



DeerGrove Covenant Church

2022 Annual Meeting

Sunday February 5, 2023

DeerGrove Covenant Church Annual Meeting Agenda - Sunday February 5th, 2023

Opening and Welcome – **Lorin (Jen Killinger** taking minutes)

- Declare a Quorum - Our Constitution states that 20% of members shall constitute a quorum for the Annual Meeting, with a minimum of 20 members. 20% of our membership (active or otherwise) is below 20, so we would use 20 as a quorum.
- Congregational reading of the relational Covenant – **Pastor Taylor**
- Opening Prayer for the Annual Meeting - **Lorin**
- Presentation of the 2022 Minutes – **Lorin**
 - Approval of Minutes
- Chair Reports - **Lorin**
 - Chair Report
 - Attendance
 - Membership Report
- Ministry Staff Reports
 - **Pastor Taylor**
 - **Gretchen Stroner and Allison Tealdi**, Children’s Ministries
 - **Pastor Rick** – as read by **Dave Green**
 - **Pastor Peter**
 - Prayer for Staff – **Dave Green**
- Stewardship – **Mike Tealdi** or **Dan Palmquist**
 - 2022 Financial Report
 - 2023 Budget
 - Voting on the budget – **Lorin**
 - Prayer for Finance Team – **Mark Johnson**
- Nominating Committee – **Ann Johnson**
 - Leadership Team
 - Lorin Michael - 1 year term
 - Mark Johnson - 2 year term
 - Kristie Bizeau - 2 year term
 - Nominating Committee
 - Linda Smith - 2 year term
 - Donna Michael - 2 year term
 - Kyle Stroner - LT representative (appointed by LT)

- Pastoral Relations Committee
 - Mark De La Paz - LT representative (appointed by LT)
- Vote for the nominations – **Lorin**, votes counted by **Mark De La Paz & Kyle Stroner**
- Prayer for new Leaders – **Kyle Stroner**
- Thank You to outgoing Leadership Team members and Nominating Committee members – **Lorin**
- Gather 2023, The Covenant Annual Meeting in Orange County, CA. Seeking two delegates on behalf of DeerGrove - **Lorin**
- Any Other Business
- Closing Prayer – **Pastor Taylor**
- Adjournment - **Lorin**

DEERGROVE COVENANT CHURCH 2021 ANNUAL MEETING NOTES

MARCH 6, 2022

Leadership Team Members In Attendance: Byron Amundsen, Heidi Corral, John Jaderholm, Jen Killinger, Lorin Michael, Peter Sjoblom, Kyle Stroner

