

To: Willow Street Mennonite Church Family  
Re: 2018 Annual Report  
Date: January 15, 2019  
From: Church Board

In 1969, while Neil Armstrong was preparing to step onto the moon for the first time in human history, a small group of dedicated women were making their mark on the world here at Willow Street. In 1969, the Willow Street Mennonite Preschool and Tea Time programs began ministering to women, children, and their families in the area. There were no rockets, no launchpads, no calculated trajectories. Just a few women investing in children and one another. And while only 12 men have walked on the moon in the 50 years since, hundreds upon hundreds have been instructed, disciplined and cared for by Christ-loving teachers and administrators. This is what a successful effort looks like. What a legacy! 50 years!

2018 saw our Lead Pastor Joe Sherer take a much-deserved sabbatical period. Sabbatical is not a reward for service, but rather an investment in the welfare of our Pastor. We are blessed as a congregation to be able to do such a thing and are happy that he has returned to his role refreshed. The year saw adjustments and investment in our physical facilities. Confronted with leaks in the roof of our multipurpose room roofing, a new roof was installed in the fall which will serve us for decades to come. Walkways and surface enhancements were made to the children's outdoor playground which made for much improved access for the children in a year of great rains. Action was taken this year to prohibit the use of our facilities for political promotion. We concluded 2018 with another run of our Live Nativity, the telling of history's most important story that has become a great outreach to the community.

It was a year of losses and a year of gains. Our church family lost some that we had known for many years and others that we hadn't even time to know. At the same time, we welcomed several new loved ones into our families through foster care and adoption. This church family has a wonderfully caring heart, one that rejoices well and grieves well all at once. It is a unique characteristic and one that I hope continues to grow.

You will read the reports from our Ministry Team members on the following pages. The Board is grateful for the leadership they provide through many programs, responsibilities, and disciplines. Great things are happening both in and beyond these walls. Yet we know that if our targets are misplaced, we can hit them all and still miss our mark. So, let's examine the ways we invest ourselves this new year and continually align them to our mission. For another 50 years is coming, and quickly.

Blessings to you all,  
Chad Kilheffer  
Church Board Chair

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

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

Remembering reinforces what we've seen, done, or experienced, both sorrow/trials and ecstasy/jubilation, including what God has done. In contrast, anticipation can range from a clearheaded expectation of coming realities, to excited hopes of long-awaited dreams. In the Bible, God frequently called His people to remember their past, but He also directs us to look for that which is yet to come. There's a way in which the past paves the way for the future. It's important to live fully in the present rather than immobilized by a wish to be somewhere else in time.

Clearly God is at work in us as well as through us. This past year seems like it may have had more than its share of tears, but it also seems to have had more than its share of joys and victories for us. In December we recognized the loss through death of twelve from our congregation, including three babies. Compare that to only four deaths in 2017. Meanwhile twenty-eight people became members in 2018, and we added 10 new babies to our number. There are also quite a few children of varied ages who have joined us by adoption or foster care. We love them all!

Last year some of you prayed in faith for the moving of numerous "mountains," saw movement as a result. Some made clear choices for greater personal Christlikeness. Some faced great loss but chose to lean into Jesus for comfort and encouragement. Some shared sacrificially, opening homes or wallets or calendars to bless others. Many of our youth are choosing to buck the trends among their peers and take a stand for Christ. I've seen God enable individuals to be gracious and merciful, when natural instinct might lead to a different response. In 2018 our dollars as well as feet on the ground reinforced the Kingdom God is building in Mexico, Haiti, Israel, Nepal, Thailand, Costa Rica, Vietnam, all 36 countries where Eastern Mennonite Missions serves, as well here in Lancaster County. These are all Kingdom symptoms!

Sermons last year included a five-Sundays series on our new Purpose Statement, and for Lent we focused on the first half of our new tagline, "Radically Loving Jesus." I was greatly blessed with a sabbatical over the summer, and those who filled the pulpit did a series on Philippians. In the fall we had a series from the book of Exodus, and our Advent theme was *The Songs of Christmas*.

Some items that would fit in the category, "Praise God for Bursting Seams!" would be our preschool student body, *MobilePack* (311,040 meals prepared by 1,498 volunteers and \$ 68,873 donated for *Feed My Starving Children*), *Live Nativity* (the highest attendance ever at almost 2,000, and media reporting which truly gave God glory), and December's 288 average attendance was the highest for any month as far back as I have records...but we have room for more, and there are lots of people around us who need a church family. Rather than congratulate ourselves for "Bursting Seams," we must give God the glory!

