



Elim Evangelical Free Church

9421 128th Street East, Puyallup, Washington, 98374

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

2022 Pastor's Annual Report

By Lead Pastor Ryan White

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:22-23)

The year 2022 was my first full year as Elim's lead pastor and our congregation's final year in what felt like an extended season of transition, dating as far back as Pastor Martin Schlomer's retirement in 2018. It was a year for processing past tumult and pain, reconnecting and reconciling as brothers and sisters in Christ, and laying a foundation for a new era of life for this congregation.

For me as your pastor, it was a time of learning and—most surprisingly—a time of deepening love. This past year God filled my heart with a love for His flock here at Elim, both those who have long been settled in this pasture and the new faces who have come through our doors. Nothing has given me greater pleasure than getting to know you as we have begun to do life together and joyfully chase after Jesus alongside one another.

If 2022 had a theme, it was gospel hospitality. The gospel is the good news that Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, has defeated the power of evil, sin, and death and now is making all things new, even us. Hospitality is the act of receiving guests and making space in our lives for the outsider—in our homes, at our tables, and within our budgets and schedules. Bringing these two concepts together, we glimpse what God in Christ has done for us. We also understand our call as God's people in this world. Jesus beckons us to receive and extend His gospel hospitality: costly, self-giving love that elevates another person and allows them to be welcomed in as God's honored guest.

This primary assignment has begun to influence our decisions and priorities here at Elim, and I pray we continue to grow in this regard. With this theme in mind, allow me to share with you a few of the highlights from the year:

- **LEADERSHIP CORE**
 - In February, we launched Elim's new Leadership Core. Based on the biblical model of deacons, it is a community of about 20 ministry leaders who partner and collaborate with the pastor and elders to advance God's mission here on South Hill. We have embraced this adventure because we are convinced that we are richer and more effective when the people of God can share their perspectives, feed their passions, and use their gifts. In 2022, this team was led by Cindy Waple, and it has been a beautiful vehicle to equip the ordinary Christians "for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11). Indeed, much of what we accomplished this past year overflowed from the love and labor of our Leadership Core.
- **LOCAL & GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS**
 - In April, Elim began to host a second, ethnic-minority congregation, ***Iglesia Cristiana Casa de Restauración Hossana*** (House for the Restoration of Praise Christian Church), a

community of about 50 Spanish-speaking believers, pastored by husband-and-wife team Javier and Dora Cuevas. It has proven to be a sweet partnership in the gospel, for they are able to reach with Christ's love individuals inaccessible to us due to the language barrier. We have enjoyed rubbing shoulders with their congregation in the building throughout the week, and we especially appreciated them participating in workdays to beautify our campus and joining us for combined, bilingual worship on Christmas Day.

- For two weeks in September, we welcomed missionaries Phyllis Pferer and Brook Kittel from **Rock of Israel Ministries**, a missions organization dedicated to reaching the Jewish people with the news that their Messiah has come and will soon return. While they evangelized at the Washington State Fair, we hosted them in our homes, blessing them with food, warm beds, and lots of prayer and encouragement. We were especially thrilled when the head of their organization, Robert Specter, visited Elim personally one Sunday to express his thanks and gratitude.
- This year Elim began a formal relationship of support with EFCA Reach Global missionaries **Luke and Jessica Bury**. This lovely young couple is embarking on a long-term assignment in Berlin, Germany, one of Europe's preeminent cities and a bastion of atheism.
- VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
 - This summer we partnered with nearby Celebration Church to put on our first vacation Bible school since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together we were able to reach and bless over 175 local children, sharing with them the hope of the gospel. After a rich week of ministry, our two congregations came together to celebrate all God had done at a combined outdoor worship and barbecue at South Hill Community Park.
- FRESH STARTS AND NEW BEGINNINGS
 - There is so much more we could celebrate! In August, we hired Samantha Kasper as our new Student Ministry Director, and a month later, we brought on Jenelle Kulaas as our Interim Worship Director. We saw the start of new discipleship groups and the launch of a young adult ministry. We again participated in men's retreats and women's retreats at Black Lake Bible Camp and saw the return of regular newcomer lunches. Julie and Nathan Brannon hosted a blindness awareness seminar to equip us to extend God's hospitality to those in our community with disabilities. We welcomed into membership AnnaLisa Cantu, Timothy Chase, Claire Kranik, Rick and Paige Leininger, and Gene and Linda Smarr. We baptized Jason Marshal, Matthew Potter, and Jonah White.

I am so grateful for what God is doing in and through His church. May we continue to marvel, trust Him, and make ourselves available for His good purposes!

"Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you." (Psalm 63:3)

2022 Elder Chairman's Report

By Dan Amos, 2022 Elder Chairman

The Elder Board started 2022 still under the state COVID mandate for another three months but looking to re-energize ministries, bring people back into community, and live out gospel hospitality. Those goals are reflected in Pastor Ryan's 2023 kick-off sermon series of Rest, Re-engage, and Reconcile.

