Making a difference in difficult times
Dear Friends in Christ,

Remember the nursery rhyme when you were a kid that went, "Here is the church, and there is the steeple, open the door and see all the people!" It almost seems as imaginary as a goose that lays a golden egg. But I remind myself that while I will never actually see a goose lay a golden egg, I WILL see a church with people again someday!

It has not been easy to spot people in the church these last few months but it hasn't been hard to see the church at work. As you read this edition of the WGPC Connector, you will see what I mean. It's a reminder that a church building is a jumping off point. Usually at church, we meet in worship to hear God's mission for us, we gather in rooms as committees to make a plan to accomplish the mission, and then we are sent out into the world to make a difference. For the time being, worship and meetings happen through technology instead of in person, but the work of the church is still out there in the world where it has always been. WGPC is still out there too!

We all look forward to the day when we can gather again at the church. Perhaps it's even more of a yearning! That day is surely coming! In the meantime, we are living in full expectation of that glorious day.

Thank you to all who continue to make our church an important part of our community as we seek to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ to love our neighbors. Through your prayers, your offerings of time and money, and your commitment to your faith we are a community that is here for our neighbors and for each other. We are not waiting until we are together in person to do the work of our God. It's great to be part of this church! For me, it's a billion times better than a golden egg!

Peace be upon you!

- EL

Cover photos clockwise from top left: Students who completed the St. Louis Internship Program enjoy the 2019 Annual Celebration - a graduation and awards ceremony; an Urban Sprouts student receives her take-home kit; WGPC members notarize mail-in ballots; an Urban Sprouts student participates in home learning.
Mission Outreach Commission steps in to assist partners in crisis

Despite the pandemic, the closing of the church building and the need for electronic meetings, WGPC’s Mission Outreach Commission set its priorities this spring and began working to help charitable organizations in crisis meet the needs of the people it serves.

Beth Kazlauskas, WGPC’s Mission Outreach Coordinator, said the current focus for the Commission is on how partner agencies are responding to COVID-related need.

“Since March, I have been monitoring each of our key partners and Meyer grant recipients to see how COVID-19 is affecting their operations,” she said.

“In April, the Commission decided to focus primarily on hunger and other immediate needs, so we are not focusing on all of the recipients of budget funds...just those who are helping clients with immediate needs during this time,” she said.

The Commission voted to allocate $10,000 from the Mission Endowment fund to send $5,000 each to Isaiah 58 Ministries’ food pantry and Webster Rock Hill Ministries’ food pantry to help with increased demand during the COVID-19 crisis, Beth said.

“The two Meyer grants that we focused on were those dealing with education and children (St. Louis Internship Program and Urban Sprouts) as that seemed key during the spring,” she said.

The commission voted to allocate $4,000 from the Mission Endowment Fund to support educational needs at Urban Sprouts Child Development Center due to its closure because of the pandemic, Beth said.

“The funds were used to help provide their students and families with books and take-home kits for student home learning,” Beth said.

Julie Wood worked with the early childhood center’s administrators.

“When we reached out to them to see how they were doing, they were already putting together home packets,” Julie said. “Their goals were to stay in touch with the children and offer them a psychological connection with the school. They also wanted to help with the stress levels of the families, and they wanted to provide books because some of these families don’t have many books.”

In addition, administrators wanted to keep specialty teachers like music and dance instructors engaged. The school now is offering a dance class online for the children, Julie said.

In addition, Urban Sprouts was doing much more, she said.

“Our donation went mostly for books, but the school was also offering tablets and hot spots to families that needed internet connections and making food available for families who faced food insecurity,” Julie said. “They’ve done a lot.”

Also, in April, a motion was made to provide $3,000 to St. Louis Internship Program to help with technology needs due to the pandemic. The funds were used for computer-based training for 150 students, Beth said. (See the related article on page 13.)

In addition, a drive for small appliances was held this summer to benefit Home Sweet Home, an organization that provides home furnishings for people transitioning out of homelessness.

“We did collect some items for them during June and July when they were closed, but we have finished that up now that they are open again,” Beth said.

Home Sweet Home now is accepting donations on Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Crews also are picking up donations left curbside by appointment and delivering to clients daily.

See Mission cont. on page 7
New direction keeps Advocacy Team in action this summer

Although the pandemic put an end to many activities, the Advocacy Team put its members in action this summer installing new leaders and taking on new issues.

