



### *From your Pastor*

This past year, our youngest son Benjamin who is in the Army, moved to Korea for 1-2 years. We are happy for him, and yet Tamera and I find ourselves missing being with him physically. We see him from time to time on video chat, get messages, and video Snapchats, but it is just not the same. There are so many times we simply just want to give him a hug or walk in the room and see him, and we know that when that happens again, it will be wonderful. In some ways, this past year has felt that way in the church. We see each other on video feeds, read posts online, see the photos come across our social networking, and yet in person interactions are interlaced with masks, social distancing, fist/elbow bumps in place of hugs and handshakes, and it has felt a bit like a long-distance relationship.

I know that all of us are looking forward to the day that we can once again, be in the unobstructed presence of those we love. While we wait for that moment, we will continue to live out life in this different way. Reflecting on our time this past year, it was a tremendous blessing to be working with such a talented dedicated group of people. Those who continue to work diligently in our Re-opening Team, ensuring a safe worship experience indoors and outside, our tech and worship teams working together and venturing into new places of accessibility for worshipers, online zoom worship, prayer groups, study groups, children and youth, as well as some new ministries. All of these and more have helped to keep our church connected.

As we look forward to the future of Ashland, I am praying for our full reconnection as church body where we are once again be physically together. I believe we have learned a lot over this past year, and we have had new opportunities opened to us. When we come back together, we will be stronger, and the time together will be wonderful. It reminds me of how we wait for our Lord Jesus to return and gather all who are His together unobstructed in His glorious presence. And when that happens, it will absolutely wonderful.

It's Great to be your Pastor, Jamie

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### ***Worship Arts***

“Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens....Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” (Psalm 150). I’m thankful that God allowed his Ashland congregation to continue to praise Him every Sunday morning. Although totally necessary, one challenge of 2020 was the need to hide our breath behind a mask, while remaining at least six feet apart from one another (difficult when attempting to blend with other musicians.) Through this challenge, though, God provided solutions, largely through the use of technology, and folks with the knowledge to put such technology in place for our congregation: many thanks to all. I did miss meeting with children, youth, and adult choirs during the week; however, we were blessed to worship virtually with several families in their homes. Again, many thanks to all who provided solutions to the challenges of 2020.



### ***Missions***

The new missions committee was formed and met for the first time on February 12, 2020, with five active members. We met again in March, September, October and December. In December, the chair of the committee changed hands within the group and two new members were identified. The new chair of the committee also joined the Presbytery’s Missions Committee.

The committee familiarized itself with the 18+ missionaries that we were supporting and assessed their needs as best we could. We brought in two new missionaries, including a new church plant from the Presbytery of the East (POTE), Dr. Greg Austen, who was requesting help from Ashland Church, as well as Ashland’s own African Book Challenge (ABC). Two missionaries had dropped out of the mission field, so our total that we now support is 18. We evaluated our finances and found that we were able to give most of our missionaries quarterly raises, which was very timely given the pandemic.

Moving forward, the goals of the committee in 2021 are to be more intentional about supporting our missionaries by:

- Informing the congregation and highlighting missionaries monthly during the Sunday service
- Praying for them on a regular basis by assigning missionaries to committee members to pray
- Having more communication with our missionaries so that we know their needs
- Establishing electronic tracking/communication files on each missionary
- Making an effort to meet monthly, as much as possible.

### ***Children & Youth Ministries***

When I look back at the Children’s and Youth Ministries in 2020 I am reminded of Isaiah 43:19, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Though it may look different than “normal,” God has been and will continue to be at work in the lives of our children, youth, and families.

**Ongoing studies:** The blessing of technology has allowed us to continue to regularly gather while in our own homes. It has also made our ministries more multigenerational as parents join their pre-schooler for Sunday School or little siblings make comical appearances at Youth Bible Study! This has truly been an added and unexpected work of God in an area we already saw Him leading pre-pandemic. We have continued to meet together digitally to grow and pray together through the following ministries:

## ***Children & Youth Ministries (Continued)***

### **Children's Sunday School**

Our little ones, along with Miss Donna and Miss Robin meet Sunday mornings at 9:30 am on zoom to praise God through song and dance, learn from Bible stories that correspond with the sermon series, and pray for each other. Their infectious joy is a highlight of each week for me.

### **Upper Elementary & Middle School**

Our young people faithfully meet via zoom on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. We enjoy silly games, are learning how to read the Bible and participating in a book-by-book overview of God's redemptive story, and end by sharing our hearts and praying for each other. Our peer leaders have been taking on leadership roles and helping to lead this meeting.

