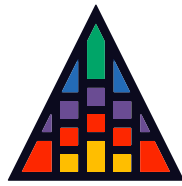




Valley  
Community

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MINISTRY  
& MISSION  
STUDY  
2024



# Valley Community

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## MISSION STATEMENT

### **Open Hearts, Open Minds, Opening Lives to God**

Reflecting God’s love in thoughtful, joyful worship.  
 Growing with vision and vitality, remembering the spirit of our heritage.  
 Serving the community with concern for the world.  
 Supporting just and peaceful living.  
 Encouraging faith exploration.  
 Enjoying laughter, music and one another.  
 A Christian place of belonging for all.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

As a faith congregation, Valley Community Presbyterian Church (VCPC) seeks to honor the important stories and lived experiences of its members and neighbors. VCPC sits on the ancestral and contemporary land of the Dakota people, for whom the land holds historical, spiritual, political, and cultural significance.

We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota people and pledge to interrupt this legacy. We will educate ourselves about Indigenous history and recognize, support, and advocate for our Native neighbors.



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 Golden Valley, MN 55422

763-588-0831

[www.valleychurch.net](http://www.valleychurch.net)

# VALLEY ACCORDING TO VALLEY

I came with Family.  
And stayed because of the Church family.

The “All are Welcome Here” sign out front  
cinched it for me.

In as much as we understand our sameness in  
God’s eyes, I think this pleases God.

We stayed because we had such  
good support for our special needs  
kids, even way back then.

I was in church work for a while. And I’ve never had a reception like when  
I came here. And that’s important. The people were just so friendly. And  
I was invited to come down to coffee. I remember the women standing  
around. I mean, all these women were just wanting to meet me and I just  
felt so loved and I was really having a rough time.

Throughout the year we focus on kids in worship, participating in worship,  
that, you know, they (aren’t) just little bodies that are meant to sit and be  
quiet, and then go away. You know, that participation is important. That  
they can teach us as much as we can teach them about love and respect.

Here in the Valley, we are not our brothers’ or our sisters’ “keeper”  
because no one has the right to keep another person. Here in the  
Valley, we are our brothers’ and sisters’ brother and sister.

~ Rev. Dr. Jim Cook, Parish Associate

Welcome to Valley Community, where we celebrate faiths  
that inspire people to make this a good day for others.

~ Rev. Dr. Jim Cook, Parish Associate

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# WHO WE'VE BEEN

# WHO WE'VE BEEN

## HISTORY OF VALLEY

### IN THE BEGINNING

In the early 1950's, a post WWII building boom was filling the first ring suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale and Crystal with new homes. The Synod of Minnesota started exploring a new church development, focusing on these northwestern Minneapolis communities. A gathering of people from diverse denominational backgrounds and unaffiliated individuals met — and “there were even a couple of Presbyterians.” Elson Peter Balkema, author of “Valley at 25,” stated that the group was willing to be formed under the Presbyterian banner. Locations for worship were considered, doors knocked on, support gathered, and on November 5, 1950, the inaugural service of Valley Community Presbyterian Church was held at Lee Avenue School.

Christian Education was a high priority; the formation of a Sunday School was announced at the second service. Five classes were created and thirteen members volunteered to be teachers. Being Presbyterian, several committees (10 by one count) were formed to handle church operations. Valley Community Presbyterian Church was officially organized on May 20, 1951. It was the first time a new church had been organized by this Presbytery in almost a quarter of a century.

Land was purchased in Golden Valley, building construction commenced, and services were held in the new sanctuary in January 1953. Overflowing from the start, Valley needed to hold three services and three Sunday school class times. Four years later in 1957, the Fellowship Hall, kitchen, and more classrooms were built. Worship moved to the Hall, still requiring two services to handle everyone. With membership continuing to grow, in 1964 the members decided to take the big step to build. Designed by architect Glen Cording, a member of Valley, the new sanctuary's inspiring ceiling looks like four large arks coming together. Seating over 300, the first service was held there in June 1965 and has served Valley well ever since.

In the 1980's a second story was added to the classroom wing, as well as a new vaulted entrance way. Mobility needs were addressed with the addition of an elevator. During the week, these new classrooms became the home for a childcare center, Valley Kids, which operated for several years serving the local community. Over time, numerous updates have been made to all areas of the campus, including adding air conditioning. The last mortgage was retired in 1997. A loan against capital campaign pledges was paid off in 2013. Valley has been debt free ever since.

Today Valley's physical plant is in exceptional condition, ready to serve the needs of our community well.

The history of Valley's social engagement, outreach into the community and world, and care for others is rich and full. Some examples:

- General Assembly allowed ordination of women in 1956; in 1957 Valley elected two women elders. In 1991 Valley was the largest Presbyterian church with a female head of staff.
- In 1961, just 10 years after organizing, Valley sponsored a refugee family from Bulgaria. Sponsorship of families from Greece, Hungary, Vietnam and Ukraine followed. In recent years, a young family from Afghanistan has settled into life in Minnesota with the support of a group of Valley volunteers.
- When Golden Valley organized the first suburban Pride festival in Minnesota, VCPC had a booth and participated in an ecumenical worship service there—and has every year since.
- Valley was in the news in 1962 when Rev. Thurber preached live from Tokyo, Japan, via telephone for a Mission Sunday. This technology had never been attempted before.
- Valley has provided support and volunteers to the local food shelf, PRISM, for many years, including hosting a large Holiday Toy Shoppe in Fellowship Hall every December.
- Social activities are numerous and have included retreats at Clearwater Forest, Fall Festivals, mystery trips, picnics, Christmas dinners, potlucks, parents' nights out and Brew Crew gatherings.
- Valley has responded to needs within our membership, including a 100-strong volunteer crew that provided help to a member with ALS; rides to church events; meals for families in crisis; countless memorial service receptions; and actively communicating these needs to all.

Travel and cross-cultural exchanges have expanded the lives of many members. Valley youth have a long history of mission trips, with the cross-country drives in a yellow school bus every year in the 80's and 90's particularly memorable. There was opportunity to see how others lived as they helped repair homes in Texas, Florida, Colorado, West Virginia, Canada and elsewhere, changing the lives of many teens and the adults with them. Versions of these trips continue to this day. Valley adults have traveled individually or with an organization such as Presbyterian Disaster Relief in-country and to other parts of the world to provide help. Costa Rica was the destination for one group; a trip to Puerto Rico was in the works for 2020.

Then COVID hit. Valley responded quickly and thoroughly to the COVID crisis. A COVID response team was formed, including members with special health concerns. At the last service before closing the building, sanitizer pump stations had been set up and the beloved practice of shaking hands with the minister after worship halted. The existing phone ministry was no longer adequate to meet the needs of worshiping remotely. The mostly volunteer technology group kicked into overdrive. Presbytery grant money was used to purchase cameras, microphones and upgrades to create a professional online streaming worship experience. Services were live-streamed, recorded, and uploaded to a YouTube channel. Videotaped segments of members' children leading the Lord's Prayer were included in the service. Staff regularly checked in on students and emailed them educational materials. Valley was approved for the Paycheck Protection Program so the staff were able to receive full-time pay for a two-month period. On a lighter note, paper replicas of Valley members were taped to sticks and displayed in their "usual spots" in the pews and from then on Rev. Richard Buller had faces in front of him as he preached to the camera.

