



**ANNUAL  
REPORT FOR  
THE YEAR**

**2024**

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1206 WHITEHALL ROAD  
MUSKEGON, MI 49445**

**ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING  
Sunday, January 26,  
2024**



**First  
Lutheran  
Church**

## **AGENDA FOR 2025 ANNUAL MEETING OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH IN MUSKEGON**

1. Welcome
2. Approval of 2024 annual meeting minutes
3. Financial Report—Diane Madej
4. Pastor's Report—Bill Uetricht
5. Pastoral Assistant's Report—Paula Dusseljee
6. Presentation of the goals for 2025
7. New business and announcements
8. Adjournment

**MINUTES FOR 2024 ANNUAL MEETING FOR FIRST LUTHERAN  
CHURCH JANUARY 28, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by President Ed Wosinski.

The minutes for the previous annual meeting in 2023 were approved.

The finance report given by Diane Madej was approved.

We approved the goals for 2024 which focused on our doing long-range planning for our building and our staffing; claimed the significance of both lament and love in our living out our discipleship during troubled times; highlighted health and movement as essential components of faithfully being the disciples of Jesus.

We ratified our newly revised constitution that reflected both the mandatory changes provided by the ELCA and those brought about by new developments in our own congregation.

Pastor Bill provided his report, reflecting his hopefulness for the future of our congregation and his gratefulness for the privilege of being the pastor at First. He introduced the staff and installed newly elected officers.

In new business, Sande Borushko asked us to consider placing a curtain on our stage in the Family Life Center.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

## **GOALS AND ACTION STEPS FOR 2025**

In 2025, First Lutheran will:

- **Continue a long-term planning process, particularly in relationship to our building and our staffing**
  - ✓ Prioritize big projects we have for our grounds: carpet, parking lot, portico near the administrative entrance
  - ✓ Encourage the Personnel Committee to meet regularly
  - ✓ Secure bids for big projects in the church building and the parsonage that may need to be accomplished soon
  - ✓ Provide forty meditations during Lent that will be available through email or by means of a hard copy
  
- **Nurture the partnerships we have with other communities of faith in the Muskegon area and continue to address global needs and promote social justice**
  - ✓ Collaborate with Edgewood Lutheran, Covenant Reformed, and First Presbyterian for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Thanksgiving services
  - ✓ Discover means to connect us to communities of faith that are not Christian (Sikh, Islamic)
  - ✓ Continue to work to support Dar Al Kalima school in Palestine
  - ✓ Utilize internet technology to highlight our relationship with Palestinian Lutheran Christians
  - ✓ Seek means to support the Ukrainians who are residents of West Michigan
  - ✓ Explore what it might mean to participate in Love Inc's pay-as-you-are-able restaurant in downtown Muskegon
  - ✓ Continue to highlight social service ministries in the Muskegon area, particularly through our Wednesday night dinners.
  - ✓ Seek new means to support the growing homeless population in our community
  
- **Develop the spiritual (wholistic) health of our members, while attending more intentionally to their care needs**
  - ✓ Offer a series on spiritual health during Lent
  - ✓ Focus on creation care through the work of the Stewardship ministry and their green team efforts
  - ✓ Pursue offering a monthly Taize service perhaps in the downtown area
  - ✓ Highlight activities at the church and in the community that focus on movement.
  - ✓ Support the work of our care team and our Grief Ministry
  - ✓ Provide our "keepers" with regular visitors
  - ✓ Discuss ways to make sure members of our congregation with health crises do not "slip through the cracks."

**First Lutheran Church in Muskegon**  
Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets - Cash Basis  
As of December 31, 2024

**Assets**

		<u>December 31, 2024</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Pastor's Discretionary	\$	4,600.89
Youth		8,306.86
Choice One Checking		44,920.26
Choice One Savings Account		26,498.22
Dollar-A-Day Savings Account		24,456.98
CD		60,000.00
CD #2		40,000.00
Prepaid Payroll		8,322.89
Endowment Fund		<u>268,973.25</u>
Total Cash		486,079.35
 <b>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT</b>		
Total Property and Equipment		2,196,614.11
Less: Accumulated Depreciation		<u>(1,519,741.20)</u>
<b>Net Property and Equipment</b>		676,872.91
 <b>OTHER ASSETS</b>		
 <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		 <u><u>\$ 1,162,952.26</u></u>

