

# Mission Study Report



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## What we believe...

We see God's light in every person. Through faith, worship, fellowship, and hospitality, Christ calls us to affirm, accept, and embrace all who enter our doors.

*Stanton Reformed Church Mission Statement, adopted 2021*

Stanton Reformed Church accepts into our family God's children of all ages, races, colors, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual identities, gender expressions, and mental or physical abilities; without regard to income, family structures, immigration status, or education. We see God's light in every person. That posture guides our journey every day as we seek to learn from one another and to know God. Inspired by the actions and attitudes of Jesus Christ, we commit to embrace, affirm, accept, and support all who enter our doors. We honor this commitment to hospitality in our invitation to worship, reception of members, participation in sacraments, ordination of leaders, hiring of staff, and solemnization of marriages. We are a people of faith and of doubts, of truths and of questions, of joy and of sadness, of grace and of love; we invite you to share in the journey with us.

*Stanton Reformed Church Welcome Statement, adopted 2019*

We are a community of grace.

We value relationships with one another and with God.

We live in fellowship, committed to accepting and supporting one another.

We value discipleship along life's journey. We study scripture, worship, and pray to foster our growth in Christ.

We value mission in our community and throughout the world.

We follow Christ's call to care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the human community.

*Stanton Reformed Church Core Values, adopted 2010*

# SRC's Future: Hospitality is Our Heart

In 2019 we adopted an ambitious Welcome Statement in an effort to create an expression of our mission of hospitality that we could live and grow into. We put that Statement prominently on the front page of our website and created an All Are Welcome working group to push us and challenge us as we grow our understanding and gifts of hospitality. A portion of the welcome statement is fueled by the ongoing conversation within the RCA concerning the Church's welcome and affirmation of LGBTQ people. But the broad scope of our statement is inspired by our gifts of hospitality. Hospitality is really at the heart of SRC, and we can trace the roots of our hospitality in many ways.

The Mission Study team conducted an in-depth survey of the congregation with 85 respondents, held interviews with all church committees, and ran focus groups to gain an even deeper understanding of what we believe and what we hope for. We will draw on the results of this effort throughout this report.

We found three themes that ran dominant throughout our thoughts:

- The enthusiastic embrace of our obligation of hospitality
- A committed desire to infuse our church with youth and energy
- The importance of music in worship

*"In a few words, what do you think SRC is doing right?"*

**"SRC is seeing to the needs of our church family in many ways."**

*-Mission Study Survey Response*

As we look with new hope toward a future where we can be close to one another again, we plan to make use of the momentum and good will generated by our All Are Welcome project to support improvements to our physical plant and program offerings to better accommodate our members and our community. We look forward to welcoming a new pastor who will lead us in worship and guide us as a community of all ages.

***We want to grow; we are ready to welcome and worship and sing with those who will bring that growth.***

When it comes to the specifics of the job as Pastor, we consistently arrived at the same skill sets and priorities.

Technical Skills:

- Good Preaching and Ability to Lead Worship on Sundays
- Pastoral Care/Counseling
- Ability to Lead Children, Youth and Adult Education and Activities

Soft Skills:

- Comfortable to Talk to
- Relational: desire and willingness to develop relationships with people in the congregation
- Can relate to all ages

# Examining Our Recent Past

Before we provide the full sweep of Stanton Reformed's rich history, we wanted to pause and focus in some detail on recent years, on what has been a period of both difficulty and growth as our church navigated a number of profound changes over a short five-year period.

- Grieving the loss of both Rev. Rebekah and Rev. Phillip Pratt
- Beginning an All Are Welcome initiative
- Maintaining Christian community during political and moral turmoil in our country
- Completing the 59th and final Holly Trail
- Managing change during a global pandemic

**The Loss of Two Pastors** - It was the summer of 2016 when we first learned of Becky's cancer diagnosis. By October, we had launched the Cancer Care Fund with a benefit concert for Becky, and began the process of adapting to a scary new reality. Over the next six months, the church gathered behind Becky, preparing meals for the family, helping to care for the girls, and going through the unusual and sometimes clumsy experience of ministering to our ministers as best we could. It wasn't easy.

Within a year, her cancer seemed to be in remission, but in 2018, Becky announced that the cancer had recurred and was now considered terminal. We cared for the Pratt family with gifts and

trips, but ultimately the cancer had moved into Becky's spine.

We had been so faithful. Becky had been so faithful. Becky offered us strong yet vulnerable reflections on her own faith throughout her illness. She talked to us about how she understood healing and God's presence, and staying faithful even when the outcome wasn't what we wanted. This still left many in our congregation feeling denied by God and even experiencing crises of faith.

On January 23, Becky's Bible Study class finished their three-year cover-to-cover journey through the Bible. Her ministry at Stanton was officially complete, and she went on long-term disability.

At our February 18 Consistory meeting, Phil told the Consistory he was leaving, and we planned a congregational meeting for the next Sunday to let everyone know. The Consistory put a plan in place to call the congregation when Becky passed. She died the next day, February 19.

*"In a few words, what do you think SRC is doing right?"*

**"All Are Welcome and Room For All are the most important initiative[s] we have taken on in the last five years. We are moving in the right direction and it is critical that we continue to do so to make sure that our membership understands why it is important."**

*-Mission Study Survey Response*

In Becky's obituary, Phil introduced the Rebekah Pratt Legacy Fund, which would become an important part of the All Are Welcome (AAW) initiative. Phil's last Sunday was Father's Day in June. The Congregational Nurture committee put together a brunch to toast him on his way out on Father's Day.

**All Are Welcome** - The decision to be intentional about hospitality began in 2018 at a Consistory retreat. We discussed joining the Room for All initiative, and prioritized projects at the church to become more welcoming to all ages and abilities.

After Becky's death, through our grief, anxiety, confusion, and even anger, we took on an ambitious project of examination and reaffirmation of what we believe most deeply about ourselves, which culminated in our church joining Room For All, an initiative of the RCA that seeks full inclusion of the LGBTQ community. We then launched our own All Are Welcome hospitality mission.

***"In a few words, what could SRC do better?"***

**"We sometimes let fear stop us from embracing new things or doing the right thing (this came up when we considered joining Room For All, but it is a thing in other ways too). We fear that we will lose members, or people will stop donating. Sometimes we just need to do what's right and trust that even if we can't always get what we want, we get what we need!"**

***-Mission Study Survey Response***

***"What do you see as SRC's greatest assets for the next five years?"***

**"Our people. We have a loving and open congregation. We don't always get everything right, but most of us are willing to try! The core of people who love our church very deeply and support it as best they can is actually pretty big for a church these days."**

***-Mission Study Survey Response***

We did the work to formally join Room for All, drafting a statement and application that was approved in our April 2019 consistory meeting. It was informed by Church Clarity ([churchclarity.org](http://churchclarity.org)) as well, so the welcoming statement would be not only about LGBTQ, but rather became a radically inclusive vision which tracked with a number of recent sermons given by Phil and Becky on the overarching theme of our understanding of Christian hospitality. We introduced it to the congregation in a congregational meeting, which went well.

**Divided political climate** - The election of 2016 prompted some painful examination of our church's attitudes toward and understanding of ostensibly worldly matters, and Phil and Becky sought to provide moral guidance, even as they faced their own family crisis. We had a number of difficult conversations concerning the church's position on homosexuality, immigration, civil rights, guns and other important issues very much in the headlines.

Like so many churches have expressed, the

political climate today often makes talking (or even praying) about issues like poverty, school shootings, or racial unrest seem partisan. We at Stanton experience partisanship in a unique way in that the spectrum of political views is distributed evenly among our membership. Therefore, we have diversity of opinion. Some respondents felt that sermons and other commentary concerning our political environment are not appropriate for worship, while others welcomed a focus on social justice and equity.

However, when we engage in theological reflections in and around how we are to “love the Lord our God... and our neighbor as ourselves,” we listen and learn from one another. Often when things change, like moving the flag out of the sanctuary or adopting a welcome statement, there are strong feelings for some. We know there are differences within our congregation. Many would prefer to avoid

Position	Respondents
<i>Very conservative</i>	6.94%
<i>Conservative</i>	23.21%
<i>Neither conservative nor liberal</i>	40.28%
<i>Liberal</i>	22.22%
<i>Very liberal</i>	6.94%

“Five years from now, how will we know if SRC is healthy? What signs would you look for?”  
**“An open environment for diverse opinions and thoughts about faith.”**  
*-Mission Study Survey Response*

talking about politics completely. Many believe that these are important issues to confront.

**Conclusion of Holly Trail** - For decades we hosted, created and sustained this decades long fundraiser. At its core, Holly Trail was a house tour but it grew into a 24- hour event. The event began with a candlelight tour and a volunteer’s tour on Friday evening. Saturday morning, the festivities

“In a few words, what do you think SRC is doing right?”  
**“We have a wonderfully welcoming group, and we're building on that strength! Room For All - I have a child who identifies as LGBT. Knowing what I know about suicide rates among LGBT youth, I worry. [My child is] very skeptical of churches and hears from others that they are closed-minded or think something is wrong with LGBTQ youth. My child loved the Room for All celebration, and was proud of the rainbow glass (now missing - which my child noticed) from the sign outside. I don't think people realize how much that meant, or how much it hurts when people talk about how unnecessary it is or removed our glass. The kids and youth are watching, and deciding what their future will be with the church.”**  
*-Mission Study Survey Response*

continued, including a silver tea, a homemade luncheon, an arts and crafts expo, a bake sale, a candy house and soothing Christmas music for those who needed respite along the way. In its last year, 2019, 1500 ticket holders traveled through individually curated homes with unique Christmas decorations, many of the most memorable decorations executed by those in our congregation. Upon reflection, we can see our varied gifts of hospitality at work in Holly Trail.

