

A photograph of a church interior. In the foreground, a stone pillar holds two lit white candles and a red flower. The background shows wooden beams and a red wall.

# ALIVE REPORT JANUARY 2021

Active Listening. Imagination.  
Vision. Empowerment.

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# ABOUT ALIVE

## About Us

The ALIVE Transition Team was formed under the direction of the Synod Offices and the Church Council, tasked with beginning the congregation's transition process and completing the first step of the call process, the Ministry Site Profile.

The ALIVE Team, led by Barry and Gretchen Johnsrud, consists of a group of 10 members of diverse ages, backgrounds, and experiences within the congregation.

## Goals

1. Listening to the congregation, hearing their joys, concerns, and hopes and ensuring all voices are recognized and included.
2. Synthesizing congregational responses to prepare input for leadership to vision forward.
3. Completing the Ministry Site Profile, which describes the congregation and is a key step in the call process for a new pastor.
4. Sharing the results with the congregation, with the hope of sparking discussion and reflection.

## Our Work

From October to December of 2020, the ALIVE Team met virtually via ZOOM with 20 groups of people from the congregation - including small groups and "open sessions" - and distributed an online survey for individuals and families to complete.

The questions posed to the congregation aimed at exploring a number of different themes and topics: Why We Stay, What We Do Best, Who We Want to Lead Us Next, and What We Hope to Be and Do in the Future.



# WHO PARTICIPATED

# 201

members of Mountain View Lutheran engaged with the ALIVE process, either through virtual meetings with the ALIVE team or by filling out the online questionnaire.

## Demographics

Years Attended	ALIVE Participants	% ALIVE Responses	% Active Members
1 - 5	26	14 %	13 %
5 - 10	19	11 %	10 %
10 - 15	22	12 %	10 %
15 - 20	19	11 %	15 %
20 +	95	52 %	52 %

Age	ALIVE Participants	% ALIVE Responses	% Active Members
18 - 29	20	10 %	16 %
30 - 49	34	17 %	17 %
50 - 65	48	24 %	25 %
65 +	99	49 %	42 %

## Reflection

1. Did anything surprise you in this data? What parts of it?
2. What areas of growth do these demographics potentially indicate?
3. Do you feel there was an opportunity for all voices to be heard during this ALIVE process? Why or why not?

## A Note About Percentages...

In the graphs that follow in this document, percentages represent the number of participants who actively mentioned a certain topic. It does not represent the overall importance of the issue to the congregation.





# WHAT WE LEARNED



# WHY WE STAY

## Community

Over and over again, members shared how deeply this community matters to them. When we asked why we stay involved, the first response was always the people and the relationships. Many members shared that this has become their family, their church home. Others spoke of knowing that we can lean on each other, expecting care and belonging.

## History + Heritage

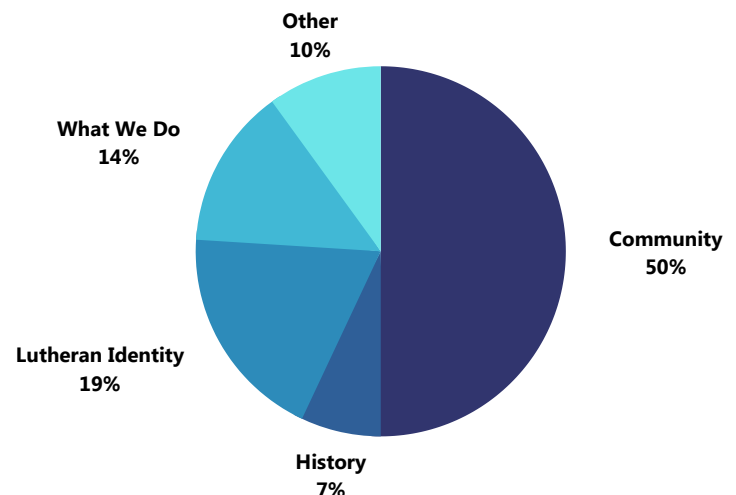
Our heritage and history as Lutherans and as a congregation also frequently showed up as a part of what makes Mountain View special. Traditions, liturgies, theologies, and personal and family histories all keep us involved here. We value the depth of knowledge present in all that we do at Mountain View.

