



# ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
246 Woodport Rd, Sparta, NJ 07871

## Welcome to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church exists to **welcome** people to faith in Jesus Christ; to **equip** us with the tools to make that faith work in real life; and then **send** us in service into the world in Jesus' name.

Shepherd of the Hills is a vibrant church which exists to give glory to God in Jesus Christ. We see ourselves as a center of Christian discipleship in the lives of individuals, families and congregations.

We are committed to:

- Worship as a dynamic experience of the presence of God through Word, Sacrament, music and Christian community;
- Welcome as an invitation to everyone to meet Jesus Christ no matter where they are on their spiritual journey of life;
- Empowerment as enabling individuals, couples, and families to discover the power of the Holy Spirit through faith active in real life;
- Growth as the opportunity to increase each person's confidence and joy in Jesus Christ through prayer, Bible study and through active service in our church, community, and the world.

## Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church 2017 Annual Report

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## Pastor's Report for 2017

### WELCOME:

Grace and peace to you from God the Creator and Jesus the Redeemer.

The prefix *re-* describes the past year. It was a year of *re-*organization and *re-*booting in the office. We realized the without tenant, couldn't afford a part-time secretary. So with a *renovation* of the office and space for volunteers, we began to break up tasks based on ability and interest. Grateful for Barbara Van Thun, Barbara Nielson, Deborah Lockwood, Lynn Ernst, and Wendy Whipple for stepping up and into various roles to keep the business of church going.

With the end of a prospective relationship with Selah House (adult day care), we decided to *re-*imagine how we wanted to move forward. This place has become a center for many non-profit groups that meet specific needs in the community. We are still in process with this.

One of the comments I heard as we met in house churches was a *re-*commitment to spiritual growth. Our Wednesday Noon Bible Study has remained steady and faithful. This fall we began bi-monthly Tuesday night study. There is room for more folks in each class. As you are interested and committed, more studies will be available.

*Re-*member – five years ago, you called me to be your pastor. I look back at the excitement and nerves that we all had then. I'm still excited for future at this place – even on the days when I'm most worn out. You may not realize the life that is planted and that bloom – but I've seen it. That gives me hope that as we work together through the bumps and changes in what it means to be a community, that there is rootedness in the love and grace of God.

### PASTORAL ACTS FOR 2017:

#### Baptisms:

3-26-17 – Francesco (Frankie) Lausch-Orta  
6-11-17 – Aidan Vincent Clemens  
8-6-17 – Samson Ignazio Grana  
10-8-17 – Mia Rose Kulisz

#### Confirmation of Baptism – October 29, 2017

Emma Kate Maynard

#### Marriage:

6-14-17 – Barbara Eye and James Klawon – Virginia  
10-8-17 – Alexa Reigstad and Benjamin Griffin – Fredon, NJ

#### Funerals:

3-28-17 - Mae Bennedetto  
5-23-17 – Joseph C. Osborne  
6-27-17 – Audrey Fetter – Member  
7-18-17 – Angela Crissey

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Tina +

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 2017**

Another church year has flown by. In 2017 we continued to grow our mission with our partners. We continue our support of the Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry, the Faith Kitchen in Dover and Project Self Sufficiency along with our tenant, Connect for Community. As part of our mission here at SOTH, we will continue to support these groups that are focused on food insecurity in our area. We also commit to be a place where those who struggle with the disease of addiction can find the support they need in one of the 12 step groups meeting here.

We have had a few hiccups this year when it comes to our facility. By the grace of God and the help of many members of our flock, we have a roof over our head and a beautiful place to meet, worship and grow. Our heating system leaks have been repaired and a brand, new floor has been installed in our Fellowship Hall. We have weathered a cold and nasty winter and I look forward to a great warm season.

We continue to be good stewards of our resources and control our spending. We have seen friends move on and new friends arrive. We had intended to hire office help this past year, but we are not financially stable enough to add another salary at this point.

We celebrate the volunteers that have stepped up to help with our mission, those with their tool belt and wet vacs when the pipes broke and all that step up every day and staff our office to ensure that our doors are open and that ministry in all forms happens every day.

I thank all of you for the time and talents you give to our faith community every day. You are what makes SOTH great.

In Christ,  
John Seal, Church Council President

## TREASURER'S REPORT 2017

The overall financial program for 2017 was projected to continue to conserve costs to within facility management and program needs while expanding community investment with outreach projects and shared ministry. SOTH council also asked our church body to prayerfully consider directing their budget giving to our unrestricted or mortgage funds for more efficient financial operations.

