

To: Willow Street Mennonite Church Family  
Re: 2016 Annual Report  
Date: January 17, 2017  
From: Church Board

“Everything you do today matters forever.”

Revelation 22:12 says, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to everyone according to his work.”

Dear Fellow Followers at Willow Street Mennonite Church:

Our Christmas Sunday Service was very positive and exciting with all the little tykes involved. What a blessing to have these younger children and families. Once again, I encourage you to read the reports since I am sure a lot of effort was involved. From my perspective, a few 2016 highlights include:

- Increase in attendance
- Our youth and others ministering in Haiti with Betty and Elage Estime
- More babies which means a future here at WSMC
- Atmosphere of prayer and caring encouraged by Kathy Landis
- The Live Nativity was a highlight including Tyler Herr’s “Spoken Word”.

Our church family has quite a few wonderful qualities. Following are a few:

- Respect for all generations
- A lot of engagement in all aspects of the church
- Preschool and Tea Time flourishing
- Loving, joyful and caring atmosphere

Psalm 100:3 says, “Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

In summary, we are all looking forward to the Phase III completion which includes additional parking and renovating the previous sanctuary. We can stop parking in the grass which is actually a wonderful problem to have. I personally encourage all of us to read, especially the Bible, but also good wholesome and challenging books. I encourage all of us to embrace a “Culture of Honor” here at WSMC. That’s the book we as a Board are studying. Looking forward to God’s excitement in 2017 and saving the Lost.

Blessings to all,  
Jim Hostetter, Sr.  
Church Board Chair

## **REFLECTION & VISION FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM**

### **LEAD PASTOR** (Joe Sherer)

Looking back at 2016, and looking forward...

Last year Deb Hershey joined our team as Children's Ministry Director, and not a minute too soon.

We are very appreciative of all that she does. A major accomplishment, at least in the minds of those of us on staff, was the completion of a total revision of our Child Protection Policy to reflect recent changes in regulations. We're glad to do all we can to ensure the safety of our children. That requires a lot more preparation for those who work with children, and gives our secretaries a tremendous amount of additional work.

This past year brought us many new friends at WSMC. We had lots of growth just in the nursery alone. These babies joined us in 2016: Libby Adams, Hudson Burkholder, Brenna Dietzel, Joshua Garcia Jr., Cora Herr, Karah Herr, Samuel Hurst, Pearl Peifer, and Ayla Stoltzfus. Our hearts were broken when Maggie Mertel was stillborn in August. After so many deaths in the congregation in 2015, the only other death in 2016 was J. David Brubaker at the end of the year. At 95, David was the oldest of our 230 members. Also four of our couples got married in 2016: Kyle and Taylor Beaver, Chad and Cara Kilheffer, Jordon and Chelsea Martin, and Lance and Cassidy Witmer.

In 2016 our Conference Room (the old library) got a wonderful face lift and is used a great deal. It looks like 2017 will bring the completion of Phase 3 (old sanctuary renovations) and the addition of some much-needed parking.

Youth Pastor Eric Herr is now in the 3-month sabbatical which I reported on in my October report. Pray for him as well as for the youth advisors who have stepped up to the plate in his absence.

At WSMC we believe that a life-changing understanding of God's Word is crucial in knowing Him. A sermon series on the book of Luke concluded Easter morning. Other sermons included series on the book of Joshua, some of the "One Another" Commands, and an Advent series on hope. Our 7<sup>th</sup> Live Nativity ('01, '03, '06, '08, '11, '13, '16) portrayed the Christmas story to over 900 people on the two evenings it was held.

By the time you receive this report, our Ministry Team will have learned the results of a survey graciously completed by 30 of our members. This is through the organization *Natural Church Development*. Our goal is to assess and then strengthen those things which will help our congregation become more healthy and more effective. The Ministry Team will also begin looking at the creation of a purpose statement for the congregation. We've been using a statement that was created for our 300<sup>th</sup> celebration back in 2010, but we desire something shorter so that every one of us can readily state what our congregation is all about.

In this year before us, let's press toward being and making, disciples of Jesus.

### **YOUTH PASTOR** (Eric Herr)

Looking back at 2016 I am encouraged by the opportunities the Lord has given for growth and the desire I see in our youth for more of Him. We had the absolute privilege of serving alongside of Elage and Betty Estime in Haiti this past summer. It was amazing to see the relationships they have with the local people and the great love and admiration that they have for the Estime's. They carry a special presence of Jesus to the Haitians and it was a blessing to witness it firsthand. The youth really dove in and did a wonderful job – I didn't even hear any complaining from the intense heat. It was neat to see the way the youth developed a love for Betty and Elage and their ministry. Twice we did a love offering for them and the kids responded tremendously in their giving.