## Spiritual Formation

At Mountain View, we find nourishment for our faith, and a loving community in which to grow and learn. We challenge ourselves and each other with difficult concepts and ideas. We listen to the hard truths and the Gospel message and learn to live more faithful lives.

## Reflection

1. What types of relationships keep you connected to MVLC? How are they unique?
2. How do we strengthen and nurture relationships and welcome people in to MVLC?
3. Can our history and heritage be a hindrance to creating community at MVLC? How could it be a gift?
4. What inspires you to focus on personal and communal spiritual formation?





# WHAT WE DO BEST

## Worship + Preaching

We love our worship services. From consistently using the liturgy and partaking of communion, to the music program involving many members of the congregation, to hearing meaningful and inspirational sermons, we keep coming back because of what we do on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. As you'll see later in the report, we have significant energy around imagining new ways we can worship while holding true to our Lutheran heritage and identity.

## Education Programs

From Adult Education to ExALT, our congregation offers many different opportunities to learn and grow as Christians. We appreciate the depth and seriousness with which we take the study of our faith, and we value the opportunity to learn from others as well as our pastors - especially visiting professors from local universities!

## Rock Ministry

Many members joined Mountain View looking for a place to raise their children; Rock Ministry is a proclaimed "bright spot" in our ministries. Particularly for young families, it is an important reason that we stay involved.

## Intergenerational Activities

Rock Ministry also is an important way we engage with each other across generations: Mentorships, both for youth and mentors, are critical to our involvement at Mountain View.





## Ministry Groups

Ministry groups of all types were frequently named as one of the things we do best at Mountain View. From small groups of all types to ministry groups with particular focuses, we feel that there is a variety of ways to get involved and get connected in the life of the church. These small groups present ways to learn and grow as a community of faith. We deeply appreciate opportunities to serve one another and to use our various gifts and talents for the benefit of the congregation. In particular, the Deacons and the Honeydoers were named as ministries that provide critical services to the congregation, helping us to grow in faith.

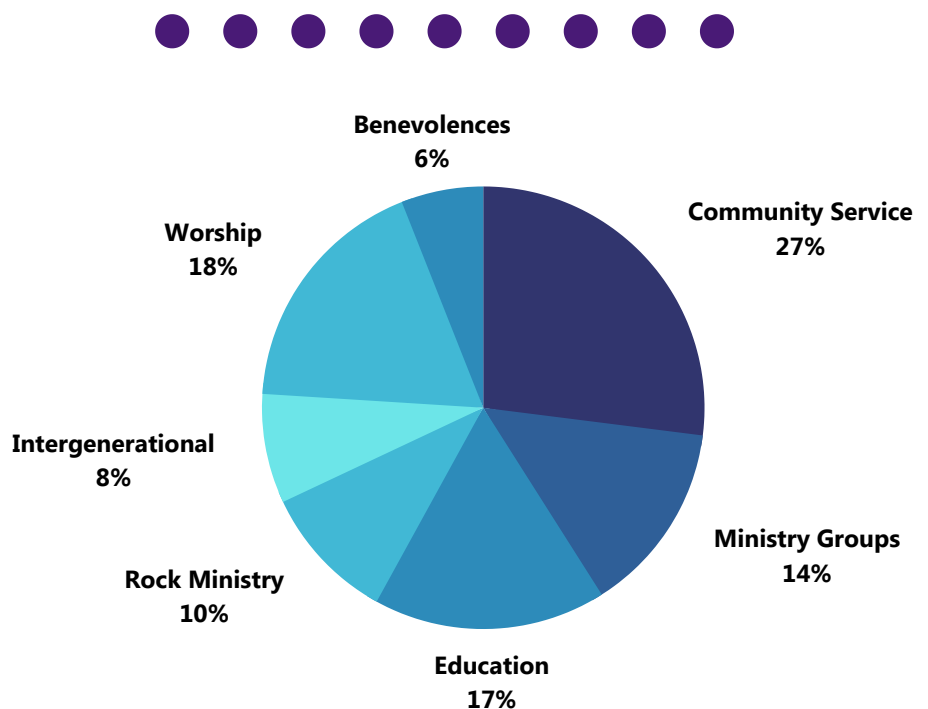


## Community Service

Many congregation members feel that we serve our neighbors very well at Mountain View, reaching out beyond our congregation through benevolences and service. The Mountain View Community Center and Edgewood Food Bank are key examples of ways that we have impacted our community, and many members volunteer regularly across the campus, sharing that these ministries are "close to their hearts." We are excited about the possibility of continuing to expand our service to our neighbors and increase involvement with the partners we already have.