In June, after an exciting year focused on bringing awareness to the issue of gun violence, team co-chairs Emmy McClelland and Sue Scott turned over leadership of the group to two new co-chairs Julie Burchett and Janice Seele. Julie and Janice have since hit the ground running as issues of equality and the election gave the group work to do.

The summer was spent supporting efforts to bring an awareness of systemic racism to the community, promoting a successful bid for Medicaid expansion and making voting accessible and understandable, Janice said.

“So many issues exploded at one time and had to be addressed,” she said. “They couldn’t wait till later. They had to be addressed now.”

Both women, however, have extensive backgrounds in civic enterprises and community service and are up for the challenge, they say.

Janice Seele, who retired from a career in marketing long ago, said she has spent years volunteering for a variety of organizations and understands the systemic problems that make life difficult for many, especially people of color, as well as the importance of advocating for change.

“There are so many areas that need assistance, and it is rewarding to have worthwhile concerns to devote your time to,” she said.

Food security, healthcare and housing are essential needs that many people struggle with and systemic racism is often the reason, Janice said. The call to address those problems can be found in the Gospel message, she said.

“Christ, the Son of God, was also a social advocate,” she said. “The Gospel is filled with charges to help the widows and children, the poor, the ill, the weak and oppressed,” she said. “We can provide charity, but when there is social justice, the need for charity is lessened. Christ was changing the system and not just helping the individual,” Janice said.

Julie Burchett signed on to co-chair the Advocacy Team when she realized issues close to her heart were bubbling up across the country.

“George Floyd was killed, and I had to say yes, this was just too important,” she said.

Julie, a teacher at Webster Groves High School for 22 years, mostly working with “At Risk” students, and now teaching U.S. History and Sociology full time, said that civil rights has long been an issue of special interest to her.

Through her sponsorship of several student clubs over the years, including the History Club, which focuses on active citizenship, and the Social Justice Club, students have learned about the Civil Rights Movement, come to an understanding about the need for social justice and have even worked to stop voter suppression.

“Civil rights is one of my favorite subjects to teach, and it’s really glossed over in the textbooks,” she said.

Julie, too, said that faith influenced her call to action.

“Since I took this job on, and I’m reading the Bible more, I am amazed at the references to social justice. God wants us to do what is right and see justice for all,” she said.

continued on next page
Advocacy continued

As a member of the Advocacy Committee, Julie has served on the subcommittee on education and presented a program on learning how to listen.

“Obviously, education is something I believe strongly in,” she said.

Both Julie and Janice and the rest of the Advocacy Team put the Aug. 4 election in the forefront of this summer’s projects. They made sure that voters were aware how to apply for mail-in ballots, when they needed to be returned, and even provided a notary service at WGPC for voters on five separate occasions. The effort was important because many wanted to mail in their ballots instead of going to the polls because of the pandemic, Janice said.

In addition, the committee organized Black Lives Matter vigils, where members of the committee and the church demonstrated support for their black neighbors with weekly gatherings in front of the church.

They also took on the issue of Medicaid expansion, a proposition on the Aug. 4 ballot that the church endorsed, to help get health care to people in need in Missouri.

Voting and the voting process will remain an important issue until after the November election, they said.

In the future, Julie hopes to have some workshops on systemic racism and provide resources and information to members on the Advocacy Team’s webpage. She also wants to work with Pastor Ed and Pastor Hannah to help the group connect with “people in other churches who are doing the same work we are and work together to spread the word further and faster,” she said.

Janice said the group also will continue to work on reducing gun violence.

Currently, the group has more than 70 people on the team’s email list, Julie said.

“It’s a good group of folks, and we’re always looking for more people to join in and help us,” she said.

Julie and her husband, Rick, live in Webster Groves. They have two grown sons – Jamie and Will. The couple has been members of WGPC for close to 25 years.

Janice and her husband, Steve, live in Webster Groves and have two grown daughters – Caroline and Madelaine. They have been members of WGPC since 1985, with a short time away when they lived in California.
Children’s Ministries focus on faith and family with free delivery!

WGPC will be nurturing our children to build faith and grow in God’s love this fall in a program delivered to homes that is designed to bring the whole family together and weave faith into everyday life.

The title, not surprisingly, is “Building Faith: Growing in God’s Love” and is designed by the same publisher, Westminster John Knox Press, as the children’s Bible Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible, said Rev. Hannah Zyla, Associate Pastor and Director of Children’s Ministries.