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

		<u>December 31, 2024</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Federal W/H	(1,638.98)	
State W/H	116.13	
Local WH	136.76	
Other WH	<u>3,046.28</u>	
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<u>2,501.19</u>
 <b>Total Liabilities</b>		 <u>2,501.19</u>
 <b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted	795,956.81	
Temporarily Restricted - Savings	107,210.87	
Temporarily Restrcted - DAD	9,365.73	
Permanently Restricted - Endowment	256,623.25	
Net Earnings (Loss)	<u>(8,705.59)</u>	
<b>Total Equity</b>		<u>1,160,451.07</u>
 <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		 <u><u>\$ 1,162,952.26</u></u>

See Accountant's Compilation Report

**First Lutheran Church in Muskegon**  
Statement of Cash Flow by Fund  
For the Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2024 and 2023

	1 Month Ended 12/31/2024	1 Month Ended 12/31/2023	12 Months Ended 12/31/2024	12 Months Ended 12/31/2023
<b>General Fund</b>				
Income	66,138.87	47,812.08	507,142.28	491,998.04
Interest Income	0.60	0.74	8.04	9.32
Total Income	<u>66,139.47</u>	<u>47,812.82</u>	<u>507,150.32</u>	<u>492,007.36</u>
Transfers				
transfer in from DAD			39,199.53	33,814.97
Sale of Van			-	9,000.00
Transfer from Savings			110,419.38	96,963.98
Transfer from Endowment			-	3,000.00
Total Transfers	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>149,618.91</u>	<u>144,778.95</u>
Outflow	62,145.46	38,422.09	603,256.76	659,101.33
Transfer to DAD	18,533.95		18,533.95	
Interest Expense			-	-
Total Outflow	<u>80,679.41</u>	<u>38,422.09</u>	<u>621,790.71</u>	<u>659,101.33</u>
<b>General Fund Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>(14,539.94)</u></b>	<b><u>9,390.73</u></b>	<b><u>34,978.52</u></b>	<b><u>(22,315.02)</u></b>
<b>Building Enhancement</b>				
Offering Income	1,380.00	1,020.00	12,400.00	12,822.00
Other Income	1,912.96	1,899.43	25,027.23	23,567.70
Revenue			-	-
Total Income Received	<u>3,292.96</u>	<u>2,919.43</u>	<u>37,427.23</u>	<u>36,389.70</u>
Outflow			0	0
Interest Expense & Other Expenses	-	-	-	302.62
Principle Reduction	-	-	-	8,424.30
Total Outflow	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,726.92</u>
<b>Building Enhancement Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>3,292.96</u></b>	<b><u>2,919.43</u></b>	<b><u>37,427.23</u></b>	<b><u>27,662.78</u></b>
<b>Youth Ministry</b>				
Income			9,627.50	7,379.32
Interest Income			0.19	-
Total Income	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,627.69</u>	<u>7,379.32</u>
Expense		39.37	17,814.70	9,525.53
<b>Youth Ministry Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>-</u></b>	<b><u>(39.37)</u></b>	<b><u>(8,187.01)</u></b>	<b><u>(2,146.21)</u></b>
<b>Pastors' Discretionary</b>				
Income		600.00	825.00	600.00
Transfer from DAD			2,593.30	-
Total Income	<u>-</u>	<u>600.00</u>	<u>3,418.30</u>	<u>600.00</u>
Expense	60.00	-	1,987.00	2,604.96
<b>Pastors' Discretionary Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>(60.00)</u></b>	<b><u>600.00</u></b>	<b><u>1,431.30</u></b>	<b><u>(2,004.96)</u></b>
<b>Dollar A Day Savings</b>				
Income	551.09	1,853.15	36,409.17	8,650.29
Transfers from General	18,533.95		18,533.95	
Interest Income	0.20	0.20	0.78	1.11
Total Income	<u>19,085.24</u>	<u>1,853.35</u>	<u>54,943.90</u>	<u>8,651.40</u>
Transfer to Discretionary Fund			19,358.51	7,000.00
Expense			10,000.00	20,000.00
<b>Dollar A Day Savings Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>19,085.24</u></b>	<b><u>1,853.35</u></b>	<b><u>25,586.39</u></b>	<b><u>(18,348.60)</u></b>
<b>General Savings</b>				
Income	175.00		29,189.17	15,099.00
Transfer from General			(40,000.00)	11,383.16
Transfer from Savings			0	7000
Interest Income	1.03	2.77	5.45	13.37
Total Income	<u>176.03</u>	<u>2.77</u>	<u>(10,806.38)</u>	<u>33,495.53</u>
Expense			67,689.69	113,689.95
<b>General Savings Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>176.03</u></b>	<b><u>2.77</u></b>	<b><u>(78,495.07)</u></b>	<b><u>(80,174.42)</u></b>
<b>Endowment</b>				
Income		20,610.68	28,292.16	40,307.73
Expense	4,427.10		15,088.67	9,360.44
<b>Endowment Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>(4,427.10)</u></b>	<b><u>20,610.68</u></b>	<b><u>13,203.49</u></b>	<b><u>30,947.29</u></b>
<b>Total Cash Flow</b>	<b><u>3,527.19</u></b>	<b><u>35,337.59</u></b>	<b><u>26,943.85</u></b>	<b><u>(66,379.14)</u></b>