**Women of the Church** - Women have found ways to gather for support and purpose for our entire history. While Holly Trail began as a successful fundraiser organized by women in the community, to benefit both the church and Hunterdon Medical Center (it netted \$66K in its last year), it provided support, friendship and connection for families in the area. It often was an entry for church membership as families moved into the area. There is a longstanding women's "literary guild" at which many of our older members continue to gather. We also have a robust prayer shawl ministry that meets weekly for support and friendship as much as for mission. To date they have given away over 500 shawls. Women have been and continue to be a driving force at SRC.

**Global Pandemic** - After weeks of slowly building awareness of COVID-19, national and local authorities began institute quarantine guidelines. Local schools officially closed their buildings on

*"In a few words, what do you think SRC is doing right?"*

**"SRC is a loving, welcoming community of faith which is striving to become even more welcoming."**

*-Mission Study Survey Response*

March 13, 2020. On that evening, the Consistory met. With heavy hearts, but conviction that we were doing the right thing, we voted to suspend in-person worship to help "flatten the curve." Our first remote worship service (a livestream) was held on March 15. We held our first ever remote communion on April 4.

During the week, we kept our community together with story time on Facebook, Zoom committee meetings and online interactive jigsaw puzzles. We adjusted programs for our children and youth with things like "Vacation Bucket School."

We are so blessed to have our beautiful front lawn. It became a gathering place for committees, bible study, prayer shawl group and eventually Sunday worship from the end of summer until Advent. Our YouTube numbers indicate an unusual bump in attendance. As we prepare this report, we are at the beginning stages of a new normal that currently includes a hybrid worship experience where some are present in person and others are watching a livestream. We still have a ways to go to pull our congregation back together. We have learned to adapt and we assume we are not finished adapting.

# Who Are We Today?

We have made good use of the many opportunities for self-reflection created by our recent past. SRC's Welcome Statement describes this church as a people of "faith and of doubts, of truths and of questions, of joy and of sadness, of grace and of love." We know these things are true, and we know that we are a historic church in Hunterdon County, with a wide welcome, a heart for families and youth, a love of music, that has been resilient through trauma.

**Historic Church in Hunterdon County** - The church is steeped in a sense of place. We are set in a



rural community with abundant natural resources and rich public institutions, many of which, such as Hunterdon Healthcare, were shaped in large part by the valuable contributions of SRC members. The county enjoys an influx of residents from outside of the area while maintaining families with multiple generations in the area. We will detail the SRC history in a later section, but we feel that the church's past (going back to its founding, back to our earliest detailed documentation, back to the earliest memories of our longest confessing members, and back to the more recent memories of those who have just joined us) serve as important touchstones as we carry our mission forward.

In total, our campus includes a church building that contains a sanctuary, a fellowship hall, the Stanton Learning Center, several classrooms, a conference room, and an office area. In addition, there is a parsonage with a detached garage, a tenant house, a barn, a playground, and several outside sheds.

**Wide Welcome** - Our congregation is growing in its welcome. Having always been a loving, warm congregation, our membership has challenged itself to be intentional in both welcoming and loving our neighbors, particularly those who often find themselves excluded by society and sadly by the

church at large.

### Families and Youth

- Always wanting to care for families in our neighborhood, we hosted at least two early learning centers.

In 1986, we created the current Stanton Learning Center (SLC), a non-profit, early

childhood development center.

This past year, adjusting to the needs of families in the pandemic, our SLC created a virtual classroom. Enrollment is up and the students are a delight to have on our campus.

On any given Sunday (pre-pandemic) there were 20 children in attendance during worship service.

*"Five years from now, how will we know if SRC is healthy? What signs would you look for?"*

***"If we continue to be known as a beacon in our community - a place where all are welcome, and a light in the world. If we continue to send strong messaging about embracing LGBT to counter negative messaging from others. If we are meaningfully intergenerational, with young and old alike actively engaged. A balanced budget and strong relationships with the community."***

***-Mission Study Survey Response***



SRC members consistently point to the importance of family participation, in particular that of families with school age children. During the Pratt's ministry, the youth program thrived under Becky's leadership and with consistent support from adult members (including from members without children in the relevant age groups).

More recently, we have experienced a decline in our active youth population (fortunately, we have seen a boom in our younger classes), and would like to renew our focus on engaging with youth membership. We see a need for a pastor to come alongside parents as they raise their children in faith. We see a need for a pastor who can cultivate volunteers in order to grow our children, youth, and family ministry.

**Music** - We love music and we invest in it. Our Chancel Choir is made up completely of lay people



and is served by our Music Director and Accompanist. Our traditional worship service contains several pieces of performative and participatory music. We also have a Bell Choir and a Children's' choir that perform during the year. We invite a variety of instrumental musicians as well. Several members share their musical gifts (flute, bagpipes, violin, bass, harp, clarinet, French horn) and we host a brass quartet twice a year. In addition to music during worship, we had begun to host regularly scheduled concerts as a fundraiser for cancer care. It is our intent and hope to continue these concerts post-pandemic.

**Resilience** - In our "Recent Past" section, we detailed some of the traumatic experiences this church has gone through together. The shared pain

*"What do you see as SRC's greatest assets for the next five years?"*

**A caring core congregation who can be flexible; a beautiful space to worship; hopefully a new pastor that can lead the congregation to the future."**

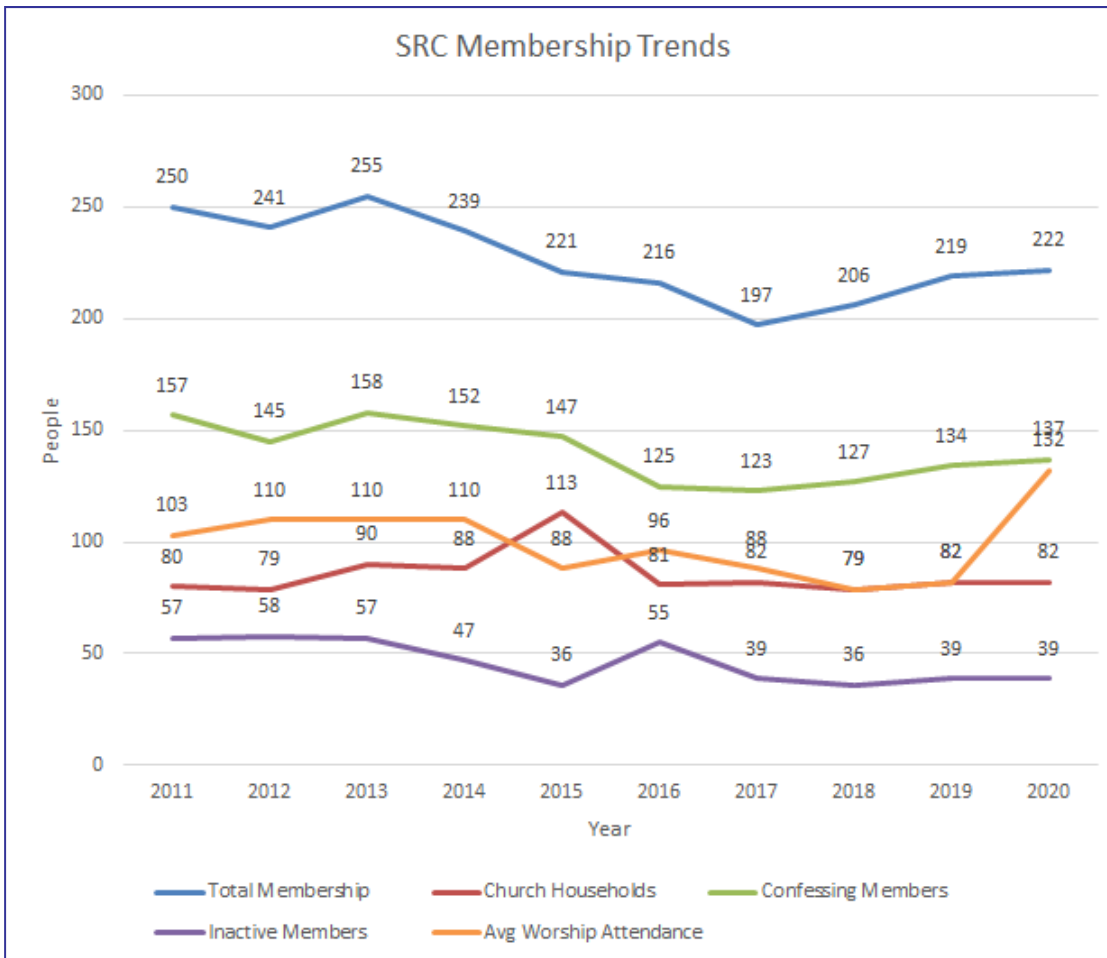
*-Mission Study Survey Response*

of that past has formed a core group of committed members that includes both longtime and more recent members.

The sadness of Becky's illness and death, the absence of Phil's steady guiding hand, the uncertainty during a tumultuous political season, and the overriding anxiety of life during a global pandemic have not been easy burdens to bear; but this church has emerged stronger and closer for having borne them.