Absent: Dave Green, Jen Klein

Topic	Discussion/Conclusion	Action/ Follow up
Welcome/ Devotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byron welcomed everyone to the 2021 Annual Meeting and announced that 32 members were present and we have a quorum to proceed. • Pastor Peter led us in reading the DeerGrove Relational Covenant. • Pastor Peter opened the meeting in prayer. 	
Chairman Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byron shared his view of our church activities over 2021 with comments about Pastor Peter and photos of a variety of church activities. • Byron highlighted the number of volunteers needed to facilitate our church activities. He estimated the number needed as 72. • He highlighted that our active members are 56 people, those inactive are 22 and associate members are 16 to bring the DeerGrove member role to 94. • Byron shared that the average attendance during 2021 was 48.5 per Sunday and the current number of active members was 55. • Byron compared when he started as chairman of the Leadership team we had 5 staff and now we have 3. We used to have 98 members and now we have 55. The annual budget was \$365K and the 2022 budget is now \$225K. We had 37 giving units and now we only have 27 giving units. He estimated the financial value of our facility is that "we are \$500K underwater". • He shared that we have missed our financial goal (Expenses to Income) by \$2,000.00 per month recently. • His goal to provide an effective Co-Pastor model to bring us through this transition period fell apart with Pastor Sarah's resignation. 	
Staff Reports	<p>Pastor Peter Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastor Peter shared highlights from his report remembering his hire as a transitional Pastor. He depended on our existing staff a great deal as we all learned how to operate totally remote and then to begin worshipping again together at church. • He conducted his congregational interviews and provided a report in July. His report suggested three ways to proceed; 	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remain on the present trajectory and search for a replacement pastor; 2. Change our vision and staff models to move ahead; 3. Close DeerGrove church. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter recognized the effort and work done by the DG2 committee who gained congregational input to recommend to the LT a vision, mission and potential staffing models to move ahead. This followed Pastor Peter’s suggestion #2. • He closed his remarks with how grateful he is for Sarah, Rick, Taylor and Barbara. <p>Pastor Rick Fisk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rick shared that he sincerely appreciated the small groups that continued to meet (remotely) throughout the pandemic. He noted that they could easily be the key element that kept the church going. • He also expressed his excitement with the Welcome Team as they “caught fire” and have provided a spark to get people thinking of how to welcome and support our community. <p>Pastor Taylor Sexton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taylor provided a nice update on our Confirmation group and the influence what we teach in Confirmation can have a real-life impact on our students. • Our Youth ministry is struggling with no 6th graders to move into our Youth Group. He recognized the wonderful work and dedication of Scott Nyman and the Congregation applauded Scott’s service. • Taylor said we will try to gain a rhythm of meeting and attending retreats in the future. • Taylor also shared his role at the church will now include Youth, but also leading the Worship Service and Preaching once a month. • He recognized the wonderful support of Barbara Fisk and the congregation applauded her service. <p>Prayer of Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Jaderholm prayed for our staff this past year and for their continued support for this new year. 	
<p>Financial Report</p>	<p>Mike Tealdi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike provided highlights of his Financial Report with slides. His highlights included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We collected \$6K in December to close the year ○ We finished with a \$43K Cash Reserve ○ Total giving was down 14% from last year 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Federal Government PPP Loan of \$31K was “forgiven” and really helped us through the pandemic time. ○ National Covenant Properties agreed to lower our mortgage payment \$1,500 per month. This will be reviewed again in 6 months. ○ The 2022 budget reflects our current giving and expenses. The median giving level is \$18,427. ○ Today our church expenses exceed our income. The key takeaway for the 2022 budget is that this budget is 30% less than last year. ○ Mike asked all DeerGrove members to consider how to give more to DeerGrove. He suggested we consider what the church means to you and get more involved and don’t wait for others to give the big financial gift – a little bit more from each will help our financial future. ● Byron asked for us to vote on the proposed \$225,751 annual budget. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mark Johnson asked that we postpone the budget vote until after we hear from the “forward looking guys”. ○ Byron asked for a hand vote of all in favor of holding off on voting to approve the budget. Byron stated that the request passed. No vote was taken. ● Kyle Stroner prayed for the Finance Team and our budget process. 	
<p>Plans to Move Forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Byron announced that the Leadership Team had not been able to come to a unanimous decision on how to move forward. Half the team wanted to close the church and others wanted to keep it open. Of those, Lorin, Kyle, John and Dave put together plans of what is needed to move forward. He announced Lorin would speak to the Plans to move forward. ● Lorin Michael shared his personal experience with DeerGrove and related the Purpose Driven Life book to his motivation to “see what God is doing and get involved”. ● Lorin shared several things that the team listed as items to be done to move forward. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pastoral Search Committee. This should have been started a while ago. He envisions 5-7 people involved in a search for a co-vocational pastor. The LT will recommend people for the committee and bring it back to the Congregation for approval. The committee will work with staff and the Conference to find candidates and bring a recommendation to the LT, who will then present a call to the Congregation to vote and approve. ○ Weekly Prayer Meeting – This will be on Tuesday evenings at the church at 7PM. ○ Children’s Ministry – Lorin was encouraged by Jen Killinger and Gretchen Stroner who are working on a schedule for volunteers to cover the children’s program with Pastor Sarah’s leaving. ○ Welcome and Outreach Team – Lorin shared the current activities of the new team that include updating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership Team will provide regular congregational updates on progress and financial status.

the web site and preparation of an Easter invitation post card that will be handed out in the neighborhood soon.

- **Building and Properties Team** – Lorin passed around a clip board for people to sign up to be on this team. He also mentioned a couple of groups he is talking with that are interested in renting our church for their meetings.
- **Fund Raising** – Lorin mentioned that 177 emails were sent to every past DG attendee, the past Monday, sharing with them our current situation and asking for their prayers and financial support. He reported that several pledges were received. A good sign! Lorin suggested that if everyone could increase their giving by 10% it would really help. He quoted Malachi 3 as an example of giving back to the Lord our full tithe.
- **Administrative Responsibilities** – A list of admin duties that Pastor Sarah had done are being coordinated by Jinny Koide. However, we need more people to help out.
- A question was asked from the Congregation if we needed to vote on moving forward. Byron responded that he didn't think so, but a motion would have to come from the Congregation.
- Byron thanked Lorin and the "4 guys" for their work and stated to the Congregation that on one hand there was the "Debbie Downers" and on the other hand was enthusiasm. He shared his personal wish to do what the Spirit wants – but that he was personally worn out and can't continue as Chairman of the LT any longer.
- The Congregation recognized Byron for his leadership through the pandemic and staff changes and applauded his service.
- Byron stated that the LT had many discussions on how to move forward and were split on closing the church or to keep going. He stated that the 2022 budget "just gets us by" and cautioned us that much work is needed to keep DG moving forward.