At the end of January, we're kicking off a challenge to men to get involved in mentoring other men. February 2<sup>nd</sup> our Church Board and Ministry Team will come together for a half-day retreat, a time of mutual encouragement and discernment. I leave February 13 to teach pastors in Haiti for several days, and then I'll join a team mostly from WSMC who will also be ministering there. In March we'll do another *MobilePack* for *Feed My Starving Children*, and in April we'll have another *Ignite* conference with input from *Global Awakening*. I'm excited about a community outreach idea which I haven't processed yet with the Ministry Team, and the youth are working on plans for a mission trip this coming this summer.

We remember all that God did in and through us in 2018; God, have your way in us in 2019!

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

God is faithful. I look back at the year 2018 and smile when I think about all that God did among our young people. This past year was a different group dynamic than I had experienced, as we had a quieter group in the Sr. High. Outwardly quiet is not to be confused with spiritually disinterested! I found out just how true that is with the group last year. There was much spiritual depth and hunger that exploded when the Lord led us to minister in Oaxaca, Mexico. I have never seen a group of youth more hungry for God in their worship and adoration. Truly, it was the richest of times together on that trip and I have come away with completely renewed expectations and hopes for our youth. There is such a craving, a deep desire for something more than this world has to offer. What a blessing it is to be in a position to share with them the greatest thrill they could ever encounter – a life devoted to the kingdom of the God of heaven. It certainly doesn't mean it will always be wonderful and peachy, but there is truly nothing better, and I have been blessed this past year as I've seen that light bulb go on in many of them in a new way.

I continue to be in awe of the generosity of this congregation. In preparation for the Mexico trip we had done our biennial auction. I stood in amazement as this church family gave financially to these youth in greater capacity than we've experienced before. It was the largest amount we've ever raised considering the smaller size of our group (per capita). The way this congregation prays for and supports our youth is certainly one of the greatest reasons we have seen the Lord's blessing on them.

The Jr. High group had quite the year last year as well. There is such great energy there and I really see many of them with hearts already stirring to desire what God has for them. We also have seen a lot of growth in the young adult age group this past year. I love looking to the west side of the sanctuary and seeing it full of post-highers!! This is such a crucial time of life, and I am so very ecstatic that Jeremy and Jenna Peifer felt the call this past year to minister to this age group. They have been leading the Sunday School class and it has been very fruitful. We also had a post-high brunch at the end of the year and had 21 there – by far the most we've had. There is great opportunity to continue to minister to them in this season of tremendous change and discovery.

My greatest vision for the year 2019 is to hold nothing back. This may sound like an odd thing to say, but over the past 10 years I have had certain seasons where I've felt like I'm in more of a "maintenance mode" and just kind of "doing" youth ministry. I never want to fall into that. I have been telling the youth that the gloves are coming off this year and we are really going to dive in together. It may feel like your toes are getting stepped on at times, it may not always be comfortable – but comfortable is the LAST thing that Jesus desired us to experience in committing our lives to Him. What does it truly mean to be His disciple? What does it mean to lay it all down for the sake of the gospel? What does it mean to carry my cross daily and follow Him? I don't want to just create an atmosphere where youth feel good and safe (I do want that). More than anything I want to create an atmosphere where youth are genuinely challenged to surrender the things that hold them back to total devotion to Jesus. I want to create an atmosphere where youth are set on fire because they encounter the conviction of the word of God. I want to create an atmosphere where Holy Spirit truly has freedom to have His way, and we walk in step with Him and follow His leading. Satan is ever tempting us as leaders to fall into mediocrity and maintenance – I refuse to go there. I need as much accountability as the next guy, and I look forward to pressing in and seeing all that God has for 2019! I'll say it again and for all of my days – GOD. IS. FAITHFUL!

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

Reflecting on the past year a number of highlights come to mind. I am thankful to the Lord for all the precious children we have at Willow Street. I am also thankful for the faithful volunteers that interact with our children in many different ways/areas. Two highlights that come to mind for 2018 are the new Sunday School curriculum and Children's Church curriculum that we started in September. It is exciting to see the children involved with the stories in different interactive ways. Bible Memory work was also implemented in September and we hope to have a few of the classes share some of their memorization during the church service this year. We have also started a prayer time with Sunday School teachers at 8:45 am to prepare our hearts before Sunday School. Nursery, Children's Church, Tea Time childcare, JBA, and Sonshine Girls continue and are full of children each week. VBS was held at WSMC this past June and we had an amazing turn out of volunteers and children and pray the children remember songs and verses they learned that week.

