



HILLCREST COVENANT CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

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LEAD PASTOR

NATE POWELL

Hillcrest Community,

Just about 100 days ago, Angela, Haven, and I drove into Prairie Village and pulled into the driveway at the Birch House, just across the parking lot from the church building. Waiting for us were five people ready to help us move our stuff into this temporary home. The kitchen was filled with food, the beds were made, and the place was spotless. We were anxious, tired, and still feeling sadness about those we left in Denver. In those few moments there was a spark, a feeling of warmth and kindness. It was what I needed.

Over the past few months that spark has grown, and I am so thankful to God for his calling and care. Inside my life a fire is growing. The spark has found tinder as the Spirit of God has expanded my heart and desire to see Hillcrest become all that he intends for it to be in our community. The fuel for the fire is found in the stories I have heard, the people I have met, the work Hillcrest is doing in the neighborhood, and the desire to see God do a new thing in our life together.

Pastor Brad Bergfalk, Hillcrest's interim pastor from March 2020 – April 2021, left me a note in his former office. He wrote, "Nate, on the whole, this is a good and generous church with a big heart for God's kingdom." I have experienced the truth of that statement. I am looking forward to pursuing God's calling on Hillcrest in this season together.

As we move into a new ministry year (September 2021 – June 2022) we will spend time together as a church asking God to give us his vision for Hillcrest now. This began last month, on August 8, as we gathered for the first Worship-Pray-Listen night. Many spoke that night about what gives them hope and many more wrote down on blue cards where they see God moving in our midst these days. Our next Worship-Pray-Listen night will be on September 26 at 6:30 pm. Please consider joining in as we continue to listen for the leading of the Spirit together.



In Pastor Brad's final report to Hillcrest he wrote, "pastors and leaders now more than ever will be required to lead with intention, integrity, and vision." I am committed to that call. Over the next 6-12 months I will ask you to join in with this process of visioning for Hillcrest. There will be large group gatherings (like the Worship-Pray-Listen nights) and small group gatherings (in November and January) for you to continue the conversation with those God has called to lead Hillcrest in this season. We need your prayers, your voices, and your wisdom since we are all *"...living stones. As [we] come to him [Jesus] we are being built into a house for worship."* (1 Peter 2:5) You are part of this building process, so join in.

I want to say thank you to those on the Hillcrest Pastor Search Team who worked hard to find the next pastor for Hillcrest. They served you with clarity, joy, and purpose. God used them in a wonderful way. I also want to thank the Governance Board who are seeking to lead us forward well. The staff team at Hillcrest is filled with called and gifted people who want to see us focus on Jesus and bring glory to God. It is so much fun to be part of this team.

Here we go!



To begin this year's Chairman report, I looked back at what I wrote last year; I acknowledged the change that our church and our world had seen over the previous year, and that I knew God had good things in store for us in the changes we knew were yet to come.

God's plan for his church will never change. In highlighting this plan from Romans 12, this is how I see our church living out God's design for his "Capital C" church:

- **In Christ we, though many, form one body; and each member belongs to all the others** – Our church is a unified whole – one body, but we are individually members. Our unity is in Christ; he is our common ground. Our individuality should not be at the expense of the whole, and unity should not be promoted at the expense of individuality. Over this last year, we've seen opinions and preferences that could have divided us; but as we remind ourselves that we are a church family, I am confident that our love of Jesus and his church will keep us unified.
- **We are to be devoted to one another in love; living in harmony with one another** – I saw love in action as we began to regather at worship in person – people hugging "long lost friends" previously separated by social distancing practices. In group life we saw our church family members deferring to the needs of others over our own preferences regarding mask-wearing.
- **We are to practice hospitality** – In this last year, our Hillcrest facility has welcomed "learning pods" of students doing online school, kindergarten enrichment through our preschool, five different Scout groups and high school music performances - all because of these groups being displaced from public school settings. We also

hosted a leadership summit, church planters and a campus ministry retreat – our facility always being ready because "company is coming."