However, the year was not without its challenges. Navigating through COVID and politics is ripe for division. Ministries are being re-energized, people are coming back to worship in community, and gospel hospitality is finding traction in sharing our building and making it more accessible. But we need to rest, rest in God's provision and love. That has to be our focus. Re-engaging requires us to be in community with each other, and disagreement only needs two to get started. We have to live in the grace of God, the grace others give us, and the grace we give to others. Without it, we are not set apart, not holy. That is our challenge coming out of 2022 and will be for the rest of our lives.

Board members included:

- Dan Amos - Chairman
- Jeff Foerster
- Cam Severns*
- Lars Passic - Secretary
- Pastor Ryan White
- Gregg Zimmerman - Vice Chairman

*Cam stepped down in September to focus on his run for local office.

In the first months, Cindy Waple kicked off training of the Leadership Core team. Most participated in the Enneagram personality test, learning about how God has made them and continues to shape them for ministry. Leaders came together regularly for equipping and facilitating connections across ministries. It began a process of increasing leaders' ownership of their ministries that will continue into 2023.

The Leadership Core was engaged to talk about facility needs. Prior to COVID and changes in attendance, we were moving rapidly toward building new classroom space to accommodate the growing Kids' Ministry. The pressure for space has not yet returned. The need to expand our hospitality is driving plans for finally updating restrooms and making them accessible. The rebranded Garden House fits into our long-term plans for education and meeting space. It was renovated in the spring, giving potentially decades more use. A playground began development, also designed for accessibility, to be constructed with a designated donation and other funds designated for capital improvements.

In April, Elim welcomed Casa de Restauracion Hossana, a Spanish-language church. They meet in the sanctuary following the morning worship service, and they are followed by a Marshallese-speaking congregation. Sharing our facility with other believers expands our reach for the Kingdom on South Hill.

2022 Kids' Ministry Report

By Beth White, Kids' Ministry Director

"They asked him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.'" Thank you, Jesus, that we have your example, your help, and your love to guide us.

The year 2022 started off quietly, with a fairly small group of kids. As more and more families began to feel safe coming back into a classroom setting, we gradually watched our Sunday school classes grow. At this point we have 50 kids in three classes—praise God! That includes 10 new families that the Lord has brought to Elim. We are continually praying that He would bring all the sheep that he knows belong in our flock and that we would be ready to welcome them with warmth and love.

We had several fun events throughout the year, both big and small. At Easter, families gathered at the church to make resurrection gardens and celebrate with an Easter egg hunt. On Palm Sunday, the kids paraded through the sanctuary waving palm branches, singing "Hosanna" to Jesus!

In July, we partnered with our neighbors at Celebration Church to put on an awesome VBS, which was attended by over 150 kids. In mid-October, we threw a Hootenanny to celebrate the blessing of simply being a part of the Lord's family with games, food, and dancing.

We currently have three classes:

- *Nursery* is for birth–three years.
- *The Lights* is for kids aged four years through second grade. Named for Philippians 2:14–16, with the idea that by the grace of God he makes his light shine through them into a dark world. They are currently going through the Old Testament, learning stories, doing projects, and singing songs each week.
- *The Garden* includes third through fifth grade. The Lord promises that when we give our lives to him and trust in his provision, he will make us like a watered garden. I like to think about all that a well-cared-for garden entails, and my prayer is that he would give each child a heart to submit their life to his loving care. These students are going through a curriculum called Torchlighters, which uses a short movie paired with a workbook to teach about heroes of the faith throughout history. They are at an age where they are beginning to comprehend the idea of faithfulness to the Lord, and it is so helpful for them to see what it looks like lived out in the lives of brave and committed individuals.

I am thankful to have many excellent volunteers teaching and helping in each class. Every Sunday we have two volunteers per class, and the Lord always provides exactly enough. My thanks to each of you who have a heart to serve the Lord by guiding and loving his children. In addition to regular classroom volunteers, many more people joyfully joined in helping with the larger events that we put on. It is truly a blessing to be a part of the Elim family. Hallelujah, thank you Jesus!

2022 Student Ministries Report

By Samantha Kasper, Student Ministry Director

In the spring of 2022, God directed my life in a different direction. During and after college, I was very invested in the youth group here at Elim. I served as a junior high leader and shadowed Brian Sharpe, the former youth pastor, after receiving my bachelor's from Moody Bible Institute in youth ministry. However, in December 2012, I stepped out of ministry as I started a new chapter in my life as a newlywed and, soon after, mother. While my original plan was to raise my firstborn while stepping back into ministry, God had other plans. Motherhood proved a lot more challenging than my rainbow glasses had led me to believe, and, long story short, I ended up taking an almost 10-year break from ministry. However, throughout those 10 years, I'd often feel the tug to go back and work with students, invest in their lives, and share about how God can transform lives, no matter the circumstances.