Looking and praying ahead to the new year, we are planning to have VBS at Willow Street again in June. More details to come soon. Many activities/classes will be similar to last year. We are looking into the possibility of holding a children's activity in the community at some point this year that would be open to neighborhood children as a way to connect with our church. We are also looking at opportunities to bless Preschool families. I am blessed and grateful to work with our children and families here at WSMC and am looking forward to what the Lord has for WSMC this year.

Submitted by Marcia Harnish, Preschool Director – 2018 was a very smooth preschool year. We teach so much more than learning to write your name and the alphabet. Learning how to use your words when you are frustrated, how to take turns, how to share, how to line up and catch a bubble and how to listen when your teacher is talking. The first weeks are always a little challenging but we are always amazed how quickly new routines are formed. The children quickly become friends and greet each other at the start and end of the day. Socialization and play are an important part of our days. The playground and gym class are a favorite for the children. We are grateful for the improvements to the playground that got rid of mud. The love of Jesus is experienced and shared by our kind and caring staff. We start in January with "open registration" and begin planning for a new school year. We are in the midst of completing progress reports. We look forward to a trip to visit the local library. The PreK classes will take a school bus ride to visit a kindergarten class. No school year is ever

the same but we look forward with great hope to what lies ahead in the upcoming new year. God shows himself faithful in providing to us in so many ways.

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

As I look back on 2018 my thoughts usually go to the different electives that were taught, or the activities that we participated in, or the people we fellowship with each week. Suddenly the words of Jesus come to my mind, "Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep." Not once, but three times Jesus asked this question to Peter. What was the purpose of this line of questioning? I believe that this is God's heart for us, that we love him, and out of this love for him we will bring him glory from the things that we participate in. It has been one year now since we introduced our new Purpose statement and tagline, "*Radically loving Jesus, Practically loving others*". It seems to me that this tagline summarizes Jesus' question and response to Peter. Let's make loving Jesus our priority this new year and see how God wants to use us to love others.

The Bible is God's word and the foundation for our teaching and study material that we use in our Sunday school classes and small groups. Without the Bible we become easily deceived and led astray by other world views. This fall we viewed a series called *The Truth Project*. This study contrasted the "Biblical world view" and the "World view" and was an excellent teaching tool that helped to dispel many of the world views held by our culture. Other studies used by Sunday school classes and small groups were the International Sunday school lesson that studies the entire Bible in a 7-year period, and *Money and Marriage God's Way*. Sunday school classes meet weekly and offer students a chance to study God's word and to develop relationships within the church. Each class has its own unique atmosphere and make up of people. Class sizes range from 10-50 participants and many classes have different social and service activities outside of class. Thank you to all the teachers that volunteer their time and to share their love for God's word each week!

The Men's breakfast has continued to meet monthly this past year. A different speaker shares each month to challenge and inspire the other men. We were privileged to have some of our foreign missionaries home this summer and share with the group. Thanks to Lem Metzler for overseeing this ministry!

Looking ahead to 2019, we will be starting a new mentoring program for men called "*Men of Iron*". This one-year venture pairs mentors and proteges' to meet monthly for spiritual growth and accountability. Stay tuned for more details!

