Training for Service in our nation’s capital
Dear Friends in Christ,

You hold in your hands our new church newsletter. As you page through it you will see the important work of a vibrant and healthy church going about its mission with joy and friendship. All of this is possible because of the dedication of those who have been part of our church throughout our 153 years. All of this is possible because of the dedication of the members of the current congregation, who give countless hours volunteering time and gifts–serving Jesus Christ. Finally, this work is possible because of the generosity of you who make gifts and pledges of money to the church, supporting your church financially. Read the stories of our ministry together in this newsletter and celebrate what God has done and is doing!

I also want you to be aware that we need to prepare for those who will come after us. As an example, during our discernment process for the Dorothy Meyer gift, many of you brought up our educational building and made suggestions about ways it could be used. There were lots of good ideas. While it’s way too soon to settle on any one of those ideas, what that told me was our congregation realizes we have an underutilized educational building. With the exception of the Early Childhood Center on the ground floor, an office for Care and Counseling, office and storage space for Partners for Just Trade, and new this fall, a space for a vocal school, most of this four story structure sits empty most of the time. As we think about the next 50 years in the life of Webster Groves Presbyterian Church, it’s time for us to think about ways the educational building could better serve our mission goals. Where we go from here will be a long process. Yet the time has come for us to consider how our physical space matches our mission and what we need to do to make our space more useful for serving Christ, more energy efficient for the care of God’s earth, less expensive to operate so we can be better stewards of God’s resources, and more spiritual, so that all may come to experience the Holy Spirit more profoundly.

Let us dedicate ourselves to being open to the Holy Spirit as God continues leading us to do new things in this place!

Peace,

Dawn Weber leads the congregation on Pentecost Sunday
This year, prepared with a purpose and a question, 25 youth and five adults headed to Washington, D.C. on the Agape 2019 Mission Trip.

The purpose was to serve those in need and learn about poverty and hunger in the United States. The question was “Have you had enough?”

“That question can be asked in three ways,” said Brian Kuhn, director of youth and family services at WGPC.

“It can be asking someone else ‘Do you have what you need?’ Or we can ask ourselves, ‘Do I have what I really need or am I just filling myself with junk,’ or we can ask, ‘Have you had enough of a world that turns its back on those in need?’” Brian said.

The final question is a call to action, he said.

“If you’ve had enough, let’s do something about it,” Brian said.

The group left May 31, to do something about it and spend the next nine days in a service-learning hostel called the Pilgrimage. The organization partners with other nonprofits to provide volunteers and give volunteers an understanding of the issues of poverty.

Our youths’ first step toward their summer mission was to help the Pilgrimage. All year long, they raised money to provide new mattresses for the hostel. Their final total was $6,944.94, enough to replace all 40 mattresses and a couple of bed frames, Brian said.

“And we were the first ones to sleep on them, although that wasn’t the point,” he said.

While in Washington, D.C., the group not only served through organizations that included D.C. Central Kitchen, Food and Friends, A Wider Circle, Charlie’s Place and Thrive, but they also learned about poverty through educational programs provided by the Pilgrimage and their experiences with people who were either homeless, formerly homeless or simply in need, Brian said.

“They served breakfast at Charlie’s Place. But more than that, they sat and spent time with people. They cleaned plates, wiped tables and chatted,” Brian said.

“My hope for this trip is always to help kids have a greater understanding of the realities of the world – poverty and homelessness – how people end up that way, and how difficult it is to get out of it,” he said.

Mary Claire Wolk, 17, said she had never been to Washington, D.C. but she expected to be working most of the time while they were there.

“None of us expected this to be a learning experience,” she said. “We learned about the homeless community. We gained a new perspective. Anyone can be homeless in the blink of an eye.”

Brian said the National Coalition for the Homeless featured speakers who had at one time been homeless to share their experiences with the youth.

“Theyir stories were very powerful,” he said.

Sarah Richards, 18, said one of the things she learned was that the homeless have their own community and they look out for one another.

“If you gave something to someone, they would give it to someone else because they said they needed it more,” she said.

(see Mission Trip continued on page 14)
Shaking up – waking up
Faith studies for adults

Faith studies for adults are taking a new turn this fall. The focus is on deepening our knowledge of God and loving our neighbors in tangible, hands-on ways.