## PASTOR BILL UETRICH'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

At the beginning of 2024 we established three goals: one related to long-term planning for our staff and our buildings; one desiring that we be a community of love and lament in a time of great turmoil; and one focused on health and movement.

We certainly have not finished our long-term planning for staffing and our buildings, but we have begun to think about seeking synodical guidance for the call process that we will enter in light of my eventual retirement. It is hoped that we will begin that process before I retire in 2026-2027. We also have begun looking at what needs to be done with our building and parsonage in the future, addressing some of those needs now, and anticipating others.

We inspected the roof on the parsonage, concluding that it has several more years of life in it. We replaced the water heater there and painted the first floor. We are about ready to purchase a new washer and dryer for this house. There are some carpet, electricity, and bathroom needs that probably should be addressed before new people move into the home. The boiler in the house may need to be replaced at some point.

We have completed sound and technology upgrades in the Family Life Center and have added a curtain to the stage. We have made the upstairs in the education unit much more friendly to use, rejoicing that more folks are using that space. We know that our boiler system in the church building is new and should last for a long time to come. We may have some roofing concerns that should be addressed at some point.

The next two planned projects for our properties will be new carpet in much of the building and a resurfaced parking lot. I can see the former happening before the summer of 2025. The parking lot will be a bigger and costlier matter.

Our goal to endeavor to be a community of love and lament was certainly at the center of our life together in 2024, particularly in light of the horrible wars in Gaza and Ukraine. In September we welcomed Pastor Khader el-Yateem from the national ELCA office. Khader, a Palestinian, brought to us in preaching and at a special event a strong call for justice for Palestinians and for all those who are oppressed. Many of us found ourselves challenged and encouraged, something that also happened as a group of us studied earlier in the year Walter Brueggeman's book **Chosen**, which asked us to think through the complexities of the crisis in Israel and Palestine. We did our little part of encouraging justice by raising over \$10,000 to support the Lutheran school Dar al Kalima near Bethlehem. Paula did a marvelous job in highlighting this school and its challenges throughout the year.

As a part of our lament emphasis, we hosted a Ukrainian meal in the Fall at one of our Wednesday night dinners, raising over \$3000 for people who are helping to keep Ukrainian civilians and soldiers safe. The response to that dinner was remarkable and very heartening.

The emphasis on love and lament was also experienced in our first-ever Blue Christmas service, a service that we shared with pastors from Edgewood Lutheran, First Presbyterian, and Covenant Reformed. Working collaboratively with other communities of faith will likely be a regular part of the new year. It was great this past year to share a

Thanksgiving service, our event with Pastor el Yateem, and a trip to the mosque in Grand Rapids with the fine folks from Edgewood.

The emphasis on health and exercise has for a long time been a part of the DNA of this congregation. The cardio drumming classes, the Overeaters Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, the yoga program, the pickleball games—they all demonstrate our commitment to health. During Lent this past year, we hosted an educational series on fasting, movement, and anti-inflammatory eating. Our summer triathlon, an event that includes lots of movement, was expanded to include children. In 2025, we want to widen our health emphases by centering on *spiritual* health.

While we didn't fully carry out our goals, I sense that we were faithful in addressing them in this our 160<sup>th</sup> year. What a joy it was to celebrate this significant marker in our congregational life! The summer concert series, the presence of Max and Ruth Bloomquist, local musicians at our worship service and in a concert, the preaching of former intern Tom Montgomery, the catered luncheon in September were all important ways that we celebrated the gift this congregation has been for 160 years.

I look forward to 2025 and what this new year will mean for this vibrant, fun, exciting, generous, rooted, and hopeful community of faith. We are blessed to share this ministry of grace and love together.