Majority Indication (non-vote)

- Byron said he didn't want to call for a vote but would like to see all those that want to keep the church open to raise their hand. He noted that all but one person raised their hand in the audience.
- A question was asked how the Congregation will be keep appraised of the financial situation. Suggestions included updates in the ACE, weekly reporting in the bulletin and a report from a LT member monthly in church of updates from their meetings. It was agreed it would be very important to keep the congregation updated and informed.
- Another question was regarding the Pastoral Search Committee. It was clarified that the LT would recommend people to serve on the Search Committee and bring it back to

	<p>the Congregation for approval. The Search Committee will look for qualified candidates and bring a recommendation back to the LT, who in turn, will recommend to the Congregation to Call a new pastor.</p>	
<p>Nominating Committee Report and Vote</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Johnson made a recommendation to hold the vote on the 2022 budget. • Byron asked for a hand vote on all who approved the proposed budget for 2022. He noted that the vote passed. • Mark Johnson offered a prayer for the Church and Byron. • Ann Johnson provided the recommendation from the Nominating Committee for the Pastoral Relations Committee and new Leadership Team members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New members recommended for the PRC were Cindy Hedstrom and Maria McClurkin. ○ Byron asked for a hand vote and said that it passed. ○ New Leadership Team members to replace Byron Amundsen, Heidi Corral and John Jaderholm are Mark Johnson (1 year) and Mark De La Paz (2 years). These two will join Kyle Stoner and Dave Green who are staying on for another 2 year term. Other LT members include Jen Killinger and Lorin Michael. ○ Byron asked for a raised hand vote and noted that the motion passed. 	
<p>Closing Prayer /Adjourn</p>	<p>Heidi and John were asked to pray for the new Leadership Team members and then Byron presented them with a thank you note.</p> <p>Pastor Peter closed our meeting in prayer.</p>	

Respectfully submitted by John Jaderholm

March 6, 2022



DECEMBER 2022

Hello Covenant Family,

Four months into serving as president I am both grateful and humbled by the gracious words of welcome and affirmation in this new call to serve. Thank you! As you gather in your local churches for your annual meetings, I send each of you greetings and my gratitude for all the ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church. **It has been a particular joy to see how Covenant churches and affiliates are engaged with the many ways we see Jesus at work around the world. What a privilege to be co-laborers with Christ together!** Thank you for all of your efforts, prayers, and support both on the front lines and in our larger shared mission.

There is much to celebrate, but we also have challenges that need our care, consideration, and prayers. Transitions are challenging, and we have experienced many transitions throughout 2022, including Covenant Offices staff. I know you feel this on the local level too. As I continue to lean into Jesus, my prayer is to listen well and seek wisdom for this new season of leadership. It is my hope that as God's people, we can move into places of healing, generosity, and kindness with one another, and together move forward to do the missional work of being good news.

I am often asked, "How can I/we/our church be supportive?" My response is always, to please pray. Pray, pray, pray! It is the most powerful way we can connect with the heart of God. I genuinely believe prayer has the power to bridge us closer to God and closer to one another. As I reflect on Mark 4:35-41, I invite you to pray like you are one of the disciples being tossed about in the storm, asking Jesus to help. These prayers of desperation are also prayers of compassion. They show that we care about what happens to us, and that Jesus is the solution to all our challenges. Pray for me and the leadership of the Covenant as we work together to be good news in this season. **Pray that we listen well to you and to one another—and especially to what Jesus is calling us to.**

For God's glory and neighbor's good,

Tammy Swanson-Draheim, PRESIDENT, EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

2023-01-16

Leadership Team Chair Report

Dear Members and Friends of DeerGrove Covenant Church,

What a privilege and an honor it has been to serve our church and our Lord and Savior as the Church Chair during this past year. I have received so much encouragement from our church congregation, our leadership team, and our staff.

As I look back and reflect on our congregation one year ago, I find that we had ourselves on a better footing than we knew at the time. Our former Church Chair, Byron Amundsen, had the forethought to form a Welcome & Outreach Team, near the end of 2021, which has become a major proponent for change within our church this year. Byron also helped us bring Pastor Peter to the congregation, and Pastor Peter continued to teach and serve us throughout the year 2022. Because of the vision cast by our DeerGrove 2.0 team, we knew the priorities that mattered to our congregation and where we should focus our efforts in 2022.

