



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



LIVING CONNECTED
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS



2024 Annual Report

FLC Mission Narrative	
Welcome & Inclusion Statement / Staff	2
Agenda / Council & Board Members.....	3
2024 Annual Meeting Minutes	4
Bishop, Council, Pastor & Board Reports	5-23
Ministry Pictures	24
Inserts Included:	
Financials	

First Lutheran's Mission Narrative

At First Lutheran Church, we are called to connection with God, each other, and our neighbors in and beyond Columbia Heights. God connects with us through the reconciling act of Jesus Christ and the daily ministry of God's Spirit.

We connect to God as a spiritual community through worship and prayer, study and the sacraments, and mutual support and service. This sacred connection calls us into relationship with our neighbors with whom God's love has knit us together. We connect especially to the neighborhood and its youth who have been an essential part of our story from the very beginning when a rural ministry to immigrant children evolved into a long-standing and ever-present calling to love, nurture and mentor young people in our community.

As our neighborhood and world changes we commit to adjust as well, making space for growth, healing, generosity and community-building. We will honor each other's diverse stories and continue living connected to God and to each other. We rely on God's Spirit to guide us.

Welcoming & Inclusion Statement

First Lutheran Church strives to be inclusive and welcoming to everyone in our church, our community, and our partner organizations. We seek to connect and serve our neighbors wherever they are on their faith and life journey. We aim to support people of every race & culture, age & ability, family structure & economic status, and every sexual orientation & gender.

Church Leadership/Staff

Pastoral Staff:

*Rev. Scott Jakel, Interim Senior Pastor
Rev. Jill Bergman, Associate Pastor*

Senior Administrator:

Joyce Weaver

Director of Finance & Operations

Jana Dietering

Director of Music Ministries:

Jeffrey Patry

Director of Community Engagement:

Nathan Roberts

Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries:

Rachel James

CYF Associate:

Angela Montero

Maintenance Technician:

Jody Chandler

A/V Tech/Coordinator & Handbell Director:

Drew Stolba

A/V Tech/Coordinator:

Chris Larson

Kitchen

Coordinator:

Angela Montero

Wedding

Coordinators:

*Sonja Super
Joyce Weaver*

Funeral

Coordinator:

Joyce Weaver

Building & Grounds:

Roger Johnson

Director of Food Services:

Rock Hauser

Front Desk Security:

Joe Stinson



**Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda
First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights, Minnesota
Sunday, January 19, 2025**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>I. Litany to Open Meeting</p> <p>II. Table Question</p> <p>III. Call to Order</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Establish a quorum</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. Approve the agenda</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">c. Approve minutes from 2024 Annual Meeting</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">d. Call Committee</p> <p>VII. Business of the Church</p> <p>VIII. Call Committee Report</p> <p>IX. Election of Leaders (Synod Assembly Voting members; Nominating Committee)</p> | <p>X. Recognition of Outgoing Council & Board Members</p> <p>XI. Board of Finance Update, Pledge Drive Report, & Fiscal year 2025 Budget
<i>Short break for children and families leaving Sunday School.</i></p> <p>XII. Celebration of Ministry from 2024 Boards (Worship, Children, Youth & Family, Spiritual Growth, Hospitality & Outreach, Charter School Taskforce)</p> <p>XIII. Closing Prayer/Benediction</p> |
|---|---|

Synod Assembly is on Friday, May 2, and Saturday, May 3.

Join us at Bethlehem Lutheran - Twin Cities, for worship and social time on Friday, beginning at 6:30 PM. Then, join us for the business and community time at Lord of Life, Ramsey, on May 3, beginning at 9 AM. *(In February, Conference Assemblies attendees vote on or nominate people for synod positions & can bring resolutions. These nominations & resolutions will be brought to the May Synod Assembly to be voted on).*

Thank you to our 2024 Council & Board Members!