This past spring, I felt God open the door for me to return. After a long and thorough application process, I was hired in August 2022 as the new youth director at Elim. Throughout these last six months of getting back into ministry, we have had some fun and life-changing activities, such as the Challenge conference in July and serving at the Tacoma Rescue Mission in November. It has also been a sweet time of relationship building: getting to know leaders, building relationships with students, and encouraging students to get to know one another better.

It has been such a joy these last few months getting to know where each student is at in their relationship with the Lord and to be able to spend time getting to know some of the female students over coffee and school lunches. As we continue to grow and evolve as a group, my prayer and passion is that these teens would learn and understand how God can transform their lives through His offer of grace and forgiveness to them and that knowledge would propel them to show grace, kindness, and love to others around them, both in youth group and in their community.

2022 Worship Ministry Report

By Jenelle Kulaas, Worship Ministry Director

Hello, I'm Jenelle Kulaas. I've been Elim's interim worship director since September. As I fervently prayed for direction for our ministry, I felt God focusing us on these two simple words: *worship* and *team*.

TEAM

A team is a community. Community means a feeling of fellowship with others because of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. There are core elements to being a community, such as a gathering place, sharing, joint action, social ties, leadership, vision, trust, and diversity. When I shared with Pastor Ryan that I was sensing God inviting us to press into our identity as a community, he responded with holy affirmation, informing that at the time our next sermon series was going to be on COMMUNITY! Wow, right? Leaning into this word from the Lord:

- We began adopting practices to build one another up. We each have a bucket with our name on it. This serves as a reminder to spiritually fill each other's buckets as Christ fills ours. We do this through prayer and positive comments. We even fill each other's buckets literally. We put Scriptures, cards, notes, and small gifts in there to bless and encourage each other.
- We carved out a livable space for our team, cleaning up the storage closet and creatively transforming it into a command center for collaboration and encouragement.
- We started the practice of quarterly worship workshops for us to bond, grow together, and communicate.

WORSHIP

What brings us together as a community is the call to worship and our role leading God's people into the experience of worship.

- At our first meeting together, we discussed what worship means, why we do it, why it is important, and what a posture of worship looks like. We all considered this integral to our calling and now include these each time we pray as a team.
- At a recent workshop, we spent time in worship together outside any practice or service. We had a chance to pray and process through a "liturgy before taking the stage" that has proved meaningful as we attune to a heart of worship. We had the opportunity to be anointed with oil and commissioned as worship leaders.
- We will continue to seek to train and develop the congregation in the rhythms and responses of worship.

Thank you for welcoming me. I am blessed and excited to be here on this God-given journey. Also, in more recent 2023 news, we upgraded our main speakers and subwoofers, vastly improving our sound quality. Woohoo!

2022 Discipleship Ministry Report

By Julie Brannon, Discipleship Ministry Deacon

In early fall, encouraged by Larry Short, the previous small-groups leader, I let Pastor Ryan know I'd be interested in working with all of Elim's discipleship groups. Since both Gene Smarr and I had indicated interest in adult ministries, Pastor Ryan asked us to work on this area. One of those aspects was Elim's discipleship groups.

The first step was organizing a list of current groups: leader contact information, group name and focus, and location and day/time group meetings are being held. Pastor Ryan and I worked on a new name for the groups and decided on *discipleship groups*, which better outlined group goals and functioning.

Currently, Elim has 10 active discipleship groups: three women's groups, two men's groups, one couples' group, one family group, and three special-interest groups.

It came to light there are basically three prongs to be considered for best functioning for discipleship groups: continually filtrating new members into groups, empowering and encouraging current group leaders, and developing new discipleship group leadership. We did the following to address these prongs:

1. It was apparent that church attendees needed more than a sign-up sheet to assist them in choosing the best fit for a discipleship group, so for several weeks, both current group participants and leaders of new groups shared with the congregation various aspects for each group.
2. To empower and encourage group leaders, with the goal of lessening the tendency for leader burnout, it was decided to have group leader meetings bimonthly, our first being held in December. Between meetings, contact will be made to continually encourage leaders. The church purchased a subscription to an excellent website for group leaders, which contains articles and training all about small-group leadership, to allow for ongoing input and information.
3. As group memberships increase, new group leadership selection and training will be considered.

Our prayer is that more people decide to look into joining Elim Discipleship Groups, where the benefits of study and interaction with others abound!