It is an honor and a privilege for me to serve First Lutheran as we continue to grow as a vibrant and passionate faith community. Sometimes, people who attend church, think of it as an experience or a place to come. But here, at First Lutheran, we are a body that lives and breathes, laughs and cries, struggles and rejoices together as we live into the grand story of God's love and grace. We work together, worship together, feed the hungry, provide showers and shelter to the homeless and together...we care deeply about people in the world who are suffering, dying on a daily basis and who long for peace and justice. Oh, how grateful I am to be a part of this faith community while living into our baptism and into our call as Lutherans!

You have entrusted me to lead you; to serve the Muskegon Community, serve on a global platform and to serve you. Following is a brief synopsis of the events, activities and ministries I have overseen this past year - all of which continue to deepen interpersonal exchanges in the community and abroad and help me grow more fully in my faith.

- Oversight of congregational care: visitations, hospital visits, sit with the dying, oversee the 13-week Grief Share class, interact with funeral directors, perform memorials, help Stephen Ministry transition to a newly formed Care Team.
- Educational opportunities: teach confirmation classes, now held on Sunday morning prior to worship, preach, teach Bible study and adult education classes, oversee the church when Pastor Bill is gone, head up women's ministries including book studies, monthly breakfast group, retreats
  - Advent by Candlelight was held on December 1st with over sixty women in attendance.
  - Continuing Education: Arabic 101 class through Bethlehem Bible College, traveled to Greece and walked in the Footsteps of the Apostle Paul
- Support Emma in her position as Education and Youth Director.
- Serve in the Outreach Ministry: provide opportunities to teach people more about the struggles Palestinian Christians face as they continue to live under occupation and the ongoing war atrocities in Gaza.
  - Develop and oversee several fundraisers to benefit Dar Al-Kalima School (Lutheran school within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).
  - Continue to build relationships within the Nassar family in Beit Jala, the ELCJHL, ELCA Churchwide, and broaden our global mission at First Lutheran. In fall of 2024, we created a Family Scholarship Fund to help students and families at Dar Al-Kalima.
  - In September 2024, the Executive Director for ELCA Service and Justice, Pastor Khader El-Yateem, visited First Lutheran. Pastor El-Yateem was the keynote speaker at our Breakfast Fundraiser, led our Confirmation class and preached. His personal story touched many lives and his witness to proclaim Jesus to a hurting world provided much inspiration to our community.

- Learning and growing and listening to the personal struggles of the people in the Holy Land continue to touch my heart, feed my faith and create a longing within me. They have taught me so much about hope and Sumud, "steadfastness." Collectively, we raised \$11,933 this year through two major fundraisers, noisy offerings, and Wednesday night dinners. Seven Family Scholarships were created. Your generosity IS making a difference in this world!
- Additional highlights and opportunities from 2024:
  - Our November Gratitude Project, which once again provided Reeths-Puffer Schools with enough items to fill their pantry for the rest of the school year.
  - Our Ministry Fair, which supports all ministry groups

In closing, I would like to say what a blessing it is be invited into your lives and I am humbled to minister alongside you each day. I look forward to a new year unfolding as the body of Christ, here at First Lutheran, and I wait with great expectation on the ways God will use all of us in this church, our community at large and in places like Bethlehem. My prayer for this church is that we continue to tell stories of how grace, forgiveness, mercy and justice *have* transformed us, *are* transforming us *and* how our transformation helps us proclaim the "big story" of God's love for all people.

Sumud,  
Paula

## **Endowment Committee End of the Year Report--2024**

Thanks to the leadership of John Jack, Steve Dix, Kent Johnson and others over the past several years, the Endowment Committee has been accumulating wealth that will continue to build and produce a prudent return on investment. First Lutheran is fortunate to have this fund and we will remain committed to be prudent in considering and granting requests.

\*The purpose of the mission endowment fund is to provide for mission work beyond the operational budget of the congregation.

\*This is a perpetual fund in which the principal will be retained and only the income used.

\*The Endowment and Trust Fund committee shall direct the operations, investments, and expenditures from the fund, including determining what is principal and income and what percentage of the fund can be appropriated each year.

\*The Endowment Committee is made up of representatives appointed from each Ministry Committee and two members at large from the congregation.

At the end of 2024, the balance in the Endowment Account is \$268,973.86. At the December, 2024, meeting of the committee, it was recommended that the distribution for 2025 be 5% of the balance or \$13,448.93. Our base is \$233,217 which is the balance that must remain or increased if funds are earmarked for the Endowment Fund.