## Reflection

1. Do our weekly activities at MVLC reflect the things we do best described in this section?
2. How do we maintain our strong programs at MVLC while expanding our service to the neighbor?
3. How might our resources be reallocated to better carry out God's purpose? Or is the resource allocation a good match now?





# CHALLENGES

## Communication

People often shared that they feel disconnected from what is happening at Mountain View, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. Many members want more open and informative communication about the ministries and operations of the church. Nearly every group cited transparency as an issue of key importance.

## Top-Down Leadership

"For better or worse," one member shared, "decisions are often made without congregational input." This sums up the frustrations of many congregational members who feel that they don't have a voice in congregational life. There is a great deal of healing to be done to reestablish trust and to build a collaborative spirit of leadership in the future.

## Pastor Leaving

There is significant amount of grief in the congregation over the sudden departure of Pastor John. Most members feel a lack of closure and struggle with the way his departure was handled. Finding a new senior pastor is a significant challenge in congregational life.

## Location + Lack of Diversity

Our congregation is very homogenous in race and economic background, a challenge noted by many members. From acknowledging our whiteness and reaching out to diverse churches to addressing socioeconomic challenges, LGBTQ+ issues, and the challenges of our location in Edgewood, many diversity issues came up in ALIVE meetings.

## Outreach + Inclusivity

Hand in hand with diversity came comments about reaching out to potential new members and drawing them into the congregation. Along with reaching out to our neighbors in Edgewood, members shared challenges around creating an inclusive and welcoming community without cliques or fractured groups.

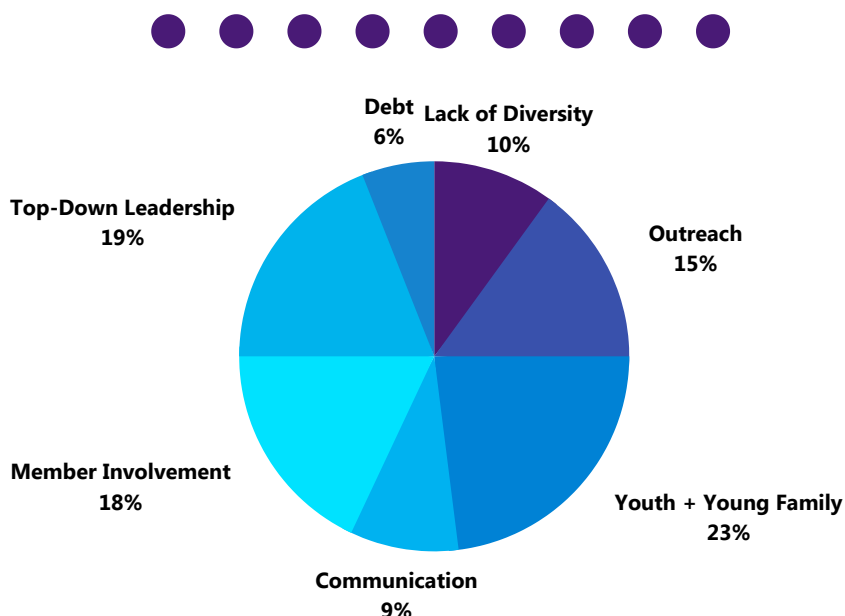


## Youth + Young Families

Our congregation, like many others, is aging, without younger people able to take their roles in the church. Young families are not joining the congregation, and many youth and young families want more programming and wholistic education to develop a thriving youth program. Many noticed teens and young adults are not actively involved, without ministries targeting their age.

