



# Bryn Athyn Church

## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

~ NOTICE ~

### SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING OF BRYN ATHYN CHURCH

September 29, 2021 / 7:30 pm / Society Building

#### Items of Business:

- |                       |                         |                                |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Prayer and Reading | 2. Head Pastor's Report | 3. Cathedral Director's Report |
| 4. Treasurer's Report | 5. Building Plans       |                                |

#### HEAD PASTOR'S REPORT

Rev. Eric H. Carswell

215-947-6225 x207 / [Eric.Carswell@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:Eric.Carswell@brynathynchurch.org)

The 2020-21 church year continued to be influenced by COVID-19 limitations even though we started having in-person family services at the beginning of July and adult services at the beginning of September.



Despite not having the Thanksgiving service at the Asplundh Field House -- normally our largest attended service each year -- instead we had a service in the Cathedral. Congregants contributed fruit offerings which were brought forward to the front of the church by chancel girls and four families, accompanied by our traditional brass processional music. Since large indoor gatherings were restricted, a greatly appreciated initiative was the drive-by version of our Christmas Tableaux. Christmas scenes were staged at the bottom of the Cathedral hill and at several locations up around Cairncrest Drive. Rather than just accepting what we could not safely do, a team put together something different but powerful in its depiction of the elements of the Christmas story. Another innovation for this year was the walk-through Easter scenes arranged throughout the Cathedral gardens. We have not done Easter scenes in the past and many found these representations of the Easter story quite powerful.

In the spring of 2020, I announced my upcoming retirement as head pastor at the end of June 2021. The congregation pursued a selection process supported by Rt. Rev. Brad Heinrichs and Rev. Derek Elphick was chosen as my successor. Soon after in the fall of 2020, Rev. Erik Buss also informed the congregation that he has accepted a call to

serve as a national pastor for England and resident pastor in Colchester. I am deeply grateful for all the roles Erik filled during his time in Bryn Athyn as assistant pastor.

Since Derek has not lived in Bryn Athyn since he graduated from Theological School, I knew the huge learning curve he would face becoming head pastor and that he would need an assistant with institutional knowledge of our congregation. Consequently, I offered to continue to serve as interim assistant pastor for a year or two to support Derek in his new role serving this congregation.

I have tremendously enjoyed so many aspects of serving as head pastor of this organization. Preaching and teaching are important roles. I've appreciated how my background in pastoral leadership helped me in leading this society, including board and pastor's council meetings. I've enjoyed being part of Bryn Athyn Church School, teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade religion and working to support both administration and teachers. While the members and friends of Bryn Athyn Church are much too large a group to easily have regular relationships with everyone, I've found it fulfilling to do what I could to be present in many settings and visit some of the people I knew were going through hard times. I'm sorry for the disappointment of people who have wished that our church could have better supported them and others.

As head pastor I've had the benefit of an amazing number of people to work with, both on staff and in volunteer roles. This is a congregation that does so much to serve so many people. Without the efforts of so many this service could not occur.

For most of 2020-21, plans toward a building project to improve our school and church facilities were put on hold. Starting in March, we resumed the planning process with encouragement from donors that a larger building project could be pursued. Since then, the building committee, under the leadership of Reuben Mergen, has been meeting regularly. We look forward to sharing with you the results of these meetings at the September Semi-Annual Meeting with the expectation to have a follow-up society meeting in October to vote on the final design.

**ASSISTANT PASTOR**

Rev. Erik J. Buss



Nobody could have predicted the craziness of last year which limited so many of the worship services we offer, especially the big special services when more people than usual come together, such as the Tableaux or the New Church Day pageant. I am so proud of how people stepped up and how we developed our programs in creative ways.

Because of the pandemic, we had to upgrade our online experience for worship. At the Cathedral, this meant adding the marvelous quartet of singers to lead our music, and enhancing the sound quality and mixing so that our congregants watching online heard beautiful music, perfectly balanced. We also worked on improving the visual worship experience online, even though distancing restrictions meant we had one less person to do the sound and video job. I was happy with how things improved, and with how we were able to reach people from all over the world at a time when they needed spiritual sustenance. Having strictly online worship services raised awareness for the need to have better sound and video equipment. Fortunately, we received a foundation grant to upgrade our livestreaming equipment so we can serve our online congregation even better going forward.

The Christmas Tableaux has been one of the few times of the year when a large percentage of our congregation gather to experience the same religious event. Since an indoor service was not possible, we opted to have an outdoor drive-by format whereby the scenes were set in various places throughout the Cathedral grounds, which people could view from their vehicles. The intent was to create the experience of what it might have been like to witness parts of the Christmas story. Recorded music was playing through outdoor speakers at the Cathedral, and readings were available so that people could hear as well as see the Christmas story. There was a huge turnout with people commenting on the powerful impact of the images, and some are hoping we could have a repeat of this format next year.

For the Easter service, we were able to offer something I have long wanted to put into practice: an Easter celebration similar to the Christmas Tableaux and New Church Day pageant. We had a walk-through outside the Cathedral grounds, with staged scenes depicting the sad beginnings of the Easter story, leading to the powerful ending when Mary met the risen Lord, and then offering a glimpse of the Lord sending out His disciples. I am deeply grateful to Alison Cole and Rachel Martin for putting in countless hours on these two events so that we could experience the wonder of the Lord's presence in living pictures.