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

2018 Highlights:

- Feed My Starving Children – In 2018, 1,498 volunteers packed 311,040 meals, which will feed 853 children for a year! Praise God!
- 2018 Haiti team – The 2018 Haiti team was compiled of members from both WSMC and other churches that ministered in Montrouis and Charrier with Haitians Helping Haitians. There were construction projects, prison ministry, community feedings, women's ministry and serving children in a school, orphanage and the HHH Kid's Ministry.
- Go Beyond – There were opportunities for our church body to participate in the larger church in Lancaster County for local service opportunities during the 2018 Week of Service, including meal packing, construction projects, L-S prayer walk, Lancaster City Clean Up, blood drive and more.
- CommUNITY 5k – This was the 5th Annual 5k, raising funds for Homes of Hope. We had a beautiful morning and great attendance, as well as a record number of community sponsors. There was a true sense of community among those who volunteered and participated.
- Homes of Hope – After more than five years of praying, searching and planning, the first L-S Homes of Hope family was welcomed into the house during Christmas week! The volunteer mentors and budget coaches who were trained this past year have jumped right in providing support and training with this family.
- Mission Sunday – We had our 2018 Mission Sunday this spring, hearing from each of our supported missionaries via video updates. It was a great opportunity for the whole congregation to learn more about what the Lord is doing in each of their ministries as they serve around the globe. Over the course of the next several months, we were then blessed to have most of those families visit with us in Lancaster and hear directly from them from the pulpit. Mission Development Team members also hosted each family for a time of fellowship, sharing and prayer.
- Tea Time continues to reach many women and their children through weekly meetings, Bible study, prayer and fellowship.

- Radiant! Women's Ministry, Basketball, and Sewing Circle continue to meet and provide times for fellowship, learning and growth through their ministries.
- The Community Meal continues to provide a delicious, hot meal and a time of fellowship for both families from WSMC and from the community. I am so thankful for those who take invaluable leadership roles in each of these areas!

2019 vision:

- Feed My Starving Children 2019 – Mark your calendars for March 29-31, 2019 for the sixth annual MobilePack at our church!
- 2019 Haiti team and support of Haitians Helping Haitians – Pastor Joe will go before the large team again this year to help lead a pastor's conference. The larger team of 13 will join him February 19-26 to minister again in the communities of Charrier and Montrouis. Please pray for safety and health in travel and for the Lord to give wisdom and guidance as we serve.
- CommUNITY 5k – We will soon begin planning for the 6th Annual 5k to benefit Homes of Hope. It is a fun activity benefitting a great cause, but also has the wonderful possibility of connecting people with Jesus and a local church!
- Homes of Hope – As we head into the first full year of active ministry, please pray for wisdom and discernment for the Steering Committee, mentors/budget coaches and the Love INC staff as we minister to families in our community. We will be seeking other churches to partner with us as well as hoping to train additional budget coaches and mentors this year from our congregation.
- Missionary Support – Please continue to pray for our missionaries who are serving full time around the world. We are looking forward to sharing more updates from them in the coming months!
- Additional Outreach – We will continue in 2019 to pray both as a Ministry Team and as Mission Development Team for His will and His way to continue to reach out to our local community as well as regional and global community. I am excited to see what He has in store for us!

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

Looking Back:

As I reflect on this past year, I am reminded of what the Lord had spoken to me about His heart for us. It was healing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Our IGNITE Conference in March focused on all of these areas. This was a time of learning and growing in our understanding of the Lord's heart for healing. Out of this grew a desire to pray specifically for healing for us a people. We started to provide healing prayer for those in our congregation that desired more intensive prayer for healing once a month in the gym during the Sunday School hour.

National Day of Prayer was held in seven different homes this year and covered the seven spheres of influence in our nation. I am so grateful to those who came to pray for our nation as many prayers are needed for our nation.

We are grateful that Pastor Joe could take a sabbatical and thankful to Eric and others for filling in while he was gone. Grateful also for all those in our congregation who signed up to pray for Joe, Eric and their families during this time. The commissioning service for our children was a great blessing. We are seeing the battle for our children's lives more and more. Prayer for them is needed now more than ever.

I see and hear of prayer happening more and more in our midst. People see and hear of needs and respond by praying for whatever situation they have encountered. This is a great blessing and very powerful!

Looking Forward to 2019:

We will be having our second IGNITE Conference on April 26-28. This will not only be for our church family but for the body of Christ locally. We are also planning for a National Day of Prayer Event.

As I seek the Lord about His heart for us this year these are the scriptures that he brings to mind.

Isaiah 58:11 & 12, "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."

Isaiah 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on us, because the Lord has anointed us to preach good news to the poor. He has sent us to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoner, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of

ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”

I believe these verses will guide everything that we do in the year ahead. May our Awesome God be honored and glorified in this place!

#### **DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP** (Wilson Roth)

God's provision has been evident in 2018 in so many ways! Many activities took place at Willow Street Mennonite Church in 2018 and we supported missions outside of the church walls. Thank you for honoring God by giving your tithes and offerings in 2018! We ended the year with a surplus a little under \$15,500. Let's rejoice in this abundance together as we glorify God through telling others about His wonderful love! Within the next month, the Finance Committee will discern how to best use these surplus funds, some of which may be used to replenish our Capital Expense Fund which was utilized in 2018 for the multi-purpose room roof replacement. Thank you, Finance Committee, for your continued service and dedication to the church finances.