“The plan is to provide a program to better equip our families to fold their lives of faith into their homelife,” she said.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted children from meeting together to learning at home, and the decision has been made to cancel in-person education classes for children not only for the first semester, but the remainder of the school year, Pastor Hannah said.

“This is what children’s ministry is going to be definitively. It’s one thing you can know. We’re going to provide consistency for children,” she said. “We’d rather celebrate when it’s safe to be together, than have to cancel classes.”

The move to home Christian learning activities, however, provides new opportunities to broaden children’s faith experience beyond the walls of the church building, as children and families consider “How are we the church?” Pastor Hannah said.

In keeping with that theme, boxes filled with four weeks of Bible stories and related activities will arrive on families’ doorsteps on Sept. 13. All families with children on last year’s Children’s Ministries roster will receive a box. To opt in for future boxes for your family, send an email to Cherstin Byers at chb@wgp.org.

“The lessons are simple, self-paced and include intergenerational activities that can get everyone involved,” Pastor Hannah said. “They include a Bible story, prayer and action,” that’s it,” Pastor Hannah said.

She said there is lots of room for customizing the program to each family’s taste and it shouldn’t be overwhelming.

“A lesson can be done once a week. There can be every day practice or a prayer of the week,” she said. “You don’t have to come up with ideas; there is no deadline; we’re just giving families the tools and the flexibility to make it work for their family,” Pastor Hannah said.

Families can take it to just about any level in a family activity, she said. For example, in a lesson about Jesus being the Bread of Life, families are encouraged to make bread or watch a video about making bread or perhaps just toast bread and eat it together.

Families will be encouraged to locate a place in their homes to designate as their sacred space. It could just be a corner in a room, a place with a battery-operated candle where children can hear stories about God’s people, she said.

The space also can serve parents, Pastor Hannah said.

“Parents can sit and drink a coffee in the worship space, just sit and be with God,” she said.

The curriculum is Presbyterian and lessons will include Creation, Abraham and Sarah’s Big Family, Jacob and Esau, Brave Women and Men in the Old Testament and much more.

“It’s exactly what I had in mind. It’s biblically based and I’m really excited about it,” she said.

Lesson plans are geared for children in pre-k to fifth grade.

“The hope is that if you have children younger or older, everyone will be able to participate,” Pastor Hannah said.

Volunteers are needed to help pack and deliver boxes. Pastor Hannah said those who formerly taught in Children’s Ministries might like to help.

“Although we’re not able to be in the classroom, we still can be engaged in children’s learning,” she said.

To volunteer to help put the materials together and deliver them, contact Cherstin Byers at chb@wgp.org.
Lift Your Prayers to God

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

Births

Tom and Linda Hagemann welcomed their first great-grandchild July 31.

Braden Dyson Waldron is the first grandchild of their daughter Kimberly and first child of their granddaughter Brittany Waldron.

“My wife Linda and I are now officially great-grandparents. And he’s a handsome devil,” Tom said.

Deaths

Georgia Johnson, we were recently informed, passed from this life on May 24, 2019.

Mildred Kent passed from this life on May 20, 2020.

Daniel Weidman, husband of member Julie Weidman, passed from this life on May 21, 2020.

Eileen Hacker passed from this life on May 26, 2020.

Rebecca “Jane” Frerichs passed from this life on May 27, 2020.

Patti Jo Tappmeyer passed from this life on June 1, 2020.

Ruth Booth passed from this life on June 2, 2020.

Henry “Hal” Jones passed from this life on June 11, 2020.

James “Jim” Murphy passed from this life on July 5, 2020.


Marjorie “Marje” Green passed from this life on July 27, 2020.

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

Mission continued from pg. 3

Betsy Wacker said that the organization’s current needs include small appliances like microwaves, coffee makers, blenders and crockpots, and the organization also needs lamps.

She said one fun way of donating is with a hands-on project.

“One of the things they have is a small chest of drawers kit for children,” Betsy said. “They give one to each child, so every child has a place to put their things.”

The donor can pick up the kit at Home Sweet Home, 290 Hanley Industrial Court in Brentwood, for $65, put it together and return it for a child in need.

“It’s a fun project and took me about two hours,” Betsy said.

She said if anyone is interested in putting together a chest of drawers kit she can pick up and deliver the kit for them. Call her at 314-974-9905.