There were two requests and approved for funding in 2024:

#1. The Youth Group was awarded \$5,000 for their New Orleans trip.

#2. Worship and Music was awarded \$3,000.00 for improvement of the church's Paraments

A Request for Funds form was presented at the December meeting with suggestions for edits. Edits have been made. The form is available in the Endowment box or from Lorey in the office. This will make it easier for individuals to request funds from the committee and make it easier for the committee to review requests.

In 2025, the Endowment Resolution will need to be changed to reflect the Church's new constitution.

There are brochures describing the work of the Endowment Committee near the welcome stations.

Pat Shafer, Chair, Endowment Committee (April 2024-Present)

## Building and Grounds Ministry 2024 Annual Report

This has been a busy year for Building and Grounds. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and expertise!

### Accomplishments:

- As they fail, fluorescent lights are being replaced with LEDs and fixtures are being rewired for them in the Fellowship Hall. Fluorescent bulbs that we already have will be used as needed to replace failing bulbs where the lights are easily reached, such as in the hallways. When the supply is used up, these fixtures will also be converted to LEDs. More than half of all the fluorescent fixtures in the building have had their ballasts removed (the most significant electrical drain for fluorescent lights) and bulbs have been replaced.
- Exterior lighting in the parking lot and building entrances continues to be upgraded.
- A new (to us) water fountain replaced the old one in the education/office wing.
- We worked with the play organizers to construct sets for the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary play and replaced and set the spotlights for it.
- The two-story window in the stairwell in the education wing was replaced. The frame was rebuilt and clad in aluminum, and the windows themselves were replaced with more energy-efficient glazing. Thanks to Wayne Halpin and friends!
- Wayne also built a movable podium to be used for larger musical productions.
- One of the restrooms next to the old choir room in the basement was dismantled and fitted for additional storage space.
- Several limbs that hung over the parsonage garage were removed and chipped. Some of the chips are being experimentally used as edging around trees on the north side and along the road. The plan is to use leaves raked from the lawn to fill inside this edging. As they decompose, they will fertilize the trees and provide new soil for planting flowers in these areas. In addition, it will make these areas easier to mow without leaving ruts around the trees.
- The native plant garden south of the gym is slowly "taking root". Next spring, the tall grasses will be moved to the gravel area on the east side of the gym, making room for native grasses and other plants. Some of the plants will be raised from seed collected within the immediate area, while other plants will be purchased from extension services in nearby counties.

### For the coming year:

- We are looking into repairing and resurfacing the parking lot.
- The light pole on the far side of the parking lot and the light on it are owned by Consumers Energy and we pay nearly \$40/month for it. If we can get them to remove the light and leave the pole, we can put brighter and more efficient lights on it to illuminate the parking lot more effectively.
- Plans are being drawn up for a portico that will cover the parking lot entrance to the building. We are planning on building it in-house, so to speak.
- The jamb for the door in the southeast corner of the gym is rusted at the base and needs to be repaired. The door itself also needs some TLC.
- The edging around the stage will be replaced with aluminum edging that should be much more durable than the plastic edging that keeps coming off.

Respectfully,  
Mark Thogerson

## **Education and Youth Ministry Coordinator 2024 Annual Report (Emma Johnston)**

We have had a year full of learning and fun with the youth!

### **PK-5th Grade Faith Formation: Holy Moly/Spark All Kids**

- ❖ From January-May, we continued with the Holy Moly curriculum with the kids split into classes: PK-2nd, and 3rd-5th graders
- ❖ With the start of the new school year, we debuted a new curriculum called Spark All Kids that keeps all the elementary kids together. They work in mixed-age groups to read, discuss, and interact with the week's Bible story.
- ❖ In the new year, I plan to begin to integrate some of the Holy Moly content to assist in greater understanding of the stories we are learning about.

### **6th-8th Grade Faith Formation: Confirmation**

- ❖ This year, we began using Faith Formation time as the Confirmation class in an attempt to make scheduling easier for families and busy middle school students. Nate Johnston is teaching the first- and second-year students, with Paula leading the third years. Pastor Bill addresses all the students at the beginning of each class.