## Involvement + Investment of All Members

Along with an aging congregation, many are concerned with declining attendance at Sunday worship and at congregational activities. Less members are actively involved in the various ministries of Mountain View, making it harder to create exciting and engaging programming for all.



## Staying Relevant

As times continue to change, churches in general are struggling to address the changes in our society. Church's relevance continues to decline in general. We have struggled to adapt to new technologies and strategies for interacting with our community, including social media. Although many people shared of their love for our worship, they also acknowledged that there is room to update our worship service to be more contemporary.

## Finances

Reducing our debt and paying off the money owed on our building projects continues to be a concern for some members. Additionally, maintaining a level of stewardship to support our ministries, especially during COVID-19, is a challenge.

## Reflection

1. What role do you see yourself playing in addressing the challenges at MVLC?
2. Can the challenges at MVLC lead to complacency? If so, how?
3. How could these challenges be reframed as goals and opportunities for the future?



# WHO WE WANT TO LEAD US NEXT

## Preacher + Teacher

Preaching and teaching have traditionally been very strong at Mountain View, and this is a legacy we would like to see continued in our next pastor. We value the depth of theology, biblical knowledge, and Lutheran identity at our church and in our pastor. We also want to continue to be challenged from the pulpit and the classroom by a pastor who pushes us to grow and to act according to our Christian calling. We want a pastor who speaks truth and grace from the pulpit and leads us in our learning.





## Personable

Our members shared that they want a pastor who embodies empathy and compassion, someone with a sense of humor who doesn't take themselves too seriously. We want to be able to approach our next pastor with concerns and joys in our lives and to be authentically heard. Warmth, humility, and energy were other words that frequently appeared in descriptions of our ideal pastor.

### Reflection

1. Is MVLC ready and open to embrace a new pastor? A new leadership style?
2. How can we prepare - individually and as a congregation - to welcome a new pastor?
3. What is the congregation's role in supporting a new pastor?
4. What kind of relationship do we want with our new pastor? How can we work together in ministry?



## Team Player

Collaboration is a key skill we want in our next pastor, whether it be with Pastor Bri, other staff, the Council, or the congregation itself. We want a pastor who is open and responsive to our ideas, who encourages and empowers us to use our gifts for the good of the church. With a pastor who nurtures and complements the many gifts that are already present in our congregation, we imagine a bright future for Mountain View.

## Visionary + Leader

We also hope for a strong leader who can share their vision with us and help us to develop our mission and ministry. "We need someone who can combine the vision and calling of the church with building trust and connection," said one member. "We need someone to lead us through transformation," added another. Strong, visionary leadership with a collaborative spirit and listening ear will bring us into the future.

## Relationship Builder

A key way we see this leadership and team mindset being embodied in a pastor is through relationship building both in the congregation and in the wider community. "We need a community person," shared one member, "someone who can relate to the entire congregation." By increasing fellowship with one another, we believe we can grow in faith together.

# WHAT WE HOPE TO BE + DO

## Congregational Culture of Service + Welcome

One of the first ways we want to form ourself for the future is to develop a congregational culture around service and welcome. Many congregation members envision a process of learning about who we are and who our neighbors are, expanding our understanding of what is needed in our communities. We have started this work, but many want to see it expanded further.

Then, knowing this, we hope to be a congregation that cares for its members, warmly and authentically welcomes those who come through our doors, and reaches out in love to those in the surrounding community. By "responding to what we hear in debt to our neighbor" and "paying attention to God, listening and learning to live with His mystery," we imagine a Mountain View radically transformed in Christ.





## Youth + Family

Among all age groups, our congregation has particular energy around revitalizing our Youth and Family programming. Members imagine expanding on the best Rock Ministry has offered - intergenerational mentorships, retreat-based learning, etc. - and incorporating new aspects into our life together. Imagining new ways for youth to be involved in worship and service came up frequently, as did opening a preschool or other daycare / after-school program. Furthermore, the congregation hopes for more social and educational support to be offered to young couples and families.



## Seasoned Adult

This energy around Youth and Young Families was also paired with enthusiasm to further develop ministries for our Seasoned Adult members. From bringing back a monthly lunch for seniors to more actively partnering with the senior programs at the Community Center, Mountain View imagines a community where our elders are active and supported even when they leave our congregation for care facilities.