Executive Committee

Julienne Wyckoff (President)
Arlen Solem (Vice President)
Chris Larson (Treasurer)
Karen Palm (Secretary)
Pastoral Staff: Rev. Bonnie Wilcox (medical leave mid-Jan thru 9/22 resignation);
Rev. Scott Jakel, Interim
Rev. Jill Bergman

Memorial & Endowment

John Peterson (Chair)
Chad Habeck (Vice Chair)
Robert Nelson (Secretary)
Chris Larson (Treasurer)
Paul Turner
Drew Stolba
Jan McFall (Worship Rep)
Bruce Shellito (Spiritual Growth Rep)
Jana Dietering (Staff)

Board of Spiritual Growth

Bob Nelson (Chair)
Bruce Shellito (Vice Chair)
Phil Mattison
Randy Bergman
Rev. Jill Bergman (Staff)

Worship Environment Team

Lyn Larson
Dorothy Markowitz
Cheryl Ballingrud

Synod Assembly Representatives

Rev. Bonnie Wilcox (on medical leave mid-Jan thru 9/22 resignation)
Rev. Jill Bergman
Jan McFall
Chad Habeck
Julienne Wyckoff

Nominating Committee

Chad Habeck
Jan Mcfall
Pam Hartel
Julienne Wyckoff

Board of Worship

Dorothy Markowitz (Chair)
Cheryl Ballingrud (Altar Guild & Enhancements)
Leesa Betzold
Pam Hartel
Jan McFall
Jeffrey Patry (Staff)

Finance

Chad Habeck (Chair)
Jeff Beck (Vice Chair)
Chris Larson (Treasurer)
John Peterson (Personnel Committee Rep)
Rock Hauser
Jill Presseller
Jana Dietering (Staff)

Board of Hospitality & Outreach

Jan Meyen (Chair)
Larry Bugbee (Vice Chair)
Jaime Alvarez
Jane Bugbee
Chris Dansby
Jennifer Schull
Nathan Roberts (Staff)

Board of Children, Youth & Family

Melissa Habeck
Marit Solem
Joline Dittbenner
Becca Stolba
Anna Presseller
Chase Ingberg
Rachel James (Staff)

Personnel Committee

Warren Watson (Chair)
Wendy Watson
Grace Fishbeck
John Peterson (Board of Finance Rep)
Arlen Solem (Executive Committee Rep)
Pastoral Staff: Rev. Bonnie Wilcox (medical leave mid-Jan thru 9/22 resignation);
Rev. Scott Jakel, Interim

2024 Annual Meeting Minutes

2024 Annual Meeting Minutes
 First Lutheran Church, Columbia Heights, MN flcch.org
January 21, 2024

Location: Martin Luther Hall

President: Julienne Wyckoff, president
Back-Up President: Arlen Solem, vice president
Powerpoint/Sound Operator: Nathan Roberts
Other Attendees able to help: Rev. Scott Jakel, Interim Senior Pastor
 Pastor Jill Bergman

- People gathered with their meals, we'll play a slideshow of 2023 highlights
 - Pr. Jill sang a table prayer.
- Opening Prayer/Litany Pastor Jill Bergman and Pastor Scott Jakel
 11:15 am
- 1) Call to Order Julienne Wyckoff
 - a) Quorum Established (n>50) and call to order Julienne Wyckoff
 - 2) Approval of Agenda - completed Julienne Wyckoff
 - 3) Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes (Jan. 2023) - completed Julienne Wyckoff
 - 4) Sr. Pastor Report video clip 11:20 am - didn't work but was uploaded to social media
 - 5) Business of the Church (approval required)
 - a) Second Approval of Church constitution - completed Julienne Wyckoff
 - b) Lenten supper sign up - completed Rachel James
 - c) Community Listening Sessions - completed Pastor Scott Jakel
 - d) Pledge Drive Update - completed
 Julienne Wyckoff
 11:25 am
 - e) FY 2024 Budget - completed Finance Board
 11:35 am
 - 6) Brief Reports from Boards about 2023 - completed Julienne Wyckoff - call up each person
 - a) Board of Worship - completed Ruth Dodson
 - b) Board of Spiritual Growth - completed Michelle Edwards
 - c) Board of Children, Youth & Family - completed Missy Habeck
 - d) Board of Hospitality & Outreach - completed Larry Bugbee
 - e) Board of Finance (beyond the budget) - completed Rock Hauser
 - f) Strategic Planning (F.A.M.I.L.Y. group) - completed Warren Watson
 12:05 am
 - 7) Recognition of Outgoing Council and Board members - completed Julienne Wyckoff
 12:10 am
 - 8) Election of Leaders - completed Pastor Scott Jakel
 12:15 am
 - 9) Election of Synod Assembly Voting members; Election of Nominating Committee
 12:20 am - completed
 - 10) First Lutheran Updates - completed Julienne Wyckoff
 - 11) Closing Prayer - completed Pastor Jill Bergman

2024 Annual Meeting Opening Liturgy

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks ...

