



# STAFF REPORTS

This year saw some changes in our staff teams, some short-term and some permanent.

First of all, Colette Dejordy retired near the start of 2022. Colette was instrumental in getting Commons focused on Refugee Resettlement, and her impact here will continue to shape Commons for years to come. Colette was also responsible for our bookkeeping and facility, and we are very excited to have Kalie Eeles join the team as our new Operations Director. She will be taking on the bookkeeping and facility as well as extended hospitality in and around the community. Larissa will be overseeing our local and global partnership including refugee

resettlement as she has also joined the team full time.

**Kalie Eeles**



**Laura Thiessen**



Second, Ryan Petkau and Yelena Pakhomova are now both on maternity leaves. Ashley Hill has stepped in to care for our kids, and you can read her report below, but Laura Thiessen has also joined us in a 12-month contract to look after our Groups and provide admin support to the pastoral team. We are very grateful to have both contributing to the Commons story.

**Larissa Amour**

2021 was yet another year with many highs and lows. In our youth group, though we had to often postpone or entirely cancel certain events, we were blessed enough to gather twice per week when it was safe to do so. This year we introduced mid-week gathering events. These Wednesday evening events were focused on re-socializing students, getting them comfortable with being in the building again, and re-building new and lost connections and friendships. On Sunday mornings our focus was on following the Jesus Collective bible series. By staying



focused on 4-week series at a time, a deeper understanding of gospel messages, characters and lessons emerged. We also prioritized a portion of our time on Sundays for the student to share their “highs and low’s” of the week. What’s come of this sharing time is an opportunity for students to share areas of struggle or success in their day-to-day lives. We’ve seen students open up and share vulnerably in these conversations and have better been able to specifically apply our bible stories and lessons to their personal experiences. Throughout the many changes and disruptions this year brought, our junior and senior high students have shown so much resiliency and care for one another.

Our BIPOC group took a pause in the fall to accommodate life and schedule changes but resumed in 2022. Our book club has also continued to grow as we made our way through 10 books on our lending library focusing on authors and books writing about theology and spirituality from the margins.

### **Kevin Borst**

For this year’s report I thought it would be valuable to begin by introducing myself. My name is Kevin. My wife Alyssa and I have a two year old daughter named Millie and by the time you are reading this we may have just welcomed our second little girl! My role here at Commons is Worship & Creative Pastor. This means I oversee our creative teams (music, production, and more) and the worship experience for our church community. I feel blessed to be working here at Commons in my role, I get to serve alongside an incredible team of staff and volunteers.



I feel pretty lucky that in 2021 our music and production teams didn’t shut down at any point because of the pandemic. In-person or online only services, our music and production teams faithfully served the community. They prepared and created a meaningful space of worship for our community. I am so thankful for each and every one of them!

In so many ways 2021 can be described in a way of “rebuilding”. This is where I see us as a community, learning what it means again to worship together in person. One of the positives of 2020 is with the addition of the live stream we learned how to worship together while not being physically together. In 2021 (and beyond) we began to rebuild what it means to worship in the same space again. It’s this deep familiar feeling we know but takes some vulnerability to let your

guard down and remember that this is a trusted space to be singing, praying, and sharing in the Eucharist together.

As we continue the journey of 2022 I see our community strengthened by the events of recent years. I see our worship together having a deeper meaning than ever before. In all this we know God will guide us to become the worshiping community God has always imagined for us.

## Ashley Hill



Changes, changes, changes! This year our Commons Kids program has seen so many changes as we have pivoted to protect our very loved group of youngsters. But, with the help of grace, prayer, and some incredible volunteers, we have been able to embrace these changes with love, care, and a spirit of flexibility. (A good sense of humour doesn't hurt, either!)