When the COVID response team felt it was safe to begin a gradual reopening, a group of volunteers sewed hundreds of custom cloth masks with the imprint "Valley Cares". Valley slowly returned to the building. The "Stream Team's" work has become such a positive experience that the commitment was made to keep it available going forward. Events such as memorial services and concerts are also live streamed, recorded and archived. Streaming will continue to be a part of Valley's ministry.

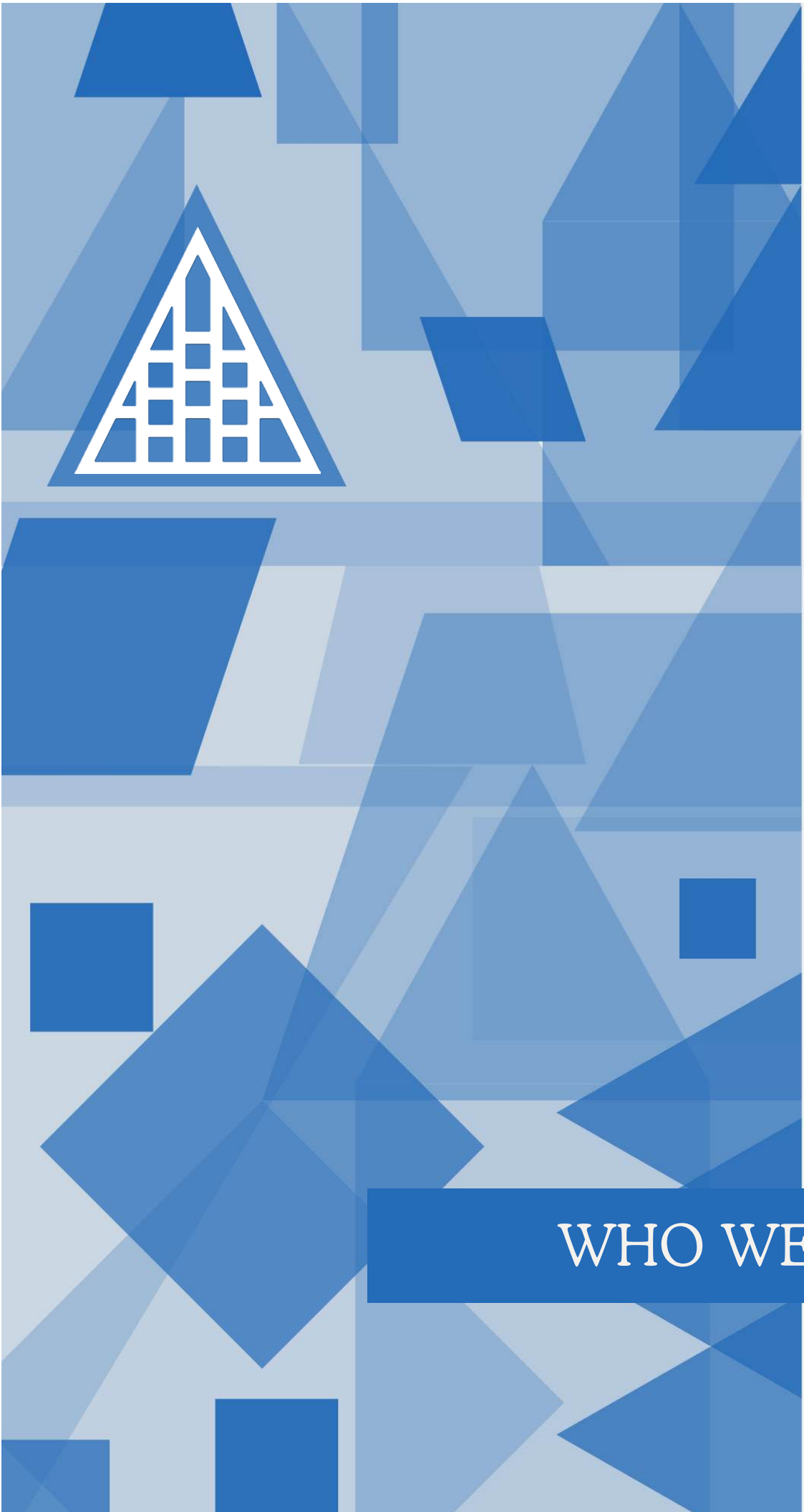
## WHY WE NEED A NEW PASTOR

Valley has always had gifted staff throughout its history. The organizing pastor, Rev. Merrill Nelson, served until the first called pastor, Rev. Marvin Hedberg, started in 1952. His death in 1968 was a challenge to the congregation he had helped to build. In 1969 Dr. James Glassman was hired as head pastor and served until 1978. Rev. Harry Maghakian (1979-1990) and Rev. Deborah Fortel (1991-2002) followed.

The most recent head pastor, Rev. Richard Buller, served longest, from 2003 until his retirement in 2024. Richard announced his retirement several months in advance. Much work was done to allow the congregation to say goodbye and to prepare itself for a smooth transition to a new head pastor. A transitional pastor, Rev. Jim Cochrane, was hired, able to start soon after Richard's departure. Valley recognizes the value and need to have a head of staff who is committed to a long-term relationship; the fact that all the pastors over Valley's history have served almost ten years or longer is a testament to this. The hope and expectation is that the next pastor will call Valley home for many years to come.







# WHO WE ARE

### **BUILDING & FACILITIES**

Valley Community Presbyterian Church is located just off Highway 100 in Golden Valley. Downtown Minneapolis is less than ten miles away and easily accessible. As mentioned in the Land Acknowledgment section, Valley is in easy walking distance from Hahá Wakpádan itself and Bassett Creek Park. It is within five miles of the suburbs of Crystal, Robbinsdale, New Hope, Brooklyn Center and Plymouth.

Care and oversight of the building has been steady over the years. Repairs have been responsibly addressed as needs arose. Equipment updates of the last few years include a new boiler, kitchen freezer and refrigerator. Outside there were major sewer line repairs as well as regular upkeep on the parking area.

The stained glass on the east and west facades of the sanctuary have been repaired, cleaned and resealed with new clear glass storm windows that replaced yellowed plexi-glass storm windows. The transformation was inspirational and the quality of the light coming through the stained glass is remarkable again.

The Deacons' kitchen upstairs was completely gutted and rebuilt from scratch, opening up 3 small rooms into one large welcoming and highly functional kitchen just off the narthex. It has been a perfect spot for buffet style dinner gatherings, wedding preparations and Sunday Communion preparation.

In recent years, Valley has been able to go beyond just addressing immediate needs, focusing on proactively improving the building and enhancing the environment.

- Lower level bathrooms upgraded for ADA compatibility
- Replacement of all windows in the education wing and fellowship hall
- Flat roof fully replaced with TPO roof membranes, drainage areas addressed
- Removal of asbestos throughout the entire building
- Fresh coat of paint throughout
- Staff and pastoral office upgraded
- Air conditioning added to Fellowship Hall
- New furniture purchased for several meeting rooms.
- Complete shift to LED lighting inside and outside the building

It is good to note here that the building has been used by other groups of worshipers as well. There have been Korean and Ghanaian congregations who have used the sanctuary in the past. Currently a Liberian congregation meets midday each Sunday.

In 2023 Valley installed an array of 120 solar panels on the flat roof - a major step forward in reducing its carbon footprint. Valley also anticipates being in a position to sell energy back to the grid. Costs of installation were covered by a Federal tax rebate and by funds from a generous member's estate.