- **We are to be faithful in prayer** – Our staff has facilitated seasons of prayer with "One Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace and Unity" in January, 12-hour Prayer on Good Friday, and a 4-week Daily Prayer this spring. God calls us to pray and ask for prayer. Please continue to be praying for our Hillcrest Governance Board (HGB), HCC Staff, and for one another.

The fruit of one specific season of prayer was the calling of Nate Powell to serve as our seventh Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor Search Team devoted hours and months to interviews, prayer and discernment; it was a great joy to present Nate, and his family, to our congregation in March and hear his heart for Jesus and his kingdom. Nate began his call here on June 1 and was installed on August 29. The Board has enjoyed getting to know and serve alongside Nate.

We look forward to what God has for Hillcrest this next year. Please be joining us for the remaining Worship-Pray-Listen evenings, asking God to speak to us about his vision for Hillcrest in this upcoming season. Continue to be praying and listening to God's call on your own life as you walk with him. Ask him how you might love and serve those whom he puts in your path.

Let's all press into deeper connections and service in the months to come. As Covenant people, let's keep meeting together as we ask those "Covenant people" questions: "where is it written?" and "how goes your walk?"

The phase for 2020-2021 in NexGen ministry would be stripping back. We had a year of change, rethinking and reengaging. This year, HCKids and Hillcrest Youth merged and became NexGen. Our offices moved together and we now work in the same space. This has allowed us to think and hear from God together all the phases as one. We stormed, formed and are trying to normalize the NexGen team. We've had many staff transitions in the midst of a changing year. As you read, we invite you to join us as we thank God for his provision, shaping, and movement he is doing within the next generation of our church.

Mission: NexGen exists to cultivate intimacy with God and to foster family and intergenerational relationships in order to live like Christ.

Our Initiatives for 2020-2021: To keep our families connected through Covid and staff transitions. • To meet when it was appropriate as Hillcrest allowed. • Pray and discern what God is doing after Covid for NexGen.

Details on Initiatives: Hillcrest Weekday Preschool is a place where all preschoolers feel at home and have a real sense of community within their classrooms. Parents develop relationships with other parents and Gretchen and her team support the whole family all along the way.

- The beginning of the year we thought that we would be in a shutdown for a few weeks, we quickly shifted to provide "at home bags" in order to equip parents to keep up their child's formation until we gathered again. Obviously, we did not end regathering again for months. We realized that our first game plan wasn't going to work ongoing. We then planned NexGen nights where the whole family was encouraged to gather, have fun and pray with one another.
- We gathered and invited the community to a trunk or treat where we saw at least 1000 people come through our parking lot.
- Kids participated in Christmas Eve Joy and Jingle Night and we live-streamed it with worship and storytelling.
- Created new Holy Week at Home engagement videos for families to watch and talk through.

- Our MOPS year pivoted to meet at the Birch House deck in the evenings where a small number of moms keep their relationship commitments with each other.
- High schoolers and some middle schoolers attended a missions trip to Alaska - together they worked at a VBS and football camp in a remote area there.

Moving forward in NexGen: After many months of prayer, worship, and seeking God together we feel our call as NexGen is to "get back the basics." It's clear that God has stripped of all things, time, resources, people, and volunteers. Going back to the basics means: Praying for our kids • Reading scripture and conversing with God about his truth. • Teaching our kids what, who, and where Jesus is in the emphasized stories in the Bible from before creation to restoration of all things. • Modeling our dependence on him and how our relationship with Jesus is the most exciting, thrilling, relationship so much that it outweighs all other things this world is asking.

