

First Presbyterian Church Santa Rosa Annual Report 2020

The phrase “hindsight is 20/20” is usually spoken as an admonishment for not having read the signs to know what was going to happen or for having made a bad decision in light of its subsequent consequences. Medical experts who work in the field of infectious disease and virus prevention may have anticipated the worldwide spread of the COVID-19 virus occurring at the opening of the year; sociologists who study evidence of racism may have seen the possibilities of a national and international call for racial justice which reached its zenith following the videotaped death of George Floyd in late May; meteorologists and fire-fighting experts may have anticipated an expanded fire season (August through November), but could not have predicted the LNU Lightning Complex Fire lasting from August to early October nor the fast moving Glass Fire from late September to late October resulting in multiple evacuation orders and loss of homes; political analysts may have expected a combative presidential election, but not the course it took due to the pandemic. While any one of these major events may have been anticipated by certain experts, the combination of all of them and their intersecting of one another was impossible to have imagined and difficult to endure. Nevertheless, we did endure them.



We not only endured these major, life-altering events, but we adapted and adjusted to the changes brought about by them. Changes in where and how we worked or if we worked, changes in our movements and social interactions, changes in how we worshipped and how we observed holidays and traditions, and changes in how we experienced community.

Our church leadership chose to make safety our priority and not risk the health of our congregation or wider community. We made use of our website and weekly emails for regular communications and offered online worship; church leaders shared “words of encouragement and hope” and “keeping in community” as a resource page for spiritual nourishment and family life activities.

We are guided by a commitment to plan what First Presbyterian Church of Santa Rosa needs to do, rather than what we want to do and take seriously these words from 1 Corinthians 10:24: “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.” —Reopen Task Force

In this year’s annual report you’ll see how we functioned as a church without meeting in person; how we grew in our faith in the face of struggles and challenges; and how we continue to serve the advancement of the gospel as devoted followers of Christ.

We Celebrate

When in-person worship shifted to an online experience, we chose a format that provided optimum presentation of worship music, messages, and participation versus a zoom platform. We later added an interactive zoom for a shared worship experience.

Sermons during the year concentrated on Scripture which addressed the testing of our faith and struggle of living through difficult times. Following the Winter and Lent/Easter series *Jesus – Up Close and Personal* (Gospel of John), we answered the question of *How Essential is Church?* by examining themes in the pastoral letters. Preachers chose their own topics in the summer and for pre-fall we drew lessons of living with disruption and displacement from the Book of Daniel titled, *Living At The Edge*. For fall we found comfort and encouragement by *Praying The Psalms*. We concluded the year with an Advent/Christmas theme of *A Clear Picture of Peace* looking at the coming of Jesus to bring God's peace to our world.



We are grateful for the talent, leadership, and dedication of our staff who responded to the challenge of making worship possible online (as well as available on CDs mailed weekly to those without internet). In particular, we applaud the skillful and dedicated work of Chris Studer, John Pavik, and Sue Magnuson. Making use of recording equipment at his home, Chris begins with a recording of instrumental accompaniment (either from John or himself) and his vocals, sends it to

A new carillon (electronic version of bells) was installed in June, paid for with bequest dollars.

May the sound of our church bells be a daily witness to the sovereignty of God in the world and a reminder that our worship of God serves as the spiritual heartbeat not only of the church, but of our community, and nation.

designated vocalists and guitarists for their contribution, adds additional vocal part(s), and then synchronizes the final version. John has adapted to the times by recording an entire library of instrumentals for our congregation to experience in and outside of services. These instrumentals—ranging from Psalm reflections to classical works to modern

hymn arrangements—were carefully selected by John to reflect the message of each week and offer hope during this isolating period. Sue created the online format, and each week compiles, edits and arranges videos with creative visual enhancements of our completed worship production.