## Fellowship

Some of our favorite moments as a congregation come when we are simply being together as a Christian community, especially when we gather around food! We hope to see more fellowship activities in the future, designed to strengthen and build relationships, such as congregational retreats or picnics.

## Worship

Our congregation loves our Lutheran liturgical worship. Many members want to imagine ways that we can hold true to the essence of that worship, while also incorporating new and different styles and means of worshipping. From incorporating technology to trying many different styles of music - while keeping the top-notch quality! - we are excited to imagine what our worship space can look like.

## Campus Use

One thing we tended to agree on across the board is that we have been gifted with a beautiful campus with many opportunities to expand our programming. We want to see our buildings full and our campus buzzing with activity!





## Community Service

"Our congregation has always been service minded," noted one member. We hope to expand and deepen our existing partnerships while also exploring new ways that we can engage with the community around us. In particular, we are energized around working more closely with the Mountain View Community Center and Edgewood Nourish Food Bank. Building bridges across the parking lot to connect our campus is one of the first ways we can serve our neighbor.

From finding ways to tackle food insecurity to addressing the rising cost of housing in Fife-Milton-Edgewood, our congregation is passionate about meeting the needs of our neighbors. With the creative ideas, hard work, and dedication of our members, we can reimagine what it means for Mountain View to be a part of this community.

## Evangelism

Expanding our outreach to the neighbor and potential new members is an area of excitement for many of us. Members envision a new welcome board, perhaps located on a main road, that would inform people about what's happening at Mountain View. In combination with an outreach campaign to meet our neighbors, perhaps going door-to-door, members imagine a revitalized New Member Class to embrace and welcome new members to our congregation.

## And Much More...

This is just a taste of the dreams our members have at Mountain View. For more ideas, see the Appendix!

## Reflection

1. Are you comfortable sharing your gifts, strengths, and talents at MVLC? Why or why not?
2. Does the 80 / 20 rule apply to MVLC (80% of the work is done by 20% of the people)? Can this be changed in the future? If so, how?
3. How can we reach out to the community to learn what needs they have and what might draw them to MVLC?
4. How do the dreams shared here make you feel? Inspired? Nervous? Hopeful? How can these dreams be integrated into a plan for our future?

# THANK YOU

- The ALIVE Team
- Pastor Bri Merkle, Pastor Mike Greenwalt, & Pastor Kim Latterell
- MVLC Council
- MVLC Staff
- The members of MVLC who participated in the ALIVE sessions or surveys!

## Final Reflection

The ALIVE process helped us to understand who we currently are as a congregation, both our challenges and gifts, to identify who we want in a new leader, and to share our dreams for the future.

How will YOU participate in our next steps?

## Anything to Add?

If you have questions, concerns, comments, thoughts, ideas, or any other reaction that you would like to share with the ALIVE Team or Congregational Leadership, please contact Barry and Gretchen Johnsrud at [bgjohnsrud@comcast.net](mailto:bgjohnsrud@comcast.net). Your voice matters - we would love to hear from you!





# APPENDIX: MORE DREAMS

- Create or host an after-school tutoring program in partnership with Milton and Edgewood schools
- Open a weekday low-cost daycare or preschool
- Create a church youth sports league
- Host family or kids game nights open to all
- Use the church fire pit for campfire fellowship
- Hold life skills classes for youth and young families
- Support foster families - some congregations sponsor a foster child or provide emergency fostering
- Design a "Prayground" for young children in the front of the sanctuary, other activities such as making cards for seniors for young children to engage in worship
- Hold Teen and Young Adult worship gatherings
- Have opportunities for service and worship at a variety of times and days of the week so working people can more fully engage
- Host monthly lunch for seniors
- Find more interactions with residents at Mill Ridge Village and other long-term care facilities
- Hold mixers or cottage meetings for members to get to know people outside their group
- Form Lutheran Adults for Fun and Fellowship (LAFF) or similar fellowship groups
- Hold "pub theology" meetings - beer and fellowship and God
- Expand global mission opportunities
- Connect with Bright Stars of Bethlehem, Opportunity Palestine, Peace Not Walls, and Jewish Voice for Peace
- Survey congregation members about their gifts
- Survey community members about their needs
- Serve with Habitat for Humanity more
- Support and volunteer with the Food Bank and Community Center more regularly