And then there is the Mask Making Team. So far, the group has made more than 1,600 masks for organizations that include Manor Grove nursing center, the Visiting Nurses Association, Home Sweet Home, Beyond Housing, Mission St. Louis, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition and WGPC staff and members as requested, said Diana Likely, organizer.

The makers now are focused on the Webster Groves School District. Although currently the district is not planning to open with in-person learning, the group plans to have masks ready for students as a supplemental supply when they do return to school, Diana said.

Beth also said that she was very proud of “all of the AMAZING work that the Advocacy Team is doing working for social justice and making the voting process more accessible.

“Man, those ladies are powerful, and I am in awe of all they have accomplished,” she said. (See the related article on page 4.)

On the horizon, during the first weekend of October, is Mission Weekend. Beth said, however, that she is not sure what the event will look like this year, but she is planning to have projects that will include proper social distancing. Watch for updates in the Friday Flash.
WGPC’s Custodial team repairs, repaints and readies the building

Although it has been a long and lonely separation for members of WGPC, there were some things that were well served by the closing of the church building in the spring and summer months of 2020, namely its floors, its doors, its walkways, its trees, its parking lots and the entire sanctuary. The empty church gave the custodial staff the time to do a lot of deep cleaning, painting and repairs they aren’t always able to accomplish, said lead custodian Pete Brennan.

“Pierre and I always talked about a wish list, things we would do if we had time. Well, we had time,” he said.

And they used it well. Over the last five months, the custodial team, which consists of Pete, Pierre Campbell and Ken Kastner, Jr., cleaned, stripped and waxed every floor, repaired and painted every exterior handrail, trimmed the trees, painted the safety zones, painted the awning over the back door, moved the concrete stops and cleaned the back parking lot, repaired the walkway outside the memorial gardens, painted and caked windowsills, painted the fire escape, painted the big red doors and cleaned out the basement, as well as routine maintenance, like grass cutting, watering plants, taking out the trash, and general cleaning.

Pastor Ed Zumwinkel couldn’t be happier.

“We are so lucky to have such dedicated custodians,” he said. “I have been amazed at the transformation that has taken place over the last several months as they complete one project after another. The painting of light posts, rooms, all the outside doors has really brightened and refreshed our building. The most astonishing change has been the basement where they unloaded four full dumpsters of junk that has accumulated for decades. They have reorganized the entire space to the point it’s not even frightening to go down there! I truly enjoy their humor and their unwavering commitment to making things happen smoothly no matter what the event.”

Pierre, who has now been part of the staff for 36 years, spent the spring scraping up old wax and putting down new, and the summer painting the fire escape. He said the staff was doing everything it normally does, but being more attentive to everything that requires basic maintenance.

“Maintenance is key” to keeping a building as old as WGPC in good shape, he said.

All three custodians said they like their jobs at the church and all expressed that they missed the congregation. Ken said he especially enjoyed helping members when they planned receptions and meals for the congregation.

“They are very receptive of my input,” he said. “A lot of times, I’ve been doing it longer than they have.”

Ken has been part of WGPC custodial team for 10 years. He works part-time but he puts his all into the time he works.

“I try to do the best I can every day I get in here,” he said. “I enjoy the work. The people are good, and it’s an easy-going atmosphere.”

Pete is the newest member of the custodial team. He came to WGPC nearly three years ago with 30 years’ experience as a custodian at a private indoor tennis club. He said the club and the church aren’t very different.

“At the club, everyone who came through the door was a member or a friend of the family. It was like the church, and the church was a really good fit for me,” he said.

Pete said his experience at the church “has been, far and away, the best working experience” he’s had.

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“When members come to me with a request, they are kind, earnest. They care about the church and they are reasonable,” he said.

Pete said he has a heart for service, is a people person, and as far as the work is concerned, he gets it.

“I’m detail oriented and finish things 100 percent,” he said.

He also likes his team.

“Ken and Pierre are really good at their jobs,” he said. “And they are dedicated. The church runs at its own rhythms. They’ve left holiday pay to work at the church. And that’s a good indication of what kind of people they are.”

Pierre also said the men work well together.

“It’s a team effort, that’s for certain,” he said.

Although the building is Pierre’s main focus, he said he missed the congregation.

“We know the church is just a building,” he said. “We want them back and we will welcome them with open arms.”