### **VBS: Splash into Summer**

- ❖ Vacation Bible School was held on July 29-August 1 from 5:30pm-8:30pm
- ❖ We followed the Spark Splash into Summer guide from Sparkhouse Digital. The week focused on four Bible stories centered around water: Noah, Jonah, Jesus Walking on Water, and the Woman at the Well. Participants ate supper and worshiped together, then rotated through stations of storytelling, art, and games related to the day's story.
- ❖ There were a total of 33 kids grades K-5, a roughly 15% increase from the previous year, as well as approximately 10 middle- and high-school students who worked in conjunction with adult leaders to guide the students through the week
- ❖ For 2025 I aim to involve a larger group in planning and behind-the-scenes work and increase participation

### **Junior Church/Summer Bible Adventure**

- ❖ A Bible story curriculum provided for elementary students during the sermon portion of the worship service. During Advent, Lisa Ziemelis took the lead to work on the Children's Christmas program.
- ❖ A rotating roster of seven teachers was used to provide this experience. Attendance was usually between five and ten children per week.

## Fellowship Ministry Annual Report 2024

We had an awesome 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in the events that were planned and attended. Thank you everyone who took part and hope you found camaraderie and community in whichever event you attended. We planned a full year with something happening each month. Below is the list:

**March** - Our annual St Patrick's event is always a well-attended night. We were entertained by the Mona Shores Fiddlers and Steph's Steps. Proceeds from this event went to the Family Life Center improvements.

**April** - Grand Rapids Islamic Mosque and lunch at The Pita House.

**May** - John Ball Zoo and Lantern Festival. An evening of lights.

**May** - We helped serve lunch after church for a Max & Ruth Bloomquist concert

**July** - Blessing of the Pets potluck. Many dogs, a cat and a rooster were blessed at this event. All got along - pets and people.

**August** - Summer Concerts - We served hot dogs before the first concert; popcorn and cotton candy at the second concert and popcorn, cotton candy and Culver's ice cream at the last concert. We may have set a standard in this offering.

**August** - Brunch for 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Fellowship cooked and served delicious breakfast foods.

**October** - Halloween Party, always a well-attended event, we brought in \$700 to go toward Lutheran Disaster Relief.

**November** - Northway Lanes bowling. Twenty-one people spent a couple hours bowling (badly) but had a very fun time anyway.

**December** - Mona Shores Christmas Singing Tree. A group of 22 people attended and were bused in due to bad weather and few parking spaces.

So, again, thank you all who took part in 2024 and hope to see many others take part in 2025.

Respectfully submitted,  
Diane Kroll - Co-Chair  
Deb Roest - Co-Chair

## **2024 Outreach Ministry Annual Report**

The Outreach Ministry Team met bi-monthly as a group in 2024 to plan and report on events and outreach ministry areas and activities for which the team is responsible.

### **Global Connections**

2024 marked the beginning of an additional focus for our outreach team: Global Connections, led by Paula Dusseljee. Pastor Khader El-Yateem, Executive Director for Justice and Service for the ELCA, visited First Lutheran on September 14 and 15. On 9/14 First Lutheran sponsored a community brunch at which Pastor El-Yateem shared his story and the work of his organization. He preached during our 9/15 Sunday worship service. Since his visit, the Outreach Team has developed a tuition sponsorship program for the families of children who attend the Dar El Kalima school in Bethlehem. By the end of 2024 we have funded 7 full tuition scholarships at \$1,600 each.

### **Adopt a Family**

Erin Schmitz led the Christmas Adopt-a-Family effort again this year. The 2024 project served 18 families and 80 individuals. In addition to the Reeths-Puffer families, this year we included one family from the Ex-Offenders in Transition (EXIT) program and two families from Kids Belong. The project offers each child two gifts: one toy and one item of clothing. We also provided small gifts for parents and a gift card for families to purchase food or additional gift items.

### **Garage Sale**

Our Annual First Lutheran garage sale was held August 21-24. The event, organized and led by Joe Dick, raised \$3,500. A bake sale, coordinated by Emily Traub and Alice Habina, was held in conjunction with the garage sale, the proceeds of which (\$500) went to Step Up.

### **Supper House**

First Lutheran continues to serve supper once a month at Supper House in Muskegon Heights. Alice Habina leads the effort, recruiting volunteers and serving on the Supper House Board. First Lutheran provided 10 Christmas bags for women served by Supper House. We partner with Embrace Books to provide books for people accessing Supper House meals.

### **Family Promise**

Amy Werling and Bonnie Nolan coordinate with First Lutheran families to provide supper for one week for Family Promise participants three to four times per year.

### **EXIT**

Alice Habina coordinates a monthly home cooked meal for EXIT participants (offenders in jail transitioning back into the community) and their families onsite at the EXIT office. Five volunteers from First Lutheran serve an average of 20 people at each monthly meal.