In January we welcomed David Irvine as Choral Music Director

Anti-Racism & Social Justice

As followers of Christ, our greatest longing must be to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. This transformed life is possible only by keeping our eyes firmly on Jesus with anticipation, growing humility, and an increasing awareness of how the Spirit is moving. George Floyd's tragic death served as a catalyst to question many unspoken, mostly unrecognized, assumptions about how we view and talk about race. Too often we did not hear the cries of our brothers and sisters of all races, but especially in this moment, of our black brothers and sisters. Jesus in all of his words, actions, and deeds, taught that all are equally beloved image-bearers of God. By not seeing the pain felt by our black brothers and sisters, resulting from centuries of oppression, we had become blind to their fullest reflection of God's image. It was there, we just did not see.



In response to what we believe is a spiritual crisis and urgent moral challenge, our Session made a commitment to racial and social justice as one of its strategic goals for the next two years. A group of fifteen leaders meet as the Anti-Racism and Social Justice team to study, discuss, pray, and seek God's guidance as to how we might address the questions raised about racial equity and justice, in our own discipleship journey as well as in our nation and world. This team has also committed to be continuing learners.

To my shame, I have learned how little I know about the whole racial injustice problem. I haven't paid attention to it. I thought it was "not my problem". This class showed me just the opposite - it IS my problem because I am white and privileged and subconsciously I am racist in thoughts and attitudes and of course, in my failure to act for racial justice. — Judy Dick

Session tasked the team to take a Biblical and invitational approach to a threefold emphasis of education, relationship building, and community engagement. Our education emphasis uses varying learning modes including a monthly literature discussion group featuring books by black authors; a seven-week class that provided

Anti-Racism & Social Justice Team

Keedra Carroll, Penny Cleary, Dale Flowers, Michelle Huntley, Kathy Karlen, Rich Mason, Laurel Quast, Paul Palmatier, Allie Shoulders, Tim Stafford, Emily Stockert, Jan Thomas, Mark Thomas, Paula Umino, and Lesley Van Dordrecht.

a basic vocabulary, concepts, and racial history titled "Learn, Pray, and Act for Racial Justice;" and a bi-monthly movie discussion night that looks at films that deal with issues of justice as well as the flourishing of black culture. Learning must precede action because in many ways relationship building and community engagement are outcomes of spiritual vitality and of growing understanding. We then experience transformation and move from lament to hope.

We Grow

While one response to the inability to meet together in-person for worship, learning, or fellowship activities might have been to take a break from our journey of Christian discipleship, we chose to adapt to the limitations imposed on us by “making the most of the time” (Eph. 5:16). To encourage children, youth, and adults to draw near to God in Christ, we chose to meet via zoom for Scripture study, community building, and faith development.

Children’s Ministries

Shawna Rundstrom and Darcy Fluitt reimagined ways to connect with First Kids



Church with Sunday morning zoom calls. They showed engaging Bible story videos, helped kids apply the lessons learned to their everyday lives, and played group games. Mid-week pre-teens met for Club Paradise. Regular drop-

offs (front porch, home deliveries) was a fun connection for kids. Even Vacation Bible School was packaged in a box and delivered to families to do at home.



When the Rundstrom family moved to Spokane, Washington in November, Darcy Fluitt agreed to serve as Interim Director of Children’s Ministries. We are excited that Darcy knows our children and their families from her 5+ years on our staff and we are confident she will lead this important ministry with energy and creativity!

Youth Ministries

Director Cory Myers and youth intern Galina Berger stayed connected with middle and senior high school students through phone contact, social media, and the Internet. *Rendezzoom* provided an online Sunday gathering and discussion for all students. Granite (Middle School youth group) and Decade (Senior High youth group) met online on Wednesdays. Teaching topics have included: “Why Jesus?”, “What is a Prophet?”, “What are the implications of the Biblical Christmas story?”, and “Being a Peacemaker.”



In order to obey the initial shelter-in-place requirement, the Preschool staff, under the direction of Amby Takekawa, created a YouTube channel with stories and activities for children during the spring. As an essential service, the Preschool resumed in-class learning in the fall with a reduced class size.

Young Adults

Chris and Aimee Studer led Young Adults which met weekly via zoom. A typical gathering began with a sharing question; then an inductive exploration of the Scripture passage for that week's sermon; followed by sharing personal highs and lows of the week and prayer for each other.



"And let us . . . not neglect to meet together . . ."