Pierre said he is especially thankful that the congregation has continued to give to the church and kept the staff working.

“We are most grateful for their ongoing financial support in this blessed facility,” he said.

Pierre and his wife, Sheila, live in St. Louis. They have a son, Pierre Campbell Jr., a daughter, Paris, and four grandchildren. When Pierre isn’t at WGPC, he enjoys traveling and reading.

“I’m a people person. I have a large family, and I try to be more attentive to my wife,” he said.

Ken has three children Abby, Zack and Ben and lives with his wife, Julie, in St. Louis County. In his spare time, he enjoys watching Dr. Who and Star Trek, reading science fiction and building model spaceships. He also loves music, especially movie soundtracks and 70’s classic rock.

Originally from South St. Louis, Pete is looking to move back there one day soon. He has two children, James and Caitlin. When he isn’t working, he enjoys reading, playing video and board games and spending time with his children.
Environmental Stewardship selects bees as its theme in 2020-21

American garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence once said, “the hum of bees is the voice of the garden.” More and more, however, our gardens are growing silent and with fewer of these busy pollinators the future of our fruit and vegetable crops is less certain.

For the past few years, the WGPC Environmental Stewardship Committee has selected a theme for the year including watersheds and trees. In April of this year, the committee decided that its focus for 2020-21 would be on bees to raise awareness of their importance in our lives and their current dire situation.

The Bible mentions bees and honey from Genesis through Revelation often in connection with good things to come. For example, in Exodus 3:8 “… I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey…” Proverbs 16:24 states, “Pleasant words are honey from a honeycomb sweet to the soul and healing for the body.”

Not only are bees and honey a good thing, they are essential to humans. Unlike birds, bats, butterflies and others that accidentally pollinate as they feed on nectar, bees specifically collect pollen. According to an article by Peg Craft for the Missouri Department of Conservation, “Our Need for Bees,” bees are responsible for 75 percent of food production worldwide. One-third of our calories come from bees and 70-80 percent of our nutrients like vitamins and minerals come from bee pollinated produce. In the most comprehensive study of its kind to date, Rutgers University found that crop yields for apples, cherries and blueberries across the country are being significantly reduced by a lack of pollinators.

Missouri has more than 450 different species of bees, which are very proficient in their pollinating work. In fact, many have evolved to be “intentional pollinators” servicing specific plants. For example, a single blueberry bee can visit 50,000 flowers in its short lifetime resulting in 6,000 blueberries. Squash bees uniquely pollinate the squash plants in your garden. Without native bees, many of our plants could not reproduce effectively and there would be smaller harvests of seeds and fruits and higher prices. While honeybees are not native to Missouri, they are critical for global agriculture.

According to Craft, you can help address the declining bee population by implementing a few simple practices:

**Plant Native** – Bees love a big clump of color. Planting a variety of native plants can have your garden blooming all season long and help increase bee populations, which will help your fruit and vegetable gardens.

**Mow Less:** Research has shown that mowing every other week will bring a 60 percent increase in bees. Even better, mowing every third week will bring a 300 percent increase in bees. So, let the yard grow and help the bees.

**Mulch Less:** Mulching helps new plants, but after they are established it’s less necessary. Many bees nest in the ground and need exposed soil to build their nest and easily come and go.
Did you know?

Most members know that WGPC has a heart for the earth, but did you know that two members have devoted almost five decades to preserving Missouri’s wilderness and public grounds?

Jan and Abe Phillips are members of the Missouri Conservation Federation, an organization founded in 1935, that campaigned for the creation of the Missouri Department of Conservation and in 1976 worked to provide funding to preserve Missouri’s forests, streams and wildlife with a successful sales tax initiative.

Abe and Jan first became involved with the organization during the funding campaign, and Jan said that effort has paid off.

“They’ve been able to create one of the best conservation departments in the United States,” she said.

Jan said over the past 40 years, the couple has played major roles with Conservation Federation including Abe’s service as president.

Before he retired, Abe also has devoted his time to nature and recreation in the outdoors in his career of more than 30 years with the St. Louis County Parks and Recreation Department, where he served as both assistant director and director.

Meanwhile, Jan was busy incorporating conservation and experiential learning in the outdoors into her work as an educator and later director of The College School, a private, pre-k through 8th grade school in Webster Groves, and she was named The Missouri Conservation Educator of the Year in 1975.