Last year’s Coffee Talks are giving way this year to a new study of contemporary issues with the goal of action.

“Faith in Real Life will focus on acting on our faith in everyday life – being the church in the world,” said Associate Pastor Hannah Zyla. “We have some really interesting programs planned.”

The class will be held in Fellowship Hall each week. Some of the speakers will come from organizations that receive grants from WGPC with Meyer funds. The Mission Commission will be awarding grants to at least two or three charitable organizations in September.

The plan is to have representatives from those organizations talk about their missions and the challenges faced by the people they serve.

Then on the third Sunday of each month, participants will put their hearts together to work on hands-on mission projects, Hannah said.

In addition to speakers from the service organizations, there will be discussions on a variety of topics including the environment, advocacy, affordable housing in Webster Groves and updates on bills and legislation in the Missouri Legislature, Hannah said.

“All of these are drop-in classes. There is no sign-up, and each class stands alone,” she said.

For those whose passions are ignited, however, expanded conversations on popular topics are planned for weeknights, Hannah said.

Secondly, there will be a new pastor-led Bible study called Diving Deeper. The new study will be based on scripture from the lectionary.

“This is a class for people who want to spend several weeks in a row exploring scripture together, in what we think will be a smaller, more intimate setting,” Hannah said.

Both Faith in Real Life and Diving Deeper will begin September 8, meeting from 9:30-10:15am. Faith in Real Life will meet in Fellowship Hall, and stay tuned for Diving Deeper’s location!

Then beginning again with the new year, there will be focused classes with guest pastors from outside the church who will teach, Hannah said.

(see Adult Ed continued on page 12)

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Children & Youth
Sunday afternoon & evening ministries

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<th>PreK-3rd Grade:</th>
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<td>Children’s Choir</td>
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<td>Holy Moly (PreK-1st)</td>
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<td>Whirl (2nd &amp; 3rd)</td>
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<td>Celebration</td>
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<td>Celebration Bell Ringers</td>
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<th>6th – 12th Grade:</th>
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<td>Praise Bell Ringers</td>
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<td>Agape</td>
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Visit wgpc.org or contact Cherstin Byers (chb@wgpc.org) for more information and to receive newsletter emails about children’s and youth activities.
The line-up for this year’s Music in a Great Place is shaping up, and some first-time and extra-special musical guests are scheduled, said Director of Music Shawn Portell. Performances will run the gamut from pure percussion to old world composers, to bluegrass pickin’, he said.

The music series is in its 23rd season.

“The concept began almost 30 years ago when I was in Pennsylvania. The objective is to offer a variety of music and worship opportunities that we as a congregation don’t do on a regular basis,” he said. “The main focus is to enhance worship and create different types of worship experiences.”

Starting the season on September 29 is the Side X Side Percussion Duo which will perform during both worship services. The duo is made up of Kurena Yamaguchi, who plays the marimba, and her husband, Tim Crockett, who plays the drums.

“This is a unique group, something new and different for us,” Shawn said. “And Tim grew up at WGPC. He is the son of Peg Crockett who used to work with the children’s choir in the early 90’s.”

The Duo performs everything from classical music to pop.

Scheduled during Lent in the afternoon of March 22 is a very special performance of Johann Sebastian Bach’s St. John Passion by the Bach Society Chorus and Orchestra of St. Louis under the leadership of Music Director and Conductor Dennis Sparger.

“This is the first time the Bach Society has done a concert here,” Shawn said. “It’s kind of a big deal.”

The Bach Society, St. Louis’ oldest continuous choral society, began in 1941. Sparger is in his 34th year as Music Director of the chorus and orchestra.

For Good Friday, Portraits in Grace, a musical gallery of faith that displays the life, ministry and passion of Jesus is planned.

Shawn said he is looking forward to it.

“This has an art component along with it,” he said.

Finally, as the year winds up, River Bend, a traditional bluegrass band, will play at the 10:30 service on May 17 and an afternoon concert.

The band is known for its soaring tenor harmonies, driving instrumentation, and the classic bluegrass sound, according to the group’s website. Expect some classic bluegrass standards and Gospel favorites.