I want to stop for a second and speak again about that Welcome & Outreach Team, which includes Jinny Koide, Brenda Welker, Kait Berger, Judy Amundsen, and Rick Fisk. This team was responsible for launching a new website at the beginning of 2022. They also brought a renewed focus on our social media, some increased signage and visibility, and brought us all together on common causes of reaching out into our community. This was one of the core priorities that our DeerGrove 2.0 vision casting team came away with, that we wanted to be a warm, welcoming community that values relationships with one another and with God through Jesus Christ.

There are many other outreach and community involvement efforts that DeerGrove is involved in, and not all of them are new. We partnered with Tricon Group, across the street, and the American Red Cross for two blood drives this year. We helped the Partners for Our Community through involvement in their community clothing closet. We returned to having our Soup Fest in the Fall, raising funds and awareness for Covenant World Relief and Development.

Another of the four DG 2.0 priorities is a dynamic children and youth program. With the resignation of Pastor Sarah last March, it wasn't clear how we were going to achieve and provide that. As Jen Killinger, Gretchen Stroner, and Alison Tealdi stepped forward to volunteer in our Children's Ministry, we were gifted with some talented and caring teachers and leaders for our children. This has been one of the "God Moments" within our congregation where we have seen an exemplary model of servanthood. They continue to work together, and with our pastors, to provide curriculum for teaching the children as they have recruited other volunteers to help with weekly teaching time in the Children's Ministry.

It was evident from the result and final report from the DG 2.0 team that we were to start a Pastoral Search following the annual meeting last year. The team was selected in April, confirmed by the congregation, and set to work right away. Their process was very thorough and took many laborious hours in meetings and preparing communications between the candidates and the congregation. The end of the road for this team culminated in November when we extended a call to Pastor Taylor Sexton, which begins a new season and chapter for DeerGrove Covenant Church.

As another initiative, the Building and Properties team began conversations about renting the building with a number of outside groups. There were 5 different groups that we considered as potential tenants. In September, we started a partnership with "The Practice", a local church plant out of Willow Creek. We now rent some office space to their Pastor and Worship Leader a couple days a week. We also continue to rent our space to the Brotherhood of Harmony on Thursday evenings. Finally, there is a retired Covenant Pastor who occasionally utilizes our building for Spiritual Direction meetings. We continue to look for ways to build good relationships with outside groups by opening our doors and using the resources God has given us, in exchange for some greater visibility not to mention helping with our mortgage and bills.

Another area of progress this year for the Properties team was the completion of the new door between the Children's Ministry room and the Nursery by Kyle Stroner. This was a project on the 2020 Vision campaign that got pre-empted by the pandemic but rose to the top of the projects that we really wanted to complete. We now enjoy more freedom of movement between the classrooms during the worship service without having to open doors into the sanctuary.

Just after the Annual Meeting last year we kicked off Tuesday night prayer meetings. This group has met faithfully ever since with as many as 12 people in attendance, and once only 2 😊 but you know what it says in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them". This group has acted as much as a small group as it has a supporting group for our church. We come together and pray over the local needs of our church, our community, our denomination, our missionaries, and our world. We consider prayer -one of the important ways that we can worship God and uphold our congregation.

I'd like to convey my thanks to Jen Killinger for being our Leadership Team secretary, serving with her gifts in so many areas, and diligently taking the minutes and action items for our team meetings and congregational meetings. As she finishes her term on the Leadership Team, I want her to know we appreciate her, and Jen will be missed in this role.

Thanks also to Pastor Peter for leading us through a difficult time. He was an integral part of our congregation during these last two years and gifted us with his knowledge on the subject of churches as emotional systems. It was truly a joy to work alongside him in ministry, and I know he has helped DeerGrove Covenant learn more about who we are, and how best we can move forward in ministry together. Now go off and retire like you're supposed to! This is a time to reflect and relax! 😊 Just kidding, Pastor Peter will remain in contact with us as he continues to provide mentoring for Pastor Taylor, as well as coaching and teaching our congregation in town hall meetings. As his role will be reduced through the next several months, we will miss his presence that we've grown to love on Sunday mornings in worship and in preaching.

To Pastor Taylor, we thank you for stepping forward into your call. You have grown and matured in front of many of us over the years, all the way back to your internship with Youth Ministry (2012?). We love you and your family and are excited to see what God has in store for us in ministry together here in the Palatine Community.