– Hebrews 10:24-25a

Adult Discipleship

Fifteen small groups continued to draw near to God and one another via zoom to study Scripture and encourage one another. Presbyterian Women met weekly via zoom to discuss the sermon from the past week and respond to the reflection questions. Under the leadership of Allie Shoulders, Director of Adult Discipleship, the second cohort of Apprentice Immersion continued meeting on zoom, exploring our identity as God's beloved and growing in Christlikeness. We postponed our planned launch of Apprentice Immersion scheduled for the fall until we meet together in person since relationships are a key component of the program.

With gifted instructors, we offered a series of multi-session classes throughout the year via zoom. In the spring, Tim Stafford led a biblical study of "Three



Small Books - Ruth, Esther, and Jonah." In early fall, Tim taught *The Adam Quest*, using his book by the same name to explore three different ways of understanding the biblical creation narrative.



Pastor Emily Stockert led a course about flourishing spiritually using Ken Shigematsu's book, *Survival Guide for the Soul*. Pastor Kent Webber led three classes: "How to Read the Bible with Understanding," "Biblical Principles for Political Decision-Making," and "The Exodus Event."



One-time seminars were presented by Caroline Keller speaking about "Deciding What to Do in the Next Phase of Life" and Allie Shoulders and Ann Hall led "Soul Training: Creating a Rhythm of Life." "Enlighten Up!" seminars featured Professor Charles E. Hunt of the University of California at Davis addressing "Engineering Design and the Universe We Live In;" and Tina Ramirez, founder of the International Religious Freedom Caucus, speaking about religious freedom.

2020 Movie Group selections:

The Farewell
The Peanut Butter Falcon
Harriet
Just Mercy
Black Panther
Blackkklansman

A multi-generational activity occurred during the Advent Season involving dozens of people from age two to ninety as a drive-up event to pick up Advent wreath supplies, Advent devotional resources, and church directories. During Advent, the We Grow team hosted a weekly gathering on zoom to light our Advent candles together.

We Care

In early March, Caring Ministries made a shift from its normal manner of extending care to implementing creative ways to maintain the same level from a safe distance. Teams of Deacons, caregivers, pastoral staff, Friendly Visitors, Stephen Ministers, and volunteers were mobilized to reach out to our church family ensuring basic needs were identified and met. For our most vulnerable members/friends we offered to do grocery shopping and run errands. Other forms of care included: prayer, phone calls, emails, zoom, facetime, snail mail, and social distance visits. In addition, meals were provided, flowers delivered, transportation to medical appointments arranged, financial assistance initiated, support groups offered, and zoom training made available.

Hi Grandma, Merry Christmas! I received SO many letters from your church and I can't express how much that means and how grateful I am!

--Ian Gilliom, U.S. Marines

As days turned into weeks and weeks into months, support groups—GriefShare, Caregivers, Friendly Visitors, Stephen Ministry, and prayer teams—offered encouragement and solace to help cope with anxiety, depression, isolation, and zoom fatigue. Pastoral care continued to serve the sick, hospitalized, family

members unable to visit them, and families who suffered the loss of loved ones. Where mandated restrictions limited memorial services, we found other ways to remember and honor the lives of congregants, such as our All Saints Day Commemoration.



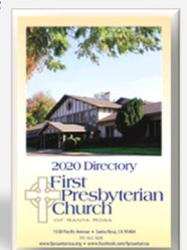
At times this past year it felt like we moved from one crisis to another. Knowing the 2020 fire season would be early, we formed an Emergency Preparedness Task Force to provide resources and training. When both the LNU Complex/Wallbridge and Glass fires struck, our congregation was prepared and mobilized to evacuate safely. We tracked all members/friends affected by the fires offering love, support, and care to evacuees and the three church families who lost their homes in the Glass Fire.

Part of growing in relationship to God is growing in relationship to one another. Relationships of our worshipping community are the heart of our life together. We share our lives and our sense of belonging is strengthened by giving and receiving care, especially in difficult times.



Popie Stafford trained Stephen Ministers and led Marriage Enrichment retreats as a Counselor-in-Residence for 34 years prior to her retirement in August. We value her enthusiasm, affirmation, and encouragement.