Total revenue was within \$200 of our 2017 budget. Unrestricted giving remained steady and the decrease in restricted donations was offset by an increase in building use donations, fundraisers and the Reformation 500 special appeal.

|               |                               | 2017 Actual  |                   | 2017 Budget       |                 |              | Previous Year     |                 |           |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|
|               |                               | Monthly Avg. | Annual            | Budget            | Variance        | % Change     | 2016              | Variance        | % Change  |
| <b>INCOME</b> | <b>Congregational Giving</b>  | \$ 15,501    | \$ 186,007        | \$ 200,000        | \$ (13,993)     | -7%          | \$ 185,568        | \$ 438          | 0.2%      |
|               | <b>Mortgage Giving*</b>       | \$ 4,146     | \$ 49,748         | \$ 42,000         | \$ 7,748        | 18%          | \$ 55,344         | \$ (5,596)      | -10%      |
|               | <b>Designated Giving</b>      | \$ 249       | \$ 2,990          | \$ 3,600          | \$ (610)        | -17%         | \$ 6,515          | \$ (3,525)      | -54%      |
|               | <i>Audio Visual</i>           |              | \$ 2,370          |                   |                 |              | \$ 5,500          |                 |           |
|               | <i>Kitchen</i>                |              | \$ 620            |                   |                 |              | \$ 510            |                 |           |
|               | <b>Miscellaneous</b>          | \$ 400       | \$ 4,803          | \$ 2,500          | \$ 2,303        | 92%          | \$ 5,393          | \$ (590)        | -11%      |
|               | <b>Fundraisers</b>            | \$ 1,085     | \$ 13,024         | \$ 9,000          | \$ 4,024        | 45%          | \$ 7,575          | \$ 5,449        | 72%       |
|               | <i>Reformation 500</i>        |              | \$ 4,212          |                   |                 |              | N/A               |                 |           |
|               | <b>Building Use Donations</b> | \$ 2,028     | \$ 24,341         | \$ 24,000         | \$ 341          | 1%           | \$ 17,446         | \$ 6,895        | 40%       |
|               | <b>Total Revenue</b>          |              | <b>\$ 280,913</b> | <b>\$ 281,100</b> | <b>\$ (187)</b> | <b>-0.1%</b> | <b>\$ 277,842</b> | <b>\$ 3,071</b> | <b>1%</b> |

\* Includes 5% of Simply Shopping sales

Church expenses were kept under budget with a variance of \$18,600 but exceeded our revenue by \$14,600. Worship and educational costs were minimized while expenditures on coffee hour, fundraisers, snow removal and repairs increased. Heating costs were \$4000 less than those from 2016. Personnel and facility expenses, including mortgage are 78% of SOTH expenses. Most of our expenses incurred in December along with the largest expense to income gap.

|                |                             | 2017 Actual  |                    | 2017 Budget       |                    |            | Previous Year      |                    |             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
|                |                             | Monthly Avg. | Annual             | Budget            | Variance           | % Change   | 2016               | Variance           | % Change    |
| <b>Expense</b> | Nurture                     | \$ 326       | \$ 3,917           | \$ 4,000          | \$ (83)            | -2%        | \$ 8,502           | \$ (4,585)         | -54%        |
|                | Outreach                    | \$ 662       | \$ 7,947           | \$ 2,400          | \$ 5,547           | 231%       | \$ 6,920           | \$ 1,027           | 15%         |
|                | Admin- Property Maintenance | \$ 1,585     | \$ 19,024          | \$ 31,675         | \$ (12,651)        | -40%       | \$ 21,717          | \$ (2,693)         | -12%        |
|                | Gen. Admin- Facilities      | \$ 4,619     | \$ 55,426          | \$ 46,576         | \$ 8,850           | 19%        | \$ 64,345          | \$ (8,919)         | -14%        |
|                | Mortgage Interest           | \$ 4,051     | \$ 48,611          | \$ 50,000         | \$ (1,389)         | -3%        | \$ 50,385          | \$ (1,774)         | -4%         |
|                | Mortgage Principal          | \$ 3,663     | \$ 43,957          | \$ 44,000         | \$ (43)            | 0%         | \$ 42,183          | \$ 1,774           | 4%          |
|                | Personnel                   | \$ 9,553     | \$ 114,639         | \$ 135,490        | \$ (20,851)        | -15%       | \$ 139,954         | \$ (25,316)        | -18%        |
|                | Miscellaneous               | \$ 167       | \$ 1,999           | \$ -              | \$ 1,999           |            | \$ 5,092           | \$ (3,093)         | -61%        |
|                | <b>Total Expense</b>        |              | <b>\$ 295,519</b>  | <b>\$ 314,141</b> | <b>\$ (18,622)</b> | <b>-6%</b> | <b>\$ 339,098</b>  | <b>\$ (43,579)</b> | <b>-13%</b> |
|                | <b>NET</b>                  |              | <b>\$ (14,606)</b> |                   |                    |            | <b>\$ (61,257)</b> |                    |             |

Unrestricted cash continues to dwindle, with only \$2,400 remaining at year's end. Positively, restricted funds increased, leaving a \$10,500 balance in our Mortgage Fund. Unfortunately, this amount will only cover the cost of 1 month's mortgage payment. Our new sanctuary, while beautiful, left us with a \$1,568,000 debt in September of 2005. Initial repayment was slow, with interest only payments for six years. Principal payments of \$1000 a month began in March of 2011. By December of 2011 we were paying \$8769.59 on principal and interest at a rate of 5.00%. The interest rate was lowered to 3.75% in January of 2013 and left us with a \$7,713.99 monthly mortgage payment, reducing our principal to \$1,254,579.56 at the end of 2017.