The most obvious change we have had to make is adapting to COVID. Sometimes this meant going to online only formats, other times it meant reduced capacity and/or wearing masks and social distancing. For the past few weeks, as case numbers have continued to decrease and things have begun to open up, we have resumed in person services and kids programs. If circumstances change again, we will continue to adapt to keep your kids safe while also providing them with fun activities, faithful teaching, and socialization—all with Jesus at the centre.

Another important change to note is that childrens and families pastor Ryan Petkau left on maternity leave this summer. We all miss Ryan, but thankfully the transition was very smooth, and we were able to secure a dedicated Nursery Director position this year which was filled by Cait Straat in the fall/winter months and Alexandra Chubachi for this year.

We also have some exciting positive changes to our programming to share with you! Over the last few months, our group of volunteers has increased, which has enabled us to open up a new room for grades 3-6. This has been such a blessing for our older children because it means they can have individualized attention and more content that is geared towards their age range and spiritual development. This year as we continue to use our Jesus Collective curriculum, we also include activities that engage the body, mind and spirit so that the children at Commons have a holistic and positive experience coming to church. Sometimes this looks like freeze tag, crazy forts, slime, dance parties, experiments, tactile activities and to be honest... a lot of noise!

This year, while we were able to concentrate more on our in person Sunday experience, we continued to offer teaching and activities online on our Youtube channel. Our Youtube channel Commons Kids now has 243 uniquely made videos, which include 97 craft videos and 49 how to draw videos.

As we continue to see new families every Sunday, we are always looking for more ways to connect with and engage our kids, and we are very excited to see what this year will bring and the ways in which God will meet us!

### **Bobbi Salkeld**

I began and ended 2021 with a couple of big writing projects for the community.

After posting daily prayers from our staff team as the pandemic interrupted our rituals, I gathered the prayers together, edited them, and reintroduced them to the community through a print collection called *From a Season Like No Other*. The reach of this collection was impressive. People mailed the book to friends and family worldwide, prayed the prayers at mealtimes, and carried the book up mountains to read the prayers in wild and windy places.



We plan to bring the remaining prayers to print sometime in 2022 in a second collection called something like *This is How We Move Forward*.

At the close of 2021, I put together a fun little book called *12 Ways to Have a Merry Christmas*. We wanted to give people something thoughtful at a time of year when we are all asked for so much. I heard stories of how the booklet inspired family creativity over the holidays. Also, everyone loves fun mail.

Between *From a Season* and *12 Ways*, I worked with Jonathan Petkau (producer) on the third season of *Between Sundays* the podcast. On March 2, we'll drop the first episode of a season called "Why Does It Matter?" – all about meaning-making. We have five compelling conversations with folks from Commons to share with the community about finding the sacred in the everyday. The podcast provides another opportunity for people to connect to the work at Commons beyond Sundays.

I'm so grateful to be a part of the Commons community. We are a creative, resilient, and Christ-centred church. Thanks to Jeremy, the board, and the staff team for trusting me as a leader here at Commons.



## Scott Wall



I want to quickly take this chance to express my gratitude to all of you — for all the ways you continue to care about and show up for the things we share!

As for my work in the community, I have spent a lot of time these past twelve months coordinating some fun learning experiences. We added three new opportunities with our Prayer Apprentice, Bible Roadmap, and Theology of Work courses — and also brought back our Marriage/Relationship course, along with the ever-popular Jesus-Centred Theology conversation. One of the big challenges this year was moving some of these events into a hybrid format where people could participate in-person and online — and we look forward to the ways this shift will help us serve everyone in the future.

Looking ahead to 2022, there are a few highlights I want to mention.

I'm super excited about our Expanded Theologies course later this spring, as well as our future plans for a Society Series that will explore the interface between our Christian tradition and the Canadian culture we live in.

I'm thrilled to be stepping into a role where I'll work more closely with our Global Partnerships — building awareness and connection with the incredible work done by IJM and Hands at Work.

And finally, I've agreed to lead a small group of international practitioners as part of our developing relationship with Jesus Collective — and have already found it rewarding.

Thanks for adapting and growing with us Commons!