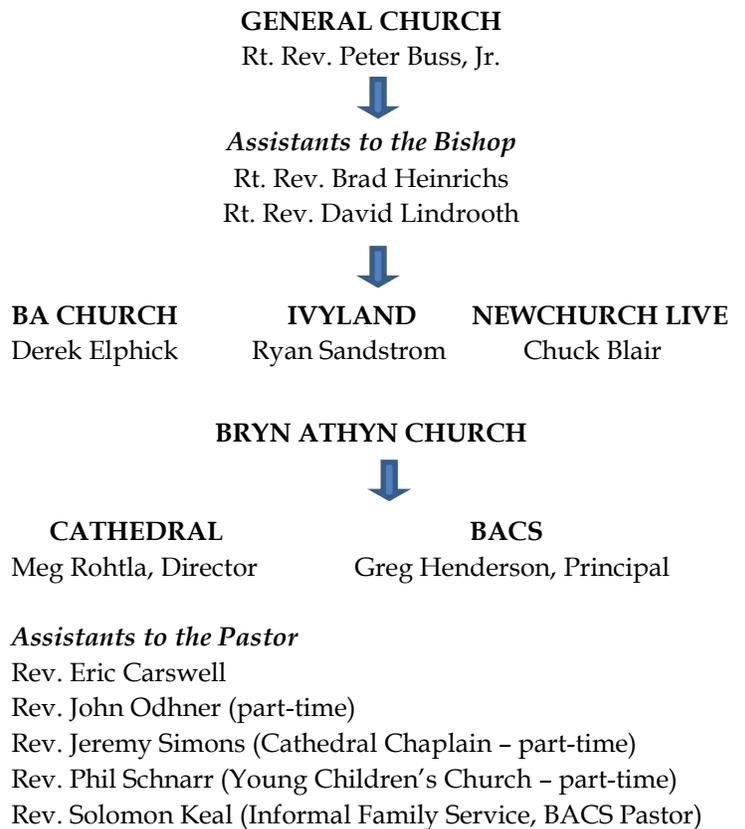
By June, we were able to celebrate New Church Day as a congregation. We enjoyed a picnic together and then watched the outdoor pageant. That coming together to celebrate the birth of the New Church was sweeter than usual because this was the first time we could gather as a community since the government lifted the mandate on COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings. My thanks to Ann Buss, who directed the New Church Day pageant for the past eleven years. She will be missed!

Another achievement this year was the introduction of our new website. Joy Cole, Rob Andrews, Liza Hyatt and many others worked tirelessly to get this up and running. I hope and believe that this redesigned site will welcome and serve both congregation members and newcomers to the church.

It has been a pleasure to serve you for the last eleven years. Bryn Athyn Church has so much to offer to each other and to the world. I wish you well as you move forward. May the Lord be with you and may you serve Him with humility and joy.



Below is useful information for our community members to see how all the organizations in our church community are connected.



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING**

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Reported by Rachel Glenn, Board Secretary

The minutes of the November 11, 2020 Special Society Meeting were approved. The election for open positions on the board of trustees was held. Rachel Martin was elected, along with incumbents Braden Bostock, Christina Irwin and Elizabeth Rogers.

Head Pastor Eric Carswell reported that since early March 2020, our congregation has faced unprecedented challenges with several months of virtual worship services and virtual education for BACS. He thanked all the staff and volunteers for their extraordinary work meeting the changing situations. The building project, which was placed on hold in March 2020 due to COVID-19, was recently restarted by the committee with new energy from potential donors, encouraging us to plan for serving the needs of New Church education for generations to come. He gave recognition to the following departing staff members: Bronwen Henry (seven years as Small Groups Coordinator); Nina Finkeldey (21 years as BATS manager); and Rev. Erik Buss (11 years as Assistant Pastor). He also acknowledged the following staff members for their years of service:

*2020 anniversaries:*

5 years: Liza Hyatt, Natalie Lambertus, Lynn Pitcairn

10 years: Beth Adams, Nathan Odhner, Jessica Baker,  
Erik Buss

20 years: Nina Finkeldey, Brenna Synnestvedt

*2021 anniversaries:*5 years: Kim Alden, Jessica Johns, Bri Kern,  
Diana Mergen

10 years: Nina Dewees, Tara Smith

15 years: Sarah Odhner, Kathy McQueen

20 years: John Odhner, Barbara Rose

25 years: Jeremy Simons

30 years: Linda Kees

Principal Greg Henderson reported that the school year has been a combination of an online and onsite program, modified with various protocols. He gave recognition to the departing staff members: Sarah Odhner (school accompanist for 14 years) and Rev. Erik Buss (taught 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Religion for eleven years).

Treasurer Stewart Asplundh reported anticipating a surplus for the FY20/21 budget. Low offertory contributions, a reduction in tuition income and increased operating expenses, were offset by increased contributions. He presented the FY2020-21 budget, which shows a surplus of \$10,150 for the society and \$34,136 for the Cathedral. The society budget reflects an increase in tuition income, a 2.9% increase in salaries and a 3% NCIF payout. The Cathedral budget anticipates expenses similar to the prior year and a 2.7% increase in income.