# Membership and Finance



*Over the years, we have experienced natural attrition but consistently have welcomed new families into our congregation. We would say we are not static; we are stable in our membership.*

*We are a congregation of primarily white, upper class families. Some of our families have three generations currently attending. Respondents to our Mission Survey conducted in 2021 included 66 females, and 49 males, representing the following age groups:*

Age	Respondents
Below 30	6
40s	25
50s	19
60s	28
70s	17
80s	19

## Current Budget Snapshot

Budgets	2020 budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
Designated income	\$0	\$14,658	\$0
Rent	\$68,350	\$45,659	\$59,100
Donations	\$148,560	\$199,899	\$190,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$216,910</b>	<b>\$260,217</b>	<b>\$249,100</b>
<i>Ministry Expenses</i>			
Staff	\$115,782	\$118,416	\$115,453
Worship	\$4,200	\$3,120	\$4,200
Discipleship	\$2,800	\$1,492	\$1,400
Benevolence and Mission	\$17,950	\$12,915	\$14,400
Mission Study/ Pastor Search			\$1,200
<b>Total Ministry Expenses</b>	<b>\$140,732</b>	<b>\$135,942</b>	<b>\$136,653</b>
<i>Operations Expenses</i>			
Operations Staff	\$22,000	\$23,717	\$22,000
Administrative Expenses	\$29,526	\$29,733	\$31,824
Facilities Expenses	\$74,650	\$69,086	\$70,000
Vehicle Expense	\$1,550	\$741	\$1,550
<b>Total Operations Expenses</b>	<b>\$127,726</b>	<b>\$123,276</b>	<b>\$125,374</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$268,458</b>	<b>\$259,218</b>	<b>\$262,027</b>
Net Income/ Deficit	(\$51,548)	\$999	(\$12,927)

# Findings From Our Consistory and Committees

Our elders and deacons are looking for a Pastor who is direct and diplomatic, someone who is able to speak, listen and embrace a congregation with a broad range of perspectives while also maintaining forward thinking. It is remarkable that our congregation is distributed evenly along the political spectrum. Our next pastor, a compassionate leader and guide, will need to come alongside us as we live into our Welcome Statement.

Our last called pastorate was actually 1 ½ pastors, where we were able to rely on paid leadership in almost every corner of our worship and work. We have “downsized” to one pastor but still find ourselves relying on the pastor for guidance and presence. Our next pastor will need to help us find the “right” amount of pastoral participation, one that fits the needs of our committees while also being mindful of the skills, vision and passion of the pastor him or herself. But we would be remiss if we did not say that there are definitely times when we need our pastor to take the lead, be our guide.

Often, our community knows us most through the Learning Center. Since this is such a public face of the church, our pastor needs to have a strong relationship with the Learning Center.

Finally, we certainly realize that our next Pastor will be entering a post pandemic church experience.

If we have learned anything this year, we know that adjusting is the new normal. As we emerge on the massive disruption, we look forward to partnering with our pastor as we reflect on what to keep and what leave behind.

## Committees

### **All Are Welcome Working Group**

When the Consistory adopted our Welcome Statement, they created this working group to interact with our various committees as we live into a broader hospitality. The group meets monthly and



keeps a list of its goals and past accomplishments. Currently, they are working with Buildings and Grounds to create accessibility to the sanctuary and Worship to consider a change in hymnal. Their ultimate goal however is to work themselves out of a job when SRC has lived into its Welcome Statement fully. One of their hopes, a collaboration with the Worship committee and the All Are Welcome, is to start a new gathering, Beer and Hymns.

### **Buildings and Grounds**

Like most churches, the care and maintenance of our campus takes about half of our annual budget, however the rents we receive are a source of budget stability. In the past, the committee was more hands-on with maintenance. Today, with the help of our office manager who enjoys the work of the property along with a strong committee of volunteers, B&G tends to be a committee that manages contractors and organizes workdays. Their current growing edge project is accessibility and continuing to make the building compliant for the needs of the Learning Center.

### Congregational Nurture

This is our flagship hospitality committee, responsible for fellowship time, nurture of the congregation (funeral repasses and goody boxes for college students, for example) and partnering with

the pastor in pastoral care needs in the congregation and neighborhood (phone calls and visitation, for example.)

### **Christian Education Committee**

Our faith formation for children happens in worship and in Sunday school. On any given Sunday, there are up to 20 children in attendance. They hear a children’s sermon during worship and then head to Sunday school for the second half of the service.

Here is a current snapshot of ages and curriculum:

Age	Curriculum	Registered # of Children
Little Mustard Seeds: our nursery age children	No curriculum	5
Little Lambs 3-4 years old	Spark - lectionary based	8
K-2nd grade	Children in Worship (Godly Play)	10
3-5th grade	Spark - lectionary based	3
6-8 grade	The Thoughtful Christian	9
(8-9 grade Confirmation	Making Disciples by Will Willimon	3 last year 3 ready to begin
High school	The Thoughtful Christian	7

During the pandemic year, Christian education and the worship committee found creative ways (using Seasons of the Spirit and Spill the Beans) to include children in worship that augmented what the Christian Education committee could offer. Each week, this past year, we have sent home activities for families to do together.

Adults: In addition to children's faith formation, we have a faithful, weekly, daytime bible study that has a tradition of reading through the Bible in different translations. After completing the NRSV, the Message, and the children's storybook Bible, "Read, Wonder and Listen," they have just begun "The Story." Additionally, there is also a women's small group that meets in someone's home; they have been working through the book "What the Bible Is All About" by Rob Bell.

### **Communications Committee**

This year, our online presence grew exponentially. Between the website, the Facebook page and the bi-monthly newsletters, this committee was busy. Regarding the newsletter, the Pastor and Office Manager publish the bi-monthly newsletter on "mailchimp." The Pastor writes a note to the congregation in the mid-month edition and the Consistory writes one at the beginning of the month, also including the minutes of the previous month.

### **Finance and Stewardship**

This committee is a newly combined committee

of the previously separated Finance committee and Stewardship committee. We hold an annual stewardship campaign, however we budget based on trends. Our Financial Secretary holds much of our institutional memory and there are members of this committee that keep in touch with various giving units to be certain of what our income will be. SRC rises to the occasion. When times are tight, this committee communicates clearly to the congregation and counsels Consistory.

Specifically this past pandemic year, we were able to make the ends meet the means through limiting spending and the receipt of additional gifts. We did not apply for the first round of payroll protection loans since our income remained steady.

Currently, the Pastor partners with this committee in helping create the budget and interpreting the financial statements. The office manager functions as a treasurer with data input and analysis. We are currently looking for a member volunteer to work with our office manager in providing financial analysis and communication to the committee.

In the next 2-3 years, we will need to engage in a capital campaign to shore up our savings after a series of major expenditures related to an aging building.

We do not have an endowment per se, although we do have regular income from the Stanton Tenant

House and the Stanton Learning Center.

### **Mission Committee**

In this past pandemic year, we were able to donate more than ten percent of our income to five key mission relationships we have: Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, Pine Ridge Reservation, Starfish, Prayers Shawls. SRC relishes in any opportunity to care and support others.

In this past year for example, there were two additional opportunities to give: a toy drive for the women at the Clinton Correctional Facility and a food drive/ fund drive associated with the first Holly Trail (see Worship committee). The food was donated to Flemington Food Bank and the funds were donated to Family Promise of Hunterdon County.

### **Personnel/ Nominating**

The membership of this committee is one Elder, one Deacon, and two members-at-large. This committee seeks to include the chair of the Learning Center board as well, to provide continuity.

The Pastor serves as Head of Staff for both the church and Stanton Learning Center. The pastor manages an office manager, music director, accompanist, a custodian, all part time staff. The pastor also manages the full-time SLC director and supports her as she manages SLC's staff.

This past year we have begun to implement mid-year and end of year assessments based on agreed

upon goals. When it comes to nominating officers, Stanton has a "deep bench" of talented volunteers.

### **Worship**

We are a traditional Reformed Church Worshiping Community. Generally speaking, we follow the Revised Common Lectionary but our pastors have been known to create topical series. The Director of Music (who just celebrated her 20th year with us) and the Accompanist are experts at crafting music to coincide with the worship text/ theme. Our typical worship service (pre-pandemic) has a polished prelude and postlude, a choir introit, anthem and benediction response and three congregational hymns.

Our membership finds comfort and meaning in the familiar. However, our Pastors have introduced creative changes cautiously (communion by intinction, lay readers, modern liturgy and new composers with fresh hymns). We have received these changes well. Rev. Becky Pratt cultivated creativity in the Worship committee over time and now we have come to expect our special services to include more visual art and/or drama. Together, the Pratts introduced our congregation to an Advent Cantata. And again, we not only embraced this change but now have come to expect it. As we emerge from the pandemic, we look forward to reflecting with our pastor on what to change and what to keep.

# In Conclusion

This report shares all that we believe to be central to our understanding of our church and ourselves, as well as our relationship to the community. We hope that it provides important and helpful insights that will serve not only in our search for a new pastor, but also as a guidepost for current and future members showing where we've been and where we are going. We have sought and gathered input from membership and staff, consulted historical records, and spent many hours together (sometimes virtually) arriving at a shared vision for SRC. The Mission that we describe here, as exemplified in our new Mission Statement, as well as our Welcome Statement and Core Values, is one that we feel confident represents this church; we look forward to finding the pastor who will lead us and keep us true to these beliefs and aspirations.