We are also so very grateful to Pastor Rick who gives of his time as a Volunteer Assistant Pastor. His involvement in the Care Ministry, Christian Formation, preaching, and many other areas have been nothing short of a gift to our church. Thank you, Pastor Rick, for your dedicated and tireless service.

There are many others to which we owe a very sincere and heartfelt “thank you” for giving of yourself in volunteer ministry to this church community. I would like to thank the people and families that are serving on the music worship team, technology team, hospitality team, small group leaders, finance team, usher team, and leadership team. I know I have not even scratched the surface of listing the people that are volunteering, nor the areas of ministry that are being fulfilled by volunteers. If I were to list them all, it would be a very long list, nearly as long as the list of our congregation as a whole. I will mention one more by name, and that’s Jinny Koide. A big thank you to Jinny for stepping in to take over the Admin responsibilities for our church. Jinny does a lot of things behind the scenes, and we are very appreciative for all the hard work that goes into the administrative details that keep things running so smooth. Thank you!

I want to close with a selection from 1 Peter 4:10 and 4:11

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms... so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

In His service,
Lorin Michael

Chair

Membership report

Active Members: 56
12/31/21

New Members:

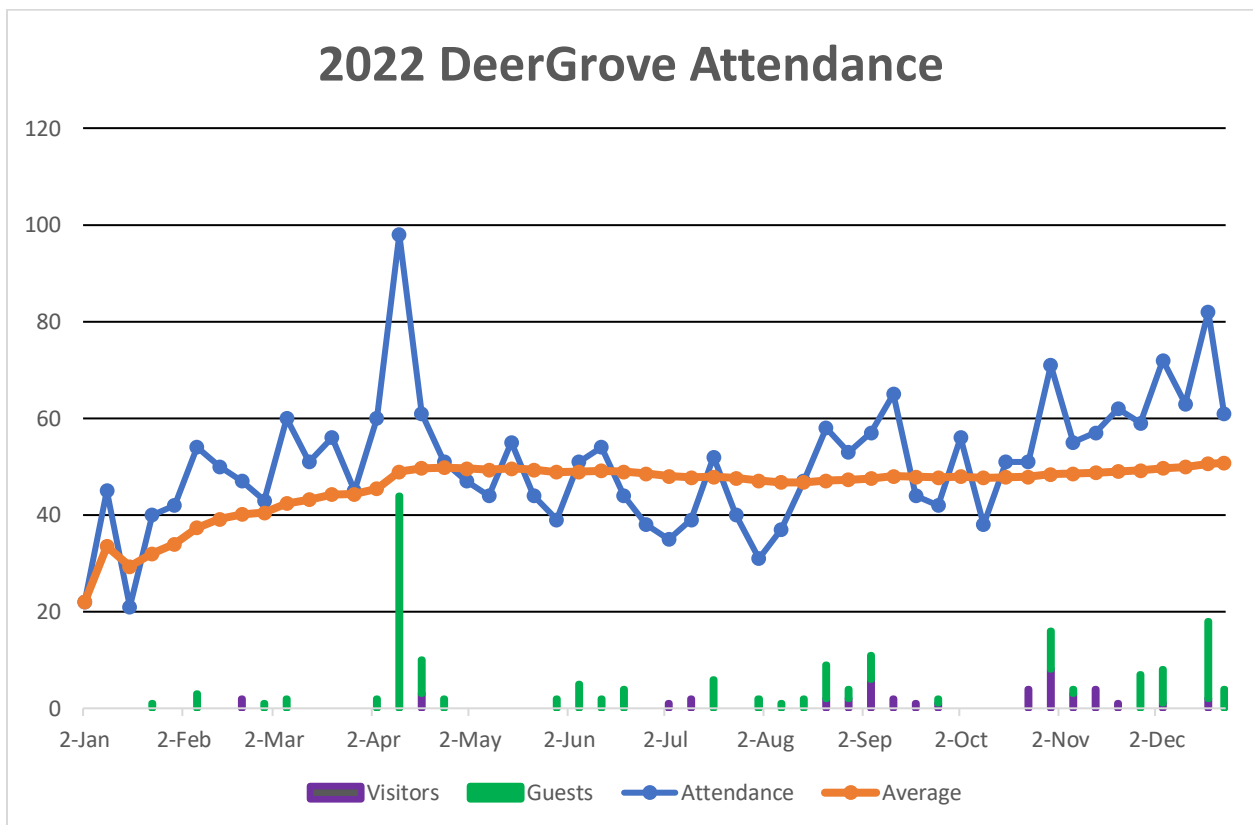
Reductions: 4

Active Members: 52
12/31/2022

Reductions:

- 1 Jack McClurkin passed away
- 1 Sarah Winter left the church
- 1 Jen Klein moved to Arizona
- 1 Karen DiVito moved to Florida

Attendance report



Report to the Annual Meeting
Taylor Sexton
DeerGrove Lead Pastor

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. -Php 1:3-6.

