**Annual Report of the Worship Committee 2023**

Members of the Worship Committee: Chair LuAnn Longenecker; members Mary Foyle, Cindy Jobin, and Lisa Mitchell. Ad hoc members: Director of Music Ministry Sharon Kimball, Keyboardist/Accompanist Jo Tree, Pastor Ernest Farrar.

This year, we welcomed new member Lisa Mitchell, who was nominated and confirmed in November. We are thankful for the faithful service of Nancy Gray, who resigned as of December 2022 — Nancy’s efficient leadership and careful record-keeping made for a smooth transition, and we appreciate all she has done! (I have used one of Nancy’s Annual Reports as a template for this one.)

This committee is primarily responsible for preparing the sanctuary for worship each week, which includes changing the paraments and seasonal visuals and scheduling volunteer participants to serve as lay readers, ushers, and communion stewards. Committee members prepare the elements on Communion Sundays and assist communion stewards in an effort to ensure that the elements are served smoothly. As of October 2023, we returned to a pre-COVID Communion practice of serving Communion at the altar rail; it is our hope for 2024 to alternate altar Communion with pew Communion, should increased attendance and volunteer stewards permit. Due to continued health concerns, Communion by intinction will be suspended.

Throughout the year our usual responsibilities and/or activities included:

* Keeping and training a supply of ushers, lay readers, and communion stewards
* Providing for pulpit supply when the pastor was on vacation, at church camp, attending a seminar, or otherwise away. UPL is blessed with capable members and friends who served in Pastor Ernie’s absence this past year: Deb Anderson, Sharon Kimball, Yvonne Long, and Stephanie Page. Further, Pastor Ernie’s November “See All the People” series included guests who dialogued with him during the sermon: Scott & Neena Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Kim, Emily MacRae, and Joan Farrar.
* Maintaining supplies of candles (oil as well as traditional wax), clean paraments, communion cups, gluten free bread and grape juice, and other supplies
* Decorating (and un-decorating) the church for seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost
* Providing feedback to the pastor and music and staff regarding worship services
* Surveying the congregation to provide regular feedback to the pastor on all aspects of worship services and together determining appropriate responses.
* Recommending variations in worship patterns and procedures. This has been greatly enhanced this year through seasonal Worship Planning Retreats with the staff at New Beginnings UMC in Townsend, where Pastor Ernie is also serving. These retreats are in addition to the weekly worship planning meetings between the pastor and Music Ministry Director
* Evaluating the music staff
* Crafting and submitting a budget each year to the Finance Committee to fund the responsibilities of this committee
* Providing a donation for the annual auction

Earlier in this report, I acknowledged our guest speakers. As a retired music educator and church musician, I am amazed at and thankful for the musical gifts offered by our staff, choir, church family and friends, particularly for a congregation this size. Our worship experiences have been greatly enriched by these folks. I would especially like to highlight our guest musicians for this past year:

* Flutists Kristin Clouser and Lisa Mitchell
* Harpist Kathy Lowe (Kathy also maintains our music database)
* Keyboardists (organ/piano) Kristin Clouser and LuAnn Longenecker
* “Patchwork Harmony” group: Deb Anderson, Kristin Clouser, and Jo Tree
* Pianists Alyssa de los Santos, Sammy Escobar, and Karynna Long
* Trumpeters Peter Gilchrest, Beverly Harris, and Rick Lowe
* Trombonist Adam Weber
* Violinist Tiffany Tavares
* Vocalists Deb Anderson, Scarlet Berry, Evelyn Griffis, Sharon Kimball, Hope Snyder, and Jo Tree

I would also like to thank Adam Weber and Eric Vickery, who work diligently to provide an optimal Zoom worship experience for those unable to attend in person; this was a necessity during COVID, and it has proved a valuable worship platform for shut-ins, members on vacation, and potential new members. We also appreciate the help of Glen Reinhardt and Owen Snyder. Further, the PowerPoint slides displayed during the worship service enlarge the bulletin information and direct our eyes upward.

As we look toward a Pastoral change in June 2024, we will be seeking input from the congregation on worship experiences, which can help us in finding a fitting candidate for our congregation. As a relative newcomer to UPL (2021), I have been enriched by stories of people and traditions that make us who we are — that being said, there is also an openness to trying new ways of worshiping that guide us forward. It is a blessing to be affiliated with a faith community that can dialogue in a healthy manner — we may be UMC, UCC, and unaffiliated members, but we are UNITED Parish of Lunenburg!

Respectfully submitted,

LuAnn Longenecker