**MESSAGE FROM THE NEW HEAD PASTOR**

Rev. Derek Elphick

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Looking back to our arrival in town at the beginning of July already feels a lot longer than it really is because so much has happened. A move, a new job for me, a new school for my youngest daughter, a new life for my wife, finding a new “everything” - bank, doctors, dentist, grocery store, car mechanic, insurance, etc. So very many changes.

Since this Annual Report covers the year prior to my arrival, let me just use this space briefly to say a few things.

First, Gay and I would again like to express our deep appreciation and thanks for the many, many kind gestures, gifts, cards, home-baked goods, etc. we received from you by way of warmly welcoming us to the Bryn Athyn community. Our “welcome” has been a gift that keeps on giving, stretching over several months!

Now that I’ve been actively engaged in the role of Head Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church, let me just say what an honor it is to live and work with you all. This is a bustling town with so many worthy, happy uses. It’s been particularly delightful seeing the Bryn Athyn Church School burst into action with 250 school children benefitting from the noble, edifying, life-changing use of New Church education. And I still have to pinch myself each time I go to “work” at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral – what a treasure that is. It is truly an honor to be the new head pastor here.

Lastly, special thanks to Eric Carswell for being the best kind of assistant one could ask for – knowledgeable, experienced, humble, kind, hardworking, ever willing to help out. Eric has made this transition work seamlessly. Thank you Eric.

**CATHEDRAL DIRECTOR**

Meg Rohtla

215-947-0266 x4601 / [Meg.Rohtla@bacathedral.org](mailto:Meg.Rohtla@bacathedral.org)**Services and Special Events**

While the pandemic was affecting everyone's daily life at the start of this fiscal year, I'm happy to report church services at the Cathedral continued with enthusiasm. The Quarantine Quartet was an integral addition to livestreamed services. Private services were offered continuously, although many families chose to wait, resulting in an extremely busy summer 2021.



Services were reimaged to conform to the changing situation. Thanksgiving service, traditionally held at the Asplundh Field house, moved to the Cathedral. Christmas Tableaux became a drive-by event with a steady stream of 575 cars and over 2,000 people. Young Children's Church held an outdoor pageant for Christmas Eve on December 23 with fire pits set up to keep people warm. For the Christmas Eve festival service, congregants had to pre-register to accommodate all who wanted to attend in person. Another new addition was an Easter Pageant, where people could walk through the Cathedral gardens to view touching scenes from the Word (785 people were in attendance). A traditional Easter adult service was also held after the pageant.

**Building Project and Upkeep**

The Small Chapel roof replacement was this year's major project, with partial funding provided by the Glencairn Foundation. Kurtz Construction Company did the majority of the work, but our in-house masons also contributed 80+ hours resulting in significant savings.

Our in-house masons worked on the never-ending punch list of items to mitigate water penetration, minor building and roofing repairs, and ongoing path repointing. They also completed the following projects:

- A complete recarving of the second of two finials removed in the summer of 2019 and re-installing atop the south chancel roof (see photo).
- Taking down two more pinnacles that need restoration, a project for the next two years.
- Restoration of the chancel gable wall.
- Continued restoration of the south chancel wall, buttress, and side aisle.



Other work included installing a new trash enclosure in the upper parking lot, tree and debris clean-up below the shops, repairs to the back drive, and regular maintenance and repairs.

We are excited to begin working on upgrading our audio and video systems to improve our livestreaming, and expect the new system to be operational in September.

Lastly, I am grateful to all the staff, volunteers, and congregants for their contributions.

**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

Dr. Graham T. Bier

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This past year continued the musical adaptations we made to deal with the pandemic. The "Quarantine Quartet" provided musical framework for those attending Cathedral worship services online and in person. As we established a routine, I was able to expand the roster to include 31 singers, despite the high-pressure situation of being one-to-a-part on microphones. When the congregation could resume singing the hymns, the quartet was phased out for the summer. However, many expressed missing them and we are considering options going forward.

The Informal Family Service was primarily online, so we had a "virtual band" until June when we switched to having outdoor worship services. This was more inclusive and I'm pleased to say we had a grand total of 114 volunteer musicians involved throughout the various recordings for this service, some from out of town (a silver lining of being "virtual").

The Cathedral Choir was inactive in the usual sense, though some members participated in the virtual band for the Informal Family Service. The choir teamed up with the Reading Choral Society to create a virtual choir video for Good Friday.

The Choristers stayed active with a blend of music lessons and virtual projects. They created virtual choir videos for the Christmas and New Church Day services. Special events included the Cathedral Brass at the Thanksgiving and Palm Sunday services. For the drive-through Tableaux, we had a choir consisting of 40 musicians playing over the speakers so the music could be heard throughout the Cathedral grounds, enhancing the tableaux scenes. The Sunset Organ Vespers drew a cautious congregation last summer, and back to an impressive crowd this past June.

My gratitude to everyone involved for their creativity, commitment and bravery -- especially Terry Schnarr and Kenneth Coy on the organ, and Keith Genzlinger on sound. With the help of Keith and Levi McFall, we are making long-term improvements to our Cathedral audio equipment. Going forward, we will have some musical re-building to do, including re-energizing from inactivity and healing from differences of opinion over cautionary pandemic measures. Thank you for your support during this challenging year.

**BRYN ATHYN THRIFT SHOP (BATS)**

Nina G. Finkeldey, Manager

NO PHOTO  
AVAILABLE

What a monumental more-than-a-year it has been for all. We know that its ripple effects are not over, but BATS is up and running again. Bravo!