### **High School & College Age**

It has been a blessing to regularly meet online with this age group and watch them pursue their faith and God's calling as they prepare to enter into the next phases of their lives. We have studied Jonah, spoken about racial justice, and are now studying "Get Out of Your Head," (a Biblical mental health study).

### **Neighborhood Bible Study**

Some of our youth are participating in an intergenerational women's neighborhood Bible study in the Deptford area led by Stephanie Wiley.

### **Fellowship Events**

We have worked to come up with safe ways for families to connect. We have held outdoor, in-person events like family picnics and games, s'more and art night, a glow party, and an outdoor movie. When the weather grew too cold we moved online for family worship, prayer and game nights.

### **Faith at Home Kits**

We have been able to make a shift from using our in-person curriculum to sending home some simple resources for families to use in their family discipleship. Home discipleship is not a new concept, in fact, it is Biblical and is also research-proven to be the most effective way to disciple our children. We will continue to provide resources for families and encourage parents to join a small group or study where they can grow in their own faith as they lead their children.

### **Outreach Service**

Our children, youth, and their families have continued to love and serve their neighbors through food pantry collections, making and collecting freezer meals, helping to assemble Thanksgiving Baskets, and making Christmas Videos for our friends at Voorhees Pediatrics!





### ***Social Justice Team***

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” – Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

After a similar account of Jesus’ words, a follow-up question was asked: “Who is my neighbor?” and Jesus proceeded to tell the well-known story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). And what was the point of Jesus’ parable? Maybe we see this too often as a general exhortation that everyone is our neighbor. Or perhaps we box it up as a proclamation that our neighbor is even our enemy. But it seems like both while both of those things are true, they’re too obvious for Jesus to have responded this way. No, the one who asked the question knew those answers. What they seemed to really mean was this: “OK, who am I required to love and help?” And Jesus’ answer was: everyone and anyone who is in need.

Though so much has changed and there has been much difficulty this past year, Jesus’ words are just as true now as ever: Love God with your all, love your neighbor as yourself. This team has wrestled over the past year with how we do the latter corporately, both in the middle of pandemic and a hyper-polarized society where all of our actions, including loving our neighbor, are viewed factiously. Community meals, food pantry collections, standing together for justice in the summer, and the Christmas Giving Tree are all ways we as a local body at Ashland have pursued loving our neighbor during this strange season of life.

Behind the scenes another development has been taking place, as God has been leading us in an exciting opportunity to give help to those undergoing mental duress and/or living with mental illness. Several folks have been working over this past year to complete training and become certified as Mental Health Coaches through the American Association of Christian Counselors. You can read more about from Dennis Cesare elsewhere in this year’s annual report, but expect to hear more about it soon. We are excited to continue to see how God leads us in our love of neighbor, and as we continue into this new year, please keep these things in prayer and let us know if you’d like to help (look for more info on those opportunities as well).



## ***Gloucester County Church Plant***

2020 was an interesting year to consider planting a church! We got approval and funding to explore planting an EPC in Gloucester County at the end of February 2020 and then the pandemic hit. Like the rest of the world, we were left struggling for several months with the question “How do we save the world when we can’t even leave our homes?!” Despite all the challenges, however, in God’s mercy and providence, we began 2021 with a core group of six adults and a firm decision to move forward with a three-year plan to plant a church. **Here are our priorities for 2021:**

- Continue prayer, leadership development, one-on-one mentoring, and small groups
- Choose name for the church
- Populate a church website with content and make useable for sharing with friends
- Take our core group through *Christianity Explored* so we’re equipped to do this in our neighborhoods
- Identify 2-3 tangible ways to connect to students at Rowan University
- Launch a simple weekly digital “Sunday” service by the end of the year

### **And here are a few ways you can pray for us specifically:**

- That I (Greg) would be more like Mary than Martha: listening well & especially to Jesus
- That our core Group would have strong marriages, wisdom, creativity, unity, and deeper, trusting relationships with our neighbors
- That we would have a successful planning “retreat” at the end of March
- That we would get a good name for the church so we can establish a virtual presence this year
- That we would find the best way to connect with the right people and ministry at Rowan University
- That we would launch in a way that keeps the focus on neighbors, new converts, and those hurt by the church



Thank you so much for partnering with us!!!

Greg Austen

## ***Mothers of Pre-Schoolers (\*MOPS)***

As with everything, our Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group has looked rather different this past year. Meeting outside to stay socially distanced or meeting online has been our go to. The theme of the year from MOPS is "decide to rise", and we try to integrate and practice this regularly. We are rising to the challenges COVID has presented us through finding creative ways to meet and share in the joys and challenges of motherhood. Even if at times, it is only a few of us, we still find a way to have fellowship and share our happiness and areas of our lives where we need help.