Jan said growing up on a farm in Miller, Missouri taught her a lot about conservation like picking gooseberries and canning.

The author of the book *Wild Edibles of Missouri*, published and reprinted four times by the Missouri Department of Conservation, Jan enlisted her family in the endeavor and humorously dedicated the book “To my ‘wild’ family Abe, Sheli, & Janette …who ate the weeds dutifully…” She said she spent a lot of time making rainbow lichen biscuits and persimmon nut bread.

Although the book is now out of print, you can access a PDF copy, simply search the internet for Wild Edibles of Missouri by Jan Phillips.

Nature, for Jan, is an expression of God and is tied deeply to her faith.

“When I go outside and see a tree, I see God. God is there in every part of nature — the trees, the sunsets and sunrises, the way nature interacts. It would be hard to see all that and not believe there is a God. God orchestrates that beauty,” she said.
Money Matters: Leaving a legacy

Legacies can come in two ways, one as a financial bequest, the other as the gift of ourselves, the heritage of our character and our example. When Sandy Buschmann died March 11 of this year, she left both — a $50,000 bequest to the church and a lasting memory of her strength, kindness, generosity, and faithful service to Webster Groves Presbyterian Church.

In her role as Chair of the Endowment & Planned Giving Commission, she used her gift for finances to provide information and guidance, said Business Administrator Jan Scheurer.

"Sandy offered this congregation insight on the ways they could share their financial gifts," she said. “She also helped determine the rules for large bequests before it became an issue and helped craft the discernment process for the Meyer and Morris gifts.”

It was the way she served, however, that made Sandy special, Jan said.

“She served with grace; she did it with kindness; and she did it with joy,” she said.

There are about 20 different ways that a person can make a financial donation to the church, from a simple cash donation to leaving a gift in your will, to transferring securities or, like Sandy, donating the proceeds of a life insurance policy that is no longer needed for the family.

Julie Wood, Sandy’s daughter, said her mother’s forethought and planning made the most of her estate.

“As it relates to estate planning, Mom was meticulous,” Julie said. “Financial planning was her profession and she was intensely proud of the business she was able to create. She planned her own estate in such a way that we knew exactly what she wanted. In addition to leaving a wonderful legacy for her kids and grandkids, she left generous bequests for her favorite charities including the church and specified some thoughtful monetary gifts for special family members who she knew could use the money.”

Bill Schwartz, the current chair of the Endowment & Planned Giving Commission, said that before making decisions about a bequest, it’s important to consult with your financial advisor.

“Most people have some kind of financial advisor,” he said. “You need to count on that person to know your financial position and where your heart is, if it’s important for you to give back, to fulfill an obligation to the church.”

Bill said an unneeded insurance policy, once your children are grown, is one good way to donate. Another is after you reach the age of 72 to donate the minimum disbursement from your IRA, if you don’t need the income, he said.

“If you don’t have it as income, you don’t pay taxes on it,” he said.

In addition, a contribution to Presbytery Schools could be an attractive way to get some income, he said.

“Of course, as a church, we hope you will support us,” Bill said.

A chart outlining the various ways to give for your goals and benefit is listed on the website at wgpc.org/give/ways-of-giving.

The important thing is, if you want to make a gift, formalize that commitment, Bill said.

“If it’s not stated, sometimes it doesn’t happen,” he said.

Bill also suggested that funds donated to the church should be left unrestricted because the needs of the church change.

“If you leave it unrestricted, the church can use it where it’s needed most,” he said.

Sandy’s life leaves a legacy to her family, friends and the church. Julie said she was very touched by the many people who praised her mother for her strength, drive, generosity and kindness as well as her devotion to family.

“These people felt her intense interest in their lives and they knew that she really cared about them and listened to their stories.”

Sandy loved the church too, she said.

“Mom always felt a duty to serve the institutions she loved. It was important to her that she continue to help them even after she was gone.”
WGPC volunteers assess and encourage student interns

One of WGPC’s partners, the St. Louis Internship Program (SLIP) was the focus of an enthusiastic volunteer effort by WGPC members this summer.

The organization prepares junior and senior high school students for employment through the year and connects students to local businesses for paid internships through the summer. This spring, it put out a call for volunteers to help with mock interviews and the assessment of students’ final projects and about 10 people from WGPC responded for each event.