With the arrival of COVID in 2020, Valley committed to improving the air quality of the facility. A campaign called "Breathing Life" was launched in which the HVAC system was overhauled and improved. As the congregation was kept from meeting in person for a season, Valley undertook the construction of a sound booth up in the sanctuary which allowed for the streaming of its services. Both projects were well received and supported by the congregation.

Beginning in June 2024, the congregation shifted to meeting in the Fellowship Hall downstairs in order to facilitate the complete renovation of the sanctuary. In addition to the asbestos removal, new carpeting and tile were installed. The beautiful "four arks" high ceiling of the sanctuary had its wood deep cleaned and refinished. Walls were painted. Services resumed there in the fall of 2024.

The east side of the building has a playground which was greatly expanded in 2023 as a memorial to member Betty Brooking. Situated just outside of Fellowship Hall, it is a popular place for the children to play after services. To the west of Fellowship Hall, there is a large patio area which has one of two Peace Poles. This area is used for picnics and other social events throughout the year.

On the east edge of the property, Valley has sponsored community gardens since 2010. Currently, there are 40 gardeners, 75% of whom are neighbors of Valley and not members. It was established to nourish community connections and relationships with fellow gardeners of all faiths and backgrounds. The garden is a beautiful example of the nurturing and growing community here at Valley.

In the next few years, the shingle roof above the sanctuary will need to be redone and an upgrade done for the parking lot. Thanks to the estate gift of a generous benefactor, Valley has been able to fund these projects. Further details are in the financial section of this report.



Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle



Photo by Amy Anderson

# WHO WE ARE

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### MEMBERSHIP & WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Valley Community Presbyterian Church has 384 active members in addition to children, families, and other individuals who regularly engage in worship and programming within the congregation. While situated firmly in a neighborhood, Valley draws members from both nearby and further away. Valley's membership represents over 90 unique ZIP codes, some within blocks of the church and others hundreds of miles away. Valley mourned the deaths of 15 members in 2024. In addition, four transferred membership to churches closer to their homes, and three were removed due to inactivity while cleaning up the rolls. Valley is committed to attracting and welcoming new worshipers amid losses in membership, however. New member classes joined the church in October 2022 and December 2023, and church members have identified membership attraction and engagement as a crucial building block in the coming years in recent congregational polling and surveys.

The COVID pandemic created new challenges for Valley, but also allowed for new ministry opportunities. Valley quickly pivoted in early 2020 to offer a robust and engaging online worship experience, and has seen increased engagement in online worship. Now over 4 years later, the church finds that nearly half of all worship attendees worship online. Some log on due to challenges of that morning, others join from vacation, and others worship exclusively online due to geographic distance.

### DEMOGRAPHICS & DIVERSITY

Valley, like many Presbyterian churches, is a mostly white, middle-class congregation, but each individual is valued for the diversity that they bring, whether through age, lived experience, or religious upbringing. As of the 2022 Church Statistical Report to the national office, Valley had 98 children and youth under the age of 18, and roughly 56% of the church's membership was under the age of 55. The congregational make-up also varies in religious background. Some members are lifelong Presbyterians, but many come from other Christian traditions such as Lutheran, Methodist, Evangelical, Mennonite, and Roman Catholic, to name a few.

Staff and members work to ensure that people of all cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds feel welcome and valued. That is done through work with community partner organizations, amplifying long-silenced voices in the pulpit, and leading with love above all else. Regardless of where anyone comes from, Valley membership is rooted in its mission statement: open hearts, open minds, and opening lives to God.

# WHO WE ARE

## WORSHIP & MUSIC

### OPEN HEARTS

Worship is an essential part of life at Valley. Everyone comes for their own individual reasons, but they are greeted with the same warmth of welcome and hospitality once they arrive. They are greeted with diverse music offerings, engaging sermons, and a sanctuary filled with a large collection of liturgical banners that all add to the worship experience.

Valley gathers for worship at 9:30am on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary. The order of worship would be familiar to anyone who grew up in a Presbyterian church, as it follows a traditional structure and many hymns are sung from the Glory to God hymnal. Worship is led by the pastor with assistance from Valley's Commissioned Ruling Elder and lay readers.

While the sermon is often delivered by the Pastor, Valley has a tradition of bringing in another voice to preach one Sunday each month so members can find the Word in new and different places. This is sometimes the Commissioned Ruling Elder, while other times it is one of the parish associates, a pastor from one of the partner congregations, or individuals from community organizations. This also has the effect of allowing the Pastor to spend more time with church members throughout that week and on Sunday morning instead of preparing a sermon.

Since the COVID outbreak, many churches question whether the convenience of online worship experiences keep people from coming back to in-person worship. Valley remains committed to providing ongoing virtual worship options. It has been a cornerstone for many mobility-challenged members and an effective way to keep other members engaged when they are on vacation, at the cabin, or south in the winter. Numbers remain strong online each Sunday, and while many members will tune in for worship virtually every so often, they still try to attend in-person for the fellowship and community that thrives at Valley.

Occasionally throughout the year, Valley holds additional worship services, most notably during Lent, when Valley has a midweek experience that begins with a potluck supper before moving into a time of worship. Most recently, in 2024, this worship took the form of guided conversation around small tables followed by singing together as a group. Lenten worship in 2023 was an exploration of the global church, with stories shared from all over the globe each week.

Until 2017, Valley had two Sunday morning worship services. One service was rooted in Valley's traditional music, including traditional hymnody and liturgy, while the second, called Wellsprings, led with more contemporary music. The Wellsprings service ran for nearly ten years. The reasons for and the reactions to the return to a single traditional service are complex and mixed. A number of regular Wellsprings worship attendees remain active in the church and the question remains how the music, liturgy, and "vibe" of Valley's services might

reflect the diversity of congregational views surrounding worship. It could very well be a topic to return to in the future.

Worship provides weekly opportunities for members to experience different styles of music. The music is led by the Music Coordinator, Rachel Williams, who most often is at the piano. Worship also includes regular monthly musical offerings by the bell choir and vocal choir as well as a constant influx of guest musicians. From classical strings to singer/songwriters to folk and bluegrass, Valley enjoys vastly different styles of guest musicians week-to-week.

Valley did not have a pipe organ for much of its history, even though the sanctuary was built with the provisions for an organ. A church in nearby Richfield, MN, merged with another congregation in early 2006, leaving its building and no longer able to use its pipe organ. Valley members saw an opportunity not only to bolster its own worship, but also to provide new life to the old and much-loved organ.

After receiving the organ as a gift, an organ committee was formed in 2006 and got to work raising the \$60,000 necessary for restoration and installation. Looking at the sanctuary now, it feels like the space had been purpose-built for the organ. Its beautiful music offers a much-loved nostalgia to worship on the fourth Sunday of the month when it is played by a contracted organist.

Another way Valley and music intertwine is through the monthly "Fridays in the Valley" concert. A stipend is generously donated by a couple of members to draw in chamber music ensembles every month, and one of Valley's community mission partners is named as the beneficiary of each concert. The concerts are free and open to the public, with 100% of free-will donations going to the designated nonprofit.

Fridays in the Valley has been a mainstay at Valley for over a decade and it serves many purposes. For one, it brings a number of individuals into the church who may not have come to Valley before. It gives exposure to small chamber ensembles and the community partners who benefit from the offerings. It is just another way Valley seeks new and creative ways to serve.