God, we praise you and give you thanks.

You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.

We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.

We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.

We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.

We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.

We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift

and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,

that the world may know you and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
2 Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,



who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in highest heaven,



who, from our mothers' arms, has blessed us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed,
the one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore;



with countless gifts of love, and still is ours to-day.
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ever more.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586-1649; tr. Cathering Winkworth, 1827-1878

Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Report from Bishop Jen Nagel, Minneapolis Area Synod

On the evening of Jesus' resurrection, as two of his followers were walking along the road that leads from the city of Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus "talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them." - Luke 24

Grace and peace to you, beloved of Christ Jesus.

This resurrection story is a favorite. We walk together as church, and Jesus draws near and walks with us. The labors of the day, the content of our discussions, the swirl of society and politics, the hopes and fears, these things shift, and yet, Jesus walks with us and is known once again as we gather together around the table.

What a year this has been. This report to the worshipping communities of the Minneapolis Area Synod is an opportunity to look back on 2024, and to look ahead at the year to come. Most of all, it is an opportunity to name and celebrate some of the ways the Holy Spirit continues to enliven God's church. We give thanks to you and your congregation for your partnership in this ministry we share.

On May 4, 2024, you elected me to serve as your Bishop. On August 1, 2024, I took office, and on September 21, 2024, I was installed during a festive and moving worship service at Central Lutheran Church. This election represents a significant threshold in our synod's life as we continue by the Spirit's leading along paths yet unknown. Thank you for your trust and your continued prayers. We are particularly grateful for the intentional work of the Bishop's Election Committee. My deep thanks to Bishop Ann Svennungsen for her 12 years of faithful leadership, and for her generosity of wisdom and spirit as I learn the ropes. As I have restructured parts of our synod's ministry team, we have had several staff transitions. Some have completed their service,

over the summer and fall we welcomed a few new staff, and in 2025 we will welcome more. Thank you to our staff for their patience, perseverance, faithful ministry, and good courage during a long transition.

Stepping into this role, I am more mindful than ever that we are **Church Together: Learning Together, Listening Together, Serving Together, Worshipping Together**

A few highlights from 2024:

- 137 worshipping communities, including
 - * 3 new starts congregational
 - * 8 strategic ministries
- 3 congregations marked Holy Closures this year, honoring their years and ministry, and in closing, stewarded their assets by contributing to Resurrection Fund.
- 11 languages spoken in worship
- 62 call processes in 55 congregations
- 8 ordinations of new pastors and deacons and
- 24 rostered ministers installed into new positions
- 34 people discerning a call to ministry and active in our candidacy process
- 305 pastors and deacons currently serving in our synod, and around 370 retired ministers
- 52 pastors and deacons serving in specialized ministries, including chaplains, educators, social ministry leaders, and missionaries
- 5 years of Faith Practices and Neighboring Practices cohorts supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative, with plans to apply for a scaling grant in 2025
- 17 congregations in the current cohort of Faith Practices and Neighboring Practices, and
- 13 in the first cohort (that's nearly 1/4 of our synod's congregations!)



- \$1.25 million grant received from the Lilly Endowment for Family Faith – a project accompanying parents and caretakers from the Synod's new and strategic ministries. Watch for more details coming soon!
- 800 people attended the Bishop Installation in person, including 220 clergy
- \$2,681,409 pledged in Mission Support, with 50% supporting MAS ministry and 50% for ELCA ministry
- 2 companion synod partnerships: Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) and the Leipzig District-Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony, Germany, including visits from Archbishop Musa Filibus (LCCN), Superintendent Sebastian Feydt and Pastor Cristoph Reichl (Leipzig)
- Synod staff supported leaders and congregations, convening, communicating, collaborating, and navigating conflicts
- Hosted many special events such as an Eco Faith Summit, Boundaries Workshop, Bishop's Theological Conference, Ministeriums, and Communicators Gatherings

What a gift to reflect on the amazing ways we were Church Together in 2024! We look forward to 2025 with the Conference Assemblies in February, Synod Assembly (May 2 - 3), and the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (July 28 - August 2). We walk together as church, trusting that Jesus continues to come near and walk with us. We are Church Together.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

