

2021-2022 Grace Lutheran Budget Narrative

UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

This last year was one of the most remarkable and challenging years in history and in the ministry of our congregation.

- Little did we know that when we worshiped together in-person on March 8th, 2020, that we would not be back in the sanctuary worshipping in-person again until April 18th, 2021.
- Our initial concern was around whether we would be able to continue to support our staff and facilities if our generous members were not in our pews regularly.
- The uncertainty along with the many twists and turns over the past year, have challenged us as a congregation to develop new ways to connect with each other and serve in Jesus' name.

UNPRECEDENTED RESPONSE

As we look toward the end of the fiscal year, while we are projecting a slight decrease **in our General Fund offerings of about 3% from last year**, in many ways, it feels like we have some momentum! *How is that possible?*

- Because of COVID, we were unable to run our regular stewardship appeal in 2020, receiving about half of the number of pledges as we did in 2019. However, this year we added and had 9 new to pledging families.
- While for years a good percentage of giving had come in online and through the mail, with the church facilities closed, all of our giving needed to switch to these methods.
- Over the past year, a few of our very generous members have moved to be closer to family or died.

Given these challenges, it feels remarkably spirit-inspired that we will come so close to matching our giving from the previous year!

But not only that, last year we also had the **Growing Grace Capital Campaign!** This \$200,000 campaign was designed to grow the Troutman Foundation (\$20,000), pay off our Council Property Mortgage (\$90,000) and create an updated Vicarage (\$90,000). It was a thrill to be able to pay off our mortgage, which began at \$1.8 million in 2007, in February of this year! To date, we have received almost \$100,000, and still have about \$35,000 remaining that has been pledged to the campaign.

The twists and turns over the past year have challenged us as a congregation to develop new ways to connect with each other and to serve in Jesus' name. The generosity of each and every one of you has allowed for us as a congregation to approach these challenges with creativity and trust in God's leading and provision.

NEW THINGS AHEAD

Overall, the proposed budget is very similar to the current year's budget. We will be tightening our belts just a little bit more to make room for a few new ministry opportunities.

- The biggest addition to the budget is the **NEW Audio/Visual Ministry Facilitator**. This part-time position will take over the responsibility of recording, editing and posting the online worship services each week.
- This budget reduces the Jeffcoat-Proctor Endowment subsidy which **supports the Campus Minister** position.
- The Council continues to be committed to developing a plan for the **Wilkes County Property** and finding ways to reduce or alternatively fund the Tax and Liability Insurance burden on the budget.
- Overall we have been able to slightly **reduce office expenses** but property costs have gone up primarily because of the **increased cost of electricity**.

THE BOTTOMLINE

The Council believes that this is a crucial time to invest in digital ministry opportunities and yet there are also some other areas where we know that we would like to focus accumulated resources in the coming year.

- We believe that our **whole staff** has risen to meet this challenging moment. The Council is committed to finding a way to appropriately **thank these dedicated servants**.
- We continue to be focused on finding a way to **enhance and grow our Youth and Family ministries**. Both of our **College Interns** for next year will focus their energies into this area. And, we are hopeful to be able to create a **temporary Youth and Family** position through designated funds to provide oversight and support as we prepare for the 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering.
- Finally, the Council remains committed to continuing to **pursue alternative income opportunities**.

We have been through a really challenging year and yet have witnessed firsthand God's Spirit alive and at work among and through us as we answer our calling to
Share God's love so that all are served and supported.