In addition, watch for these Music in a Great Place performances:

October 27, 2019  Matt Pantaleoni, bagpiper
November 24, 2019  Stonehenge Brass
December 15, 2019  Festival of Lessons and Carols, (“What Sweeter Music” by Mark Hayes)
January 19, 2020  Award-winning classical guitarist W. Mark Akin
March 15, 2020  Lorraine Glass-Harris, violinist for the St. Louis Symphony (now retired) performs with our own Shawn Portell.
April 12, 2020, Easter A return visit from the talented woodwind quartet that joined us last year.

More performances will be scheduled with artists and dates to be determined.
On August 11, members of WGPC said a sad goodbye to the Rev. Susan Andrews as she leaves to serve the congregation at Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church as their Interim/Transitional Pastor beginning Sept. 1.

Susan began her service to WGPC on Feb. 1 of 2018. Since then, even working just 15 hours a week, she has become an integral part of our church’s leadership, Pastor Ed said in a letter to the congregation.

“For 18 months, Susan has served as our Parish Associate, spending her time ministering in the areas of pastoral care, adult education, serving as liaison to the Advocacy Team, preacher, worship leader and countless other projects she has willingly taken on at my request. Susan has been an invaluable colleague in ministry and gifted leader among us!” he said.

The daughter of a pastor herself, the Rev. Mark Lewis Andrews, Susan heard the call and followed in her father’s footsteps to ministry. She graduated from Wesley College in 1971 and received her Master of Divinity degree cum laude from Harvard Divinity School in 1974. She was ordained as a Presbyterian minister by the Boston Presbytery in September of that same year.

She said she was on the cusp of a great crowd of women that would enter the ministry.

“That’s when things really began to speed up,” she said. “Now (new ministers) are mostly women.”

She served as a pastor for 30 years before being elected moderator of the 215th General Assembly in 2003 and was the first woman “parish pastor” to fill the position.

After retiring, she and her husband, Sim, moved to St. Louis to be near their daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren.

She said she has enjoyed her time here at WGPC.

“This has been a gift and a blessing to me to be surrounded by a caring, intelligent and outward looking congregation,” Susan said. “I enjoyed preaching and teaching and doing a great deal of pastoral care. I’ve been blessed by the stories of the older people and excited to be here for the beginning of the Advocacy Team’s hands on mission with social justice and the advancement of systemic change. And working with Ed and Hannah and the rest of the staff has been pure joy,” she said.

Would you like to spend some time this fall improving the lives of families in New Orleans? Then join us for our 14th annual RHINO (Restoring Hope In New Orleans) trip, November 11-16! Each fall a group of dedicated volunteers works with St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church and Habitat for Humanity to rehab homes and neighborhoods affected by Hurricane Katrina. All members are welcome and we would love to have some new faces join us!

The cost to volunteer is $225 for the RHINO fee plus a housing fee of $94 per night per room. The housing cost will vary based upon how many people (maximum of four) want to share a room. The RHINO fee includes four lunches and three dinners, a t-shirt and program administration. A deposit of $75 per person is due August 31 although late reservations will be accepted as space allows. The remaining balance will be due October 1. Please contact Diana Likely (314) 608-0293 or d.likely@hotmail.com for more information.
Another successful trip to Nicaragua

Harriet Hall and John Hughes, along with four others from our presbytery, returned from visiting our partners in Plan Grande #2 in Nicaragua on July 28, and Harriet reports that the week was a big success!

“We had a great time with the younger kids playing and reading books,” she said. “Two afternoons of VBS were focused on ‘Jesus as the Cornerstone’ and the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders from Matthew 7.”

The group met with the college scholarship recipients and learned more about their studies, progress, and hopes for the future. They also met with many of the parents of the high school scholarship recipients and shared with them the ways that we work to raise the funds that support them, Harriet said.

“We presented graduation plaques to the high school graduates in a community-wide celebration that included folk dancing,” she said.

One of the most significant results of this trip was the new written guidelines that were agreed on for both of the scholarship programs, Harriet said.

“Since the college scholarships had been an ‘experiment’ up until now, we met for over six hours, over the course of three days, to confirm the selection criteria and process. Our CEPAD (Council of Protestant Churches in Nicaragua) coordinator/interpreters did a wonderful job of facilitating our communication about these important issues!”

In addition, the group visited the preschool and the neighborhood we helped build, Villa San Luis, Harriet said.