Bishop Jen Nagel

Report from Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton, Minneapolis Area Synod

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

All around us, we see signs of God's love and goodness. A person who has stepped away from church for many years steps back into a congregation, feeling the call of the Holy Spirit. Young adults feeling isolated in a digital-first world start gathering in person in a small group, enjoying the warmth of a hug and a new friend asking about their week. A mother plants a garden, and it yields fruits and vegetables, giving her nutritious food for her kids and extra produce to sell at the local market. Everywhere we look, we see signs of Christ's love. In Psalm 93, we read: "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore" (4-5).

God's love is a majestic thing, and it moves us to share it in word and deed. The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, across our country and around the world.

I am so grateful for you, dear church. Your generosity to each of these three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has bolstered the church's ability to share the message of God's love to people who are longing for it. Through your

“More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.”

—Psalm 93:4-5

financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices, you've helped carry this message of God's majestic love. Thank you, dear church. As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to stand steadfast in God's promises, sure of God's love and goodness.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Interim Senior Pastor Report—Rev. Scott Jakel



Dear Friends in Christ,

We're so grateful for the chance to be "living connected" here at First Lutheran. God has blessed us richly during a surprise year of transition, sustaining us in a time of waiting to hear about the future pastoral leadership of this church.

Now that a call committee is actively preparing in anticipation for the time when they will be doing their essential work - interviewing and recommending a person to be the next senior pastor here - the waiting continues.

The one thing I can assure you that has not been put in a holding pattern here is the Holy Spirit's work through the many, many volunteers and capable staff

working alongside the steady lay leadership of this congregation. They've persevered in their efforts to touch the lives of so many children, youth, families and adults in a time of uncertainty.

Rather than duplicating the stories and statistics that will be represented in other reports, I will be brief. Instead, I want to simply say how much this experience of being your interim pastor has meant to me. Thank you for this privilege!!

I will be with you as your senior pastor until the call process is completed. Until then, let's keep on praying and singing and learning and serving and giving and

sharing our faith in the best way each of us knows how.

The future of First Lutheran is bright! It's our opportunity to make the optimistic view that I can see to become a reality through our fervent efforts in the power of the Spirit.

Living connected - as our mission language proclaims - is a meaningful way for us to share God's love. We are in this together.

Let's be patient and persistent as we proceed into the future that God has in store for us. Blessings will abound!

In Christ, Pastor Scott Jakel



2023 Statistics

Baptisms	8
Marriages	3
Confirmations	1
Funerals	16
New Members	12
Average Worship Attendance	126*

2024 Statistics

Baptisms	3
Marriage (renewal)	1
Confirmations	2
Funerals	17
New Members	17
Average Worship Attendance	124*

* Includes Ash Wednesday, Easter, Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas & Sunday Services.
Does not account for online Live Stream viewing (40-88 views each Sunday)

Report from Congregational Council President

—Julienne Wyckoff



Our church does great things!

We feed people, we see them through times of sorrow and great joy, and we learn together that through the grace of our God, we have a bigger purpose in life, to serve with love.

But it isn't always easy. First Lutheran has had a tough year. First there was **Pastor Bonnie's** unexpected medical leave, and later in the year (Sept. 22) her resignation. We had some tough negotiations with our charter school, Bultum. We had hard talks about what we really want to do with this big, over 100 year old building. It is a blessing and a challenge!

Thank you to **Bruce Shellito, Larry Bugbee, Paul Eddy, Jody Chandler** and all the **wonderful volunteers** who help keep our church functional and beautiful! And in the latter part of the year, we put together a Call Committee to begin the search for a new senior pastor. We are so grateful to have a great team of volunteers guiding us into the future.

Through it all God was with us. Our synod supplied us with a great interim pastor, Scott Jakel. **Pastor Scott**, without ever losing his cool, has humbly led us through the past year, always with great advice and gently leading us to make our own decisions. He expected maybe a two month call here and now it will be over a year! We owe him dearly for supporting us.