This committee would like to thank all those who participated in our survey, in interviews, and in discussions, as well as our families and one another, for the patience and commitment to making and keeping SRC the sacred center to our spiritual and moral lives.

*-Bruce Adam, Scott Clarke, Penny Gallagher, Donna Herb,  
Christopher Jackson, Donna Morris, Rev. Beth Scibienski*

Interim Pastor Rev. Beth Scibienski

Vice Presidents: Diane Clapp and Sara Haviland

Deacons: Melissa Berner-Clarke, Melody Landon, Kate Morris,  
Tanya Tucillo, and Michele White

Elders: Diane Clapp, Michele D'Amico, Sara Haviland, Donna Herb,  
Erik Petrushun, and Bud Tunison

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**Grace and Peace since 1833**





**Appendix 1**  
**History of the Stanton Reformed Church**

On October 15, 1833, the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church began in this town which was then known as Mt. Pleasant. We belong to the Reformed Church in America which is the oldest Protestant denomination with a continuous ministry in the USA. We have a “Presbyterian” form of government served by Elders and Deacons, elected by the congregation. The Consistory is the organization that sets the policy for the local church and oversees its worship and work.

The property on which our first church stood was purchased for \$30. The first pastor arrived in 1835, and took up residence in the house across from the current Stanton Tenant House. The first sanctuary was erected with timber from Stanton Mountain, near the Herr property, and that sanctuary was large enough to seat 600 people. A belfry was added in 1914, and in 1922, a chapel was added.

In the Spring of 1921, a local chapter of the Women of the Reformed Church of America was formed, “the Women’s Guild of Stanton Reformed Church.” In their 1975 memoirs, we read, “the devoted women, in their many years of service, were responsible for much of the upkeep of the church, paying for heat, light and insurance, and building a garage for the pastor’s car.” We also read, “A farming community, such as this was years ago, did not have much ready cash, so it was up to the women to get busy.... Our guild meets once a month and we try to grow spiritually through our spiritual life study.” As part of a national institution, the Women of the Reformed Church in America, a local chapter was formed.

On July 14, 1931, the total church structure was destroyed by fire when lightning struck the church. And only one year later, on July 17, 1932, a new sanctuary was dedicated with a seating capacity of 120. This section of our building currently hosts the Stanton Learning Center. A

**October 15, 1833 – Founded as Reformed Protestant Dutch Church**

**1835—1850 J.R. Van Arsdale**

**1852—1872 Horace Doolittle**

**1872—1876 Edward Cornet**

**1876—1882 Abram I. Martine**

**1882—1887 Charles W. Pitcher**

**1887—1890 Adrian Westveer**

**1890—1895 James Bolton**

**1896—1903 Addison C. Bird**

**1904—1909 Adrian Westveer**

**1910—1916 Gustavus A. Goebel**

**1917—1920 C.W.T. Atlee**

**1921—1924 Eric T. Muller**

**1925 Supply Pastors**

**1926—1956 Herman J. Knickel**

**1957—1965 James E. Vincent**

**1965—2002 Richard A. Miller**

**2002—2004 Richard Sanner (interim)**

**2005—2008 Faith Link**

**2009—2019 Phillip Pratt and Rebekah Pratt**

chapel was added, which now serves as our fellowship hall. The total cost of the structure was a little over \$10K; and although the country was going through the Great Depression, it was completely paid for on the day of dedication.

It was by faith, hard work and financial commitment that the Stanton church began and continued as a witness for Jesus Christ in the community. However, by 1956, Stanton Church was in a depression of its own; there were few members, very little money, but there was still faith. It was at this point that the Women's Guild had a new idea, instead of a traditional fundraiser or "harvest home," the church would host a "Chicken Bar-B-Cue - a bigger and better bar-b-cue than had ever been held before."

After 1600 ears of sweet corn had been delivered, too many apple pies to count had been baked, and ice cream had been donated, the Bar-B-Cue pit arrived. It was 50 feet long and held 600 halves of chicken at one time. Seven local men donned chef's hats and went to work." Altogether 756 dinners were served and 320 quarts of iced tea were consumed (and nearly as much coffee). The total proceeds were \$1866 and profits \$700. (In comparison, the same fair in 1921 collected \$641 in proceeds and netted a profit of \$500.)

For almost 40 years, Stanton was a "mission" church of the RCA, as it was unable to sustain itself financially. During these years, the RCA paid at least half of the pastor's salary. After a few decades of financial support, the RCA thought it time to close down the church. But in 1957, Mr. Vincent came here as a seminary student and stayed on after his ordination.

In 1961, the Stanton Reformed Church organized a fundraiser to benefit both the church and the local Hunterdon Medical Center; the fundraiser was called Stanton Holly Trail. This is a turning point of sorts in that the Womens' Guild now could raise money for community projects and local needs. Stanton Holly Trail was a house tour, decorated for the Christmas Holidays, as well as a Bazaar and luncheon. This event attracted women in the area, many who were members of the church and many who were not. Together, the pastor and a small group of people carried on the worship and work of Jesus Christ to the community. It wasn't long before the sanctuary was soon crowded. It was in 1964 that a new sanctuary, our current sanctuary, was built to seat 250, costing approximately \$95K.

In 1965 Richard Miller became our pastor. He had recently completed seminary training and he arrived here with his wife, Rosemary and young daughter and infant son. They were soon to have another son. Rev. Miller was a guiding influence upon our church and its growth. He offered his services to Hunterdon County for social services, prison ministry and benevolence.

In 1968 several rooms were added in our church basement for Sunday school, youth group and music ministry. And in 1969, we began sponsoring a Boy Scout Troop, Troop 1969, which continues to meet at Stanton today.

In the 1970s there was an early learning center run by the church. It dissolved due to illness of the director. In 1987 (or thereabouts), a woman from Flemington approached us about running a for-profit learning center in our building. This effort lasted only a couple years when SRC decided to make this a ministry of the church. Thus the Stanton Learning Center was born in 1989. Its purpose was to serve the community and yet it also became a source of income in the way an endowment would.

Our choir director, Linda Lockart (a graduate of Westminster Choir College) was a wonderful source of creativity, particularly with our children. For example, In 1986, our children had an opportunity to sing with 700 other children at a special service for one of Linda's professors. After Linda's tenure, a few Choir College students served our music program. And eventually in 2000, Megan Petrushun would become our choir director, and she continues to this day. The Chancel Choir and the music of SRC remains a primary value for our membership.

At our 150th anniversary, in 1983, we held a huge event, including a parade that traveled from Woodschurch Road to the Church. There were floats; children decorated their bicycles. The event itself was more about those of us in the parade than the neighbors who may be watching. Truth be told, everyone had a place in the parade.

In 1991, we created a Memorial Garden on the north side of the church building. The garden was to be used for past and present members, and family members thereof upon approval from Consistory. (In 2006, the cost for bricks in the memorial garden were \$150 for member plus the cost of the engraving of the brick or \$250 for non-member plus the cost of engraving).

Rev. Miller introduced us to the Chiapas Missionaries in Mexico. Over time we developed a relationship with this mission. In the 1990s, the women of the church organized an expansive Mother/Daughter dinner Mother's Day weekend. During this time, we hosted popular community dinners (sometimes with more than one seating), with Rev. Miller as the chef du jour. It is important to mention that Rev. Miller baked our communion bread.

In 2002, upon Rev. Miller's retirement, we began a two year period of discernment and challenge with our Interim Pastor, Rev. Sanner. As with so many churches, we had our ways of doing things and with a new

minister, we found ourselves having to ask questions of ourselves and reflect on who we are and who we want to be. One thing we affirmed once again was the importance of church music. Rev. Sanner led us in a fundraising effort to purchase Walker Organ, which is still in use today.

By 2005, this interim period finally led us to our next installed pastor, Rev. Faith Link. Rev. Link served us for three years. During her time in leadership, she introduced us Ilya Yakushev. Ilya is a world renowned concert pianist and a beloved person at SRC. (Even as late as 2020, Ilya continued to practice in our sanctuary when in town and he was a standby musician for community concerts that we held.)

It was at this point we began a lengthy relationship with the Rev. David Ruisard from the Rockaway Reformed Church. Rev. Ruisard served as our “supervising” pastor while we began yet another transition period. In 2008, SRC ended a successful steeple fund campaign and a new steeple was constructed and erected. And just in time. The search committee had met, interviewed and unanimously voted to extend the pastoral call to a husband and wife couple, Phil and Becky Pratt. By the end of 2008, the call was extended and the Pratt’s would begin their worship and work with SRC beginning of the next year.

The leadership of the Pratt’s brought new life and energy to us at SRC. The Pratts both supported the Learning Center, in chapel leadership and in board meetings. They divided committee work between them, offering their particular leadership style along the way. Together, they helped us discern our core values; these core values remain true of us today. Pastor Becky introduced us to curriculum like “Children in Worship” (also known as Godly Play) and Making Disciples by Wil Willimon. She led us in an effort to include children at our communion table. And she also revived a youth group that would extend past the children of our church to the inclusion of their friends and neighbors.