**Blood Drives**

Kim Westerholm coordinates the bi-monthly Red Cross blood drives held at First. A faithful cadre of six volunteers helps the process to run smoothly. We average a total of 36 pints of blood per drive.

**Wednesday Night Dinners**

Alice Habina coordinates Wednesday night dinners at First Lutheran September through May, many of which highlight and benefit a community service organization. One especially notable Wednesday night dinner was sponsored by the local Ukrainian community at which close to 300 people were served.

**Quilters**

First Lutheran quilters meet weekly to work on quilts they distribute globally through Lutheran World Relief.

**Bread Delivery**

Sande Borushko delivers a loaf of homemade bread to all visitors who leave contact information with the church.

**God's Work/Our Hands**

Eight First Lutheran volunteers served food, lead games and interacted with children and foster families from the Kids Belong program at an event they held at First.

Gail Taggart leads a group of gardeners who planned, planted and tend a garden at the HOPE project.

**Community Concerts**

First sponsored three community concerts in North Muskegon during the summer. Each one raised money for a community service organization.

Kim Westerholm, Outreach Ministry Chair

1/26/24



## Worship and Music Annual Report 2024

In 2024 the Worship and Music Ministry addressed many needs that would improve the worship experience for the congregants of First Lutheran. We began with the purchase of the Roland Digital Piano. The old Clavinova had seen better days, and it was time to update to a much-improved instrument. This piano is portable and can be used all over the church building, and even off site, if needed. The sale of the old Clavinova and an additional gift of money from the Endowment Fund allowed us to purchase this instrument. Additionally, there was the purchase of new "walk around microphones" for the sanctuary and a battery charging station to save on the battery costs to operate them. One of the largest projects for the ministry this year was the sound system for the Family Life Center. This was installed in September and has been a huge improvement for events of all kinds that occur in this area of the church. We saw the benefit of this sound system during the annual "Almost Anything Goes" event that took place in the fall.

Worship and Music is also a service ministry. In early 2024 we hosted a Wednesday Night Dinner serving homemade meatloaf and a variety of sides to provide additional funds for the purchase of the sound equipment. We hosted the "Bread Day" coffee hour on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, providing an assortment of homemade breads, and we served as helpers for VBS during the week of July 29 - August 1, offering to help with whatever needed to be done. More recently, Worship and Music assisted Reeths-Puffer Choirs with their Wednesday Night Soup Dinner and totally enjoyed the Christmas concert they provided following the meal. And as part of the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, we prepared for the Summer Concert Series in Walker Park, hosting three bands on three separate occasions for our Northside community, while Karl Ziemelis prepared interviews with members of the congregation and posted them to the church's website for a look into their time and experience at First.

Some changes have occurred in 2024 as well. Shar Bourdon, Music Director, has narrowed her responsibilities to the adult choir, the bell choir and The Band. Elise McDonald continued her role as the accompanist, and Lisa Ziemelis has assumed responsibility for the youth choirs. Some long-time practices are more difficult to change and require a slow transition. It is our hope to eliminate the "green sheets" for visitors and replace them with "pew pads" where more accurate and useful information can be acquired. We also hope to initiate a change for prayer requests, asking that those requests be made in the Narthex prior to the start of the service. These long-held practices will take a bit of time to change completely.

Worship and Music is a ministry filled with wonderful members who enjoy the work set before them. This year, Rhonda Sweet has begun the enormous task of updating the paraments. She has presented her vision and will begin with the creation of the "white" season. We are looking forward to her completed work. After the Ministry Fair, Chris Patterson, Dona Gilbert, Carol Parker, and Kathryn Hall expressed interest in being a part of the work of this ministry. Chris will join us as a new member of the ministry, Dona will be assisting with Communion Prep, Carol will be attending to sacristy candles, and Kathryn will be added to the lector's rotation. We are fortunate to have so many who want to serve. And, there are always those who are serving in other ministries that

provide their gifts and talents to us. Wayne Halpin has built a conducting podium for the sanctuary. This gift will help all those who conduct choirs of all types to be seen and alleviate the issues of blind spots and vision issues in the sanctuary.