Photo by Amy Anderson



Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle

# WHO WE ARE

## EDUCATION

### OPEN MINDS

Education has always been a core value at Valley. Members are attracted by “great educational programs for all ages,” to quote a response to a recent survey question. Adult education has, from the beginning, included far more than Bible study. There have been great Bible lessons—a new Kerygma series drew many participants in the 80’s, for example—and small Bible study groups continue to this day. Adult classes held most every Sunday morning after worship include specific Bible questions, but also range from “Israel and Middle East” to “Active Parenting” to “World Hunger.” Selections for lifelong learning in faith and community have included:

- Jewish Community Action: Understanding White Nationalism
- Recalibrating Our Spiritual GPS
- Plastic Alternatives
- Moving Mountains Together: Affordable Housing in the Twin Cities
- The Climate Crisis
- The History & Traditions of our Liberian Immigrant Neighbors
- Where Christian values and National Interests collide - Ukraine, Palestine and more

Skilled teachers, both from within Valley and from the community, have led the classes which are often live-streamed and/or recorded. Until recently, Valley had a sustainability group which sponsored special education events to offer ideas for how to walk more softly in the world. This work has been deemed so valuable it is now integrated into our adult education with a commitment to offer a class in this area every term.

Valley members take advantage of additional educational opportunities, particularly from the Presbytery. Several Valley members participated in an anti-racism pilgrimage, a weekly Zoom study and discussion series. Hennepin County sponsors education and challenges to lessen the use of plastics or food waste, and Valley has had teams participating. Men’s retreats at Clearwater Forest often center around the teachings of a book. Valley’s women have attended the women’s camp, Clearwater Chrysalis, every year since it started in 1984, gaining life and spiritual insights from keynote speakers and other women from across the Synod.

Another facet of Valley adult education is the “Friendship Group.” This monthly Sunday morning gathering for disabled adults is led by a dedicated group of members who offer Bible study, crafts, music and more to a group who have created lifelong friendships.

Children are valued at Valley every day. All ages are welcome in the sanctuary for Sunday morning worship, and space is available in the kids' corner for preschoolers to move while they worship. Pews nearby are reserved for young families, and a family room is located inside the Sunshine Room that offers a quiet space for those who need a break from worship. During worship, children are invited up to the front steps to listen to a children's sermon after which time children aged 3 to 3rd grade can leave to attend Faith Formation in the Sunshine room. It is a structured, class-like environment that focuses on the scripture lesson for the week.

Every summer a Vacation Bible Camp is held, attracting children from the congregation as well as beyond Valley membership. Crafts, games, even visits from animals fill this time. An "Echo" service is held one Sunday during the summer, in which children and youth share music and insights from their time together with the whole congregation.

TEAMS Program is for kids entering 4/5 grades. Through special projects using a STEM model, they solve problems and complete projects as a team on Sunday evenings. Examples range from solar powered cars to candy machines. They also explore their faith together through spirituality conversations that focus on current events paired with stories and scripture from the Bible. Working together and building relationships while having fun is the foundation of TEAMS. Creating a space that allows them to ask questions about faith and the world around them continues to help grow strong, faithful youth who are committed to the mission of Valley.

Youth groups for middle school grades 6-9 and senior high grades 10-12 meet every Sunday evening, engaging in Bible study and faith discussions, team building opportunities, and fellowship. Throughout the year there are mission opportunities for them. In the summer, a mission trip is organized for each age group, traveling often to other parts of the country to connect with other youth groups and provide service to diverse communities. The youth work hard to raise funds for these trips, including with a Valentine cookie sale.

All children going into grade 3 and older can go to summer camp at Clearwater Forest, the Synod and Presbytery-owned camp two hours north of Valley. Scholarship money is available to make it possible for any child to go.





# WHO WE ARE

## FELLOWSHIP

### SIGNATURE EVENTS

This congregation is called *Valley Community* Presbyterian and the formation of community through relationships and fellowship is an essential part of life at Valley. This sense of connect- edness is not only highly valued, it is also mentioned again and again as a reason people come back a second time to Valley and why so many make Valley their home church.

Gathering for social events is something a community does. Some celebrations have been a tradition for many years. *Fall Festival* is just what it sounds like: a time in the autumn to gather for food and fun. Typically, this has included fund raising, with both silent and live auctions, and the proceeds often go to improvements in the kitchen.

*Trunk-or-Treat* originated during COVID as a way to let Valley and neighborhood children safely go out for Halloween. The trunks of members' cars in the church parking lot are open and decorated with treats handed out to costumed children. Even after COVID, this has continued to be a favorite, safe way to trick or treat.

In December, an annual *Christmas Dinner* is held in Fellowship Hall. Holiday food, often with a theme, and entertainment is offered. For some, this is their main holiday celebration meal.

The *Y.E.S. (Youth Education Scholarship) Tea* occurs every spring. This popular event is hosted by a number of volunteers, each of whom set and decorate their table, sometimes quite elaborately. A full high tea is offered with both savory and dessert courses. Many guests are from outside Valley, and money is raised to provide scholarships to Valley's graduating high school students.

Throughout the year, various Valley groups meet regularly or for one-time events, open to anyone interested. A Brew Crew brews and bottles beer under the guidance of an award-winning home brewer. Two groups gather for monthly lunches. Parents Night Out is a welcome chance for young children to be cared for at Valley while their parents enjoy time away. Craft days, puppet shows, concerts, Easter egg hunt, Twins game — all are gradual- ly building back to pre-COVID frequency, all helping to create even stronger bonds in the Valley community. Not to forget the most frequent beloved fellowship tradition of all: coffee and doughnuts after worship!

# WHO WE ARE

## MISSION & OUTREACH

### OPENING LIVES

Being part of mission in the Valley means being part of a community that not only cares and connects but takes action. Seeing a need that is beyond any one member, a community of care exists, formed by people who have decided to be known by what they do for others. Never saying “This is enough,” but asking, “What’s next?” Blessed and ready, Valley pays it forward.

Valley Community Presbyterian Church’s mission work has always been rooted by three pillars – providing food, housing, and care for vulnerable populations, such as children and vulnerable adults. Throughout its 70+ year history, Valley has formed long lasting partnerships with community organizations that continue to bring positive impact to the surrounding community every year.

These are Valley’s Community Mission Partners:

- PRISM (People Responding In Social Ministry) – Valley is a founding member
  - provides dignity-centered resources for food, housing, and other basic needs in the NW Twin Cities suburbs.
- Liberty Community Church
  - the first and only African-American-led Presbyterian congregation in Minnesota aligned in solidarity with the North Minneapolis community.
- Clare Housing
  - provides affordable and supportive housing options that create healing communities and optimize the health of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Every Meal
  - a local nonprofit that addresses the weekend food gap for children. Valley helps deliver weekly supplemental food to students at a local school.
- Habitat For Humanity
  - brings affordable housing to Twin Cities area communities. Valley organizes volunteers to work on a Habitat project over the January MLK holiday.
- Bridging
  - provides donated furniture and household goods to families and individuals transitioning out of homelessness and poverty.
- Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery
  - offers free, voluntary services for parents who face barriers such as poverty, domestic violence, and other difficult situations, including caring for their children in difficult times

- Meals on Wheels
  - provides hot, nutritious, lunch-time meals for seniors and for individuals who are not able to prepare meals or leave their homes
- PC(USA) Mission Agency
  - connects Presbyterians and combines resources to provide emergency and ongoing aid both around the country and around the world.
- Father Project
  - The FATHER (Fostering Actions To Help Earnings and Responsibility) Project's mission is to assist fathers in overcoming the barriers that prevent them from supporting their children economically and emotionally.
- Clearwater Forest
  - a shared camp and retreat ministry of the Presbyteries of the Twin Cities Area, Minnesota Valleys, Northern Waters, Northern Plains, and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies.
- Beacon Interfaith Housing
  - an Interfaith housing collaborative, Valley has supported Beacon by advocating for public funding, prayers, and raising seed money for Emerson Village, an affordable housing community

Each of the above-listed partners provides a service to the community that Valley supports with both time and funding. Special events are hosted by Valley, such as a barbeque at Clare Terrace, or the PRISM Holiday Toy Shoppe each December. A number of Valley members volunteer for all of these partners, either on a regular schedule or for specific projects. A link to a listing of these partners and their websites is included in the appendix.