Pastor Phil introduced us to the work of Re-Member, a nonprofit organization, which works with the Oglala Lakota Nation on Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota USA. We began taking intergenerational mission trips to the Reservation, helping to rebuild relationships, homes, and lives. The trip was also a cultural immersion and has indeed made us part of the circle of advocates that stand in solidarity with the Indian people of Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

In 2018, the Pratts went on a sabbatical during which they visited other churches. Upon their return, they began to share the various ministries and programs, values and missions that they had witnessed at other churches. One primary reflection from their sabbatical was the importance of Biblical Hospitality. The RCA has been in discussion about the full inclusion of LGBTQ members for over a decade at this point. It was at this

point that we began to learn what it means to be a “welcoming church.” We used a resource called “Being a Welcoming Church,” produced by the Evangelism and Church Development department of the PCUSA.

We tested our strongest hospitality muscle when we began to support our pastors and their children following Becky’s diagnosis with cancer. We set right to work: making meals, doing laundry, babysitting and listening. We began hosting “cancer care concerts” - initially as a means to provide for Becky’s medical bills. At the Pratt’s insistence, we created a fund to provide for others in the area, partnering with Hunterdon Medical Center. In 2020, this fund closed and the remaining money was sent to the NJ Congregational Center for Cancer Care.

As a country we seemed to be reaching a new level of political unrest, something that had been brewing for a couple decades. The political views of SRC are distributed equally across the spectrum. The faithful reading of the Bible began to feel partisan at times. Yet amidst cancer treatments and family upheaval, the Pratts led us faithfully toward a vision of Christian Hospitality. In 2019, we took our first large step to join “Room for All.” Our second large step was to develop our Welcome Statement. The consistory wanted our welcome to be broader than LGTBQ, and drew upon resources offered through churchclarity.org, that encouraged us to consider other marginalized groups. Our Welcome Statement is intentionally broad and therefore something for us to grow into in the next season of our life together.

Pastor Becky died in February of 2019. Pastor Phil moved in June with their daughters to Michigan to be with family. In August, Rev. Beth Scibienski joined us for an intentional interim period for healing and guidance into our future. We were challenged yet again when the world would go into shut down with the global pandemic of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020.

We once again put our hospitality muscles to work. Of course the ways we typically welcome and embrace one another was not an option (meeting in person and making meals for one another, or even hugging). We learned to meet online. We learned the value of a phone call. We adjusted and readjusted - and then adjusted again.

It was during this period of social distancing that we studied our congregation to find where we have been and what we have become. It is with confidence in our history and hope in our future that we say, “*We see God’s light in every person. Through faith, worship, fellowship, and hospitality, Christ calls us to affirm, accept, and embrace all who enter our doors.*”

## **Appendix 2**

### **2020 Congregational Meeting and Committee Reports**

# **Congregational Meeting Agenda**

**Stanton Reformed Church**

**January 31, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.**

**Call to order** - Sara Haviland, Co-VP of Consistory

**Opening prayer** - Rev. Beth Scibienski

**Receive committee reports** - Consistory Liaisons

## **Annual Committee Reports**

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Nominating / Personnel	12
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## **2021 Budget and Pledge Report**

**Annual Report of the Stanton Reformed Church Consistory**

**State of the SRC - Sara Haviland and Diane Clapp Co-VPs of Consistory**

**Gratitude, Closing Prayer and Adjournment**



# Annual Committee Reports

## All Are Welcome Working Group

**Purpose:** Working to expand Stanton's Christian hospitality to become a more inclusive and welcoming church. Priorities include general welcome, welcome for all ages, all family structures, and all physical abilities.

**Members:** Michele D'Amico (Chair/Consistory liaison), Sara Haviland (Co-Chair), Lauren Huelsebusch, Donna Morris

**Meets:** First Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30pm

**Next meeting:** February 3<sup>rd</sup>

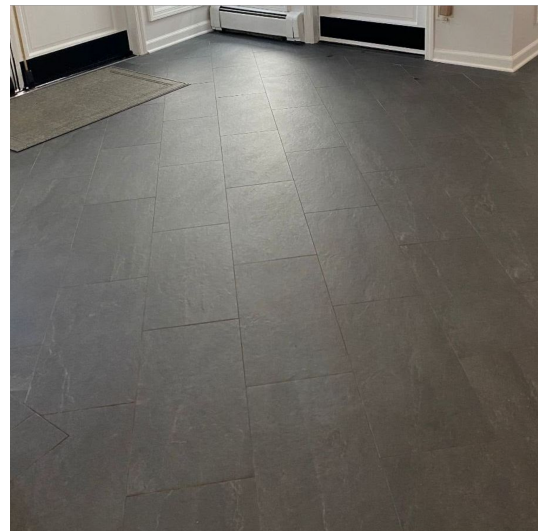
### **2020 Highlights:**

Our group has an advisory role - we represent many committees, and consider how Stanton can build on its legendary warm welcome in ways that expand our Christian hospitality. We oversee the application of the Rebekah Pratt Legacy Fund (RPL Fund), ensuring that spending is in line with its mission.

The work we do falls into four buckets, and is largely accomplished with/through other committees; in many ways this is a progress report on the ways we've ALL worked to make Stanton more welcoming. It's a very long list as the whole church has pulled together to creatively "be the church" during Covid - go team!

### **General Welcoming**

- Improved website and expanded Facebook presence to maintain communications during the pandemic.
- Consistory check-ins - via phone, email, text to see how our members are doing.
- RPL Fund-supported improvements: Added tech to facilitate welcoming during distancing (new AV equipment for live streaming), new outdoor gathering areas to facilitate safe in-person gathering
- Turning lemons into lemonade! We used the opportunity of the empty building to complete long-planned RPL Fund projects: new entry hall and Narthex flooring and paint, refinish flooring throughout the main floor. Additionally, the Learning Center sponsored new paint in the Nursery.
- Back to Church Sunday, which was an overwhelming success - we welcomed 75 to our in-person service, and more online.



- Advent/Christmas - emphasis on strong communications (mailers, Facebook and website campaigns) and finding ways to get people together (prayer stations, brass concert).
- Building relationships with “sister churches” via events such as the Hunterdon Holy Trail, which brought hundreds of cars through Stanton as part of a progressive live nativity.

### **Welcoming All Family Structures**

- Most progress on this was made in 2019 - our new welcoming statement, joining Room For All. Seeking new ways to build on this work in the future.

### **Welcoming All Ages**

- The VBS summer bucket series - a great success, offered meaningful activities for our youngest friends. We also included an All Are Welcome bucket!
- Sunday School - prior to pandemic, working to integrate middle school and high school students more meaningfully into the life of the church (fewer pull out lessons, more time in service - Sunday School aides, liturgists, ushers). During pandemic shifting to distanced Sunday School (outdoors or at-home), and Pastor Beth's children's book series during the weeks of the strictest lock-downs.
- Confirmation - despite the pandemic's limitations, we were able to complete the 2019-2020 Confirmation program and hosted a lovely service and reception to welcome three confirmands into full membership.
- Stanton Learning Center - supported during the closures when they had no income for rent, and during the 2020-2021 program year with extended space. SLC expanded its offerings greatly to support families during distanced learning. Our [Giving Tuesday 2020](#) campaign focused on a lower level sink (we raised over \$2000) as they are currently using portable sinks for their extended program. We fostered communication across the SRC and SLC as part of the campaign. Also included SLC families in our Advent/Christmas card campaign.

### **Welcoming All Abilities**

- Continued to place emphasis on more readable programs, microphone use. Our new t-coil loop system (RPL Fund project) will allow congregants with hearing aids to connect directly to our audio in the sanctuary. We also have two headsets for those who do not have hearing aids but could use a boost.
- Remote worship capacity will continue to serve those who cannot attend due to illness, and will be a permanent fixture moving forward.
- Generally, the flooring in the entry area was designed to be safer for those with mobility issues.



- We removed the first two pews in the sanctuary to create multipurpose space, allowing groups to gather while the SLC uses our conference room. Added benefit: no more stairs to navigate for our weekday groups.

**Misc.**

- During the unrest of the summer, we participated in the 21 Day Race Equity Challenge, a faith-based series featuring readings intended to help us see the world through others' eyes.
- We want YOU! If you are passionate about helping Stanton serve as a beacon to our members and the community around it, please come try out a meeting! See Michele or Sara for more info.

## Buildings & Grounds

**Purpose:** Oversee the maintenance of the church buildings and grounds, including the parsonage, church, playground, tenant house, barn, garage, shed and lawn. Receive requests from congregational committees or members, accomplish due diligence and complete maintenance or renovations as approved.

**Members:** Melody Landon (Chair/Consistory liaison), Dave Clapp, Carole Falar, Christopher Jackson, Paul Morris

**Meets:** First Monday of each month

**Next meeting: February 1<sup>st</sup>**

**2020 Highlights:**

2020 was a very busy and productive year for the Buildings & Grounds Committee. The following items were approved and completed:

**General church maintenance**

- Decayed sidewalk removed and replaced with grass – courtesy of the Boy Scouts
- Church exterior light posts painted
- Ansul fire protection system inspection and updates by Kistler O'Brien
- New tenant (baker) utilizing our kitchen facilities
- Successful spring clean up and tenant home work days



**Rebekah Pratt Legacy Fund Projects (with AAW)**

- Sanctuary and Learning Center entryways tiled and painted. Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and Learning Center wooden floors were sanded and sealed
- Loop System (hearing) installed in sanctuary and new sanctuary carpet runners to cover it
- Outdoor planters, rockers, benches, chairs and tables added to the grounds

**Tenant House (a.k.a. the Stanton House)**

- The tenant house interior was painted, downstairs floors were sanded and sealed, front porch and front door were painted, new front landscaping, new back deck, new electrical heater installed in the kitchen, new upstairs bathroom vanity, lights and toilet, outside well sanded and painted, chimney tear down and roof repair, new stairway carpet, radiator repair and exterior pressure washed. This created a great deal of interest in the house and supported an increased lease price.
- New tenant lease signed beginning 11/15/2020 for a two year term – Income increase of \$4200 per year



## Christian Education

**Purpose:** Engage congregation in practice of Christian discipleship. Choose curriculum for adult and children's education with Pastor. Provide teachers and helpers as needed for classes. Oversee High School and Middle School Youth Groups. Support and encourage teachers and Youth Group leaders. Oversee Confirmation process with Pastor and provide support as needed. Provide nursery staff and support. Provide, review and enforce child and youth safety policies.