Hello DeerGrove Family,

Paul's words to the Church at Philippi perfectly capture my thoughts and feelings as I reflect on the past five years I have served DeerGrove, as well as this past year of ministry. Each of you hold a special place in my heart and I am so humbled and thankful to be on this faith journey with you. Like Paul, I am confident that God began a good work 26 years ago when DeerGrove was planted and continues to bring that good work to completion today. This past year I've seen each of you reflect the light of Christ in our Church and throughout our community through your worship, generosity, participation in Christian formation and small groups, volunteering in various ways throughout our Church, and serving our community. As we look forward to another year together my hope is that we would all remain confident in the good work that God will continue to do in and through each of us at DeerGrove.

In the one month I have been lead pastor I have been overwhelmed by all of your support and words of affirmation. Throughout the process of being called as lead pastor I was struck by the Spirit-led, diligent, thoughtful work of the search committee. I felt incredibly supported throughout the entire process and am confident they had DeerGrove's and my best interests in their hearts and minds. The Sunday I was installed as your pastor will be a day I will cherish for my entire life. My family and I are incredibly grateful to be a part of this community.

The areas of ministry that I oversaw for the majority of 2022 were worship and youth. In the area of worship, I've sought to lead us in a way that embodies the intentions of the DG 2.0 survey which included Biblical foundation, prayer based, intergenerational, and vibrant contemporary worship music. Each week when we gather, scripture sets the foundation for our time together beginning with the call to worship, moving then to scripture reading, and finally to the biblically based messages. Prayer is also an integral part of our worship services. One prayer that we've incorporated this year that I have found especially meaningful is the corporate prayer of generosity during our offering time. I also found our corporate prayers of remembrance on All Saints Sunday to be very sacred.

As a congregation one of our core values is caring for the next generation of believers. One of the ways we sought to uphold this value in 2022 is by having an 'Intergenerational Sunday' the second Sunday of each month. On intergenerational Sundays we invite our kids to help lead worship by playing instruments, hear a Children's message, and remain in the sanctuary during the entire service either sitting with their parents or doing crafts at the back kid's table. Our intergenerational services point us to the biblical truth that children point us all toward the Kingdom of God. (Matt.18:3)

In 2022 we were blessed with amazing growth in our music and worship team. As a church community we are blessed to have an amazing team of committed, passionate, and talented individuals who lead us so well into the God's presence each week. As a team we learned many new worship songs and grew together as a team in our musical abilities. I am looking forward to continuing to serve alongside this incredible team and am excited to see how God continues to use the worship team at DeerGrove.

In the area of youth ministry, we were thankful to confirm Griffin Nyman, Elijah Connors, and Aaron Connors in June of 2022. Each of them gave amazing testimonies of how God has worked in their lives and how they will seek to continue to follow God throughout their lives. Due to students graduating and a large gap in the ages of youth in our Church, the youth ministry did shrink in 2022 and we moved to more informal gatherings and events with our small group. Unless there is an influx of new folks in 2023 I do not anticipate much growth in the area of youth ministry in 2023. However, our youth ministry team will still seek to care for and nurture the spiritual growth of the students at DeerGrove.

DeerGrove Covenant Church
Annual Report
Rick Fisk – Assistant Pastor, Congregational Care

Congregational Care

This is an area where I have taken the lead, usually being a point of first contact or initial recipient of information concerning some one's illness or other prayer concern. But There are many others also involved in this ministry, both Pastor Peter and Pastor Taylor also provide pastoral care, sometimes depending upon relationships or availability. There are also others who lead a small group or simply have a caring heart that take the initiative to follow up with people within their circle of acquaintances. This ministry continues to have some limitations based upon continued concerns about Covid/Flu and other viruses. Most healthcare institutions still have restrictions upon visitation.

Life Groups

Lots of caring for one another takes place within our life groups. These groups are centers for sharing, praying and comforting within the small group. Please don't struggle on your own, I encourage you to reach out to a pastor, a life group leader or a friend to help share your burden or concern.