Elementary through high school will be going through scripture from before creation until the restoration of all things where we will be showing the entire narrative of who Jesus is and our call to worship him and him alone. We have discerned that this next generation needs mothers, fathers, grandparents to pray for them. The enemy is loud, the world is loud, screens are loud, teachers, parents and leaders are all stretched thin. The body can stand up for this next generation and pray just as our grandmas and grandpas, mothers and fathers and community prayed for us. In the end it's about talking to Jesus. We long for our kids to talk to Jesus, to know Jesus' voice, to seek for his voice and gain unmovable personal biblical convictions before God. It's about modeling talking to Jesus. Kids need to encounter our reliance on God. Seeing us going after Jesus. Pursuing Jesus with all our hearts, minds, and soul.

We're so thankful for those volunteers that are called to pray for the next generation and would invite you to consider where you feel called to step in. The next generation needs the wisdom of all the generations before them to stand firm, lean into God, rely on him, and model simple devotion to our Savior.

I want to share three words that not only represent the ministry of Community Life but our church as a whole over the past year...

WORD #1 - TRIATHLON... Last year (end of 2019/ start of 2020) started with some very difficult moments for us as a church. Moments that challenged and tested the very fabric of who we are as a church. Saying it was a difficult season would be an understatement. The best way I can describe how I was feeling would be that I was running what felt at the time was a marathon in very difficult running conditions. And just when it seemed like the conditions were improving and I could see the finish line just ahead of me we were hit with a world-wide pandemic followed by racial and political unrest that continues to this day. What I thought was a marathon quickly became an Ironman Triathlon that God used to teach me endurance, strength, humility, trust and a renewed love for his Word. I cling to the words found in 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11 that say, *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body."*

WORD #2 - TRANSITION... This year has been one of transition for our church as we saw multiple people on our pastoral staff (Larry, Dori, Janie, Brad and most recently, Daniel) depart for other jobs or retirement. All five of them were rocks within our church and I feel so blessed and privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside them over the years. The love and passion they had for this church community and most importantly, the Lord, cannot be overstated. Also, we had the honor of welcoming in the seventh Lead Pastor in our church's history, Nate Powell and his wonderful family. Many thanks go to the Search Team for the countless hours of prayer and

hard work they put into this hire. With all these transitions God continues to teach us how to trust him for his direction as we see his plans come to life!

WORD #3 - REINVENT... When Covid hit and we all found ourselves in a place we were not expecting to be we had to reinvent the way we did church in just a few days. But thanks be to God that he was not caught off guard and with the Holy Spirit's leading (and our friends at Zoom... shout out to Scott Beystrom) we found ways to do ministry in new and fresh ways. New and creative ways that we would have never attempted if it was not for the circumstances found in the pandemic. Sure, most of us still would admit we prefer face to face gatherings but through it all we saw that the Lord's work in our lives cannot be slowed, limited, or even stopped because we can't do ministry like we had always done it.

Groups (some hybrid): Rediscipling the White Church, Enough study for women, Hillcrest DNA, Better Together, Kingdom Mosaic, Psalm 23 study for women, The PATH to Cultural Climate Change, Now That Faith Has Come study for women
Gatherings (some virtual): For men: Top Golf, Coffee on the Hill - For women: If: Table, Bunco Night
Fun group: Princess Pie Night, Fourth Friday Concerts with food trucks!
On Demand (videos): Life Together, Parenting Teens in the Pandemic

In closing, I want to pray the words of Ephesians 3:20-21 over us as a church as we look forward to many more years to come. *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*





Welcoming and Reconnecting

Connections ministry provides onramps for people within our church to grow spiritually and relationally and for people who are new to faith or exploring Hillcrest as a congregation. If there was a theme for 2021 it would be reconnecting. Hillcrest has a wonderful history of providing hospitality to others and this year we have continued to grow and innovate ways to include new people and connect with existing members.

Connections Highlights from 2021

In the weeks preceding Easter, congregants were encouraged to personally invite friends to attend Hillcrest's Easter service. We provided small bags of Hattie's Coffee, a notecard for space to write a personal note, as well as information about Hillcrest's Easter service. The goal was for members to pray for and consider people in their spheres of influence and provide a personal invitation to Hillcrest. Many people shared that their friends were touched by the gesture of being invited.