Jan & Theo Thomas coordinated our production of a New Church Directory which was delivered in late fall.



We Serve

Just as our congregation has been severely disrupted in this year of covid-19, so have been our mission partners and associates. “Molly” was caught outside her beloved home country (somewhere in Asia) and could not re-enter until a few weeks ago. Megan and Brian Meyers (Mozambique) and Dusty and Sherri Ellington (Zambia) abruptly departed their homes abroad when their work became impossible—and headed for a planned sabbatical year in the U.S. Others who work with seminaries or training colleges—Chumley and Connie Eckerle (Wycliffe in Texas), Don and Elizabeth Sendek (Colombia)—saw their schools suddenly go digital and the nature of their work changed drastically. Those who reach out to students—Laura Thiel (Sacramento), Kurt and Laurel Thiel (international), Joe Thackwell (faculty and grad students), Jeff Johnson (middle school and high school)—had to do most of their work on zoom since students suddenly weren’t available to meet in person.



I've been terribly impressed by the creativity and the drive these missionaries have shown in adapting to the unfamiliar. They rose to the occasion, finding new ways to reach out to those they are called to minister to.

—Tim Stafford



Greg and Kristi Fauss and Emily Hebling (Berlin), seem inexhaustible in finding new ways to reach Germans and refugees who have landed in Germany. Emily met and fell in love with an lowan living there! Dusty testified to the ways he and Sherri have seen God's long process work out after Egypt's government kicked them out (no reason given) more than ten years ago. In Zambia, where they ended up, their son Clayton encountered wildlife (not much of that in Cairo) and also witnessed much suffering—which ultimately led him to study biological engineering at Stanford and now in Paris, seeking innovative ways to prevent disease and death from mosquito-borne illnesses. In the heartbreak of leaving Egypt, God never left the scene. And so may it be with us: that ten years from now we will see how God's work never

stopped during this covid-19 year, but took new and unexpected paths.

While individual involvement with community service was limited, the Community Service Team found ways to enable us to assist our service partners. In particular donating food items for Redwood Gospel Mission's Thanksgiving Food Banquet and Christmas gifts for the students, their families, and staff of Kid Street Learning Center.

Community Service Partners

Catholic Charities

Juvenile Justice

Kid Street Learning Center & Charter School

Redwood Gospel Mission

The Living Room

Others Receiving Financial Support

F.I.S.H.

Presbyterian Preschool

Redwood Empire Food Bank

Westminster Woods

We Support

General Operating Budget Summary

Budgeted Income	<u>2020 Budget</u>	<u>2020 Actuals</u>
Pledges & Contributions	\$ 1,163,060	\$ 1,079,258
Investment Income	6,000	1,576
Subtotal of Contributions	\$ 1,169,060	\$ 1,080,834
Facility Use Fees/Department Income	50,821	31,958
Paycheck Protection Program		110,027
Total Income	\$ 1,219,881	\$ 1,222,819
Budgeted Expenses		
Personnel	840,133	804,118
Children's & Family Ministries	18,700	3,075
Youth Ministries	67,850	16,648
Adult Discipleship	10,430	6,094
Caring Ministries	8,050	3,887
Worship & Music	17,650	4,315
Missions - World and Local	129,395	129,939
Building and Grounds	79,050	52,179
Admin & Finance	111,816	119,844
Total Expenses	1,283,074	1,140,099
Net Revenue Over Expenses	(-\$ 63,193)	\$ 82,720

<u>Designated Mission Giving</u>		<u>Disaster Relief Fund</u>	
(Above & Beyond Budget)		Balance at 1/1/2020	\$ 102,120
World Mission	\$ 28,715	Total Donations (12/31/2020)	18,156
Local Mission/Community Service	15,009	Allocations (12/31/2020)	59,002
Total	\$ 43,724	Account Balance	\$ 61,274

Session chose to budget a shortfall of (-\$63,193) knowing we had retained income to offset it. However, we did not anticipate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to faithful congregational giving and receipt of the government Paycheck Protection Program, we ended the year with retained income in the amount of \$82,720.