**Members:** Candice Teuber (Chair), Michele White (Consistory liaison), Beth Scibenski, Debbie Scheuermann

**Meets:** Second Wednesday of each month from 5:45pm to 7pm.

**Meeting dates for 2021:** Jan 13, Feb 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, Sept 8, October 13, November 10 and December 8.

## **2020 Highlights:**

**Sunday School** - All levels of Sunday School followed their curriculums through March, when church services ceased due to COVID-19. March through June, the Christian Education Committee encouraged families and children to remain actively involved in church by watching services on SRC's YouTube channel and following along with Pastor Beth's Children's Sermons. Materials that went along with the Children's sermons were delivered to families homes so that they could participate with materials in hand. Children's Sunday was held in June in which the Children and Youth were able to participate in lead roles in the Worship services through either virtual or pre-recorded videos of readings, artwork, musical performances, etc. In the spring, all Sunday School students received an age appropriate Bible or for the older students, a game to play with their families.

Over the summer, a "Vacation Bucket Bible school" program was provided through totes with materials and activity programs that families could pick-up, enjoy the activities as a family and return to the church.

During the months of the fall that we were able to worship outdoors, a short Children's Sermon was given by Pastor Beth, and Sunday School was held in a small group setting on the playground. Weekly Children's Bulletins were sent out along with suggestions for activities/discussions for parents to engage with their children in Christian discipleship. To engage our families in worship and celebration of Advent, a book entitled, "Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas" was delivered to families and children made artwork (placemats and greeting cards) for Meals on Wheels.



**Youth Group** - The Youth Group held a very successful pancake breakfast/fundraiser on January 26, 2020 and raised a whopping \$1,070.00 - to go towards Starfish food pantry and CHOP! The fundraiser was organized by Ed and Debbie Scheuermann and a great time was had by all. Youth Group met several times before shutting down due to COVID-19, enjoying a trip to Yescades Arcade and an escape room. After our worship services became virtual or outside, our Youth continued to be involved in worship services and other volunteer activities. Examples include readings, prayers, musical performances, video tech support, creating artwork, church building and grounds maintenance, etc.



**Confirmation** - On November 29, 2020, Confirmation class officially ended by welcoming three amazing young men into membership to Stanton Reformed Church.

**Adult Education** - The morning Bible study has been consistent since covid. They finished a reading of the Bible in the version called *The Message*. They began reading a version of the Bible called *Read, Wonder, Listen*. There is a women's group that has sought to meet when possible, convened by Candice Teuber. They continue to read Rob Bell's, *What the Bible Is All About*.

**Volunteers** - We are always looking for help in working with our youth! If you feel the calling, we would LOVE to have you!

## Communications

**Purpose:** Ensure that the membership is apprised of events and happenings. Develop and assemble visitor's information and greeting packet. Oversee development and maintenance of website (with secretary). Oversee development of church informational brochure. Provide and oversee intentional neighborhood outreach.

**Members:** Sara Haviland (Chair/Consistory liaison), Amy Coss, Lori Semler

**Meets:** February and August to plan program year

**Next meeting:** February 11th at 7:00 p.m.

### 2020 Highlights:

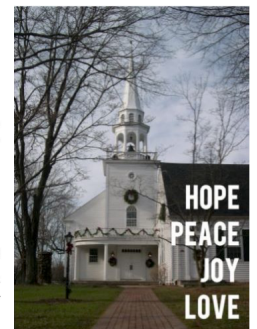
In coordination with All Are Welcome and in light of the challenges of staying connected while Covid forced us apart, we made some very big communications pushes that included:

- **Website ([www.stantonrc.org](http://www.stantonrc.org)).** In addition to general maintenance, early on we used the website to communicate changes, first with a "Stanton Responds to Covid-19" page and now with a weekly "Stanton: Home Edition" page on our website (this provides congregants with a weekly Worship Toolkit for our remote services).
- **Social Media.** We have built momentum on the Facebook site with 1-3 posts per week. During the early days, this became an important means of communicating in real time with the congregation (and Pastor Beth hosted a children's story time that was very popular).
- **Eblasts.** We shifted strategies so there are two eblasts per month: One mid-month edition written by Pastor Beth, and one end-of-month Consistory Corner written by the VPs of Consistory. Both feature important news and



Let that sink in.

Giving Tuesday 2020  
Stanton Reformed Church & Learning Center



Post Details

Stanton Reformed Church  
Published by Sara Haviland · November 11, 2020

Sharing some uplifting news - Nick and Lucas's Re-Member fundraiser, as told by N.J.com! <https://www.nj.com/.../hunterdon-teens-raise-thousands-for-na...>

NJ.COM  
Hunterdon teens raise thousands for Native American reservation in South Dakota

Get More Likes, Comments and Shares  
When you boost this post, you'll show it to more people.

Performance for Your Post		
264 People Reached		
69 Reactions, Comments & Shares		
37 Likes	24 On Post	13 On Shares
18 Love	12 On Post	6 On Shares
1 Wow	1 On Post	0 On Shares
10 Comments	8 On Post	2 On Shares
4 Shares	3 On Post	1 On Shares
73 Post Clicks		
0 Photo Views	43 Link Clicks	30 Other Clicks
NEGATIVE FEEDBACK		
0 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts	
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page	
Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts		

264 People Reached 142 Engagements Boost Post

6 Comments 3 Shares

Like Comment Share

announcements - if you are not receiving them, please reach out to stantonchurch@gmail.com to be added to our list.

- **Mailers and campaigns.** We had a variety of campaigns this year to reach people for different events. Our "Back to Church" campaign included a mailer and was an overwhelming success. We added an Advent mailer/Christmas card from Stanton that was also very popular. Finally, we coordinated the "Let That Sink In" campaign for Giving Tuesday, which raised over \$2000 toward a lower level sink.

- **Stanton in the news.** Coordinated with NJ.com for an article on Lucas Teuber and Nick White's fundraiser for Re-Member: [Hunterdon teens raise thousands for Native American reservation in South Dakota](#). Stanton was also in the news this year with the Holy Trail feature: [Historic Churches will Present 'Hunterdon Holy Trail'](#)

**Join us!** We are always looking for new members! If you like writing, taking or editing pictures, or are particularly tech-savvy, come on by our Feb. meeting or connect with Sara (sarahaviland@gmail.com).

## Congregational Nurture

**Purpose:** Engage congregation in practices of Christian fellowship. Maintain contact with members at home and college students. Plan for fellowship hours and maintain supplies necessary. Plan for receptions after special services and programs (including funerals). Plan fellowship events for the year, i.e., church picnic, progressive dinner, pizza dinners.

**Members:** No Consistory liaison, Pastor Beth is currently serving this committee.

**Meets:** As needed.

**Next meeting:**

### **2020 Highlights:**

Progressive dinner in February

Pizza Sunday

Coordinated set up and contributions to ecumenical dinner and member memorial services

Advent Outdoor Fellowship Time

Joined with the Consistory in making regular phone calls to the congregation

## Finance & Stewardship Committee

**Purpose:** Review financial records and reports produced by the treasurer and financial secretary. Provide financial reports to the consistory. Assist in creating annual financial reports to the congregation. Prepare the annual budget for the upcoming year (Jan-Dec). Appoint a stewardship point-person to facilitate an annual stewardship drive. Care for and maintain any special funds established by the church. Act as agent of the church in all business transactions and account holdings. Oversee and review financial record keeping practices. Facilitate an annual audit of all church finance records and practices. Maintain investments with a careful balance of growth and stability. Guide pastor in selecting a scriptural theme for Stewardship. Create Stewardship program materials, letters, pledge cards, and thank-you notes. Facilitate a

church fellowship feast and celebration. Determine a guest speaker for one Sunday and make necessary arrangements. Arrange necessary electronic means for pledging and donations. Plan quarterly stewardship “reminders” (preaching and communication). Facilitate testimonies from donors and recipients of missional value in giving.

**Members:** Diane Clapp (Chair/Consistory Liaison), Sandy Adam, Anna Barton, Donna Morris

**Meets:** Second Monday of the month, 7-8pm via zoom

**Next Meeting:** Feb.8th

### **2020 Highlights:**

2020 was a year of unexpected and unplanned events around the Covid crisis. Herculean efforts were made throughout the year by all committees to meet new and changing needs while staying within their budget. The finance committee monitored the Actual vs.2020 Budget figures on a monthly basis.