2022 Leadership Core Report

By Cindy Waple, Leadership Core Deacon

In March, a new Leadership Core team began meeting monthly. The Leadership Core included Pastor Ryan, the elders, and the ministry leads for each of Elim's ministries. These monthly meetings focused on three areas of our spiritual life in Jesus: solitude, community, and ministry. As leaders we explored, discussed, and considered leading others from the outflow of our love for and life in Christ (solitude) as well as what it means to be in community with others—loving one another and offering generous listening with one another (community). Solitude and community then inform and shape our offering of ministries to others as the hands, feet, and love of Christ. In addition, these monthly meetings provided opportunities for all of Elim's leaders to gather, discuss, and support one another's ministries.

2022 Ministry to Women Annual Report

By Shauna Essman, Co-Leader of Ministry to Women Team (MtoW)

Members: Fran Amos, Julie Brannon, Lori Cantu, Shauna Essman, Janine Lawrence, and Becca Passic

At the beginning of the year, we were challenged with connecting women to God and one another and how to encourage their spiritual journey. We meet monthly to grow together as a team and plan for ways to connect. We consider it a true blessing to serve together the women of Elim!

Janine Lawrence continued as our Meal Train coordinator. We know meal preparations often fall to the women of the home, and we felt this was a great way to embrace our women and support their families in times of need. If you find yourself in a difficult situation, please reach out to someone on our team and allow your church body to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Julie Brannon continued in the role of coordinating groups at Elim. She recruited leaders and encouraged them through prayer and training. Later in the year, Gene Smarr joined Julie to assist with these groups. These two oversee all discipleship groups: the men's groups, the women's groups, a college group, a cancer support group, couples' groups, and a recovery group. People participating in these groups are growing in their faith journey while engaging with others in community. These Discipleship Groups are always open to new attendees and leaders.

Elim also continued supporting the students and families at Zeiger Elementary in a couple of ways. When the school year started up, many families felt the rise in cost of school lunches. Elim was asked, and they responded by generously donating lunch-type foods to share with these students. Elim also participated in collecting gift cards to share with the families at Zeiger, providing Thanksgiving meals during the season. These efforts will continue under the Outreach Team going forward.

Lori Cantu served as our communication expert. This included everything from setting dates on the church calendar to sending out communication to the women of Elim to educate and advertise the happenings. We could not do our job without Lori! It's just one of the many hats she wears.

Fran Amos worked as a liaison with CareNet. She organized a baby bottle drive, collecting money for their ongoing supplies. Fran also coordinated a collection of small personal items to put into bags and hand out

as gifts to clients who visit the clinic. In addition, she created a resource board where we put out information and resources on different topics—check it out!

Becca Passic, Brianna White, Lori Cantu, and Shauna Essman hosted a few women's outreach events, including a bunco night, a "Favorite Things" event, summer IF: Tables, and a Christmas advent family event where families came together to make fleece blankets for our local Project Linus chapter. Look for more of these opportunities to connect with your friends (and meet new people) in the coming year!

In the fall of 2022, Janine Lawrence and Shauna Essman coordinated a Women's retreat with Black Lake Bible Camp. Women were able to connect with each other and other women in the area, as it was a multichurch event. It was great to return to a familiar location to worship, learn, and fellowship together.

We said goodbye to our teammate Fran Amos, as she has stepped off this team to continue her service with CareNet, under the Outreach Ministry team.

2022 Financial Report

By Willie Houze, Treasurer

As Treasurer and a member of the Elim Stewardship Team, I thank God for your continued faithful giving in 2022. Through His never-ending grace, we started and ended the year strong and again were able to meet all our financial obligations for the year, including all local and international ministries, and finished the year in the black!

For 2022, Elim's members approved an operating budget of \$304,356; our total expenses were \$281,422.11, and our giving toward the budget was \$304,307.92. It's worth noting that this year's budget was an increase of \$31,532 over last year, and our expenses were \$53,056.43 higher than the previous; however, we were still able to meet our commitment to Denominational Support for the EFCA as well as provide support to our Holistic Outreach Ministries at home and around the globe, and we finished the year with roughly \$22K in net income. Another point worth noting is that of the total amount received toward Undesignated Giving, nearly 51% was received via online giving! Keep it up!

In 2022, we saw another decrease in our Benevolence fund, yet we were still able to provide financial support to family members in need. We ended the year with a balance of \$1,311.45, which is a significant reduction from the previous year of \$4,400.56.

While we were not financially able to start some of the major renovation programs we dreamed of, we had what we needed and then some, and no ministry program was denied funding.

Attached are the 2022 Balance Sheet and the Profit-and-Loss Statement.

Again, I humbly thank Dan Amos, Gregg Zimmerman, and Bethany Gapsch, as well as the Elim Ministry Directors, for their hard work, support, and input as we developed the 2022 Operating Budget. Also, thanks to the Elim family for approving and supporting this budget.

Thank you again for your giving to the ministry work here at Elim.

The detailed financial information has been removed from this version of the report. To request a copy of the 2021 Profit-and-Loss Statement and/or the 2021 Balance Sheet please email office@elimafc.org