In addition to Valley's Community Mission partners, many other opportunities are available to support mission in the area.

- **Special Giving** – quarterly extra giving campaign that rotates the mission partner who is receiving the extra collections
- **Fridays In the Valley** – concerts held in Valley's sanctuary on Friday evenings, with a different mission partner each time selected as recipient of funds raised during the event
- **Refugee family sponsorship** – In November 2021, Valley began sponsorship of a family from Afghanistan seeking asylum in the US. Valley volunteers provided employment, transportation, medical and legal advocacy, English and acculturation, and many other services
- **Keys To Success** –Organized through Beacon Interfaith Housing, Valley participated in helping homeless families with furniture, appliances, and other household items when moving into stable housing
- **Breathing Life Campaign** – Capital campaign during COVID pandemic that also included significant funds for four of Valley's longtime mission partners: Beacon Interfaith Housing, Liberty Church, Clearwater Forest and PRISM
- **Alternative Gift Catalog** - Provides members a way to give a gift to a special person who will enjoy a donation to a charity that is close to their heart
- **Noble School** - Valley is well represented at a nearby elementary school, with volunteers to help both students and teachers

Valley's budgeted mission giving for 2023 was \$25,000, and is designated to PCUSA Unified Giving plus several causes identified by the Mission Possible team that support causes of youth, housing, domestic aid, and international mission. Special offerings on Sunday mornings and other giving opportunities throughout the year such as those listed above add to this total. Endowment grants, youth fundraising, in-kind items, and donations to the church that are designated to a specific mission cause are included in the final total. In 2023, in part due to the mission directed portions of the generous bequest of a member described later in this report, Valley's total giving to mission was almost \$350,000.

In the context of Valley's extensive involvement with its mission partners and projects, when PCUSA began certifying churches as being Matthew 25 congregations in 2019, it was a natural next step for Valley.

As a Matthew 25 congregation, Valley has pledged to build congregational vitality by engaging the surrounding community and being the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus Christ, as well as empowering every member to discover their individual calling from the gifts God has given them. There is a commitment to dismantling structural racism by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices, and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice, and oppression of people of color. Valley is committed to eradicating systemic poverty, looking to the governmental laws and political structures that need to be addressed in order to dismantle the systematic disadvantaging of people.

Valley's Sunday bulletin ends with the reminder that "Worship has ended and the service has begun," because doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God is lived out every day.



# WHO WE ARE

## LEADERSHIP & COMMITTEES

### SESSION & DEACONS

Valley Community Presbyterian Church is governed by the Book of Order and ordains and installs ruling elders to serve on Session as the governing body of the church. The elders also serve as trustees. Valley's Session is composed of 15 elders who lead or co-lead 11 committees. The Session meets monthly, with each meeting consisting of reports from each committee, pastoral reports, and matters needing votes for approval. Elder appointments are three years long and are on a three-year rotation to ensure 2/3 of the Session are returning members.

#### **Session committees are:**

- Church Growth
- Educational Ministries
- Fellowship
- Finance
- Mission Possible: Peace and Justice
- Nominating
- Personnel
- Property
- Stewardship
- Technology and Communications
- Worship and Music

In addition, there is an Endowment Committee which meets quarterly to review the investments and to discuss grant requests. The head of the Session finance committee serves on Endowment. All grant requests require Session approval.

At times, a task force is formed to temporarily address a need. The work of the now disbanded Earth Care task force continues and has been incorporated into regular educational opportunities and general policies of the church. The Immigration task force oversaw the sponsorship of the Afghan refugee family who arrived in Minnesota in November, 2021. Needing much intense physical and financial support when they first arrived, the task force was later disbanded with celebrations as the family gained independence.

In 2021, Valley convened a Land Acknowledgement Task Force to write a land acknowledgement statement. The Task Force also leaned into taking additional actions that breathe life into its land acknowledgement commitments. In 2022, the Task Force partnered with cultural advisors, community organizations, and an Indigenous contractor to develop the [Hahá Wakpádan / Bassett Creek Oral History Project](#). It also developed a 2-minute video for [How to Pronounce Hahá Wakpádan](#) in reference to the Dakota name for a nearby creek. The Task Force continues to work internally and externally on raising awareness of local Indigenous experiences and priorities.

Valley's Board of Deacons consists of 15 deacons. Each deacon is responsible for a Care Circle, composed of a number of Valley members, often grouped by some common demographic factor. Deacons check in with their circle and find opportunities to send cards, notes, or call as a way to connect with members and remind them that they are loved. Deacons gather for meetings as the full Board of Deacons regularly throughout the year. Deacon terms last 3 years.

# WHO WE ARE

## VALLEY STAFF & PARISH ASSOCIATES

### FULL-TIME POSITIONS



- Pastor and Head of Staff (currently filled by transitional pastor Rev. Jim Cochrane)
  - serves as a theological and spiritual resource for individuals and the congregation as a whole as well as its various ministry units. Provides spiritual and worship leadership to the congregation. Works with staff and applicable church leadership bodies (Session, Deacons, and Endowment Committee)



- Educational Ministries Director: Sheila Sheldon CRE
  - develops and provides spiritual, relational, and organizational leadership for the Children Ministries, Youth Ministries, Family Ministries and Adult Education Ministries. Collaborates with the pastor to plan and carry out the vision of the church



- Program and Communications Coordinator: Mariah Messer
  - provides support for all education programs and assists with social media and general communications for Valley. Collaborates with the Educational Ministries Director and other staff to plan and carry out the vision of the church



- Office Administrator: Savannah Martinez
  - provides administrative support to the pastor as well as other staff, members of the Session, and Board of Deacons. Maintains accurate and up-to-date financial reports showing actual spending compared to planned spending by account, under direction of the church's Treasurer and Finance Chairperson. Communicates information to membership on a regular basis. Serves as a focal point for all church scheduling, activities, etc.

