, beginning with the Rev. John Hose Award recognition service in January. Rev. Michael Cooper presented me with the Rev. John Hose Award, MCC's award to clergy in recognition of "outstanding service to the denomination." Special church occasions were also observed, such as Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, a Blessing of the Animals, and so on.. In June, we shared a Pride service and potluck with our sister MCC in Chicagoland, A Church 4 Me. Members of Holy Covenant also took part in planning and offering a service at International Mr. Leather in May—this was especially satisfying, as one of the attendees had never heard of MCC before, and was excited to learn there was a church where he could be all of himself. Good Friday was observed with a community service at Second Baptist Church of LaGrange. We also remembered Mother's and Father's Day, and All Saints Day. We also celebrated a reclamation service in September to recognize the restoration of the church building after the church building was vandalized with spray paint in late March. The Worship Team is preparing for Trans Day of Remembrance, the community Thanksgiving service, World AIDS Day, Advent, and Christmas Eve, to round out the year.

We hosted several guest preachers, including Rev. Nilsa Irizarry, Rev. Doreen Sturba DeZur, Minister Al Banks, and Mr. Harold Gibson.

I led worship for Imago Dei MCC in Pennsylvania (via Zoom) several times during the year as they engaged in a search for a new pastor. I also led worship at Plymouth Place Retirement Community on three occasions.

I have to thank Roxann Victory, our tech lead for worship, for her flexibility and willingness to try new apps and new ways of doing things, of adapting to changes on the fly, and problem-solving when needed. She's also trained Barb Adams Latsaras to run the PowerPoint when she's out of town, and thanks to Barb for taking that on. Finally, thanks to the Worship Team for constructive feedback, helpful suggestions, and a commitment that means worship is continually improving. Thank you, Joanie Baird, Holly Blonde, Andrew Hillum, Jim Ulisse, and Roxann Victory!

"Joseph" was the topic of a movie discussion in October, focused on the movie of that name, a series from PBS starring Ben Kingsley as Potiphar.

I continued my outreach to the community through membership in and attendance at the monthly lunch for progressive clergy in the LaGrange/LaGrange Park/Brookfield area. We have supported many events in the area (a health fair, a community unity education day, community Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas meals, the BEDS shelter, and more). In addition, I took part in the Good Friday and SummerFest worship services.

Community Outreach also includes two groups that are specifically geared to the LGBTQ+ community—SAGE’s Friday afternoon discussion group, and Thrive with Pride, a program of AgeOptions, for LGBTQ+ seniors. The national SAGE organization asked all the local groups to rename themselves, dropping the SAGE name. The group meeting in Bellwood is now the West Suburban Senior Services. I usually attend the Friday group. Thrive with Pride offers a large group meeting once a month via Zoom, which usually involves a presentation on a topic of interest to LGBTQ seniors, from Medicare to LGBTQ themes in movies to LGBTQ-oriented legal guides. Several churches and senior centers (Holy Covenant is one of them) offer small group discussions and re-presentation of the large group topic.

I have applied for another Louisville Grant, this time to implement a spiritual advocacy ministry in MCC. As of this writing, I have not heard whether I will receive it—awards are scheduled to be announced November 1, so I anticipate knowing by the time of the congregational meeting.

Our Pastoral Care Ministry is expanding, as Holly Blonde has begun to take on the initial contact for people we haven’t seen in church or online for a while. Once she makes contact, if they wish it or she feels it would be helpful, she passes the names on to me. Our prayer ministry is expanding, as those watching the live stream ask for prayers via the comment box, and more people from the general public are accessing our online prayer request form. I also continue to support two people in Cook County Jail via court presence, correspondence, and virtual visits.

I continue to participate in the Thriving in Ministry program of MCC, which is intended to support MCC clergy and ministerial leaders by encouraging selfcare and healthy practices, whatever that may be for the individual—exercise, meditation, time away, hobbies, etc. Another clergyperson and I meet regularly via Zoom for mutual support and encouragement.

In late March, the church building was vandalized—spray paint was used to cover up our rainbow stairs and the rainbow lines on our front door, as well as cover our rainbow cross on our banner. The Brookfield Police were of course contacted, but their investigation did not have useful results. However, we were pleased and relieved by the response from our neighbors in Brookfield, who rallied to our support with financial donations, their labor in assisting to clean up and repaint our rainbows (and we added a few more!), and in the meals provided by Pub 78 (our Pints with the Pastor location) and Indivisible Brookfield during our painting days. In addition, we were gifted with many rocks painted with rainbows and slogans such as “Love Wins,” and “Brookfield is for Everyone.” The latter slogan was also made into signs by a local

sign maker, and proved so popular he had to make more, twice, and expanded it to “LaGrange Park is for Everyone.” Finally, our replacement banner was donated by the banner maker who had made our original. The malice of the individuals who marred our building had the opposite result from their intent—we were not intimidated, nor were our Brookfield neighbors; instead, we were strengthened by the knowledge that we were supported, wanted, and loved in the neighborhood.