Faithfully,  
Robin Mahon  
Council Treasurer

## **ADMINISTRATION GROUP REPORT 2017**

We give thanks for Patrick Wood's service as Administration Team Coordinator. His term ended in May and he continued to serve as he was able to finish projects onsite.

### Property

Pastor Reyes and John Seal have been working together to maintain the various roles under that title.

We were blessed in 2017 to once again have our summer landscape provided by a congregation member. This gift insured that the outside property was evenly maintained. Thanks also to Don Roberts and Stephen LaValley for keeping up with shrub landscaping.

We had one full winter with natural gas and have indeed realized a significant savings.

We also give thanks that we were able to fully repair heating pipes that had fallen into disrepair. We are looking towards installing a water softener to help extend the life of all our fixtures.

We continue to watch utility costs – as well as prioritize the next “major” building project. We are nearing the fifteenth anniversary of the original building. It's a testament to this congregation for their faithfulness to maintaining and cleaning the facility.

### Communication:

Weekly email, quarterly mailings and use of website and social media are all tools to keep folks in the loop. It would be great to have a few folks to help coordinate these efforts!

### Stewardship/Resources:

Stewardship is defined as using one's talents, time and treasures to maintain what we're being given.

Our financial stewardship efforts need some energy. We've lost folks due to retirement and relaxation. We've been blessed to hold income relatively steady with increase in building use donations. More

education and focus is needed as what we are called to do often runs counter to worldly ideas and practices.

Thanks to all those who volunteer in any capacity! It's a blessing to have folks support all of our in-reach and outreach efforts.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Tina Reyes

## **NURTURE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

### ***Worship and Music***

In an effort to improve the poor sound in the sanctuary, an Assistive Listening System was installed in October allowing the broadcast of our services through the WIFI network to smartphone users. The response has been overwhelmingly positive!

The 6 p.m. Sunday evening service, which presents another weekend worship time for families, continues to have a small but steady following. In addition, a joint worship service with St. Mary's Episcopal included a Prayer Service for Justice and Peace at that same time on Sept. 17, Oct. 15, and Nov. 19. Additional joint worship opportunities with St. Mary's included an Easter Vigil and Blue Christmas observances.

### ***Christian Education***

Several children attended the Middle School Retreat at Crossroads Camp in March. First Communion was given to 3 children on May 14, Mother's Day. Many thanks to Denise Roberts who has served as teacher of this program for several years. CJ and Jeff Behling & Stephanie Bolich continue to serve as Faith Formation teachers, and Lynn Ernst coordinates the First Friday gatherings as well as teaching the confirmation class. During Lent, the confirmation students participated in skits during our Wednesday evening worship. We are most grateful to all who service as Christian educators here at SOTH.

We are also thankful to all who assisted the Robinsons as they guided the children in the planting and harvesting of the community garden. The produce was joyfully accepted by the Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry who reported that their clients were so appreciative of the fresh, home grown veggies. On Oct. 29, we celebrated with one service and a luncheon to honor our confirmation class, and to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

Pastor has distributed the information regarding the National Youth Gathering to be held in Houston, TX from June 27 - July 1, 2018.

### ***Adult Education***

The Wednesday lunchtime Bible study for adults continues to be an excellent opportunity to study selected books of the Bible.

On June 25, Pastor Tina led a group to Carnegie Hall to participate in a Lutheran Hymn sing sponsored by Concordia College to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

A Tuesday evening faith book group studied Opening the Book of Faith by Diane Jacobson, and continued in a second session reading the book, Accidental Saints by Lutheran pastor, Nadia Bolz Weber. This group looks forward to continuing our reading together in 2018.

Wendy M. Whipple, Nurture Coordinator

## **FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

### ***Oktoberfest – October 7, 2017***

This was a successful event and 71 people attended (which was 9 down from last year) The proceeds from this event support our Thanksgiving Outreach – which concluded with a donation of \$731. The gift basket raffle very successful, raised \$220, which was 31% of dollars raised for the outreach donation.

### ***Fish & Chips Dinner – March 3, 2018***

Another Successful event with 188 attending the event. However, attendance was down 24 from last year. This could be due to the timing of the event, which varies each year according to the Lent schedule. This year's event was moved up due to early Easter and St Patrick's Day falling on the weekend.

The donation to our outreach efforts came to \$1,784, which was down \$316 from the previous year. Again, our gift basket raffle very successful, raising \$500 or 28% of dollars raised

### ***Overview***

The events would not have been successful without the support of Barbara & Jack Robinson, Solveig & Ed Schunk, Bill Davis and Samantha Valtos. Thank you very much!!!

Great thanks to Barbara and Jack Robinson for leading the charge around town to securing donations for the gift basket raffles.

### ***Future Potential Events***

Summer BBQ or Chicken Dinner

Dinner parties

Campout at a local Campsite (numbers interested)

Future events would be possible with support from members of the congregation. These events are time consuming to plan and complicated to run. Support from others would make more events possible.

Expanded participation from the community would also expand our outreach mission. Get the events on your schedule early and invite a friend or neighbor.

Thanks for your support!

Submitted:

Robert Hardt, Fellowship Coordinator