Setting a tone of welcome was key as we invited people to reconnect. On Mother's Day and Father's Day, we provided a variety of greeting cards for people to take and give to their mothers and fathers.

This was a special touch that the congregation really seemed to be grateful for. It was also helpful for kids who had forgotten to get mom or dad a card!

Over social media we have sought to lay out a digital "welcome mat" for people checking out Hillcrest or wanting to learn more about our congregation. Members have shared that they feel more informed about upcoming events, schedule changes and have another point of access for events that require registration. We have shifted away from inspiration and towards more information to help others connect with Hillcrest.

Volunteers have willingly and joyfully stepped up to serve in greeting, at the coffee bar, and as ushers. Though we are still growing these teams, this has felt like a way volunteers have been eager to reconnect with our community.

Lastly, the Prayer Trio initiative was launched in August at Hillcrest's first Worship-Pray-Listen night. Over 40 members from our congregation signed up to meet in trios to get to know or reconnect with people in our church and to pray together. Already we have heard answers to prayer in these groups!

The Main Thing (My overarching goal)

I believe the greatest challenge any church faces is to keep (make?!) the main thing the main thing. I am convinced if any church will do this, it will be overtaken by what other churches spend most of their time, energy and resources going after. In light of the above, I have decided to make the main thing the main thing in my life and ministry, and to include anyone else in this pursuit who wants to give it a shot. In Luke's account of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha, Jesus said only one thing is needed. He describes proximity to him as that "one thing", and clearly states that it is a matter of choice. So, as a worship team, we are making a careful, concerted effort to choose well. We are relegating everything else to secondary status and setting our hearts to seek the Lord in all we do, individually, and in our role as worship leaders. This is no small task, as we are countering the culture, both in (sadly) and out of the church. But the little progress we've made to this end has been encouraging enough to whet our appetite for more, and to convince us there's an alternative to the church worship culture as we've known it. To paraphrase Craig Groeschel, in order to experience what no one else is experiencing in worship, you've got to go where no one else is going in worship. By God's grace we will go there.

Who is the Worship Team?

A team of 30+ volunteers helps me facilitate the congregational worship at Hillcrest. Divided into four teams, they serve faithfully, each once a month, and have a lot of fun doing it! I believe pastoral care and discipling of this team is fundamental to the quality of congregational worship.

Sunday Services

- Staffing, rehearsing and recruiting teams.
- Sunday mornings include an extended devotional/discipleship time with the worship team.
- Work with the worship planning team (staff) to create service structure and plans.

Training and Equipping

- Including a co-worship leader each Sunday for training and equipping.
- Relational mentoring – periodic breakfasts, lunches with members of the worship team.
- Involving members of the Hillcrest worship team in my outside ministry and conferences.

Excellence in Audio/Video Presentation – Sanctuary, Online

- Upgraded sanctuary sound systems – both for the congregation and the worship team.
- Recruited trained, experienced audio engineers for sanctuary and also control room (for the sound that streams online).
- Stage logistics arranged and managed to enhance musical creativity for the team, increase the quality of our musical experience, minimize distractions for the congregation, and efficiency and flexibility to accommodate Pan y Vino Church.





In the midst of challenging times, God still moves his kingdom forward around the world. We, at Hillcrest, are privileged to be part of God's global movement. Here is a list of some of the ways Hillcrest has been engaged in missions over the past year:

Financial support to 34 missionaries and ministries.

Hillcrest's people engaged with our Advent Conspiracy 2020 campaign, which replenished \$50,793.40 to the Mercy Ministry Fund of Abigail House in Amsterdam. Hellen Guldner of Abigail House continues to offer much needed financial assistance as well as counseling care at no cost for missionary families.