As preparation in the months leading up to the trip we spent a lot of time talking about spiritual warfare. The reality of angels and demons, generational sin, demonic oppression and possession, the authority we have in Jesus, etc. It was good preparation to be reminded of the power we have when we carry the name of Jesus – to come against the darkness! In the fall we have talked a lot of about the difference between having a fear of God and a fear of man. Far too often our decisions and mindsets are driven by fear of man. It was good to identify those things – but then to see the better way – that the only thing that truly matters is what the *Lord* thinks, and pleasing Him.

I am encouraged by the desire and growth I see in our young people, but I also see great difficulty in the world they are living in. They experience the increasing pressure to have their lives figured out by the end of their High School years, the culture of instant gratification, distractions of social media and technology, increasing demands of extracurricular activity, easy accessibility to sexual perversions of many types, and the list goes on. Please continue to join me in intercession over our youth. I see hope in them. I see a generation that is eager to live a life of genuine faith and relationship with the Creator.

I am praying for fresh revelation and vision as we enter 2017. What really are the needs of our young people today? What is it that they *need* to hear and be challenged with (not just what they *want* to hear)? What more, or different, can be done to really encourage them as they journey through these difficult years of adolescence? What is the Spirit saying, right now?

I am so blessed to be able to serve at WSMC. As I begin this new year with a 3 month sabbatical – my prayer is for the Lord to renew my mind, heart and spirit with renewed passion and vision for our youth and this ministry. I do not want to get stagnant – quite the opposite. There is so much the Lord wants to reveal to our youth, and I am praying for eyes to be opened and faith to be stretched as we enter into this new year. Holy Spirit, we invite you – COME, and have your way!!

#### **DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES** (Deb Hershey)

As I reflect on the past 6 months in the new position of Children's Ministry Director I have many feelings...blessed, overwhelmed, challenged, excited to name a few. It has been a busy 6 months getting all the different ministries organized and under the umbrella of Children's Ministry. With approx 70 children from infant through 5th grade, there are many opportunities to interact with and help our young children. I've spent time in the nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Tea Time child care, Vacation Bible School, Preschool open house and have been at church on Wednesday evenings when the children are so excited to be there and participate in an activity they've been looking forward to. There is lots of energy and excitement in these different ministries.

With the help of the nursery committee and Sunday School coordinator, we have worked at keeping the nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, and Tea Time programs staffed and running. Child care was also organized for the Love & Logic class in the fall and it was a fun time interacting with the children. We can always use more volunteers to help with child care (especially on Thursday mornings). If you would be interested please let me know. I truly appreciate everyone that already volunteers for childcare and teaching. What a blessing you are to the children.

Looking ahead in 2017, I am thinking ahead to Spring and Summer. Some possibilities include a teacher's seminar, a Saturday morning Spring activity for the children, implementing Circle of Grace teaching in the children's Sunday School classes 1-2 Sundays in April, and Vacation Bible School in the summer. Circle of Grace is a curriculum recommended by SafeChurch to give our children confidence in who they are in Christ and give them the ability to identify safe/unsafe situations/people. We have a lot to look forward to in the new year. There are many ways we can bless the children of our congregation and their parents. Please continue to lift our families and all our childcare volunteers up in prayer.

Matthew 19:14 – *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*

#### **DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP** (Darrel Mills)

As I reflect over the last year one thing stands out in my mind. That one thing is all the new faces and people who have participated in our church and its various activities over the past year. This is really exciting! It is really encouraging to see people reach out to the new faces that seem to arrive every week. It is also a blessing to see how God uses all of us to build his Kingdom.

Not only does God use each of us to build his Kingdom, he uses his Word to teach us his truth. Our Sunday School classes have used a variety of study materials including book studies, documentaries, video series, missionaries, special speakers, and Bible studies to help disciple us. We remain committed to use the Bible as the foundational truth to all of the studies that are used for the discipleship of those attending our church. Our Sunday School class time has also been used to train folks for leading small groups, training our congregation about "Safe Church" policies, training our Prayer ministers for effective prayer ministry, and hearing from some of the missionaries that are serving around the world.

Beyond studying God's word, there is a lot of interaction among class members both during class and outside of class. It is encouraging to see so many people reach out to others in their class in times of need and for just plain fun. Many activities such as work projects, retreats, picnics, and other social events are part of each class. It is also great to see the classes grow with the addition of new people attending our church. Let's continue to invite others to participate in our classes and small groups!

2016 brought some other welcomed changes. After much prayer, planning, and discernment, the Ministry Team added a new position of Children's Discipleship Director. This position was filled this year by Deb

Hershey. I am thankful that Deb has answered the call to fill this vital position that will greatly help with the discipleship and growing needs of the many children of our church.

Some of our classrooms also got a facelift this past year. Some rooms were modified to better serve the needs of adult and children classes. Our library was also remodeled to be used as a conference room and resource center. Thanks to everyone who helped to make our classrooms an inviting place to meet.