It is natural for people to seek out and enjoy group gatherings, our life groups are built upon this natural desire. The DeerGrove congregation represents our collective "body of Christ," but our life groups represent the more intimate/personal body life where people can belong and become "known" by a group of friends. Currently our life groups include the following:

- The Herd – this group is a mix of those still working and those retired. They are ready to welcome new people to the group and provide a deep concern for each person who attends. The Herd meets the first and third Sunday evenings of each month.
- The Flock is currently looking for a new leader to facilitate the group meetings. This group is primarily people who are working, with a few who are beginning to see retirement on the horizon. They have described themselves as a "casual fellowship" group which meets occasionally.

- She Reads Truth is a women's study group which meets on Thursdays. This group enjoys strong fellowship and personal support from each other. They are always eager to welcome others into their fellowship. This group is also committed to individual study during the week.
- The Men's Fellowship meets every Friday morning and uses Rick Warren's Daily Hope as the focus of a devotional study. Sharing personal concerns and praying for each other is how the group ends their time together. On alternate Fridays the group meets via a Zoom call or in a restaurant to share breakfast together.
- The Gathering is comprised of young families and singles and is a delightful part of our congregation. There is an occasional "formal" gathering of this group but one of their favorite gathering times is simply to hang out after the Sunday morning service and enjoy each other's company. They have been the organizers of the kid-oriented movie nights which have been a lot of fun.

If you are interested in becoming involved in a life group you can find a listing of the groups by the welcome table in the lobby, or feel free to seek more information from me.

Preaching

I preach as needed. Due to some of the added responsibilities I carried in 2022, I requested to preach a little less often.

Grief Group

I, along with staff and the leadership team, had a burden for all of the people in our congregation who were working through issues of grief. It fell within the area of congregational care to try and figure out what we as a church could offer in response. My deepest thanks to Ann Johnson, and her sensitivity, in developing our first ever **Circle of Presence**. As needed, we hope to make this an ongoing offering for our church (and perhaps the community).

Adult Christian Formation

It has been a delight to welcome two new teachers to our pre-service Sunday morning class. Bridget Jeffries has brought us insights into her doctoral studies in

Church History and Mark De La Paz has taught us how to exegete the Word after completing his Master's Degree in Exegesis . Both of these teachers have kicked off their classes by preaching at DeerGrove the Sunday before their class sessions started. It has been rich for us as a church to have this sort of talent in our congregation. Look for both of these talented teachers to offer classes again. Thanks to Bridget and Mark for their willingness to share with us.

Committee Work

This year included lots of committee work, while it required additional time, I feel God has had me in my assistant pastor position, "for such a time as this." This year I served on the following committees:

- Staff meetings once a week.
- Leadership Team – I served as the staff liaison to the leadership team.
- DeerGrove Pastoral Search Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Welcome & Outreach Committee – (staff liaison) This was a newly formed team to support DeerGrove's outreach to the Palatine Community. This was a finding of the DG2 Team from 2021 and recommended by the leadership team.

Closing Observations

- I will be forever thankful for Pastor Peter's willingness to extend to us his time and wisdom as our transitional pastor.
- In 2022 it seems as if the presence of God has been upon us in unusual ways. For me, I have seen it demonstrated in you, the people of DeerGrove, through both your generosity of time and money. May God continue to bless us in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Fish

DeerGrove Covenant Church Annual Meeting / Peter Sjoblom – Interim Pastor

January 17, 2023

Transitional/Interim Pastor Report –

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

It's been two years since we began this journey together. I had never delivered a sermon into a camera before January 2021. I don't ever see myself doing that again.

From day one you not only welcomed me but also fully engaged in the process that we initiated. I think fondly of the staff meetings that helped initiate me into the ways DeerGrove "did" church, especially during the pandemic. I never felt like I was flying blind, a common experience of Interim pastors entering congregations in the midst of transition in normal conditions.

I'm grateful for the leadership team engaging a return to in person rather quickly. I became aware, early on, of the gifted leadership present in this congregation. We worked together to move toward a date for meeting in person again.

Last year (2022) as we approached the annual meeting, the major challenge set before us was an honest conversation about remaining open or closing. The conversation was challenging, yet grace filled. The leadership team was needing the whole of the congregation to weigh in on the matter and it seemed the Spirit was leading us to the opinion that staying together and moving forward was best.

Thanks to an encouraging vision from Lorin Michael (Soon to become Chair), DeerGrove not only voted to proceed but stepped up the common commitment to the future in remarkable ways.

A big challenge was moving forward with Kid's ministry. Gretchen Stroner, Jen Killinger and Alison Tealdi capably led this, not just maintaining but actually providing vision as the kids are getting older. I had the pleasure of meeting with them monthly to listen to their process and hear ideas for the future.