### PART-TIME POSITIONS

- Music Coordinator: Rachel Williams
  - organizes and manages the music program for worship and other Valley musical events. Collaborates with the pastor in music selection in support of the weekly and special worship and liturgical themes. Coordinates and supports special music soloists and ensembles
- Choral and Hand Bell Director: Janet Carlson
  - directs the Handbell Choir at one or more traditional services a month from September through May. Conducts and leads the choir for worship and other Valley musical events. Leads the Choir for practice prior to each planned performance and collaborates with the pastor in music selection in support of the weekly and special worship and liturgical themes

- Custodians: Hunter and Ben Sheldon
  - responsible for the entire facility and grounds, insuring the facility and grounds are clean, safe, and attractive spaces for members, guests, and outside organizations who use our building and grounds
- Sunshine Room Lead: James Decker
  - provides safe and nurturing care for babies and young children during assigned services

## PARISH ASSOCIATES

The parish associates are pastors, many retired from congregational leadership, who volunteer their time and talents to offer sermons and sacraments during Sunday worship and provide other support to the head pastor throughout the church year. They are:

- Rev. Dr. Jim Cook
- Rev. Bill Davnie
- Rev. Rebecca Tollefson
- Rev. Kate O’Brien Soltau
- Rev. Dr. Nancy Phillips
- Rev. David Phillips



Photo by Amy Anderson

# WHO WE ARE

## FINANCE

### ANNUAL BUDGET

For being a small, community church, Valley has a robust and well-managed financial portfolio. A summary of Valley's budget for 2024 is listed below. The balanced budget indicates Valley's continued commitment to good financial stewardship and sustainable ministries.

<b>INCOME</b>		
	<b>Regular Envelopes</b>	\$409,701
	<b>Non-pledging Members</b>	\$22,000
	<b>Initial Offering</b>	\$600
	<b>Per Capita Envelopes</b>	\$7,000
	<b>Non-member Giving</b>	\$5,000
	<b>Prior Year Pledges</b>	\$2,000
	<b>Loose Offering</b>	\$2,000
	<b>Facility Usage</b>	\$12,500
	<b>Interest/Dividends</b>	\$700
	<b>Special Offerings</b>	\$8,000
	<b>Funding from SMF</b>	\$48,004
	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$517,555</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
	<b>Salaries</b>	\$231,911
	<b>Employment Allowances</b>	\$32,659
	<b>Administration</b>	\$28,250
	<b>Communications and Tech</b>	\$3,500
	<b>Property Care/Improvement</b>	\$62,360
	<b>Stewardship Campaign</b>	\$500
	<b>Per Capita</b>	\$16,325
	<b>Educational Ministries</b>	\$7,400
	<b>Worship and Music</b>	\$8,400
	<b>Fellowship</b>	\$500
	<b>Church Growth</b>	\$750
	<b>Mission</b>	
	Local Mission	\$6,000
	PC(USA) Mission	\$9,000
	Special Offerings	\$8,000
	Loose Offerings to Mission	\$2,000
	<b>Total Mission</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
	<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$517,555</b>



## DEDICATED ACCOUNTS

In addition to the regular income that comes in throughout the year, Valley also has a number of accounts dedicated to specific programs and services. The total amount of those accounts on December 31, 2023 was \$516,507.89. While there are a vast number of accounts serving a variety of programs, a list of some of the larger accounts is below and a more detailed breakdown can be made available upon request.

Local Giving	\$19,282.64
Youth Accounts	\$14,449.52
Youth Scholarships	\$12,902.44
Memorials	\$12,902.44
Supportive Ministries Fund*	\$263,709.61
Adult Mission Trips	\$34,182.58
Building Contingency	\$113,209.19

\* This special fund was created to provide a source of supplemental funding for ordained and other staffing needs to support VCPC ministry not covered by income received from pledges.

## ENDOWMENT

Valley has been blessed to have an endowment fund to provide support to individuals and organizations above and beyond the annual budget process, especially when there is extraordinary need. These funds have been established by members and friends of Valley Community Presbyterian Church and provide funding for grants that allow for the continuation of the church's mission and ministry both within and beyond our church family.

The funds are invested, with 4.5% of the total value of the fund available for disbursement every year, calculated on a 36-month trailing average. The market value of the endowment fund on June 30, 2024 was \$1,788,031, with \$58,614 available to give out in 2024. Of note, a new fund was created in 2024 with a \$15,000 seed gift to provide annual scholarships to graduating scholars of Liberty Community Church's 21st Century Academy. The fund will begin paying in 2029.

A link to a listing of all the funds in Endowment is included in the appendix.



## ESTATE GIFT

In late 2023, Valley received an estate gift from a recently-passed member valued at \$1.5 million. A committee was formed to determine the best use of those extraordinary funds, and it was decided that it would be used first-and-foremost to support Valley's various mission partners and to advance the cause of racial justice. This list gives details of that breakdown, by cause and/or organization.

\$100,000	Racial Justice Reparations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$50,000 - Liberty Community Church</li> <li>\$50,000 - Makoce Ikikcupi (Indigenous Land Recovery Project)</li> </ul>
\$100,000	Organizations addressing the needs of Poverty, Children, Women, Housing, and Elder Justice:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ten Valley mission partners received \$10,000 each.</li> </ul>
\$200,000	Valley Family Stewardship fund in Endowment to continue the member's pledge in perpetuity
\$100,000	Barbara J. Johnston Scholarship fund in Endowment for women in ministry
\$100,000	Supportive Ministry Fund (described above)
\$135,000	Eco-Justice: purchased solar panels for the church
\$100,000	Disability Justice: planned elevator improvements in accordance with ADA requirements
\$65,000	Technology and Communication upgrades
\$600,000	Upgrades to sustain our physical building:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Painting</li> <li>Lighting</li> <li>Sanctuary renovation</li> <li>Peaked roof repair*</li> <li>Fellowship Hall floor replacement*</li> <li>Parking lot resurfacing*</li> <li>Building maintenance fund*</li> </ul>

\*projects that have been funded but still to be completed

Valley has had a number of capital campaigns in the past with none on the horizon, currently. The last campaign, Breathing Life, concluded in 2022. It raised a total of \$98,592, of which \$40,000 went directly to mission partners. The remaining amount was used to repair the roof and install updated HVAC in various parts of the building.

## FINANCIAL POSITION

Valley's financial position is strong. Stewardship and care for what God has given us runs deep in Valley's identity, and that shows through prudent investing and preservation of funds. The church has assets totaling over \$2 million, much of which is invested for long-term growth and stability. Other funds are earmarked for building improvements over the next 3 years to ensure the building will be an asset to the community, not a liability. What remains is spent after asking the question: how can this help someone who needs it?



WHO ARE WE  
CALLED TO BE?

# WHO ARE WE CALLED TO BE?

## MEMBERS' THOUGHTS

### WHAT MAKES VALLEY TICK?

In an honest effort to understand what it is that draws people to Valley, both initially and ongoing, several in-person listening sessions were held. An online survey brought even more feedback – approximately 100 responses. Out of these tools, common themes emerged.

Whatever brought someone to Valley's door, once they came, people found it to be a refreshing place, a welcoming place – where a warm greeting and an invitation to come join for coffee afterwards happens often. The sign at the front door "All are Welcome Here" is not an empty phrase. People noted this often and in a variety of ways: friendly, accepting, openness to all, loving, safe and welcoming. This is a trait that Valley has deliberately cultivated and newcomers notice.

Why did people first come to Valley? The most prevalent reasons had to do with family: wanting a place to raise their kids. At Valley they saw a child-oriented setting where there was an educational program in place for all ages (indeed, on up through adult) and children involved in various ways within the church and in its services. The educational programs of the church, for youth and notably for adults as well, encouraged people to find their place at Valley.

Almost as prevalent as it being a young families' church, a large number of responses indicated they came to Valley at the invitation of a friend or neighbor who was already attending. Members attending are happily inviting others to come and see what they have found in their Valley home.