Some of the other discipleship opportunities offered this past year were participating in an "ALPHA" course and a "Love and Logic" class. ALPHA was an opportunity to learn about an introduction to the Christian faith and to invite others to participate in that experience. It was also a good way to help train and equip people to facilitate small groups. Love and Logic was a 6-week class to help parents effectively train and raise their children. Couples from our church, Tea Time, and Preschool attended this class.

I would also like to thank all who have given their time this past year to teach our Sunday School classes, provide child care, and who have taken on the role of mentors, encouragers, and prayer warriors. Also, thank you to all the parents who have daily taken on the role of discipling their families. With your involvement, gifts, and talents, discipleship is the effective ministry God has called us to.

As I look forward to the new year, my hope is to gain a better understanding of how to build a stronger team of people to help with the growing needs of Discipleship within our church. I would like to see our monthly Men's breakfast expand to meet the needs of the men in our congregation. I also want to see our Small group ministry grow to help include others who may not have a connection to a church family. If you have a vision or passion in any of these areas, please let me know. Your involvement is greatly appreciated.

#### **DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS** (Karen Bender)

It has been an exciting year in the life of Willow Street and in the missions department. The various ministries continued to be active in the missions department and also saw leadership changes in the Missions Director, Tea Time Coordinator and in Women's Ministry. The Sewing Circle ladies continued to bless near and far with their tireless work. The Community Meal blessed church families and community members during the last school year and large turnouts so far this school year. Tea Time has continued to grow and minister to women and children every Thursday...The energy if you walk into the building on a Thursday morning is palpable! Basketball continued to provide fellowship and outreach through sport and the Cafe' Committee team ministered through coffee and connection before Sunday School. Feed My Starving Children reached 2,500 volunteers over the past three years and sent more than 500,000 life-sustaining meals to those in need. We continued our support of our full time missionaries and also had the blessing of sending a number of short term missionaries during 2016. Two teams also worked with Betty and Elage Estime in Haiti over the summer and this fall was full of preparations for the February 2017 adult team. Volunteers continue to work with Love INC and another successful CommUNITY 5k was held, raising funds for Homes of Hope. Vacation Bible School and Mobilize continued to reach out into our community.

I am excited to see what the Lord has in store for missions and outreach at Willow Street Mennonite Church during 2017! January has already started with the beginning of the active search for a home in the L-S district for our own Home of Hope, partnering currently with two other area churches. Because of the CommUNITY 5k and the generosity of the congregation and community at Christmas, we have the finances we need to get started! Praise God! We will soon be seeking mentors and budget coaches to go through training to be able to minister to the families who are selected for the 3-6 month transitional stay. Radiant Women's Ministry will launch in January with a fellowship event and a book study. Twenty adults will be ministering in Haiti in February. Feed My Starving Children will again be packing 200,000 meals in March with the help of 1,000 volunteers. We will be praying and preparing for the community VBS this summer alongside the Children's Ministry Department. It is my prayer that we will also continue to look for His guidance to reach out into the Lampeter-Strasburg Community, into the broader Lancaster County community, to hurting people in our nation through Mennonite Disaster Service and other means, and to reach out globally to love like Jesus.

#### **DIRECTOR OF PRAYER MINISTRIES** (Kathy Landis)

As I look back on 2016, I see God continuing to build a foundation of prayer in our congregation and feel so blessed by God's Presence among us as His people. We have much to celebrate as a people! May our worship and thanksgiving be extravagant!

#### Highlights of 2016:

- 21 Days of prayer and fasting.
- A new church plant is birthed.
- Sunday School class of senior ladies covers one new family each month in prayer.
- 3 intentional Wednesday evenings designated praying for healing for specific people.
- Series of messages on prayer during the month of April from Pastor Joe, Tre Moore and Steve Weaver.
- 6 evenings of worship in different homes praying for those battling cancer.
- Encouragement to spend 15 minutes each day being still before the Lord and listening for His Voice.
- Praising God for many answers to prayer for God's favor and protection over our youth as they ministered in Haiti.
- Bus trip to our State Capital in Harrisburg to pray with thousands of others for our nation.
- Sunday School classes committing to pray for our preschool classes for the school year.
- Training taking place to empower the prayer ministers to develop their gifts in the prophetic and healing.
- Spontaneous prayer happening more freely in our midst in many different settings.

#### Looking forward to 2017:

As I seek God for what is on His heart for the new year these are the things that I hear Him saying to us.

- Keep praying for more hunger and thirst for Him.
- Persevere in praying for the gifts of my Holy Spirit to be released in fullness. (I Corinthians 12:1-11)
- Pray for His manifest Presence to consume the church body.
- That every person will know that they too can intercede for others in prayer. Prayer is not something designated to a select few.
- Learn to see worship as a very powerful form of prayer. We were created to worship and as we worship demons flee, captives are set free, and whole armies are destroyed.
- Grow in the area of healing ministry.