Throughout the lockdown, I spoke with all of our staff and volunteers. I was moved by their willingness and eager desire to be back in the saddle again. Clearly, not everyone could come back immediately for understandable reasons, but their support was rock solid and appreciated.

We returned to campus on June 7, 2020. It took seven weeks to sort out the monolithic restructuring of our intricately and closely woven operations to comply with CDC guidelines and we reopened for business on July 27. Huge thanks to a hardworking group who worked tirelessly as we navigated our way to re-opening. The waves of work and decision-making were intense. Changes, even when desired, tend to be challenging for people. Professionals in the thrift business had, in the past, advised to refrain from implementing more than three or four changes in a year. As things settled, I counted 31 easily – many of these major.

Gratefully, the Powell House was available to provide the space we needed! We re-designed major procedures, erected tents for inventory, used our two vans constantly, assembled new shelving, rearranged floor displays and cashier locations to accommodate social distancing, minimized furniture, expanded clothing space – and without anyone having nervous breakdowns (it would have been allowed). Face masks, screen separators, fans, quiet spoken customers... well, hats off to our cashiers and helpers! By February, we had navigated the myriad of challenges and exercised the new standard approaches to a point where we dared to call it "routine." We had found our new "normal."

I am humbled by the past year and deeply grateful for all who contributed to raising BATS up again. I am so proud of us all for serving so many on different levels.

On another note, I would like to warmly thank and acknowledge the excellent work and thoughtfulness of our PT data/bookkeeper, Sarah Grubb, who left in the spring to start a new job. She will be missed.

After 21½ years as manager, I decided it was time to retire from this position effective June 30, 2021. Brenna Synnestvedt and Leslee Dewald, long-term assistants, will serve as interim co-managers.

I love this place. BATS and all of the people who have worked here will always be in my heart. It was a significant year with our staff facing many challenges in different

situations rising up to the occasion to treat people with kindness and respect. I have seen quiet greatness this year and throughout my time here at BATS.

Thank you for the privilege of working with you and for you.

**YOUNG CHILDREN'S CHURCH**

Rev. Phil B. Schnarr

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Young Children's Church continues to flourish. For many months during COVID-19, we produced weekly video worship services for families. As our experience grew, the quality improved as did our viewership. One grandfather in our congregation expressed strong appreciation for them. His extended family would gather at his house on Sunday mornings to watch these services and then have brunch together. They found the videos very useful for their regular group of 17 people. One tremendous highlight of the year was the outdoor Christmas Eve pageant, which included real shepherds and their sheep. I would like to thank the Jackson family for many, many years of support and for supplying us with live animals that make such a difference for the children.



Since April, we have returned to in-person worship services with all but two held outdoors in the crepe myrtle grove on the south lawn of the Cathedral. Our attendance has increased with the outdoor services and we are pursuing minor landscaping changes to improve the seating situation.

We are truly grateful for the grandparents and families who volunteered as ushers, project designers and provided refreshments for our services.

This past year my wife, Terry, and I again cohosted a reading and discussion group that met at the Cathedral on alternate Tuesday evenings. Please consider joining us for selected readings from works of the Writings and collateral literature. We have a good time together.

When COVID-19 forced us to switch to virtual meetings, the men's doctrinal reading group continued, though with reduced attendance. I am hopeful that a return to meeting in the Cathedral will re-energize our group, which has been meeting now for 10 years.

Last but not least, I wish to convey how enjoyable my work teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade religion has been. The Word is full of adventure, excitement, villains and heroes. And throughout our studies we marvel at the Lord's patience, His leading, and how an open and faithful heart will carry all of us through whatever struggles life puts before us. Fifth graders are wonderful and I am so happy that the Lord has provided me this rewarding ministry.

**BRYN ATHYN CHURCH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

Greg D. Henderson

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Like the year before it, the 2020-21 school year was one deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a year comprised of two very different educational models. There were periods when classes were held online through remote platforms and video conferencing, and other times when it was onsite with our students in their classrooms.

We learned a lot from teaching remotely during the previous spring, and when circumstances dictated that this school year would be online again this year, we worked hard to learn from past experiences in order to provide our students with a superior version of online classes. Teachers were able to work from their classrooms, materials were delivered back and forth from home to school, and the amount of synchronous instruction through Zoom dramatically increased, allowing teachers and students to maintain connections even when working across the internet.

Even with these improvements, there is no way to truly replicate the experiences within a classroom, and so we were extremely grateful for the periods when we could teach the students onsite. The days spent together in our classrooms were appreciated and valued in ways that they never were in previous years. Thankfully, there were ultimately more days spent in the classroom in person than online. We were able to be onsite at times because of the layers of safety protocols that had been implemented. These included social distancing, mask wearing, increased ventilation, and rethinking how we used our spaces. Each of these mitigation practices allowed us to have school in person, which is clearly recognized as vitally important to the academic and emotional well-being of our students. We are looking forward to a time when we can begin to safely peel away some of these layers.