This year, of course, was exceptional because training and preparation were all moved online and interviews and assessment were conducted by electronic meetings because of the COVID pandemic. WGPC’s Mission Commission helped SLIP make that happen by donating $3,000 which was used for technology to provide instruction for 150 students.

Member Harriet Hall said she enjoyed the interview process.

“Each of the students I interviewed was well-prepared, serious, and of course a little nervous,” she said. “The virtual nature of this training for them was certainly unusual but they and the staff at SLIP handled it well. They were genuine, responsive, and so impressive. Some of the accomplishments of these students blew me away! I was also really thrilled to learn more about the staff and program at SLIP. I’m so happy that WGPC supports this program and that I’ve had a chance to participate in a small way.”

Deb Grossman was proud of the number of members who came out to assess students’ projects in July.

“We had a pretty good showing of WGPC people reviewing the projects for the St. Louis Internship Program,” she said. “When I tuned in for the pre-briefing, I was with Renee Bennett, Diane McCullough, Julie Wood, and Harriet Hall. Others who had signed up for previous days were Betsy Wacker, Georgia Urban, Mark Johnson, Janice Seele and Tom Hagemann."

She said Shanise Johnson, executive director of SLIP, was grateful for everyone’s participation.

The St. Louis Internship Program is one of our partners through the Dorothy Meyer grant program and one of the goals of those partnerships was to connect with charitable organizations that could provide hands-on opportunities to participate in their good works.

Member Tom Hagemann, who worked for many years as a manager at IBM and who now volunteers as a mentor that helps people launch their ideas into businesses, volunteered to assess final projects. He said he enjoyed meeting the students, but he may have gone off script with his questions.

“Sometimes their answers spark new questions,” he said. “Good questions force them to use critical thinking.”

Students seemed to be up for the challenge though.

See SLIP cont. on page 15
What COVID-19 means for singing in the church

by Shawn Portell, Director of Music

There is bad news and good news on the music front since COVID-19 came and tried to steal our songs. The bad news is that singing with a traditional choir, for the time being, will have to be set aside. The good news is with proper planning, new technology and a creative spirit, music still will praise God in the sanctuary.

We are a singing church. We express our faith through song. For months now, many of us have been unable to attend services because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we are asked to “sing from home” we miss singing hymns in person—praying them—together. We yearn to enter our churches once again and lift our voices in song. But singing together as a congregation or as a choir may not be possible for some time—even after our church reopens.

While research is rapidly changing what we know about COVID-19, mounting evidence strongly suggests that singing can significantly increase transmission of the disease. Scientists and medical professionals classify singing as a high-risk activity because singing encourages aerosol spread. Aerosol particles are light enough to remain suspended in the air for hours at a time and can travel several feet from the emitter. When those aerosol particles carry COVID-19, they pose a serious risk for anyone unlucky enough to breathe them in. Singers are therefore considered super-spreaders.

What does this mean for Webster Groves Presbyterian Church? I met recently with a group of St. Louis Presbyterian music directors from Ladue Chapel, Kirkwood Presbyterian and Second Presbyterian to discuss how these topics affect each age group and each choir we direct. We were unanimous in our recognition that choral singing will look different in the upcoming months. Large choirs with singers standing shoulder to shoulder will not be viable for some time. With accommodations, however, small groups of singers who feel safe doing so, with social distance in place, could get together to sing.

In the fall, we will still see our band and singers. Our four staff singers will expand their quartet to an octet to allow others to sing from time to time. We will still see handbells playing occasionally with some established modifications. We will also continue to see music guests participating in our 24th season of “Music in a Great Place”. We will still hear our Gress-Miles pipe organ and our amazing sanctuary grand piano.

We are committed to the safety of all of our musicians and are limiting weekly participation and rehearsals, practicing social distancing by rearranging our choir area, requiring masks to be worn by all who participate. In addition, we have purchased high quality singers’ masks that we will soon see our singers wear. We are even investigating a better-quality microphone, mixing and monitor system so that we can all hear the music better, both at home and in person.

Even though it is a sad time for our profession, we know we will sing again. For now, we march forward and continue to make music in the best way that we can. It is all for the glory of God, and we know that even in our silence, God can still be praised!
Bettering our building and grounds

The church building and grounds had two major projects completed this spring and summer.

One was a second round of tuckpointing on the church building and the other was the resurfacing of the east parking lot, Business Administrator Jan Scheuer said.