“We made wind chimes with the women, hosted a data show containing almost 20 years of photos from the community, (They LOVE seeing old pictures of themselves and family members!) and showed two movies,” Harriet said. “And of course, we could not visit Plan Grande Dos without the traditional s’mores and youth chocolate fight.”

“We all stayed healthy and came home inspired and secure in the knowledge that we are ALL God’s children and that God guides our partnership with this wonderful community.”

Harriet and John also returned with pottery, jewelry and coffee to be sold as a fund-raiser for the Scholarship Programs. Watch for details to follow.
As new children’s and youth programming gets underway for the fall season, our Director of Youth and Family Ministries Brian Kuhn is taking some time off to refresh his 20 year ministry and enjoy a sabbatical. His time away began Aug. 4 and will continue through Dec. 8.

Serving children and youth as the director in the interim will be Summer Kohring, who currently teaches Jr. Kindergarten in the Early Childhood Center and also is a mother of three and loving guardian of a teenager.

Brian said learning and rest will be the focus of the time as he reflects on his years as a youth minister. He hopes it will be a time of rejuvenation for him.

“After 20 years, I wanted to step back and evaluate and see things from a distance,” Brian said. “I became a youth minister at 23. Now, I’m 43 years old. It’s very different. I need some time to understand that and see what God’s calling me to next.”

Over the next four months he also will keep moving forward and has enrolled in training on a new psychological tool called an Enneagram.

“It’s a tool that helps you better understand yourself and others,” he said “Most people are familiar with the Myers-Briggs test, but this is so much better. The Enneagram is fluid and tells the unique aspects of the individual. It also has an amazing faithful thread that runs through it, which speaks to how we best connect with the holy.”

Brian has finished part one of the training and is traveling to Menlo Park, California for a week long training on parts two and three this month. He will then go to Cincinnati in November to take part four of the training. He said the tool will be used in his youth ministry and makes a great tool for parenting as well.

He also has chosen five books to read that are all applicable to his discipline, he said.

While he is gone, Summer will lead the youth ministry in her own way while also using a program and calendar that Brian has laid out.

“She’s wonderful and amazing,” Brian said. “She teaches morning pre-k classes in the ECC. She ran Vacation Bible School for us three summers ago.”

Brian said he has “all confidence” in her ability to run the program. The ministry will just have “a new voice and feel for a little bit.”

Summer began her office hours the week of Aug. 12. She said she is looking forward to making connections with youth at church as well as with the older children.

“We can learn from each other. I’ll learn from them, and they’ll learn from me,” she said.

She’s also interested in trying some new things like having Agape youth meet together once a month to cook and eat a meal together.

“Food can really bring people together,” she said.

Philanthropy will also be incorporated into activities, she said.

“I want to push that love in Celtics and Agape and think about how we can help others,” Summer said.

Otherwise, Brian said, the schedule for the fall semester for the youth ministry will be “like every other year.” The high school Agape group and the Celtics middle school group will meet every week.

“Both have the theme of ‘The Story of…’ which poses the question, how do different aspects of life (like service, learning, faith and love) affect our story and help us tell God’s story?”

He said there would be a fall retreat in October and a fundraising dinner theater in November. Planning for confirmation will start in January, as well as plans for Agape's summer mission trip.

Brian said he was excited and a little anxious as he steps out of the picture for a few months, but he is also thankful.

“I’m grateful the church gave me this opportunity, and I look forward to sharing it with them when I get back,” Brian said.
Lift Your Prayers to God

Let us “live in harmony with one another” and “rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.” Romans 12: 15-16a

Births

Bruce Edward Watson III (Eddie) was born April 23, 2019. He was 7 lb. 5 oz. 20 ¼ inches long.

He is the first child for Diane Toomey-Watson and her husband, Bruce. Diane is a music assistant with WGPC and sings with the choir.

James Bering Keenan made his appearance June 14. He is the son of Tim and Katherine Keenan and weighed 8 lbs. 8 oz. and was 21 ½ inches long when he was born. He joins his siblings Will and Claire.

Garrett Robinson Dubbs, son of Dale and Jamie Dubbs and grandson to John and Robin Cannon, was born June 19. He came a little early and weighed 5 lbs. 10 oz. and was 18 ½ inches long. This is the first child for the Dubbs family and first grandchild for John and Robin.