It is tempting for us to dream of a time when things will be back to the way they were, but while there is certainly reason to believe that COVID protocols will not last forever, things may not return exactly the same as they were. This experience has changed all of us. The pandemic has brought out issues that need to be addressed, such as the emotional losses, the damage isolation has created in the social development of our students and all of our relationships, and the academic challenges remote learning may have caused. There are also ways we have gotten better through all of this. For instance, there are now resources and techniques that became part of our educator arsenal that we have never tried before. We have also gained a new perspective and perhaps a new set of priorities. Our goal is to learn from this experience in order to make a new normal that is even better than the old normal.

Each year we have to say farewell to members of our faculty. Sadly, this past year was the final year for five staff members. Amanda Miller, in our Student Support Center, was a dedicated teacher who was committed to meeting the needs of her students. Bri Kern served as our school counselor and provided care, wisdom and guidance for our students and staff. Sarah Odhner served as our accompanist supporting student performances, chapel services and music classes with love and professionalism. Rev. Erik Buss, the assistant pastor, was part of the team that gave chapel and taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade religion class, walking his students through important topics and connecting them to their lives. Barb Rose spent the past 20 years in the Student Support Center building strong working relationships with her students and making her classroom a welcoming and supportive place for learning. Our school benefitted from the gifts that each of these individuals brought to their roles and we will miss them. While we are grateful that Rev. Eric Carswell will remain on staff and continue preaching and teaching at BACS, we will miss the leadership he provided as the head pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. So much of what we do has been strengthened by his day-to-day involvement with our faculty, staff and students.

Looking back on the 2020-21 school year, I am in awe of what we accomplished. Our teachers pushed themselves to their limits solely because they knew it was the best thing for their students. Parents poured time and energy into supporting school from home on top of everything else happening in their lives. People in our community repeatedly reached out to us with messages of support and generous donations. The students continually displayed their ability to adapt, cope and, most of all, to be kids in all of this.

While it has been, perhaps, a year like none other, we are grateful for the opportunity Bryn Athyn Church has given us to work with our students. Our school is doing important work and it is an honor to be a part of this organization.

**INFORMAL FAMILY SERVICE/BACS PASTOR**

Rev. Solomon J. Keal

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It was a challenging year for the Informal Service community. Yet, there were silver linings and opportunities for growth. Because of COVID-19, services were completely online throughout this year. Worship was pre-recorded, and the video made available on our website. These videos contained the usual informal format, which included an informal talk, music, and pictures illustrating the story and topic. We also instituted a live discussion/fellowship time on Zoom on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am. The planning team had their weekly meetings all year on Zoom.



Graham Bier continued to do an amazing job of recruiting volunteers to participate in virtual bands, which provided music for our Informal Service videos. I worked with a wonderful production team, which included Tykah Echols and Rev. Kurt Asplundh. Despite having a great team, it was challenging to keep producing new videos each week, so we transitioned to three times a month, giving the team a break for one week every month.

Over the course of 2020-21 we produced 48 videos. We also produced a special "Laurel Sunday" video in which the Informal Service and Laurel Camp communities came together online to participate in one service. We ran two different Journey series during this time: "Resilience," and "Kindness." The Informal Service Christmas video featured footage of the drive-by Christmas Tableaux at the Cathedral, as well as the special Tableaux music performed by 40 musicians. For Palm Sunday, we did another drive-by procession in addition to the worship video, which allowed for some in-person community. We had a number of guest preachers this past year: Jeff Smith, Justin Schorran, Coleman Glenn, Kurt Asplundh, David Lindrooth, and Pete Buss. We averaged 80 views per video, and the Sunday online Zoom discussion continues to average 10-20 people.

We had our first chance to get back to in-person services in May. We held three outdoor services on the grounds of Cairncrest between May and June, one of which included the baptism of a child. The average attendance for these outdoor services was 62, and in addition, there was an average of 42 views of the livestream. The Informal Service has now returned to in-person worship in Heilman Hall, where we continue to livestream as well.

One of the silver linings of this past year has been the online Zoom discussion group, which was loved so much that we have continued it, even though we have now

returned to in-person worship services. Another silver lining is that the pandemic forced us to experiment with livestreaming our services; something I have been wanting to do for years. Because of the online presence that the Informal Service now has, we have expanded our community. There are people on the West Coast who occasionally watch the service online, and one individual from North Carolina regularly joins our Sunday online Zoom discussions.

Despite the challenges this year has brought, I continue to enjoy being the pastor for the Informal Service community, now going on eight years. Archived Informal Service videos are available at [www.BrynAthynChurch.org/worship](http://www.BrynAthynChurch.org/worship).

Audio recordings are available at [www.NewChurchAudio.org](http://www.NewChurchAudio.org), under "Location: Bryn Athyn Heilman Hall." The weekly sermon reviews are included in the *Bryn Athyn Post*.

This was officially my third year as the School Pastor for Bryn Athyn Church School. I am head of the Religion Team, which oversees the school's spiritual mission and determines the school theme each year. The theme for the 2020-21 school year was about courage: "Be of good courage, and the Lord shall strengthen your heart." (Psalm 31:24) The theme for the 2021-22 school year is "Seek First the Kingdom of God," (Matthew 6:33). I am also responsible for creating the yearly chapel schedule and overseeing the religion curriculum, as well as participating in the Primary Grades' special worship services. This was my 9<sup>th</sup> year teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade religion. However, our new head pastor, Rev. Derek Elphick, will take over teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade religion for 2021-22, and I am transitioning to teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade religion.