Many came to Valley because it was close to their home. Some knew they were looking specifically for a Presbyterian church. Some were raised at Valley and continued on into their adulthood, perhaps even raising their own children there. People attend from a vast area now, many having moved from the homes they had when raising kids but are staying at Valley because they have grown to love it there.

Valley members often highlight the sense of community they feel with other members and attendees. As people come back again and again, they find members really getting to know each other, serving one another, supporting each other through life's stages. Valley has all ages. The children are cherished and blessed, given a place to learn and to minister.

Another aspect that stood out as to what keeps people at Valley is its strong foundation of service, serving one another and turning that ministry of service outward. Beyond how they care for each other, the focus is also on the neighborhood, the city and the world. It is quickly evident that Valley is involved in many ways with the local community and the broader community of Minneapolis. At a grassroots level, members volunteer to reach out and assist those in need, both in the short-term and over years of investment in numerous programs

around the city. Not just concerned with the immediate need, Valley seeks to find ways to address issues at a higher level, working to bend the arc of social justice in the direction of the marginalized among us. As one member stated, Valley “walks the talk” of inclusivity and service to all.

Perhaps it was the location or the denominational name or even the beauty of Valley’s sanctuary that first enticed people to come along with Valley, but these values of family, education, community service and inclusion have shaped who Valley is today.

## **VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Valley has heard God’s call to be a peaceful presence both in the lives of its members and the community. In its near-75-year history, Valley has made a constant effort to build supportive relationships with the community that surrounds the church, proclaim the Good News in worship, and uplift and equip its members, and will continue that work for the 75 years to come and beyond. Through multiple listening sessions and an all-church survey, members of Valley shared how they saw God calling Valley, and most responses centered on ideas around four main themes: Membership, Fellowship, Worship, and Mission.

A combined meeting of currently-serving elders and deacons was called to discuss these results and discern what this might mean for the future of Valley. In a brainstorming session, these congregational leaders reflected on the four themes: their importance, a vision into the future, and what it might take to get there.

## **MISSION**

Strong relationships and active service to the community are essential to Valley’s life together, not only because of Valley’s status as a Matthew 25 congregation, but because it is what those who love God are called to do. Valley’s activity outside of church walls is also what draws people into the church again and again. As Valley looks to the future, lay leaders have become aware that one of Valley’s greatest assets, its building, is largely under-utilized throughout the year. There is a desire to put the building to use much more throughout the week in ways that could serve both members and community partners. Service to the community is a cornerstone of Valley’s identity, so putting the building to use on a more regular basis would fit with the church’s vision. It would also connect members with more community organizations and provide more visibility to the church given its “tucked away” nature. In the near future, Valley could begin assessing current vs. future building use. The Mission Possible committee is also in a visioning process asking the question, “what does living out social justice look like?”

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Valley recognizes both the practical and theological importance of a strong membership. New members bring a diversity of histories, backgrounds, and lived experiences, and their presence ignites the church with energy and life. Through each individual’s unique gifts, a strong membership also allows the church to reach out to the world in new ways. While Valley feels its membership is already strong, it would be impactful if the congregation better reflected the community around Valley. By building a worshiping community that more effectively represents the lived experiences of the community, Valley can deepen its understanding of stewardship: caring for and supporting all of the world around us.

This requires helping new members find a place in which they can serve the congregation when they join and continuing to foster a community that welcomes all by recognizing the gifts of all members regardless of age, ability, or history. By continuing to love one another as a family of faith, Valley can serve as a beacon of unity and welcome in a divisive world.

## WORSHIP

Worship is a foundational part of Valley's past, present, and future. Many people's first experiences of Valley center on a worship service of some sort and it is the primary way many members engage in the life of the church. Most importantly however, it is what connects us to God and one another. It is essential that worship at Valley reinforces the joy with which we live our lives. In order to do this, Valley will do well to continue emphasizing much of what is already being done: including people of all ages and abilities in worship and finding new and creative ways to praise God. By creating opportunities for members to interact with one another in worship, worshippers can celebrate God in new ways. Valley's worship life is strong, but creating space for "nimble" worship by offering variety and flexibility in liturgy and music will also provide worshippers with novel ways to experience God.

## FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship is a reason to come to church outside of worship. It enhances the vibrancy of worship, education, and other church programs, and a successful fellowship ministry encourages more people to get connected within the church. Fellowship, when done with intentionality and care, offers an opportunity for members to support and uplift one another and can serve as a catalyst for service to one another. Fellowship could be included in previously planned education and mission events, or any other Valley program. Lay leaders have also expressed a desire for more small group meetings, perhaps around interest areas like Valley's "Brew Crew" or craft Saturdays. Essential to this desire is making it grassroots: minimal staff planning involvement, relying instead on volunteer teams. There is also a vision for fellowship with the neighborhood in which Valley lives: chances to build relationships with those who live nearby with no strings attached. To make Valley's presence better felt in the community, investment may need to be made in advertising and signage.

The elders and deacons recognized that Valley considers most of these themes as strengths of the church, but they also acknowledged that the Spirit continually provides both encouragement and opportunities to grow in new life. By keeping these central pillars of the church in the forefront of leaders' minds, Valley can stay attuned to where God is next calling the congregation.