Our Stimulus Gift Fund provided for people in our city. With your donations, we were able to split \$23,236 between New Community Church (a Covenant church in KCMO), HCC Refugee Assistance, and Briarwood School Assistance.

We were able to invite these mission partners to our services:

Andrew Sweeney – Young Life, France
Mission Adelante – Kansas City, KS
Darryl Answer – New Community Church
Jamie Gibson – Christar
Bruce McGregor – Freedom Fire

In April, we hosted the yearly Mission Adelante Donation Drive, filling three trucks of donated clothes, furniture, and household items for the Adelante Thrift Store. The store serves the community and supports the ministry of Mission Adelante.

We are hopeful that we will be able to return to sending short-term teams to mission partners who request our help once the pandemic passes.

We know that it is the prayers of God's people that sustains the fulfillment of the Great Commission around the world. We are grateful for the Missionary Prayer Team at Hillcrest that gathers prayer requests from our mission partners and distributes the list weekly, and for those who faithfully pray.



The care of property at Hillcrest is under the care of the Property Team.

Highlights in Properties

In the fall, a group of volunteers spread a layer of new mulch on the playground. Other volunteers served at different times throughout the season, preparing the facility for winter and the holidays. Our spring All-Church Clean-up and Serve Day did much to improve the inside and campus grounds. Late spring, the front walk was replaced at the 8801 Nall entrance. In the summer, the upper hallways, upper lobby and lower level lobby were painted and volunteers repainted the trim - this gave us an updated look as we welcomed people back into our building. Also, new directional signage was added on all levels of our building and classrooms; coffee and library

signage was updated. To correct heating and cooling issues, a stand-alone unit was installed to serve the needs of the kitchen.

Regular Sunday services and other uses of the building were inside, online, on Zoom, and outdoors on “The Hill.” Outdoor heaters at the Birch House patio allowed groups to meet on cold days. Our main classroom - 204 - became a Zoom Room, allowing groups to include participants meeting in person along with those offsite using Zoom technology.

Special thanks to all who stepped up to keep our facility ready for company. There are many ways to help. If interested, email Roger Larson at rlarson@hillcrestcov.org.

We want to praise God for his gracious provision and the Hillcrest congregation for your generous giving during the past year. Despite all our church went through, we were able to meet our budgeted giving and should be able to continue sharing the good news of Jesus in the days ahead.

Financial Update

Faithful generosity combined with sound expense stewardship has supported the ministry priorities reflected throughout this annual report. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on everything this year including giving and spending at the church. Hillcrest tithes and offerings exceeded \$1,800,000, and because expenses were well managed, coupled with the \$188,500 PPP loan forgiveness, we ended the year with a surplus of over \$200,000.

Hillcrest continues to be debt free. We applied for and received a second PPP loan from the government during the year to cover personnel and properties costs during this time of uncertainty, and technically this money was still considered a loan at the end of the year. At the writing of this annual report, we have received forgiveness of the entire amount of the PPP loan, which will be reflected as income in 2021-2022.

Other Updates

Future Needs – The church leadership continues to seek God’s direction for maintenance and care of our church building and grounds. The exterior façade maintenance is under review among leadership and professional experts. (The \$200,000 surplus will be moved to capital reserves increasing that balance to just over \$400,000.)

Budget for 2021-2022 – The Finance Team developed a top-line giving expectation based on review by team members, HGB and church staff. The staff developed the ministry budget based on our vision and priorities. This budget was approved by the congregation on June 27, 2021.

This Year – We are embarking on a new beginning with the installation of a new Lead Pastor. It will take some time to see the financial impacts of this new beginning, and that is why we are projecting a decline in year over year giving. With the grace of God and the support of the congregation, we expect to be financially stable through the next year and hopefully reach as many people, if not more than we have in the past.