The administration of the church was also an important challenge. Jinny Koide stepped into this role and has offered professionalism in a volunteer capacity. Her gifts in carrying out these responsibilities are notably significant.

Another challenge was the pastoral search process. There was no problem recruiting interested participants for the committee. John Jaderholm provided good leadership to the team. They connected with the conference for resources and access to Cov-Connect and put together a very detailed profile for prospective pastoral candidates.

I do believe that the process and congregational discernment led to a clearly fine candidate in Pastor Taylor. His knowledge of the church, his commitment to the community, and his education and experience helped to make this call a clear choice. Pastor Taylor has been an important asset to me through this interim period. His heart for God and desire for people to enter into God's presence on Sunday mornings is well noticed.

I need to extend my heartfelt thanks to Pastor Rick Fisk. I've known Rick for the last 20 years. But these two years have deepened our relationship significantly. The fact is, I would have been lost without Rick in this role of congregational care.

I know there are many I forgotten to name. The relationships that accompany the work are so significant. I've been blessed to know you and will forever be impacted by your love for Christ. My heart is filled with so many wonderful memories.

I do hope that my time here at DeerGrove has borne fruit for Christ's Kingdom. I pray that I have assisted you in your growth in Christ in the same way that you have helped to grow me in faith. I can conclude by agreeing with the Apostle Paul as he states in Philippians 3:

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Respectfully Submitted

Rev. Peter Sjoblom

2022 Annual Meeting Update – Kids Ministry

Dear DeerGrove Family,

This year in Kids Ministry has been a very full and beautiful year, full of growth and energy. The team of three: Jen, Alison, and Gretchen formed quickly in response to Pastor Sarah's departure on March 7, 2022. The first few months were filled with lesson planning and figuring out volunteers on a week by week basis, but we have been fortunate to move to a phase where we are able to plan for the future and make strategic choices for how to teach and engage our kids.

Since we are all volunteers, we thought it would be helpful to discuss our current roles. We are all very hands on in many aspects, but generally, Jen is our Volunteer Coordinator, Gretchen focuses on Content and Curriculum, and Alison is our Event Coordinator. We all help select curriculums, plan events, run the classroom, make room updates, stock supplies, and plan lessons, but these roles are one way we have tried to create direction and lean into our strengths.

During the summer, our kids learned about the Fruits of the Spirit, going through each virtue over the course of the nine weeks and memorizing Galatians 5:22-23. We have prioritized memorizing scripture, prayer, studying the Bible by following along with the lectionary, and incorporating theology for our tiny disciples. We are amazed and grateful to God for the ways our kids have grown and what they have learned in this past year and also for the relationships that have formed and the confidence that comes with being known and loved in community.

Over the summer, the Kids Ministry team selected a curriculum that follows the lectionary, with the intention that families could be learning and going over the same scripture to facilitate and continue conversations at home. The kids have been memorizing scripture and growing in confidence by reciting for the congregation. Intergenerational Sundays have resumed and the nursery is once again staffed each week, and we are grateful for the love, attention, and commitment to being an intergenerational church. We are also so grateful for the 10 additional volunteers that have come alongside us to help disciple and care for our little ones.

With the intention to create opportunities to invite families to our church, we have hosted four events: 2 family movie nights, Trunk or Treat, and the Christmas Family event and plan to create other events throughout the year to offer invitational opportunities and to have fun together as a church body. We have made updates to the room to help with instruction (painted a chalkboard, added instructional posters to help our kids make connections across scripture and theology, and added a door between the Kids Room and Nursery for the ease of volunteers - huge thank you to Kyle for installing and Lorin for patching drywall and staining the door!). Our hope and intention is that the Kids Room be focused on learning Bible stories during classroom time and for kids that are not quite ready to sit and engage, to have a warm, fun environment to play and form relationships with members of our church in the nursery. Our kids' ages vary greatly for the classroom (3 years to 5th grade), which is difficult to engage kids on each of their developmental levels. We are anticipating eventually opening up another classroom either

during the service, or potentially offering a Christian Formation for our older kids before the service. With that, we will need additional volunteers or even greater commitment from our current volunteers. We could always use substitute teachers as well, so if you feel led, please get in touch with us.

We are all incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement of this congregation, as well as for Pastor Peter's encouragement and direction he offered for the three of us as we stepped into this role.

For our good and His glory,

Jen Killinger, Alison Tealdi, and Gretchen Stroner