While this year has been anything but normal, we are looking forward to next year where we are hoping to do more community outreach, where we will be able to hopefully meet in person but always where we will be able to share life. MOPS is a safe landing place for any mom of young kids...we are always hoping to meet new people and share life together - it's what we do best! If you'd like more info for now or for next year reach out to us! You can contact Emily Dempsey at [emilydempsey1@gmail.com](mailto:emilydempsey1@gmail.com) or in person, or talk with Chrissy Blizzard-Wrobel as well. We know God has something amazing in store for us!

## ***Ashland Care and Counsel Program***

Our Ashland Church family is no stranger to building warm, caring relationships. This has continued in spite of the Covid-19 crisis even though it has been a bit more difficult. The pandemic has presented a variety of challenges and many of them have an effect on our mental health.

The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) presented a conference in 2018 entitled "The Struggle is Real." Some of us attended in order to grow in our ability to care for God's people God's way. We came away with a stronger desire to be available as 'helpers' and the vision for our church began.

In 2020 The AACC launched "Dare2Care Global Church and Mental Health Initiative." According to the CDC- mental health issues are skyrocketing. 40% of U.S. adults now report struggling with anxiety, depression, substance abuse, trauma, or stress. We have seen pandemic-related health concerns along with lockdowns, racial trauma and more. People everywhere are exhausted and in need of hope.

Our church enrolled in the program on scholarship (no cost, regular tuition \$2400) for the forty hours of training. Over 2,800 churches and 11,000 students have enrolled representing all 50 states and over 60 countries so far. Here at Ashland Church some of our people have completed or are working toward becoming a *Board Certified Christian Mental Health Coach-First Responder* through the International Board of Christian Care. The courses are designed to educate, equip and engage the learner. We believe and have committed to being used as God's conduits to bring His message of hope and healing to others. We encourage others who may feel the same way to pray about it as this is an open-ended opportunity and we are enrolled as a church. In addition to the training we hope to develop a resource area in our building that will serve as a place where people can feel safe and cared for as our coaches meet with them.

On behalf of our team, thanks for your support and please pray that God will continue to direct our efforts.