“I love being a grandmother!” said Robin. (But we all knew that).

Millie McAuliffe Odum, daughter of Pete and Emily Odum, was born July 18. She weighed 7 lbs. 3 oz. and was 20 inches long. She joins big sister Trudy, 6, and big brother Peter George, 2 ½ in the Odum family.

Baptisms

Cecilia Jean Lane, daughter of Peter and Katherine Lane and granddaughter of Richard and Vicki Lane, was baptized July 7 at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church. Welcome to the body of Christ, Cecilia!

Graduates

Godspeed to all our students heading off to college:


Email Tracey Rapisardo (tar@wgpc.org) with announcements to be included in the WGPConnector.

Moves and Transitions

Deke and Lindsay Karzon have moved to New Jersey to be closer to family.

Deaths

Please keep the families of the following individuals in your prayers:

Les Cavin passed away May 3, 2019. He was 83 years old. Les was a custodian at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church for more than 30 years and even devoted time after his retirement to help out at the church.

Former member Betty Crabtree passed away May 5 of this year. She was 94 years old and a member of Webster Groves Presbyterian Church for 26 years. Through the years she served as a Sunday school teacher, Bible study leader and Stephen Minister. She moved to Jefferson City in her final years.

Bill Longstreet passed from this life on July 13, 2019. He was 83 years old. Bill professed his faith here at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church and was a member of this congregation for 71 years. He also is a past elder of the church. He lived in a nursing facility in New Florence in his last years.

Duane Johnson Sr. passed away Aug. 1, 2019. He and his wife, Nancy, recently became members of Webster Groves Presbyterian Church. Please keep Nancy and all their family in your prayers.

Carol Forsyth passed away Aug. 5. She was 90 years old and was a member of the church for 21 years. At one time she sang with the Chancel Choir. Please keep her husband, Ted, and all her family in your prayers.
Behind the scenes members of the Church Office Guild keep things happening at the church.

Commonly called COGs at WGPC, members of the Guild could not have a more appropriate name as they truly have the torque that keeps things turning.

Pastor Ed said, staff members of the congregation and visitors depend on the COGs to get things done.

“What has been amazing to me is the commitment of each one of our COGs. You can count on them to be there as sure as you can count on the sun rising. Their dedication to this ministry of hospitality is really quite incredible,” he said.

COGs are the first faces visitors see through the week. They help the staff and manage the phones, even on Sundays.

In addition, members of the Guild distribute mail and assist with special projects like proofing the bulletin, monitoring security, and passing along information from members to staff.

“Our job is to make things run smoothly,” said Mary Gloeckner, chairwoman of the group, “because if things don’t run smoothly, members will be unhappy.”

Currently all seven of the COGs are seniors, and they say they enjoy the work because they like interacting with people.

Karen James, who has served in the Guild for 25 years and formerly supervised the COGs, put it simply.

“I like to see people,” she said.

Ruth Meyer said she joined the Guild shortly after she became a member.

“Jane Hammond recommended it to me, and it’s a great way to meet people in the church,” she said. “You get to see what happens behind the scenes.

You get to know the staff, and I feel connected to the church.”

For Jon Schickedanz, the job is about service.

“I wanted to help the church,” he said. “As a volunteer, there is no monetary expense for a (receptionist). I also enjoy interacting with people, and I get a chance to read.”

And Mary said there is always a cookie in the church’s front office for those who stop by.

“My biggest customer is Pastor Ed,” she said.

The list of members includes: Karen James, Mary and Jim Gloeckner, Alan McClelland, Ruth Meyer, Lynne Rapp and Jon Schickedanz.

Thank a COG this week! And if you’re interested in joining the group, call Mary at 314-962-1222.

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**Family Movie Night**

**Saturday, September 7, 6:30-9:30 p.m.**

Bring your chairs and blankets and join fellow WGPC families for an outdoor movie night in the Petru backyard.

We will gather for fellowship and to watch a family-friendly flick in the backyard (movie TBD). Snacks, popcorn and juice/water provided, just bring yourself and a seat (or use the grass.)

RSVP to Joshua & Katie Petru (petrufamily82@gmail.com)
Redressed: renovation projects continue at WGPC

Lots of improvements are being made to the church building at WGPC.

Many began this summer and are completed; some are in process; and others are to come in the near future.