The *Money and Marriage God's Way* class at the beginning of 2018 provided solid Biblical teaching and good discussions on how we should be good managers of the resources God entrusts to us. Let me know if you are interested in participating in a similar class in 2019.

Much needed updates were also made to the kitchen in early 2018. The kitchen serves as a preparation area for many meals provided throughout the year and I believe that the food prepared in the kitchen and enjoyed in the multi-purpose room brings us closer to each other and God through fellowship. Thank you, Liz Hess and all of the kitchen helpers, for everything you do in making ministries with food a success.

The church facilities are utilized on an almost daily basis for events and ministry. However, don't hesitate to be creative in thinking up new ways to utilize the church building for ministry and gatherings in 2019! We have a wonderful church facility. What would be a better way to honor God through the space than by using it to its fullest extent? Contact the church office to schedule your event, meeting, ministry or gathering. Thank you, trustees, for the constant upkeep to the church facilities as they continue to get older each year!

As we live to honor God with our time, money and giftings in the coming year, it is my desire for us to rejoice and discuss more openly our giving in 2019 with one another. Just as we challenge each other to read the Bible, serve others, and to keep our hearts pure, let's ask each other how we are doing with our monetary giving. It may feel like a bit of an imposition at first to discuss finances with each other, but God desires us to hold our worldly possessions and worldly wealth with open hands. Let's also share stories of God's abundance with each other and encourage each other to be generous. God provides earthly wealth not to make us comfortable and wealthy, but in order for us to be generous and bring praise to God. Let's celebrate together in the joy that comes from breaking the chains of materialism and greed through generous giving!

#### **DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP** (Mari Cunningham)

As I reflect on 2018, a few highlights meld with lessons and lyrics. Loving Jesus Radically Means Surrender was our theme for Lent. *Here I am, God, Arms wide open. Pouring out my life, Gracefully broken. All to Jesus now. Holding nothing back. I surrender* (lyrics from *Gracefully Broken* by Matt Redman). I have seen, in 2018, active surrender from many in our congregation – people allowing the Lord to mold them and use them.

Philippians provided our focus for many sermons through the summer months. Paul's writings have strong themes of peace (rather than anxiety), joy, and thanks. *My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, o my soul* (lyrics from *It is Well* by Philip Bliss). I have seen, in 2018, people enveloped in peace in the midst of struggles and trials.

Our Live Nativity's focus was on God's love story and Jesus' sacrifice for us. Deb Kilheffer wrote a powerful script. *Children, weep no more, Hope is on the horizon, Weary world behold, Your promised Messiah. Angels, let your song begin, Here comes Heaven, Christ is born in Bethlehem, Here comes Heaven (Here Comes Heaven by Elevation Worship)*. I have seen, in 2018, people captured by the reality that heaven came to earth through the birth of Jesus. It was a blessing to see the Lord's hand in many aspects of the Live Nativity – all roles filled, many people involved, people using their gifts and time to accomplish something big, good weather, safety, and large attendance. The best part was watching people's faces as the final scene revealed Jesus, and, as he hammered the pegs into the wooden cross, shared the reason He came to earth as a baby. Heaven comes to earth. We have hope because of Jesus. Let's continue to pray that the message of the Live Nativity will continue to inspire.

Thanks be to God for the many people who serve on Sunday mornings (sound, visual, and light technicians, ushers, welcome center, musicians, vocalists). God has also blessed us with a lot of children, many of whom shared the Christmas story eagerly through drama, singing, and scripture.

As 2019 begins, I look forward to continuing to seek the Lord's guidance for our congregation and how I can be part of supporting what He is doing here. Coming up soon is our annual Ministry Team and Church Board Retreat. I am already thinking of ideas to create opportunity to know Jesus in a deeper way during Lent. I would also like to provide increased support and training to those involved in worship. I have seen God at work in WSMC in 2018 and am expecting to see more of His work in 2019. I am honored to be a part of what is happening in and through WSMC and looking forward to reflecting on the lessons and lyrics from 2019.

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Additional item attached in the Annual Report:

- Organizational Flow Chart