We also are grateful to our staff who grew together to keep the church running. Many thanks to **Pastor Jill** for her joy and prayerful spirit, we need you! **Nathan Roberts** is a wonder, he's everywhere! From leading the Bultum negotiations to driving the church bus and organizing community events! **Rachel James**, head of Children, Youth and Family Ministries - those after school kids love you! And thank you for getting the youth group out of New Orleans when Delta Airlines had a computer meltdown.

Jeffry Patry, you lift us every week with your music. I remember you saying that you knew as a little child that music would be your calling, and I thank you for sharing your talents with us.

Joyce Weaver, Senior Administrator, keeps us all organized, informed and moving along. Yes, I know I'm getting this report to you late and so appreciate your patience!

Jana Dietering has the hard job of managing our finances and does so with a cheerful spirit.

There are so many more to thank - **Angela Gallo**, who helps us welcome our LatinX neighbors, and tries to teach us Spanish. Our custodian **Jody** helps us understand our old building while keeping us comfortable and safe within it. **Roger Johnson** is timeless - are you really going to retire? I know I am not naming everybody, but know we are all grateful for you.

Why do the staff do their jobs so well? Just for a salary? Why do we as a congregation keep coming here every Sunday? Because we like to visit with each other? No, it is much greater than that.

It is because we hear God's call for a better world. A more peaceful, healthy one. Every soul that comes into our building will go out with a blessing. Whether it is a meal, a pat on the back, some homework help or just a smile, we here at First Lutheran will serve all with joy. This takes a huge group of welcoming and loving volunteers. We are so grateful to our members who continue to faithfully worship with us in-person and online. You bring God's spirit to life every day in this church and our wider community!

Thank you for letting me be your president for two years. I leave you in good hands, all guided by God. Keep doing great things!

FAMILY Report—Warren Watson



The FAMILY (“Facility And Mission In our Latter Years”) Committee was chartered by the Church Council in 2023. The purpose of our committee is to explore our congregational relationship with our Church building. This is important because while we have a strong rental relationship with Bultum Academy today, there is always the possibility that Bultum might move to another location, leaving us unable to afford our building without new renters. Rather than address these challenges when we are in search of a new renter, our committee was chartered to evaluate all options while we have a great renter relationship in place.

The members of this Committee include:

Jeff Beck
 Ruth Dodson
 Grace Fishbeck (“retired from the committee”)
 Becca Stolba
 Warren Watson (Chair)
 Pastor Bonnie Wilcox (at the outset of the committee)
 Pastor Scott Jakel (after Pastor Wilcox resigned)

The Committee engaged Pastor Jeff Kjellberg (Kairos Group) to support this Committee.

In 2023 we implemented the “Missional Assessment Profile” (“MAP”) study to assess our congregational impact, effectiveness, and potential. Our committee was pleased to have 123 members of our congregation participate in this assessment...THANKS to each of you for helping us! The results of this MAP include a wide variety of responses too many to capture in this summary. That said, I’d like to mention two specific indicators from the survey: 1) our congregational respondents feel a strong connection with our Mission and 2) we are ready to make some bold decisions and advance this Mission in new and renewed ways! This is great news!

We also met with several local civic leaders, property managers, business leaders and community leaders. These small group sessions were intended to brainstorm ways in which our property can be of greatest good in the community of Columbia Heights and the surrounding area. In summary it is fair to say that these participants appreciate how our property is currently being of service to our community. They also see many ways we might use our property to expand our impact on our community in the future!

In early 2024 we entered a pause in our activity due to Pastor Bonnie’s medical leave. The nature of our work as the FAMILY Committee is largely driven by the Sr. Pastor and their long-term vision for First Lutheran Church. The committee will remain on pause pending the arrival of our next Sr. Pastor. In the meanwhile, if you have any questions, concerns and recommendations please reach out to any one of the Committee members. Thanks for your support!

Associate Pastor Report—Rev. Jill Bergman

This year revealed a focus for ministry that looked beyond what was easily accessible. I felt deeply moved to seek Jesus both within our congregation as well as beyond what was familiar. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *“Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”* (Galatians 3:7-9).

2024 began with an opportunity I had never dreamed would present itself to me. I was blessed to be able to travel to Greece with a group of other clergy and their spouses to learn about Paul and his missionary journeys. This was provided to me through my generous continuing education budget at First Lutheran and also at a generously reduced cost from Good Shepherd Travel.