Some of those improvements are being paid for with funds from the Meyer donation and others are coming from Repair and Replace and the general fund, said Jan Scheurer business administrator.

**Flooring**

If you haven’t seen it yet, new flooring in the foyer at the Hale Entrance is complete.

The new ceramic floor laid by the Just Around the Corner company in July also includes new flooring for the Early Childhood Center’s Office and extends to the classrooms. This project cost under $10,000 and was paid from Repair and Replace funds.

**Lighting**

Economic light fixtures and LED bulbs have been installed throughout the church. The switches in the hallways, restrooms and other areas of the church have motion sensors that turn on the lights when someone enters the space and are on a timer to turn off again after they leave. The work was completed by Benson Electric Company, Inc. and cost approximately $10,000. The project was paid for with Meyer funds. This improvement helps WGPC save on energy usage, Jan said.

**Tuck Pointing/Waterproofing**

Extensive tuck pointing work began this month and will continue for some time. The work is necessary to stop leaks in the building and preserve the structure which is now approximately 95 years old.

“We most urgently need repairs to the parapet caps and the external masonry where there are internal leaks,” Jan said.

Waterproofing, by far, will be the most costly of the coming expenditures.

“Separate estimates came in for phases of the work, but the entire bid for everything except the bell tower came in at almost $125,000,” Jan said.

The company is Western Specialty Contractors. The projects will be funded by the Meyer fund.

**Fire Panel**

The installation of a new fire panel was also scheduled to begin this month. In order to conserve on the cost, the installers will attempt to reuse some existing equipment. The expense is estimated at $34,000. The contractor is Tech Electronics. Funds will come from the Meyer fund.

**Outdoor Seating**

The grassy area between the church and the Graebel Building will soon be improved and get some use. Plans are to beautify the space and make it a seating area. Flagstones that once lined the east side of the parking lot will be used to create a garden atmosphere and outdoor seating will be added, Jan said.

**Computer Upgrades and paint**

In addition, five new computers with operating systems and the necessary licenses have been purchased for staff members. Jan said that the Windows 7 operating system is becoming obsolete, and the new computers have Windows 10. In addition, the church system’s firewall will be updated. The cost is estimated at $6,500.

**Paint**

New paint also is planned for several rooms in the building – some right away, others after waterproofing has been completed, Jan said.
Money Matters

Conservative budgeting and pledges that came through are making the second quarter financial report short and sweet.

“It is sweet because we are in the black,” said Jan Scheurer, business administrator.

The Budget Committee presented a deficit budget for 2019 and forecasted a shortfall of $27,431 by June. Expenses, however, have come in below the budgeted targets in most areas and so far this year, revenues have come in higher than expected, mostly due to interest gained, Jan said.

Revenue was budgeted to come in at $585,800 by mid-year, but actually came in at $601,093 for the first two quarters, a difference of $15,293 more than expected. Expenses were conservatively budgeted at $613,231 but actual expenses are $599,772, a difference of $13,459, to the good.

Revenue is currently ahead of expenses by $1,321.

So far, cautious budgeting and spending have been a blessing, Jan said.

Savings are currently seen in the areas of leadership, property, general administration, session and others.

The good financial picture doesn’t even include a generous gift of $500,000 given to the church from Mary Lee Morris’ estate in January. With all large gifts, a portion of the money, $25,000, is allocated to the general fund as revenue in the fiscal year the gift is received, Jan said.

Due to the foresight of the Endowment Committee which submitted a resolution in 2015, the church will go through a discernment process to determine the needs of the church and best use for the money. The discernment process is expected to begin this fall for Mary Lee’s gift, she said.

“Our appreciation goes to all who have a part in planning and maintaining the financial health of this congregation,” Jan said. “We are grateful to your generosity in making annual pledges through the work of the Stewardship Commission in October, as well as considering Planned Giving as part of your estate planning.”

If you wish to make a gift to WGPC, please contact Jan Scheurer at 962-9210, ext. 3206 or a member of the financial planning committees of WGPC.

Adult Ed cont. from pg 4

In January, the Rev. Vanessa Hawkins, Designated Associate Presbytery Leader will teach a focused three-week class. In February, the new Campus Minister for UKirk St. Louis, the Rev. Max Hill, will lead a three-week class, and then in April, Hannah will teach a class on reading scripture from children’s bibles, exploring how we first learned Bible stories and how we teach these stories to our youngest members.