Parking Lot
If you haven’t seen the newly resurfaced parking lot, you should check it out. Members are giving the project rave reviews. The improved aesthetics aren’t the only advantages of having the parking lot resurfaced and restriped, however.

“The work was needed because some members of the congregation were having trouble navigating the parking lot with their walkers,” Jan said.

The project was completed by Fontana Contracting Inc. of Kirkwood. The cost was $39,597. Of that cost, $10,000 was donated from the member who identified the problem and $29,597 was taken from the Building Endowment Fund.

Tuckpointing
This spring’s tuckpointing project was the second phase of a project by Western Specialty Contractors of St. Louis. The company began tuckpointing last year to address interior water damage to the building. The cost for phase one was $26,009.

The company returned this year for phase two which consisted of additional tuckpointing work on the building. The cost of the project this year was $32,788.

With the work of phase one and two completed, money allotted for tuckpointing on the church from the Dorothy Meyer funds through the discernment process has now been used, Jan said.

Work, however, still remains to be done. A third phase of tuckpointing and a fourth phase, which would involve masonry repair, needs to be completed, but the church will have to wait until funding can be identified, Jan said.

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“Theyir answers were pretty darn good,” he said.

He thought the program was helpful but also said he’d like to see it expand to include more male volunteers and a diverse group of male volunteers, and he’d like to see more young men in the program.

“This kind of program is vital,” Tom said.

Deb said the interaction with the students was worthwhile for members too.

“I hope we can continue to contribute in this way as it was so good for the students and for our members as well. Everyone grew from the experience,” Deb said.

Executive Director Shanise said the organization usually places an average of 100 students in summer internships and last year the group grew to 141 interns.

“This summer, as a result of COVID, we placed 98 students in summer internships. Six of the 98 students are working in physical internships and the others are completing virtual internships,” she said.

“Since only a few internships were held in physical locations, SLIP devised internships that are hosted virtually for eight weeks. Interns were paid $10/hour for up to 40 hours per week. SLIP staff members served as supervisors and SLIP’s Summer Program Monitors facilitated feedback sessions and job coaching for each student,” Shanise said.

The St. Louis Internship Program has been providing opportunities for underserved youth through partnerships with businesses for nearly 30 years. Ninety-eight percent of SLIP interns have successfully acquired employability skills since 1992, according to the organization’s website.
Church Calendar

Each week

Worship Online - Sundays at 9:30 a.m.
Join us for worship services online at wgpc.org/online-worship. Services are live-streamed Sundays at 9:30 a.m. After the service ends, a recording is available to view any time.

Need a Break? - Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.
Join a pastor on Zoom Wednesdays 10-11 a.m. to hang out and catch up. Check the Friday Flash for the Zoom link, or email Pastor Ed at efz@wgpc.org for more information.

Disciples Bible Study - Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.
DBS will be starting the book of Acts and reading through the rest of the New Testament. Check the Friday Flash for the Zoom link or email Pastor Hannah for more information.

Each Month

Join the Third Wednesday Book Study
In October, the group will begin reading Holy Envy and getting together via electronic meetings to discuss the book each month until May. For more information, contact Jan Phillips at 314-961-3654.

For weekly news updates sign up for the Friday Flash at wgpc.org/about/newsletter

Sept. 13 - First Delivery for Children’s Ministry -- Growing in God’s Love
The subscription Christian education program that provides a box of activities for children aged 4 to 10 years old begins Sept. 13. Families on last year’s roster will receive a box. To opt in for future boxes, send an email to Cherstin Byers at chb@wgpc.org.

Sept. 13 - Drive Through Donation Drive
Mark your calendar for our Drive-Through Donation Drive on Sunday, Sept. 13, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. on the church parking lot. We will be collecting canned food items for our supported food pantries, kitchen utensils for Home Sweet Home, and items that you have been saving to recycle in our bins in Fellowship Hall. Look for details in the Friday Flash.

Sept. 20 - Music in a Great Place – Amy Camie and her Healing Harp
This year our Director of Music and organist Shawn Portell is booking all his favorite musicians from the past, and Amy Camie is first in the lineup. She will offer her talents during the worship service at 9:30 a.m. A certified clinical musician, Amy has dedicated her music to promote health and wellness, the comfort and healing of the seriously ill and the peace of those in hospice. Join us.

Coming in October – Mission Weekend!
Keep your eye on the Friday Flash and get ready to participate in social distanced projects to benefit the community.