This was a challenging year for the school due to the pandemic. We fluctuated between remote school and in-person school with safety protocols. The transitions were hard on everyone, but it was amazing to see the teachers, parents, and students rise to the occasion to create an environment where New Church education and aspects of our regular school routine could continue.

We had chapel in Heilman Hall without the students in attendance and livestreamed to all the classrooms. Many thanks to Lucas Mergen, Sarah Odhner, and Nathan Odhner for making this possible. Even though we couldn't hold Religion assemblies in person, the compilation videos that each grade produced were very touching. We also could not have our traditional Easter service in the Cathedral. It is my hope that in 2021-22, we can return to having the whole school worshipping together.

Despite the many challenges that this pandemic has brought, I think we've seen that spiritual community is capable of existing even beyond physical community. As we gradually return to a more normal routine, I think perhaps it can also be a reminder not to take for granted the blessings of in-person community.

**MARRIAGE PROGRAM**

Rev. John L. and Lori S. Odhner

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[John.Odhner@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:John.Odhner@brynathynchurch.org)

The past year has brought unexpected blessings for the marriage program. Since all of our groups switched to online meetings, there was a possibility for reaching out beyond a small radius. With expanded parameters, we launched three new groups. One continued for a few months, while two others are still going strong. In conjunction with Grand Human Project, I also began a women’s group, which promises to be ongoing.



Mentoring is an effort to link young couples with older couples, the hope being meeting once a month for support. Since these too would be on Zoom, it no longer mattered where people reside. It was delightful to pair up 18 quartets across the country. Again, some show no indications of ending even though the original goal was to meet for only six months.

*Marriage Moats* continue to be circulated by email and social media. These invite comments and conversations that help all of us to explore what healthy relationships look like. I continue to be grateful to the photographers who allow me to use their beautiful images.

We try to honor anniversaries by publishing them in the *Bryn Athyn Post* monthly and sending cards to the couples. Couples seem to appreciate this small effort.

Last Christmas many of us were feeling isolated. People struggled with not having the traditional celebrations around the holidays. There has been a quiet effort in years past to bring joy to families needing a little extra love. Surprise gifts arrive anonymously on the families’ doorsteps for twelve days, reflecting the twelve days of Christmas. I invited 80 people to be part of six threads, with gifts arriving for a dozen days. It was magical, with both givers and recipients feeling blessed.

I am pleased to report that after not having a Marriage Conference for a few years, we will be having one in February of 2022. Stay tuned for details.

**ATTENDANCE STATISTICS**

	2019-20		2020-21	
	#svcs	Avg.	#svcs	Avg.
Informal Family*	34	85	N/A	N/A
Young Children**	28	36	17	32
Family Cathedral***	34	77	52	59
Livestream views		43		55
Adult Cathedral***	34	133	52	46
Livestream views		55		135
Baptisms (Cathedral)	13		10	N/A
Weddings (Cathedral)	25		26	N/A
Memorials			19	N/A
<b>SPECIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>#svcs</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>#svcs</b>	<b>Total</b>
Maundy Thursday			1	40T
Livestream				21
Good Friday				
livestream only			1	65T
Sunset Organ Vespers****	2	598T	3	N/A
Thanksgiving (AFH 2019)	1	865		
Cathedral 2020			1	50
Livestream				125
Cathedral Tableaux	4	1575T		
Drive-By 2021		135T	1	575C
YCC Christmas Eve	1	147T	1	125T
Family Christmas Eve	3	1266T	1	132T
Livestream		68T		153T
Christmas Day	1	190T	1	24T
Livestream		45T		98T

\*Informal Services primarily had recorded videos and in-person services resumed in May 2021.

\*\*Young Children’s Services started in-person services outdoors intermittently in September 2020.

\*\*\*In-person family services resumed in July 2020.

    In-person adult services resumed in September 2020.

\*\*\*\*No attendance recorded.

C - Number of cars

T-Total attendance

**VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR/  
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR**

Nina C. Dewees (215-947-6225 x206,

[Nina.Deweese@BrynAthynChurch.org](mailto:Nina.Deweese@BrynAthynChurch.org)

215-947-6225 x206 / [Nina.Deweese@BrynAthynChurch.org](mailto:Nina.Deweese@BrynAthynChurch.org)

This past year has continued to limit ways of engaging volunteers and connecting community, but we have persevered! Zoom has been such a gift for enabling small groups to continue meetings for planning, support, learning and inspiration.



The Pay-It-Forward Crew was able to serve a few families with outdoor yard clean-ups, but we shied away from indoor activities. We held a few "Virtual Cook Days" where we cooked in our own homes, while logged into Zoom, and the prepared food was dropped off at the Society Building for the PIFC freezer. This was a way to restock our frozen food collection while enjoying some community building. I was so grateful to be able to continue to deliver meals during the pandemic. Thanks to all who participated. We have also partnered with Wawa through Food Donation Collection to deliver over 50,000 frozen breakfast sandwiches.

An amazing program that started during the pandemic was the quiche donation program. Community members were invited to purchase quiches from The Omelette Bar, owned by Jon Caldwell, and then donate them to the Pay-It-Forward Crew. At the end of each week, Jon donated an equivalent number of quiches and then I and other staff members and PIFC volunteers delivered them to community folks facing challenging times or significant life events, like the birth of a new baby! It has been a wonderful way to check in with people throughout our community.