- Changes
  - Worship moved outside to allow us to gather while maintaining social distancing which required new/enhanced technology as well as some chairs, heaters and other items.
  - Passing the collection plate could no longer happen and alternate ways to give were emphasized. Throughout most of the year pledged giving was good while gift donations (collection plate) lagged behind amounts anticipated by prior years’ experience. Even through the hard times the congregation gave generously resulting in positive donations in all areas by year end.
- Loss of Income
  - Significant income in rent was lost when Covid required the Nursery school to close. In addition other planned paid facility usage was stopped due to safety concerns. Fundraising plans were not possible.
- Unplanned Capital Costs (following the 2019 major costs of a new furnace in the church and the parsonage septic)
  - A new boiler was needed in the tenant house
  - The tenant house rental ended and there were costs to rehab the property and prepare it for a new tenant
- Opportunity
  - While the pre-school was closed and the building was empty it was decided to proceed with some “All are Welcome” projects that had been planned. A T-coil-heating system was installed, new carpets, new flooring and painting were completed with designated funds.
  - Tenant house rent was increased
- Budget
  - Preparation of the 2021 budget plan. This budget was planned utilizing past budget trends, input from committees as well as the actual 2020 budget experience.
- Stewardship Campaign 2021
  - “Stanton Shares” was planned in December 2020. A mailing to the congregation discussed the ways we share ourselves and our resources. We are reminded that through sharing we begin to see God at work through us. God fits each person’s unique sharing together with what others share to accomplish great things. Beyond



sharing God is working in us and through us. With faith that we are truly better together please consider how you can fit into God's plan by making your pledge for 2021.

- Openings
  - We are looking for volunteers to serve on the finance committee and for the Treasurer position. We welcome you to contact Pastor Beth or any member of the committee if you are interested.

## Mission & Outreach

**Purpose:** Engage the congregation in acts of Christian mission. Research and provide opportunities for physical mission. Appoint liaison to each mission focus, i.e., Starfish, Re-Member, Habitat For Humanity, Crop Walk, Prayer Shawls, etc. Research and provide opportunities for financial missions. Collaborate with the pastor to plan an annual mission trip. Engage the congregation in acts of outreach.

**Members:** Tanya Tuccillo (Chair/Consistory Liaison), Parry Adam, Andrea Becker, Elizabeth Berner, Jean Feike, Linda Foster, Penny Gallagher, Beryl Gandolfo, Lynn Hallinski, Linda Harnack, Lauren Heuelsbusch, Bernadette Lynch, Darlene Manchen, Jean Martinetti, Donna Morris, Kris Parella, Deb Scheuermann, Leda Stevens, Steve White, Janet Williams, Adele Wittenberg, and more!

**Meets:** Quarterly

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

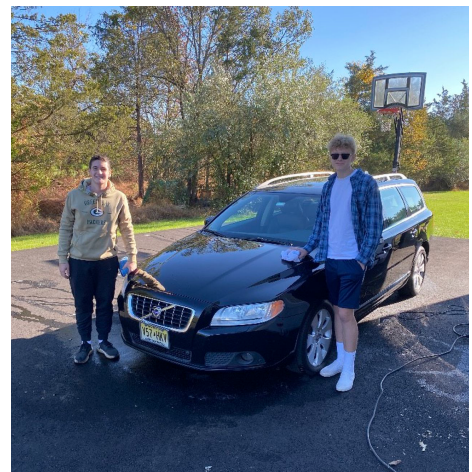
### **2020 Highlights:**

In addition to the funds listed below, which were disbursed after being pledged to SRC, the congregation has generously donated in the following ways:

- Food and money to Readington Starfish for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas
- So many gifts were given to Angel Tree and children of incarcerated moms
- Hundreds of Blizzard Bags were assembled for Meals on Wheels in September
- Kids colored place mats for Meals on Wheels
- At least once a month, volunteers make and donate lunches to SHIP, and look forward to getting back to in-person serving once we are past the pandemic

SRC donated the following to our mission priorities:

- Meals On Wheels: \$4,649.27
- Habitat For Humanity: \$3,786.68
- The Rez: \$2,866.05 **PLUS** \$3,000.00 from Nick & Lucas' car detailing. Total: \$5,866.05!!



- Starfish: \$550.00 (In addition to member donations of food and money during the year)
- Prayer Shawls: \$200.00 (for shipping expenses)
- Cancer Care Fund: \$7,658.02

=====

Total: \$22,710.02

Mission chairs are as follows:

- Meals on Wheels: Donna Morris
- Habitat For Humanity: Beryl Gandolfo
- Pine Ridge Bunk Beds - The Rez: Steve White
- Prayer Shawl Ministry: Adele Wittenberg
- Starfish: Jean Feike
- SHIP: Beryl Gandolfo

## Mission Study / Pastor Search Team

**Purpose:** The task of the Mission Study/ Pastor Search Team (MS/PS) is to study and report on the past and current culture and health of the congregation to compose a mission statement that will serve SRC over the next 5 to 10 years. The purpose of the mission study is to describe who we are as a church and where we want to go in order to create a Ministry Information Form (job description) in search of a new pastor.

**Members:** Donna Herb (Chair/Consistory Liaison), Sandy Adam, Scott Clarke, Penny allagher, Donna Harding, Christopher Jackson, Donna Morris, Beth Scibienski [Classis representative Rev. David Ruisard]

**Meets:** Every other Wednesday at 7:30pm

**Next meeting:** February 10, 2021

### **2020 Highlights:**

The MS/PS Committee first met on 10/14/20. Accomplishments to date:

- Formulated how the team would be engaged, outlined phases and steps needed, and determined a timeline to complete our goal.
- Reviewed resources such as the SRC Mission Study Guide, Ministry Information Form (job description) and Personal Information Form (pastor resume).
- Phase 1 - Mission Study (a time for congregational reflection to inform us of our future needs):
  - Finalized the Scope of the Mission Study
    - Determined what was needed and how best to obtain the information (e.g. congregational survey, committee interviews, focus groups).
    - Congregational Survey:
      - Completed the first major task of the Mission Study by creating questions for the congregational survey, piloting the draft survey, and finalizing the survey based on review and feedback.

- The finalized congregational survey was sent out to over 150 congregants on 1/18/2021. The survey will close on 2/1/2021.

### **2021 Next Steps and Timeline to Achieve our Goal:**

- February: Interviews with SRC Committees; Analyze Data from Congregational Survey
- March: Form focus groups based on survey results and meet with groups
- April: Complete Mission Study Report; Submit to Consistory for Approval and to the Congregation
- May: Begin Pastor Search - Post Job with Description based on Report; Review Candidate Applications
- June: Interview Pastor Candidates
- July / August: New Pastor position is offered and accepted

## Nominating / Personnel

**Purpose:** To help select the members of the church family who will add their unique voice and ideas to the Consistory and to the greater congregation. The committee determines which offices of Consistory need to be filled and pursues candidate recommendations from the committee, from the Consistory, and from the full congregation.

When there is a need to replace outgoing members, the committee requests nominations from the congregation, which inform the slate it presents to the Consistory. The committee will also present a slate of candidates to the Consistory for approval, which is then presented to the congregation for their vote annually in the spring.

**Members:** Bud Tunison is the Elder responsible for the committee. This spring he will be joined by one Deacon and two Members at Large.

**Meets:** In the spring, or as needed.

**Next Meeting:** TBD

### **2020 Highlights:**

Due to Covid we delayed our typical nominating season in the Spring and did our work in the fall. Successfully nominated candidates to fill all but one vacancy. There is still one Deacon vacancy on Consistory.

## Worship

**Purpose:** Engage congregation in practice and acts of Christian worship. Review and oversee practices of communal worship together with the pastor, including sacraments. Utilize creative methods of worship planning and formation. Engage individuals throughout the congregation in worship leadership and participation. Shape the worship space utilizing creative and artistic elements. Engage and facilitate multi-sensory worship practices including music, visual art, written liturgy, drama, and dance. Arrange for lay leadership in worship in the pastor's absence. Designate individuals to oversee ushers, flowers, acolytes, scripture

readers, and preparation of sacraments. Decorate the worship space with seasonally appropriate elements and remove elements as needed.

**Members:** Kate Morris (Chair/Consistory liaison), Penny Gallagher, Alice Miller, Beryl Gandolfo, Lauren Huesbusch, Megan Petrushun, Ann Sauerland

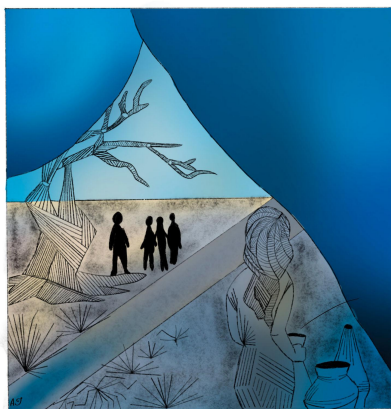
**Meets:** The 4th Monday of the month

**Next meeting:** February 22<sup>nd</sup>

### **2020 Highlights:**

Some highlights of this year were:

- Being able to still worship together, first via YouTube then in person, outside.
- Learning how to adapt to the new ways of worshiping.
- Participated in the Hunterdon Holy Trail
- Celebrated Advent with different stations each week of Advent
- Christmas Eve outside service was planned; unfortunately the weather didn't cooperate.
- Collaborated with neighboring churches to bring different events (i.e., Holy Trail) and share worship services



# Stanton Learning Center Board

**Purpose:** The Stanton Learning Center operates under the legal and fiduciary authority of the Stanton Reformed Church. We work collaboratively to support The Learning Center and Church's mission of nurturing, developing, and educating the young children of the greater Stanton Community.