Plans for the coming year:

- Sponsor and serve one or more Wednesday Night Dinner
- Encourage congregants to serve in various capacities of this ministry
- Volunteer for serving at VBS
- Create opportunities to provide a variety of musical/theatrical endeavors for the congregation

# Congregational Care Ministry Annual Report for 2024

The Congregational Care Ministry consists of several diverse programs that serve our church members:

Coffee Hours: held every Sunday morning following worship and requires as many members as possible to host: chair Barb Bonifield

Funeral Management/Luncheons: approximately 30 funeral luncheons were held at First Lutheran in 2024: chair Barb Bonifield

Intercessory Prayer: prayers offered by different Church members each day to pray for our members and the larger missions of the Church; chair was Kami Kral. (With Kami's death, this ministry is being reorganized.)

New Member & Sponsor Dinner: chair Annette Jack

Prayer Chain: anyone can ask for prayers for themselves, family, friends, etc.  
chair Marianne Newman [mariannenew81@gmail.com](mailto:mariannenew81@gmail.com)

Ride Program: offers bus rides to Sunday worship and also offers rides, as needed, for doctor's appointments, etc.

Meal Train: when someone or a family has a need for meals (illness, new birth, a death in family, etc.) chair Gail Taggart

Care Team: (formerly Stephen Ministry) chair Diane Madej

The year 2024 the Team brought compassion & grace by serving six members of our faith family. In the new year, the Care Team will be doing visitations in hospitals, nursing homes, communion, and being of assistance to Pastor Bill and Paula. We are humbled to be the feet, hands, and heart of our Lord.

There are many more volunteers connected with each of these programs. We thank everyone involved for their commitment to the care and life of our congregation!

We are always very happy to welcome new volunteers to any one of these programs. If you would like to know more, please contact any of the program chairs or me,

Annette Jack, Congregational Care Ministry Chair.

## STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

This year the committee worked on revitalizing the "Dollar-a-Day" monthly funding program. This year the goal was to raise funding for improvements to the Family Life Center. The monthly collections averaged around \$600, although in November \$1075 was donated. The 2024 project was completed with the help of large donations. Currently, we have \$24,420 in that account. There were some funds from previous projects available and there have been recently large individual donations. The remaining \$5,000 debt on the stage curtains will be paid when the final bill arrives. The campaign for 2025 is for major carpet replacement.

We also assumed responsibility for the "Annual Golf Outing" at which we raised funds of \$4500 for the Dollar a Day project, of which \$2500 was donated by sponsors. Andy Luther has already volunteered to help with the 2025 outing. The 2024 committee included Kent Johnson, Gary Hansen, and John Arter. Pat Shafer, Gary Hansen and Kent Johnson worked on sponsorships. Alice Habina oversaw food service.

Three times during the year, through committee member Kathryn Hall, Stewardship supported the Green Team in managing three "Adopt-A-Highway" projects. The first outing included 20 participants, the second had seven, and the last one had six.

After the golf outing, we began to work in earnest on the annual pledge campaign. We managed to obtain pledges of \$240,000, close to last year's total pledge amount, with support from staff. Kathryn Hall and Gary Hansen were instrumental in leading this campaign.

Kathryn Hall has agreed to complete my term and serve as chairperson in 2025. Much appreciated, Kathryn!

Joe Labiak, Chair

## Official Acts 2024

### Baptisms

Michael Shields	Anthony Allen McCleary
Amory Joseph Hathaway	Aven Marie VanVelzen

### Confirmands

Greyson Jones	Ryan Legard	Emily Lucht
Elizabeth Lucht	Chloe O'Connor	Taela Plekes
Raleigh Schmitz		

### Funerals/Deaths

Ted Wierenga	Joan Rumohr	David Kleis
Barbara "Bonnie" Vandervelde	Frederick "Fred" Workman	Keith Endelman
Agnes Tallent	Tom Larson	Nancy Hazekamp
Aaron N. Rich	Donald Freeman	Michael Sauro, Jr.
Thomas Kanaar	Kay Diane Meyers	Bradley Hyde
Linda Sahlhoff	Matthew Olsen	Tom Lindrup
Dale Wheeler	Terri Hoffman-Forward	Maria Mayo
Patricia (Patty) Wall	Margaret Tyler	Marjorie A. Visscher
Steve Dix	Karen "Kami" Kral	

### No Weddings

### First Communion

Cassidy Alger	Noah Ziemelis	Ellery Dewey
Madison "Madi" Stewart		

**New Members**

Nick Mock

Andy Luther

Evie Hulka

Randy Tardy

Peter Nyblad

Catherine Tolley

Barb Jammer

Kathy VanPopering

Cora Del Percio

Chris Patterson

Bill Patterson

**We did not place anyone on the inactive list this year**