Hannah said she’s “really excited” about the pastors who are coming from outside our own church.

“We’re deepening relationships beyond our congregation, in the broader community, she said.

“I think it’s going to be good. There are going to be choices for people with different learning styles and they can choose what they want to learn,” she said.

In addition, the One Church, One Book group is changing its structure to incorporate more than one book and several small groups.

Planned for the groups this year are two thought-provoking books to delve into: White Fragility: Why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism and Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others.

“This is a new approach,” Hannah said. “We’re inviting people to join small groups to read these books.”

Plans are to have men’s groups and women’s groups to talk about each book.

“The small groups will be self-directed once they form. How often they meet and where they meet will be up to them,” Hannah said.

When the small groups are finished, the plan is for everyone to gather on March 1, 2020, to share a meal and talk about the books together.
What is a Matthew 25 Church? It is a church that is actively engaged with the world to serve the oppressed, the hungry, the imprisoned or the poor.

The mission is based on the parable of the sheep and the goats where Jesus reminds us that what we do for the hungry, sick, the stranger, the poor and imprisoned people, we do for Him, according to Presbytery literature.

The designation is given by the PC(USA) and it asks Matthew 25 churches to work on one or more of these three focuses – to build congregational vitality by challenging members to “deepen and energize their faith” and “share the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed;” to work to dismantle structural racism by advocating for the “breakdown of systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination of… people of color;” and to work to eradicate systemic poverty “by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that exploit the poor economically.

Although we just recently applied for the designation, former Parish Associate Susan Andrews said WGPC had already completed the requirements, and now simply needs to work with an ongoing commitment.

We now bear the Matthew 25 mark. The symbol with its circular shape represents unity and equality. The three interlocking figures represent the equality of all people without gender or race bias, and with their arms around each other, they symbolize “friendship, protection and service,” according to the PC(USA).

Be SMART puts thoughts into action

The Be SMART program held Aug. 11 at WGPC began with real life stories about what can happen to children and teenagers when they get hold of an unsecured weapon. Those stories included accidental shootings with serious injuries or death, or even suicide.

“Every story is different,” said Peggy Neufeld, from Moms Demand Action, an organization dedicated to “fighting for public safety measures that can protect people from gun violence,” according to the organization’s website.

“It’s everywhere,” Peggy said. “Some people tell me it’s an epidemic.”

The Be SMART program is not an anti-gun program, but a plan to help gun-owners secure and store their guns responsibly to lessen the chance that a gun will get in the wrong hands.

Sixteen people came out for the presentation.

Organizer Jenny Weihl said the program was one way to follow through and make a difference instead of remaining frustrated about the issue.

“‘At the ‘No More Thoughts and Prayers’ film event the Social Advocacy Committee hosted in the spring, Moms Demand Action provided an opportunity to take action by hosting a Be SMART program,” Jenny said. “The Committee wanted to host the program to keep the discussion of what we, as a church community, can do to prevent gun violence.”

The program uses the acronym SMART to illustrate the steps for safer gun ownership.

Those steps include –
- Secure guns in homes and vehicles
- Model responsible behavior
- Ask about unsecured guns in other homes
- Recognize the risk of teen suicide
- Tell your peers to Be SMART

“I learned a lot from the program,” Jenny said. “Actually seeing a gun lock and how it is used and the different ways guns could be securely stored was new information to me. The facts she shared about the role of guns in suicides was really powerful. I learned that for people of all ages, access to a gun increases the risk of death by suicide by three times. Most importantly, I left feeling empowered to ask friends and family if they have a gun and whether it is securely stored.”
Another of the concepts Agape members learned is gentrification. Gentrification is the process of renovating homes and businesses in a deteriorating area to attract more affluent people to the neighborhood. The result, however, most of the time, is the displacement of residents who do not have the resources to live there and must move to other parts of the city.

Charlotte Marshall, 18, said the group went to a variety of sections of D.C. and saw the differences.

“There were big divides,” she said. “Sometimes one half the street was real nice and the other side was run down, a poorer neighborhood.”

Jack Korte, 16, said he especially experienced the sharp contrast because he and his family traveled ahead of the group to take their vacation in the city.