Perhaps what I am most excited about as we enter this New Year is that I see an increasing hunger and thirst among us for God to continue to move powerfully in our midst. This is an answer to our prayers! That hunger and thirst causes us to worship our God wholeheartedly inviting His Presence among us in a more powerful way. Worship is also warfare prayers (2 Chronicles 20:20-23). A whole army is destroyed because of the worship of God's people! May our worship of our great God destroy every assignment of the enemy against us. I love what God is doing in our midst and encourage each of us to keep crying out to God in prayer for more of Him!

We, as His Disciples are given a command in Mark 16:15-18 to preach the good news, heal the sick, and raise the dead. I believe that God is taking us to a new level in our walk with Him and I can't wait to see what He will do among us. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us!!! I believe it and am totally amazed that our God still chooses to work through His followers. We must continue to persevere in praying for our hearts to be wholeheartedly committed to Him so that the incredible Glory of the Lord may rest upon us to bring life to all those that we encounter.

#### **DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP** (Byron Wert)

With the end of yet another active year here at Willow Street, I want to thank everyone in the Stewardship Department for their volunteer work. As with my own "to do" list, so it is with the church's "to do" list, it never totally goes away. There is always something that needs to be addressed. So, thanks again to those that oversee and complete those tasks.

This past year financial statement ended with a combined general and mission incomes at almost 94% of the budgeted amount. This was the same percentage as 2015 but since our budget was larger this means that our overall giving increased. Thank you. The 2016 expenses were below the estimated amounts. With these two facts and the additional incomes from building use and interest, we ended the year in the "red" to the amount of \$2,015.62. The expenses in 2017 are again projected to increase, so the challenge remains to keep our giving at a pace that matches our budget.

I anticipate 2017 to be another year full of programming at Willow Street. The options for involvement are numerous and varied. Hopefully you can find your niche where your God-given talents and energy can be used to bless others.

**DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP** (Mari Cunningham)

Looking back on 2016, four songs come to mind that were meaningful to me this year.

*God is on the move, on the move, Hallelujah, God is on the move, On the move today  
I see a generation, Standing on the truth, In each and every nation, God is on the move*

I chose this song to include at VBS this summer. And wow, I was amazed at how the children embraced it and sang with joy and enthusiasm. This was also the title of our service in November when various ministries shared about how God is moving at WSMC. I truly believe God was and is on the move in and through this congregation.

*Life is short; I wanna live it well, One life, one story to tell, Life is short; I wanna live it well, And you're the one I'm living for, Awaken all my soul, Every breath that you take is a miracle, Life is short; I wanna live it well*

I heard this song live at Creation this summer and referred to those lyrics in a message I shared in August. My desire has always been to live in obedience and service to the Lord. Hopefully, we all will challenge ourselves to live life well and have appreciation for every breath we take.

*There in that moment our story was changed, for sin had a rival and hope had a name.  
A starry night when Jesus came to save us. A holy night; now none can separate us.  
Emmanuel, God will dwell with us this starry, starry night!*

This was a song the children (shout out to Janae Harnish for a beautiful solo) sang on Christmas morning. I always love hearing the children sing! And I love the line “hope had a name”. Our Advent series focused on hope. Our advent candle lighting focused on hearing hope through testimonies.

*Forever, He is glorified, Forever, He is lifted high, Forever, He is risen, He is alive*

I chose this song for our Easter Sunday service. Easter Sunday is always a highlight for me and this past Easter, a group of youth, along with Gemma Bruner, shared a beautiful creative movement to the song, Forever. In addition to coordinating our Sunday services (thanks to the many people who serve on worship teams – musicians, vocalists, sound techs, computer techs, and lighting techs) and leading music for VBS, I also taught children’s church, served in the nursery, served on the 5k, child protection, and Live Nativity committees, and worked with a group of young adults to plan worship nights over the summer.

Looking ahead to 2017 – Some goals for the upcoming year: enhance Sunday services (they seem to keep coming every seven days), include new people in worship teams (providing support and training as needed), start a children’s praise team, learn to know the congregation (regular attendees and new friends) more in order to plan services that will be relevant, and provide support and encouragement to our Pastors. Most of all, my goal is to be in tune with what God is doing and providing opportunity for us to be ushered into His presence and experience His power and peace in ways that are life changing.

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Additional items attached in the Annual Report are:

1. Organizational Flow Chart
2. New documents approved by the Church Board in 2016:
  - a. Child Protection Policy (visit [willowstreetmennonite.com](http://willowstreetmennonite.com), click on *Ministries*, then *Children*)
  - b. Key/Door Combination Policy
  - c. Sabbatical Policy