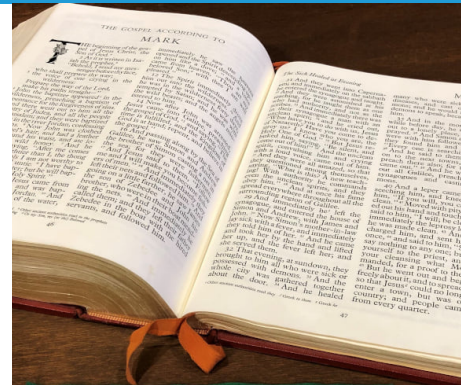
# MORE DREAMS



- Open the church for emergency shelter for our homeless neighbor - Freezing Nights
- Open Education Building classrooms for homeless families
- Explore possibility of building transitional housing on campus
- Use the garden plot more fully
- Travel to apartment complexes, motels, and low-income housing areas to provide services rather than asking them to come to us - for example a Food Truck with hot meals or an Art Truck with traveling VBS and activities for children
- Visit the refugee detention center
- Connect to Living Stones prison ministry
- Create a "honey-do" list for members of the congregation and the surrounding community for household tasks and needs
- Sponsor a refugee family
- Participate in God's Work Our Hands Sunday - a whole-congregation day of service for our community
- Meet with the other congregations in the chapel.- have a quarterly dinner with them and worship together
- Form relationships with the other congregations on the Hill - have ecumenical discussions and collaborate for service
- Hold joint services and discussions with the Catholic churches
- Expand opportunities for interfaith dialogue with our Jewish and Muslim siblings
- Strengthen connection with PLU and other professionals for our education classes on Sundays and Wednesdays
- Invite non-members to our education classes
- Go door-to-door to invite new members, especially in the new apartment complexes
- Focus on life-skills education as well as Christian Education
- Host activities like the Scandinavian Festival and Song of Mark- a musical outreach program

# MORE DREAMS

- Get an electronic reader board out front or on the main road that highlights the activities that are happening at church
- Host ice cream social or other community events with the Community Center to bring people to campus
- Serve coffee or breakfast to the Food Bank clients on Saturday mornings
- Create and distribute flyers around the neighborhood along with a small gift bag or bible verse
- Hold open gym time for the community in the evenings or for parents to gather with their younger children after dropping their older children at school
- Enhance the coffee station in the Gathering Space to be a full free-will or low cost coffee shop for members on Sundays and for Food Bank or Community Center clients
- Reimagine New Member Class as a Discovery Group, more about learning about Lutheranism and the wider church than a "if you go to this class you must become a member"
- Provide a simple worship service that makes sense to people who aren't "churched"
- Encourage programs like Head Start/ECEAP to use our space.
- Host quiet night or morning taize-style services where people can get comfortable in the sanctuary - like compline at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle
- Rearrange the worship space in creative ways for things like dinner church, where the service centers around a full meal
- Continue to host community groups in our Education Building such as AA, the homeschoolers, and the Boy Scouts
- Have educational theme dinners to connect the congregation to topics we're learning about in a variety of ways
- Serve meals with the Armory or Peace Community Center



# MORE DREAMS

- Continue to livestream worship and improve the quality of production in our livestreaming
- Explore different styles of music and liturgy in our worship
- Facilitate prayer groups for those who want to learn more about prayer or want to pray together
- Hear more from the choir and other musically talented members of the congregation in worship or host concerts
- Incorporate technology into our worship by putting in screens or TVs - this could also reduce bulletin costs
- Provide counseling and parish nursing to community and congregation members

## Dreams to Share?

The ALIVE Team and congregational leadership would love to hear about them. While we can't do everything all at once, starting with the visions and passions of the congregation is key. Reach out at [bgjohnsrud@comcast.net](mailto:bgjohnsrud@comcast.net) to share your ideas!