“We stayed in a fancy hotel. All I saw was the Potomac and the National Mall,” he said. “Then I met (fellow members of Agape in the city.) It was really eye opening. I saw the way a tourist sees D.C. People who live there see it completely different.”

Emma Binder, 18, said she saw good food being served in the kitchens, and other services like haircuts, dental visits and even doctor visits being furnished for those who lived on the streets.

“People need more than just food. They need to get haircuts or see a dentist,” she said.

Ethan Weihl, 17, said some things you have to learn by getting out in the world.

“One week can change your perspective on people,” he said. “I think some things we learned we could implement in St. Louis.”

Clara Veldhuizen, 18, said she did not know much about homelessness before the trip, but the experience helped to dispel stereotypes that homeless people were drug addicts or people who came from a bad background and recognize that all kinds of people can become homeless due to circumstances beyond their control.

In addition to the mission side of the trip, youth had time to see the Library of Congress, the National African American History Museum, the Capitol Building and the Holocaust Museum, Brian said.

“(The Holocaust Museum) was so powerful,” he said.

Other than that, he said just being together was a highlight of the trip.

“Being together for nine days, everybody’s true self comes out at some point,” Brian said. “But that’s a beautiful thing. There were questions and honesty, conversation and reflection on what all this means and where God is in all of this.”
To all Webster Groves Presbyterian Women:

The Presbyterian Women are starting an exciting new Horizon Bible study this fall, "Love Carved in Stone: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments" by Eugenia Anne Gamble.

Gamble invites us to consider how these commands were understood in their earliest form and how that understanding can unlock insights for our lives today, according to Horizon.

If you are interested in this study, contact Carol Jones at 314-821-2836, or email her at caroljonesann610@yahoo.com. The cost of the study book is $10 or $15 for large print.

"We meet on the third Tuesday of each month from September through May," Carol said.

Presbyterian Women will resume their meetings on Sept. 24th at 10:30 a.m. in the Parlor. Lunch is at noon, and the cost is $10.

Did you know?

Did you know that member Jane Fairbanks' son broke into Major League Baseball with the Texas Rangers earlier this summer?

Peter Fairbanks, 25, a graduate of Webster Groves High School, was moved up to the big leagues June 9 as a relief pitcher in a game against the Oakland A's.

During his two innings on the mound, Peter did not allow a hit or a walk and had three strikeouts, according to the Webster-Kirkwood Times.

Jane said the move up was very exciting and just a little bit nerve wracking.

"Having him out there and pitching in the big leagues," she said, "I'm sure I was more nervous than he was."

Peter is back in the minor leagues, traded to the Tampa Bay Rays after struggling later in the season. He is currently with the Durham Bulls. Jane said Peter was really happy about the trade, and he has been pitching well in triple A.

Peter has been playing baseball all his life, she said.

“He’s always been pretty good at it,” she said. “Pitchers have a tendency of going up and down,” (from the minors to the majors).

Jane and her husband, Shane, have had a whirlwind summer traveling to Arlington and Cincinnati, Ohio, and watching his games on TV or online. “Shane played one year in the minors and at Mizzou,” Jane said. “He’s always giving him some feedback and advice. Yes, we are very proud.”
Environmental Stewardship chooses a Tree Theme for 2019-2020

TREES! TREES! TREES! The Bible holds over fifty references to trees including: "Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for God comes to judge the earth," (1 Chronicles 16:33) and my favorite "Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree." (Genesis 18:4).

WGPC’s environmental stewardship committee has chosen trees as the theme for 2019-2020, so throughout the coming year our activities, Sunday adult education speakers, evening speakers, art and more will focus on the benefits of trees.

Where would we be without them? As the bulletin board in the gathering space states, without trees we would be "up a creek without a paddle", "our 2x4s would be 0x0s," "hide and seek would just be seek" and "hammocks would just be blankets on the ground."

Without trees there would be no place to sit in the WGPC sanctuary. We would have no offering table. Our baptismal font would not be nearly so lovely, and our organ would be missing some pipes.

Would you like to learn more about the value of trees and the service they provide for us all? Join us for our upcoming events. We also welcome all to our meetings on the third Sunday of the month at 9:30 a.m. beginning September 15, in the conference room across from the church office. - Deb Grossman