All in all, it has been a busy year, with more than the usual ups and downs—and coming on the heels of COVID, that is saying something! I continue to be grateful for the leadership and support of the Holy Covenant Board of Directors: Roxann Victory, Barbara Adams Latsaras, and Joanie Baird.

In all God’s many names,

Rev. Martha Daniels

2023 Annual Financial Report Comments

- 1) September 2023 YTD Net Operating revenue was \$48,297 and Expenses were \$36,853, so Net Income was about \$11,444 for September 2023 YTD.
- 2) From October 2022 to September 2023, we had Net Operating revenue of \$59,377 and expenses of \$48,095 so we had a Net Income of about \$11,282.
- 3) We received one check for \$5,000 and another for \$10,000 totaling \$15,000 from New Spirit Church.
- 4) The June Dance/Auction totaled \$975.
- 5) The Fall Garage Sale in October 2023 brought in \$646, but it is not included in the Financials statements which were as of 9/30/2023.
- 6) We received a settlement from Erie Insurance for about \$73,000 to cover storm damage to the roof and siding for the church building and garage.
- 7) Our current Operating Fund cash balance as of 10/17/23 is about \$12,064, which includes \$3,450 restricted for Salary only, \$3,000 reserve, and the remaining \$5,134 is unrestricted.
- 8) September 2023 YTD UFMCC Assessment = \$1,039. Our January 2023 tithe rate was 3.5%. The rest of the year is at 2%
- 9) Pension for September 2023 YTD is $\$1.75 \times 22 \text{ members} = \$38.50/\text{month} \times 9 = \346.50 .
- 10) Total owed by the Operating Fund to the Designated Fund is still \$1200 as of September 30, 2023.
- 11) Checking Balance in the Designated Fund on 9/30/23 was \$9044.
- 12) Current Balance in the Age Options Designated Fund as of 10/17/2023 = \$5,487, which includes \$2000 grant for 2023.
- 13) Balance forward is about \$983 in the Boiler/AC Fund.
- 14) Balance in the Sign Repair Fund is still about \$2528.

Respectfully,

Joanie Baird, Treasurer

Holy Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

2023 Social Media Annual Report

November 19, 2023

Website

The church website has been active since April 17, 2017, and is done in WordPress. I have been maintaining the site since I built it.

We have moved from streaming on Facebook to using just YouTube to stream the services. Facebook continually muted our songs even though we had the rights to play them. YouTube respects our license and does not mute us. Please subscribe to the channel to be notified when new videos are added. Please click here to go to the [HC YouTube Page](#).

Over the year the website was maintained and improved upon, and the following is updated:

- Link to the weekly newsletter
- Calendar is updated monthly on the website that allows links and images.
- Monthly financials added to the Board page
- Worship Schedule has been added to the home page.
- Home page changed monthly to show calendar and update header.

Facebook

During this year, events that were posted were for our two garage sales, special worship, and other events. Our Facebook site has information which is posted by either Rev. Daniels, Roxann Victory or me. All three of us are Admins for the site.

Twitter

Our Twitter account is active, but our newsletter can no longer be posted from Constant Contact as they have removed the capability. The Board has decided to not use Twitter and change over to Threads which is like "X" but owned by Facebook.

Instagram

We started an Instagram account which tends to lean toward the younger crowd. Items that are posted on Instagram show up on Facebook since FB owns Instagram. We have had 188 posts, 139 followers and 83 that we are following. Our Instagram account is "holycovemcc."

Constant Contact

Every week I send out a constant contact newsletter "What's Happening at Holy Covenant" and every few months a newsletter is sent specifically to the membership or to announce an event, death, or some other information.

Holy Covenant Metropolitan Community Church 2023 Social Media Annual Report

There are three different email lists.

1. HCC email list has 169 emails on it.
2. Members and current congregants has 26
3. Members only 15

There is an area on the website where you can sign up and if you have not signed up for our newsletters, please do so on the website.

Giving Tuesday

Every November, Giving Tuesday is a way for us to fundraise inside/outside of the church. We are listed with other organizations that corporations look to give their money to and there are some individuals that do give specifically during that time. I make sure that we are listed with the Giving Tuesday foundation. Besides money, Giving Tuesday is also a time to volunteer with organizations like food banks, helping the homeless etc.

If you have an announcement or an article that you want in the monthly newsletter, please email it to me at the below email address before the first of the month.

Barbara Adams Latsaras,
Social Media Coordinator
socialmedia@holycovenantmcc.org

2023 HCMCC Building & Grounds Report
November 19, 2023

1. Coordinated volunteers, local neighbors, congregants, members, HCMCC friends and material donations for vandalism recovery.
2. Installed two more ring cameras on the church premises for security and loss prevention after the vandalism.
3. In July we had the roof, siding and gutters installed.
4. We are asking for volunteers to clean the church weekly (light duty maintenance) to keep the inside spiffy or delegate donations to hire an outside service.
5. Now that we are in the throes of winter, we are asking for volunteers for snow removal or, again, designated donations to hire an outside service to keep walkways and entrances safe and clear.