In the spring, we started a new Stephen Ministry training class with eight eager students, and training will conclude by the end of this summer.

One small group of volunteers who has dedicatedly continued their service throughout the past year has been the flower arrangers, who provided the chancel flowers for the Cathedral worship services. With so many watching the worship services online, it is delightful to have those beautiful arrangements on the chancel. Thank you to that creative team.

Also in the spring, a new group started meeting over Zoom - That was Then, This is Now - Caring for our Elderly Parents. This group meets monthly to support those caring for their parents as they get closer to the spiritual world. It is a tender and thoughtful group.

Volunteering and opportunities for community connection are gradually opening up. Let me know if you'd like to get involved!



**SMALL GROUPS COORDINATOR**

Bronwen M. Henry

[Bronwen.Henry@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:Bronwen.Henry@brynathynchurch.org)



The years 2020 and 2021 continue to be a time of great need and opportunities to innovate our approach to community in the time of a pandemic. Through the pre-vaccination period, we continued to offer the following programs mostly using an online platform:

- "It's Time to Talk and to Listen: A Conversation on Racism, Oppression and Privilege." -- This is a two-part series focusing on conversations regarding race, oppression and privilege. Many people in our congregation as well as newcomers in our community joined this series with thoughtful contributions.
- "Resilience" -- Kirsten Huff led a three-part workshop focusing on our fall Journey series, "Resilience." There were 56 participants from all over the world. More than 12 small groups were formed online (not bad in a pandemic!).
- "Protecting our Mental and Emotional Health During COVID-19: Tending to Ourselves and Others." This presentation featured resources from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, coping strategies and finding support, as well as hearing local individuals' experiences on relationships, stress and mental health.
- Speaker and author, Francis Weller, did a two-part series on navigating grief in a time of radical uncertainty. This program was offered online and in-person.

While there is uncertainty as to when in-person gatherings can resume, we are aware of the continued need for community.

I will be stepping down on July 31, 2021, as Small Groups Coordinator to pursue a new job at Interfaith Philadelphia. However, I will continue as Finding Hope Coordinator, for the community, also pursuing ways to collaborate with Bryn Athyn College on events that would be welcoming to college students. The organization of small groups will be taken on by Nina Dewees, Support and Engagement Coordinator.

**ANNUAL GIVING COORDINATOR REPORT**

Diana M. Mergen  
215-947-6225 x202

[Diana.Mergen@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:Diana.Mergen@brynathynchurch.org)

Fiscal Year 2020-21 is certainly one for the history books! No one could have predicted what type of year it would be. It was full of surprises with every flip of the calendar page. Yet, we managed to meet and exceed our target goals. We received contributions from 482 people, 80 people more than the prior year. I also devoted a big portion of the year to learn our new database, and updating and implementing new programs, such as collecting donations and generating annual statements.

Each year we are reminded of the generosity of many volunteers, donors, and school and church staff whose time, energy and financial support make meeting our goal possible. There are many ways to support our organization. If you would like to learn more, contact me by phone at 215-947-6225 x202 or email [diana.mergen@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:diana.mergen@brynathynchurch.org). Also, have a look at our redesigned website at [www.brynathynchurch.org](http://www.brynathynchurch.org).

**SUPPORT RESOURCES**

There are many ways in which Bryn Athyn Church supports people: through church services, small groups, classes, Bryn Athyn Church School, Journey programs, etc. The following are other resources we encourage you to remember when needed:

**Pastoral Visits:** One-on-one visits with any pastor, at your home or at the Church Office.

**Caring for Marriage:** Providing help in person, mentoring and daily emails. Contact [Lori@caringformarriage.org](mailto:Lori@caringformarriage.org).

**Stephen Ministry:** Ongoing, one-on-one, confidential lay spiritual care for people facing life challenges.

**Pay-It-Forward Crew:** Supporting people in times of need with volunteers willing to help in practical ways.

**Visiting Friends:** Informal, occasional visits offered by volunteers in the church community.

**Emergency Financial Aid:** Short-term financial assistance for those currently associated with Bryn Athyn Church.

To learn more or to get involved, contact Nina Dewees at 215-947-6225 x206 or [Nina.Dewees@BrynAthynChurch.org](mailto:Nina.Dewees@BrynAthynChurch.org).

**CONGREGATION STATISTICS**

Members:	737
Friends of Bryn Athyn Church (age 20 and up):	2253
Young people (ages 15-19):	209
Children (ages 0-14):	367
Total Congregation:	3,566

**MEMBERS AND FRIENDS  
who passed into the Spiritual World  
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021**

John T. Acton	Vaughnlea Gerhard
Donnette R. Alfelt	Mary Jane Greer
Edward G. Allison	Harry G. Grubb
E. Boyd Asplundh	Peter R. Gyllenhaal
Edward K. Asplundh	Howard "Bush" Henry
Myra J. Asplundh	Hyland Johns, Jr.
Peter Bostock	Robert H. Johns
June D. Brock	Robert F. Klein
Sylvia R. Cooper	Edith Norman
James Cronlund	Wayde Pitcairn
Deana P. Duncan	Siobhan Price
Bill Fehon	Judy P. Rhodes
Cora Funk	