# WHO ARE WE CALLED TO BE?

## SURVEY RESULTS

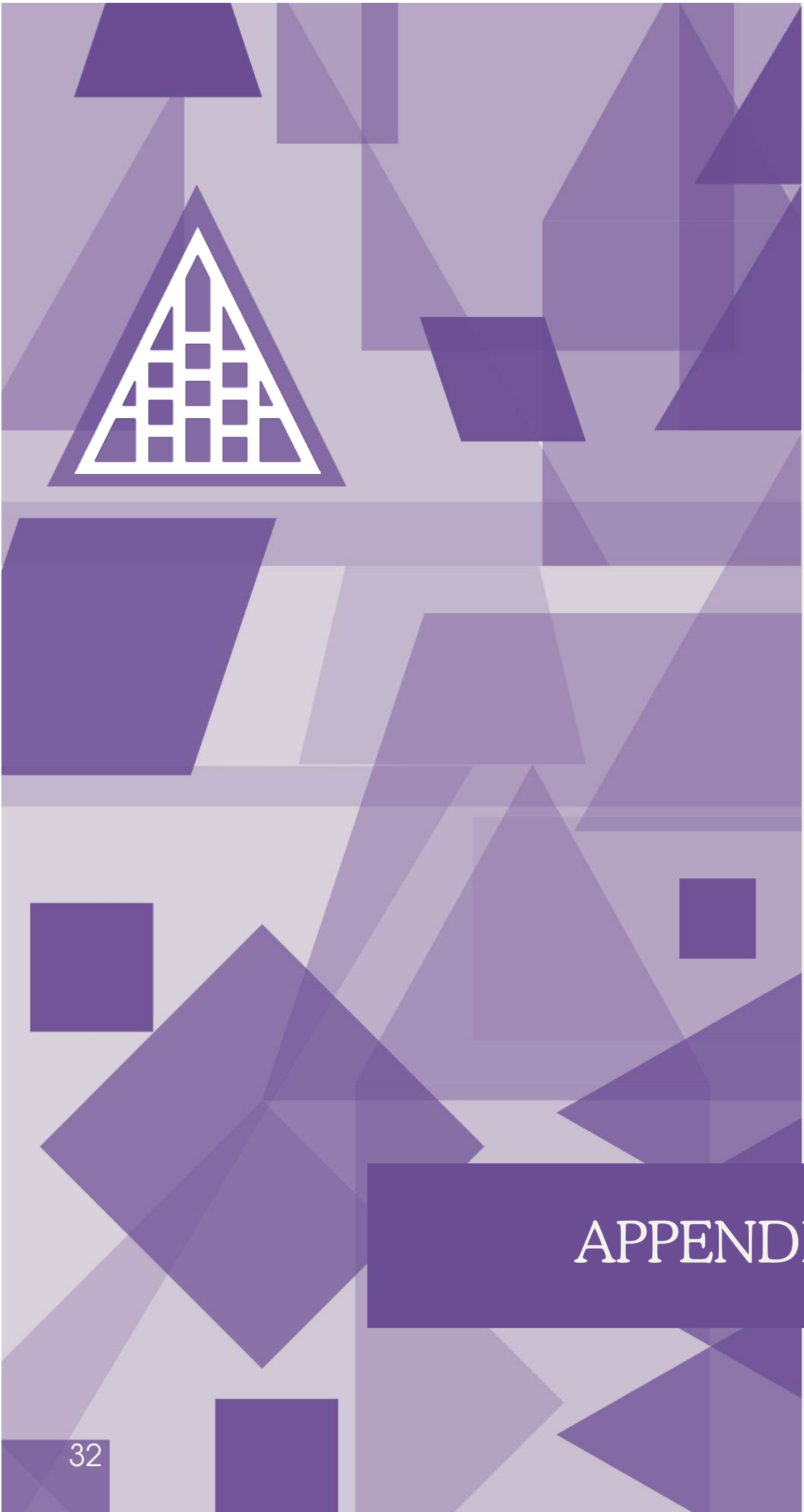
### DESIRED GIFTS IN A NEW PASTOR

Valley is seeking pastoral leadership that will help activate faith; that will call members to build the Creator's intention together. Valley seeks a candidate with energy to inspire and move the mission of Valley forward. Valley values collaboration and partnership and has an excellent staff. Accordingly, a team player with strong communication and collaborative leadership skills who can make the most of the staff and congregational talents and strengths is required. Valley also desires and appreciates a pastor with strong knowledge of the Bible and the historical context it represents.

Members were asked "What gifts will Valley's next installed pastor need to be successful in ministry?" and chose their top 5 of the 14 choices given. While the Ministry Descriptive Profile (MDP) prepared by the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) will dig into this area much deeper, following are the priorities voiced (in order of importance) that the PNC may use in preparing the MDP.

<b>Good Communicator</b>	can convey complex ideas efficiently and can translate ideas to different groups
<b>Empathic</b>	can sit with others in their emotions and provide appropriate care and responses in challenging situations
<b>Good Listener</b>	can listen with an empathetic ear and provide caring support
<b>Adaptable</b>	is flexible and able to step outside of one's own comfort zone to entertain new ideas
<b>Visionary</b>	sees ahead clearly, casts a compelling and inspired vision for a future, and sees possibility
<b>Socially Aware</b>	understands the norms, values and common behaviors of the church and society, and can work in cross-cultural settings
<b>Organizational Manager</b>	proficient in the various aspects of running a complex organization
<b>Problem Solver</b>	can anticipate future consequences and bring groups together to address and resolve conflict in a healthy manner
<b>Mentor</b>	identifies gifts in others and encourages others to follow their calling
<b>Change Leader</b>	can rally a group around a shared vision

The specific job description and required tasks of the head pastor will be addressed in the Ministry Descriptive Profile by the Pastor Nominating Committee, with support from Valley's Personnel Committee.



# APPENDICES



# APPENDICES

## RESOURCES

### HELPFUL LINKS

<b>2023 Annual Report*</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/donate/">https://valleychurch.net/donate/</a>
<b>VCPC Website</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/">https://valleychurch.net/</a>
<b>YouTube</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/@valleycommunitypresbyterianMN">https://www.youtube.com/@valleycommunitypresbyterianMN</a>
<b>Newsletters</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/monthly-newsletter/">https://valleychurch.net/monthly-newsletter/</a>
<b>Endowment Funds List</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/grants-endowment/#grants">https://valleychurch.net/grants-endowment/#grants</a>
<b>Past Worship Services</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/worship/#past-worship">https://valleychurch.net/worship/#past-worship</a>
<b>Mission Partners</b>	<a href="https://valleychurch.net/mission-possible/#mission-partners">https://valleychurch.net/mission-possible/#mission-partners</a>

\*previous years available upon request

### CHURCH INPUT

#### PURPOSE

The purpose behind the Ministry and Mission Study was to build a holistic idea of who Valley is in this season of transition. The MMS is a comprehensive document with both quantitative and qualitative information about the congregation and surrounding community, including demographics, finances, and congregational hopes and dreams. The document can thus be used both by the Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) and a newly called pastor to understand who the congregation is, what we value, and how we hope to engage with the world.

Listening sessions were one of the important opportunities for congregational feedback in the MMS process. This is a unique chance for dreaming and building ideas as a community, as it took place in a group conversation setting. This was not a focus group where people offered their individual input in a sterile environment; rather it was a time when we prayed for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the conversation and people could build off of one another's thoughts and come to a deeper understanding of how God is at work in the congregation. Three of these sessions were held, with a total of approximately 50 participants.

A followup listening session was held for currently serving church officers. In synthesizing survey and listening session results, broad themes emerged when looking at Valley's future, and it was the team's hope that a combined meeting of elected officers might shine light on the path ahead in slightly more detail.

## METHODOLOGY

Attendees were invited into a suitable space where everyone could see and hear one another. After an opening prayer, a couple of starter questions were thrown out to get the conversation started. Some starter questions are listed below, as well as what the questions are aiming at:

- Introduction
  - Name, Length of Membership at Valley
- Congregational Strengths
  - What initially drew you to Valley? What kept you coming?
  - What about Valley would make Jesus smile?
  - What does Valley do really well?
- Areas for Growth
  - What would you like to see be done differently at Valley?
  - Are there any emergent needs in the community that Valley could address and hasn't?
- Visions for the Future
  - What would you hope Valley looks like in 10 years?
  - The Greek word for "church" is ekklesia (literally, "called out"). What has God called Valley out to be and do in the world? What is our special mission?

For the officer listening session, participants were broken into small groups, each with a specific area to discuss concerning visions for the future of Valley. Groups were then brought back together and results shared.

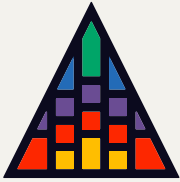
## SURVEY QUESTIONS

An online survey was made available to the entire congregation, with four weeks to respond. 97 responses were received. Some questions were multiple choice; some were text. These responses were tabulated, and both the full responses and graphs visually depicting the answers were used by the committee.

The questions in the survey were:

- How long have you been coming to Valley?
- What initially brought you to Valley?
- How often do you participate in the life of Valley? (worshiping in-person or online, volunteering, attending events, etc.)
- What are some of the barriers to participation if you haven't been very active in the congregation recently?
- What keeps you coming back?
- How have you participated or been active at Valley?
- If you had to describe Valley to someone in 5 words, what would they be?
- What about Valley would make Jesus smile?
- Why do you think people are attracted to Valley?
- How can Valley grow its ministry to better meet the needs of members and the broader community?
- What should Valley's primary focus be in the near future?
- What gifts will Valley's next installed pastor need to be successful in ministry?
- What do you hope Valley looks like in 10 years?





# Valley Community

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