Statement of Financial Position

	<u>6/30/21</u>
ASSETS	
General Fund	\$ 644,776
Capital Reserve	212,620
Missions	156,699
Benevolence	18,262
Savings	96,237
Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,128,594
Investments	265,583
Fixed Assets	4,684,390
Other Assets	26,226
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 6,104,793
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	\$ 590
PPP Loan	188,500
TOTAL LIABILITIES	189,090
NET ASSETS	
Fund Balance	5,041,551
Ministry Fund Balance - Designated	358,465
Capital Expenditure Reserve	257,201
Net Surplus	258,486
TOTAL NET ASSETS	5,915,703
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 6,104,793

Statement of Activities

	Actual 6/30/21	<i>Budget 2020-2021</i>
Income		
Giving	\$ 1,806,385	\$ 1,800,000
General Fund - PPP Loan Proceeds	160,195	150,000
Total Income	1,966,580	1,950,000
Ministry & Operating Expenses		
Personnel Expense	1,010,235	1,103,305
Properties	152,409	159,826
Operating Expense	71,774	108,816
Ministry Programs	80,207	124,440
IT & Media	53,810	52,268
Missions	327,162	401,345
Capital Expense & Operating Reserve	44,581	-
Total Ministry & Operating Expense	1,740,177	1,950,000
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	226,403	-
Other Income / (Expense)^	32,083	-
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	\$ 258,486	\$ -

^ Non-operating budget ministry items that fluctuate annually (i.e. Missions, Preschool, Benevolence, etc.)

Hillcrest Covenant Church - Budget Comparison

	Budget		Budget	
	2021-2022		2020-2021	
Income				
Giving	\$	1,300,000	\$	1,800,000
General Fund - PPP Loan Proceeds		150,000		150,000
Total Income		1,450,000		1,950,000
Ministry & Operating Expenses				
Personnel Expense		808,329		1,103,305
Properties		139,768		159,826
Operating Expense		94,234		108,816
Ministry Programs		95,418		124,440
IT & Media		52,251		52,268
Missions		260,000		401,345
Total Ministry & Operating Expense	\$	1,450,000	\$	1,950,000

Hillcrest Governance Board

Nate Powell, Lead Pastor
Jeff Kurtz, Chair
Jackie Shaver, Vice Chair
Jimmy Tompkins, Treasurer
Dawn Dolliver, Secretary
Mindy Vaughn, At-Large
Sarah Signer, At-Large

Births

James “Jamo” Gabel
Parents: Chris and Harriett Gabel
July 25, 2020

Malachi Ray Beystum
Parents: Scott and Jessica Beystum
April 25, 2021

Theodore “Teddy” Atlee Gafford
Parents: Atlee and Emily Gafford
June 4, 2021

Baptisms

James “Jamo” Gabel
Anthony Carlsen

Dedications

Barrett David Blue
Baker Samuel Blue
Parents: Mallory and Adam Blue
November 8, 2020

Marriage

Lacey Pagett/Brent Ferneau
July 17, 2020

Deaths

Corky Nason: July 9, 2020
Dixie Pollard: July 27, 2020
Dale Kirby: August 2, 2020
Wayne Powers: January 3, 2021
Vidy Metsker: January 11, 2021
Alice Adranly: April 8, 2021
Jo Johnson: June 17, 2021
Dave Mattson: June 19, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

ANNUAL MEETING

Annual Celebration / Worship Service September 12, 2021

“To bring every person to life in Christ”

Call to Worship / Opening Prayer – Jackie Shaver
Opening Songs

Welcome – Jeff Kurtz and Nate Powell
Worship Songs

Stories of Celebration – Nate Severson and Nicole Guthrie
Larson Award – Jeff Kurtz

Stories of Celebration – God’s Provision at HCC
Mindy Vaughn and Jimmy Tompkins

Stories of Celebration – New Life in Jesus
Looking Forward with Hope – Nate Powell

Closing Prayer – Sarah Signer
Closing Song

Sending – Nate Powell and Jeff Kurtz

(Following 10:30 am service there will be time for questions/comments of the annual report.)