**NEW MEMBERS**

**July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021**

Darrell Allen	Bergen Jungé
Kimberly B. Allen	Mary Anne Miller
Shaun D. Buss	F. Lee Moorhead
Paige B. Cronlund	Gail G. Neukum
Derek P. Elphick	Benjamin Odhner
Annalisa S. Franzen	Andrea C. Pitcairn
Zach Franzen	Russell R. Pitcairn
Jena P. Frey	Alex Rohtla, Jr.
Teryn G. Glunz	Stephen Rohtla
Darryl G. Hasen	Meredith G. Schnarr
Emily G. Hasen	Gary R. Schnarr
Scott C. Henderson	Kelsey G. Smith
Cara Hyatt-Nelson	David R. Steen
Jessica Johns	Grayson Zuber
Janet M. Karallus	

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Stewart L. Asplundh

215-947-6225 x210 / [Stewart.Asplundh@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:Stewart.Asplundh@brynathynchurch.org)



Fiscal Year 2020-21 while still impacted by COVID-19 was more normal in many respects. BACS operated with remote and in classroom learning, however, preschool was cancelled for the year. BATS closed during COVID-19, but reopened in late July when restrictions were lifted. We ended the year with a surplus of \$27,798, income up just under 7% and expenses up less than 1% compared to the previous year. The annual fund, school contributions and special (earmarked) contributions were all higher than the previous year. Basket Offertory contributions were below budget and lower than the previous year. Overall contributions were up \$161,814, or 14.8% compared to the previous year.

Last year our PPP loan via the General Church was finalized, and we recently learned that our application for loan forgiveness was approved. We need to determine the appropriate allocations and accounting to see where this will offset various COVID costs.

Tuition income was lower than last year due to a decrease in students, however, we saw a decrease in financial aid, so an overall increase in tuition revenue. With no preschool income and some refunds from the previous year we had a small negative income for the preschool. Due to changing remote and in classroom learning we reduced or eliminated some school activities and after-school programs, reducing or eliminating both income and expenses for those areas.

Despite BATS being closed early in the year and opening in late July with safety protocols in place (masking and frequent cleaning and disinfecting), they successfully ended better than the previous year with sales totaling \$408,378 for a net profit of \$61,530. Nina Finkeldey has informed us that she will be retiring effective June 30, 2021, after having been the BATS manager for 21 years. Many thanks for her many years of service!

Total expenses were up under 1% at \$5,480,813, approximately \$33,000 higher than the previous year. Society and school expenses were both lower, but we had increased building and maintenance costs.

Looking forward to the budget for Fiscal Year 2021/22, we are forecasting a salary increase of 2.8% (based on a 1.4% cost of living increase), 10% increase for the school budget and 5% reduction in building and maintenance costs. The society budget will remain about the same.

The Cathedral ended with a surplus of \$156,775 with a slight decrease in expenses, and about a 5% increase in income. The forecast budget for Fiscal Year 2021/22 is just over \$1,000,000 which includes a small surplus.

Many thanks to our donors for a successful year of meeting and exceeding our goals. We are grateful for your continued financial support.

**CONTRIBUTIONS COMMITTEE**

Fiscal Year 2020-21 was a successful year for contributions. We saw increased giving to the Annual Fund, School, Special and Cathedral Funds (taking into account projects counted for the cathedral last year). Basket contributions, while lower than last year, were just above our goal of \$100,000.

Annual Fund contributions were higher compared to the previous year and \$77,646 above goal. Basket offerings met our goal but were down compared to the previous year. Special contributions were higher than last year. School contributions were higher than the previous year by \$28,000, and \$54,000 above goal for the year.

Overall giving was higher than the previous year by about \$161,000, largely from a combination of broad support from many contributors as well as generous large donations. Overall, this is a good sign of financial support for our church and school!

We thank all of our contributors and appreciate your continued financial support.

CONTRIBUTIONS	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Change	% Change
Direct Contributions	810,863	654,193	712,647	58,454	8.9%
Basket Contributions	147,887	125,330	100,366	-24,964	-19.9%
Special Contributions	132,000	77,048	176,782	99,734	129.4%
School Contributions	240,142	235,425	264,015	28,590	12.1%
	1,330,892	1,091,996	1,253,810	161,814	14.8%

Return to:

*Church Office*

600 Tomlinson Road, Box 277  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania 19009  
Phone: 215-947-6225

**BRYN ATHYN CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor .....Rev. Derek P. Elphick  
Assistant Pastor.....Rev. Eric H. Carswell  
Assistants to the Pastor  
    Rev. Solomon Keal           Rev. John Odhner  
    Rev. Phil Schnarr           Rev. Jeremy F. Simons  
  
Cathedral Director .....Meg Rohla  
BACS Principal .....Greg D. Henderson  
BACS Pastor..... Rev. Solomon Keal

*Officers of the Corporation*

Derek P. Elphick..... President  
Eric H. Carswell ..... Vice-President  
Rachel Glenn ..... Secretary  
Stewart L. Asplundh..... Treasurer

Printing and mailing done by *Bryn Athyn Church*

**SUNDAY SERVICES**

**9:20 am**    Informal Family (Heilman Hall)  
**9:30 am**    Family Cathedral (Cathedral Nave)  
**9:45 am**    Young Children's Church  
              (Cathedral Council Chamber)  
**11:00 am**   Adult Cathedral (Cathedral Nave)