**Members:** Andrea Schmidt (Director), Melissa Berner-Clarke (Chair/Consistory Liaison), Beth Scibienski, Donna Morris (Finance), Angel Longo (Personnel), Chris Vidak (Personnel), Megan Johnston (Treasurer), Gina Nelessen (Scholarship)

**Meets:** October, January, June

## **2020 Highlights:**

- There was a financial loss due to the pandemic (2019-2020 school year). A loan was received to assist with this and it looks promising that it will be forgiven. The director is still waiting on the bank to start the loan forgiveness application process.
- Rent was pardoned when the center shut down (due to the pandemic) through September. Stanton Learning Center is deeply grateful for the church's commitment to the program. Thank you! There will be an increase in rent starting with the 2021-2022 school year.
- Changes have been made to the 2020-2021 program to provide a safe environment. Students are placed in pods of 10 and there are smaller student to teacher ratios. Students only socialize with the students in their pod. We have received grants to assist in paying for extra staff and cleaning supplies. The health and safety of the program is closely monitored by NJ Office of Licensing. A virtual program for school-aged children was also added downstairs to support students on the days that they are learning from home. Forty-seven students are currently enrolled at SLC which is typical compared to previous years. The director continues to give tours to interested parents.
- Hoping to hold some outdoor fundraisers in the spring to raise money (if the Covid guidelines allow).
- We need one more church member to be on the SLC board – please let us know if you are interested.

## 2021 Budget and Pledge Report

Line items	2020 budget	2020 Actuals	2021 Budget
Designated income	\$0	\$14,658	\$0
Undesignated Income	\$68,350	\$45,659	\$59,100
Pledges and Gifts*	\$148,560	\$199,899	\$190,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$216,910</b>	<b>\$260,217</b>	<b>\$249,100</b>
Ministry Expenses			
Staff*	\$115,782	\$118,416	\$115,453
Worship	\$4,200	\$3,120	\$4,200
Discipleship	\$2,800	\$1,492	\$1,400
Benevolence and Mission**	\$17,950	\$12,915	\$14,400
Mission Study/ Pastor Search			\$1,200
<b>Total Ministry Expenses</b>	<b>\$140,732</b>	<b>\$135,942</b>	<b>\$136,653</b>
Operations Expenses			
Operations Staff	\$22,000	\$23,717	\$22,000
Administrative Expenses	\$29,526	\$29,733	\$31,824
Facilities Expenses	\$74,650	\$69,086	\$70,000
Vehicle Expense	\$1,550	\$741	\$1,550
<b>Total Operations Expenses</b>	<b>\$127,726</b>	<b>\$123,276</b>	<b>\$125,374</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$268,458</b>	<b>\$259,218</b>	<b>\$262,027</b>
Net Income/ Deficit	-\$51,548	\$999	-\$12,927

<b>Pastor's Terms of Call***</b>	
Salary	\$58,000
Parsonage	
Insurance and Pension	\$16,969
Social Security Offset	\$3,000
Professional Expenses and Continuing Education	\$4,250
Medical Reimbursement	\$2,000
Four weeks paid vacation and two weeks continuing education	<b>\$84,219</b>

\* The anticipated pledges and giving for 2021 is based on a three year trend. Giving via the website carries a transaction fee of 3.25%. With that said, online giving and automated banking creates consistent giving and ultimately has helped our budgeting.

\*\* We were able to give away 7.5% of our pledged income directly to missions.

\*\*\* The pastor's salary is allocated differently but reflects the same total as 2020.

# Annual Report of the Stanton Reformed Church Consistory

Delivered January 31, 2021

## Year in Review

This was an historically difficult year, as the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to reinvent church continually. With the incredible commitment of our pastor and staff, committees, and members, we ended the year with great signs of health. The committee reports, attached, detail the many ways that everyone pulled together in this unusual year - we have much to be grateful for.

It is difficult to understand these reports without understanding the context of this year, so this report attempts to record some of the major ways the outside world changed the way we did business in 2020.

## Things Were Going Well...

Our year began with the many traditions we all love - star words for Epiphany, progressive dinner, Ecumenical Lent dinners, Scout Sunday, a Souper Bowl. We first learned that Covid could be a challenge for the U.S. in late February; at the March 1 service, we asked people to adapt to each other's comfort level during our sharing the peace (curtsies and bows were briefly back in fashion!). The Consistory had its annual retreat on March 7, during which we planned the timeline for the Mission Study and began discussing what the process would look like. At that point we discussed the growing concern over Covid-19, which was beginning to appear in Seattle; within a week, that concern would overtake the country.

## The Great Disruption

Local schools officially closed their buildings on March 13. On that evening, the Consistory met and discussed how to proceed. With heavy hearts, but conviction



*A mini-worship gathering, one of our first attempts at getting back together in person.*

that we were doing the right thing, we voted to suspend in-person worship to help "flatten the curve". Our first remote worship service (a livestream) was held on March 15. We held our first ever remote communion on April 4.

As we began to understand more about how the virus transmitted, and the value of masks and distancing, we became comfortable with gathering outdoors. On June 7 we began to host Sunday Strolls, which morphed into mini-worships, on the front patio. A small group of members and friends gathered for prayer, to ring the bells,

and visit before going home to see the worship service streamed.

In the summer, we decided to host worship together, with masks and distancing, once monthly on the lawn. On July 12, we hosted our first full in-person worship service since the shutdown, on the front lawn. It was a great success, so on August 22, we launched an outdoor worship series that continued through November 29.

In December, we returned to remote worship but followed with prayer stations and fellowship on the lawn.



*Outdoor worship series on the lawn.*



*Brass concert/Choir performance for our Advent series.*

### ***Staying Connected***

During the pandemic, we have tried in many different ways to connect with each other. At first, we experimented with different ways to stay in touch during our full shutdown - story times, movie clubs, social hours, reading groups, etc. on Zoom. We worked puzzles together online. The Consistory began making regular rounds of phone calls to members to check in.

Our Christian Ed hosted our first ever “Vacation Bucket School” for our young members. We moved most meetings to Zoom, including Bible Study. We added a labyrinth at Stanton for people to come enjoy the grounds, and new outdoor meeting areas supported by the Rebekah Pratt Legacy Fund. During the summer and fall, our groups met regularly on the patio.

With cold weather, we returned to Zoom, but were relieved to learn of vaccine approvals in December. It will take awhile to get everyone vaccinated, but we now see the light at the end of the tunnel.



*Prayer Shawl meeting on the patio.*



*Bible Study via Zoom*

### ***Looking to the Future***

We learned a very important lesson in 2020: things can change very quickly! Currently, we plan to offer remote worship during the



worst of the winter. As soon as is practical, we will return to outdoor worship. As vaccine availability increases, we will return indoors. Following the lead of the schools, we developed a “Road Back” plan pegged to the NJ Department of Health, available here: [Stanton Covid Protocols](#)

## Consistory Service



*A socially distanced laying of hands for the Consistory installation.*

The following officers completed their service in August 2020:

Deacon Scott Clarke, Deacon Lauren Huelsebusch, Elder JP Magron, Acting Deacon Ed Scheuermann

The following officers were elected to second terms:

Elder Diane Clapp, Deacon Tanya Tuchillo

And the following officers continued into the second year of their current terms:

Elder Sara Haviland, Elder Michele D’Amico, Deacon Melody Landon, Elder Erik Petrushun, Elder Bud Tunison, Deacon Michelle White

The following officers began their first terms in October 2020:

Deacon Melissa Berner Clarke, Elders Donna Herb, Deacon Kate Morris

One Deacon position remained vacant.

In October 2020, Elder Diane Clapp joined Elder Sara Haviland to serve as Co-Vice Presidents of Consistory. Diane will stay on as VP when Sara’s term ends in August 2021, ensuring continuity during the transition to a new incoming minister.



*June Consistory meeting at the new labyrinth - our first “live” gathering during Covid.*

## Personnel

Pastor Beth Scibienski’s contract as an Interim Pastor was renewed for a second year in August. Reverend David Ruisard continued to serve as our Classis Representative.

The Mission Study team was convened in October to begin the process of hiring a permanent pastor. It consists of Elder Donna Herb (chair/Consistory liaison), Pastor Beth Scibienski, Bruce Adam, Scott Clarke, Penny Gallagher, Donna Harding, Christopher Jackson, and Donna Morris.

We celebrated 20 years of Megan Petrushun’s music ministry at Stanton during our fall Back to Church event.



*20 years of Megan - celebrated with a commissioned anthem by Heather Sorenson*

## Membership Record

Member Sara Fisher married Mark Walters on September 12. Member Hope Brembt wed Michael Rodgers at Stanton on September 26. Pastor Beth Scibienski officiated both services.

With sadness, we report the deaths of members Milly Jagel, Carl Koch, and Clifford Wittenberg. Carl's funeral was held at Stanton on March 8. A private family service was held for Milly on June 6 in the Memorial Garden. We are grateful for their lives and time spent at Stanton.

An Inquirer's class was planned for spring but was disrupted by the pandemic.

Three confirmands completed the Confirmation process on November 29: Pierce Jackson, Russell Serrani, and Nick White.



*Confirmation Class of 2020*