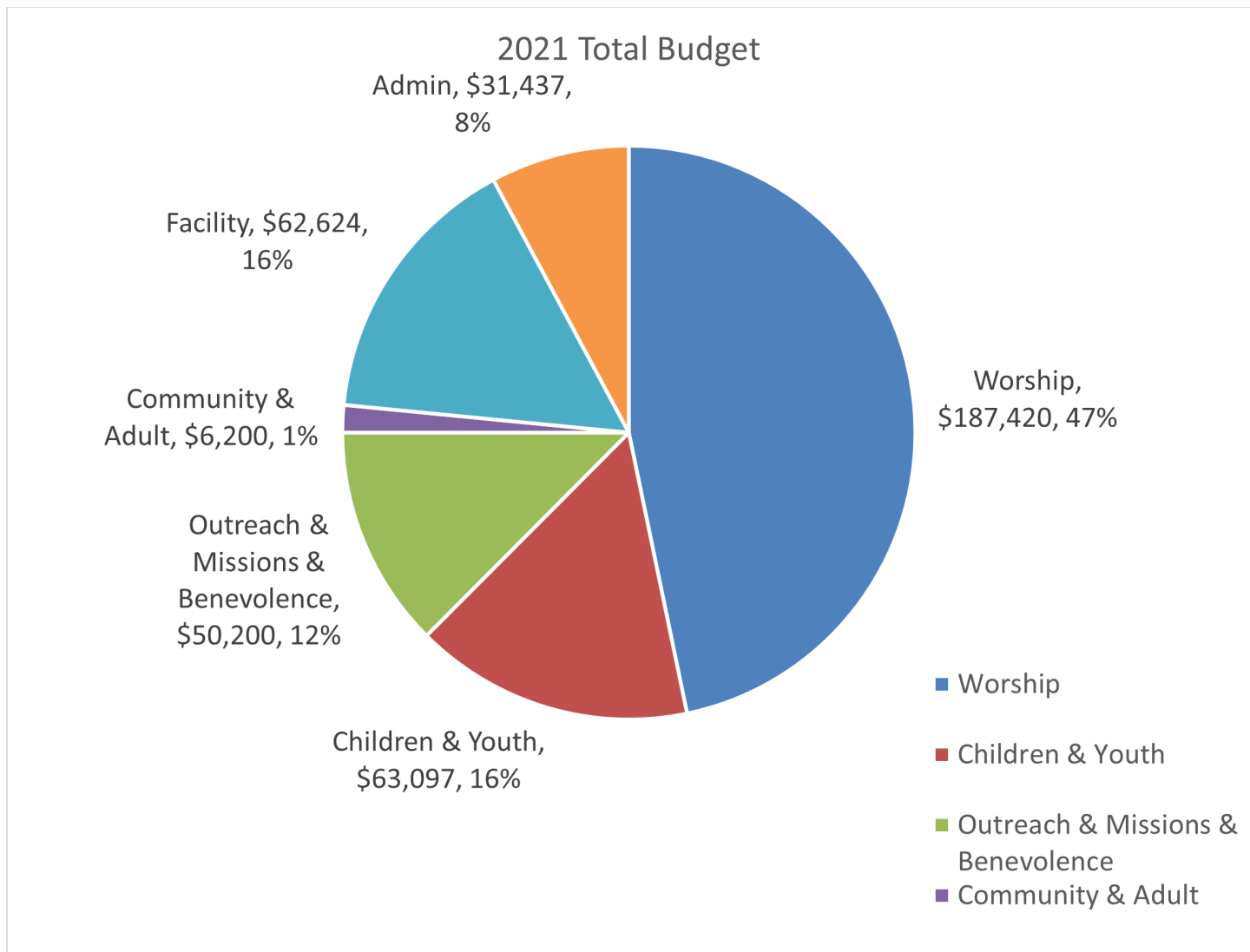
Dennis Cesare, LPC, BCCMHC

## ***Small Groups***

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thes 5:11*

So grateful to share that even in times such as these, we see God working at Ashland and there is surely confirmation of that in our small groups. During this year some groups were able to see each other in person but most often connected virtually. Currently, we have 10 small groups with more than 50 folks involved. We also had a couple of new groups that ran for a specific period of time designed to provide opportunities to correlate study and discussion with Pastor Jamie's messages. The format and schedule of each group varies. Some are specifically for women or for men and some have a combination. On a personal note, it was indeed an encouragement to me to be a part of a small group where we were able to keep connection, learn more about God's love for us, and pray for each other and our families. Small groups are a way to walk alongside each other and I continue to be amazed at how God works through them.





Category		
Worship	\$187,420	47%
Children & Youth	\$63,097	16%
Outreach & Missions & Benevolence	\$50,200	13%
Community & Adult	\$6,200	2%
Facility	\$62,624	16%
Admin	\$31,437	8%
<b>Overall Budget</b>	<b>\$400,977</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is amazing to see how God provided for us during the past year. Although our giving fell short of budget, through the generous giving of our church family, other private donors, and taking part of the Paycheck Protection Loan, we were able to meet our budget. This is truly a miracle. The following is a general look at our upcoming budget for 2021. A more detailed budget is available to our members upon request. Let us pray together for another miracle this year, and thank you to so many for your faithful support.

### ***Ashland Church Staff***

Jamie Cupschalk - **Pastor**  
Carol Holmes - **Worship Arts Director**  
Janine Fleming - **Children and Youth Ministries Director**  
Renee Lieb, Chris Slone, - **Office Team**

#### **Elders**

**2021:** Fred Acheampong, Mike Greco,  
Chris Slone

**2022:** Linda Buzzard, Darrell Proctor

**2023:** Randy Buckley, Barb Cesare,  
Kevin Gallagher

#### **Trustees**

**2021:** Jake Cominsky, Rob Favuzzi

**2022:** Jim Fleming, Tom Seitzenger,  
Robin Thompson

**2023:** Kelvin Satterfield

**Auditing Committee:** Stephen Cupschalk,  
Melissa Gallagher, Robin Kerth

#### **Deacons**

**2021:** Esther Acheampong, Kate Sereno,  
Barb Gleeson

**2022:** Conner Fleming, Marylin Ford, Gloria Proctor,  
Elia N. Rosario

**2023:** Peg Buckley, Nancy Cominsky,  
Stephanie Wiley

**Treasurer:** Linda Fleming

**Financial Secretary:** Rebecca Emmel

**Assistant Financial Secretary:** Donna Blizzard

**Nominating Committee:** Chris Slone: Chair,  
Kevin Gallagher: Vice Chair, Joe Carty, Dennis  
Cesare, Erin Fleming, Elyse Proctor, Ruth Seitzenger

#### ***Our Mission***

To seek the lost and grow disciples who worship and enjoy our

#### ***Our Vision***

To be a Covenant family in our community which is transformed by the Gospel, empowered by the Spirit, and focused by our Mission.

#### ***Ashland Church***

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