My spiritual growth during this experience was surprising even to me. I left Greece longing to discover more about the spread of the Gospel at its beginning, how it continues to spread today, and my role in that evangelistic process. Outgrowths of this experience included working with members of First Lutheran to create a Travel Ministries podcast series where we shared stories about how we met Jesus away from home; a commitment to bring others to Greece to give them the opportunity to expand their faith and understanding of the Gospel; and a strong desire to open First Lutheran’s hospitality on a deeper level to the faithful who have walked a different path from ours.

Working with the Board of Spiritual Growth, we developed an emphasis on showing hospitality specifically to those whose first language is Spanish. We have been welcoming native Spanish speakers at a greater rate to a variety of ministries at First Lutheran, so our board decided to lean into supporting them as much as possible. To that end, we hosted a Spanish/English Conversation Circle each Sunday in July, we worked with Angela Gallo to provide for her to translate our weekly bulletins into Spanish, and we have placed a greater emphasis on including Spanish in our worship services. Our biggest learning opportunity came when our board was able to attend the Latine Ministry Workshop presented by Wartburg Seminary and offered virtually in December. We feel challenged and called to push ourselves to share the Good News beyond what is familiar to us.

Together with First Lutheran, we strive to creatively present the message of Jesus in ways new people will understand and the longtime faithful will find inspiring. I love the podcast format for offering our witness both to our congregation and also to people we may never meet. Besides the Travel Ministries series, we also created a Lenten podcast series which explored the Gospel of Mark, a Financial Stewardship series which asked how God intersects with our money, and an Advent series exploring Messianic prophecies. We also presented our annual Last Supper drama which is like a live action worship/drama experience.

One unique opportunity for me was the invitation to partner with the City of Columbia Heights as they



designed a plan for energy usage in their community. I’m in a group called “Partners in Energy” which, over 6 monthly sessions, is investigating the energy needs of all Columbia Heights residents and businesses, as well as discerning how to equitably, conscientiously, and economically distribute or create the energy needed. As the sole clergy member in the group, I feel honored to be able to provide a faithful lens with which we can view the people and land that make up Columbia Heights and provide for their needs.

The biggest blessing of this year has been growing in faith with the people of First Lutheran Church. Each of us has faced challenges but we have continually supported one another and learned more about the community of our Triune God in the process. May First Lutheran be an integral part of God blessing all the nations!

In Christ, Pastor Jill

Worship & Music Ministry Report—Jeffrey Patry

Greetings from the Music Department at First Lutheran Church! As we continue in this Epiphany season and post-Christmas busy-ness, I want to offer some gratitude and include a brief overview of the past year.

I want to thank our tremendous pastoral staff of Pastor Scott and Pastor Jill. It definitely takes a team (or a village) to plan and execute our worship services every week. I want to thank them for their leadership and willingness to try something different! Thank you also to the rest of our team – Rachel, Joyce, Jana, Nathan, Jody & Roger. We each have different gifts, and it is an honor to share my gifts with this amazing team!

I want to offer my thanks for our tech team Drew & Chris. Without them, our livestream wouldn't happen. Thank you for your tech savviness and serving in worship each week.



We continue to provide rehearsal space each week for the Caritas Vocal Ensemble (Sunday afternoon), Augsburg Centennial Singers (Monday afternoon) and Chorus Polaris (Tuesday evening). I am thankful that our building is getting used for these wonderful ensembles. It is a blessing to open up our space for our community!

The First Lutheran Sanctuary is continuing to be a “hot spot” for concerts and special music events. *Singers in Accord* uses our space for all of their concerts. We have also hosted concerts this year by *Magnum Chorum*, *Mississippi Valley Orchestra*, *Copper Street Brass*, *Bella Lumina Choir*, *Caritas Vocal*

Ensemble and Normandale Community College Concert Choir and Vocal Ensemble. Other events have been a Meditation Concert, a Halloween Spooktacular and an organ recital by me.

Lastly, I want to thank our numerous ensembles and musicians for a spectacular year of music. Many thanks to the Sanctuary Choir, Contemporary Ensemble, Family Choir and Campanile Handbell Ensemble for enhancing our worship services with your beautiful music. It is truly a blessing to serve here at FLC as your Director of Music Ministry!

*Where words fail, music speaks
– Hans Christian Andersen
Music expresses that which cannot
be said and on which it is
impossible to be silent
– Victor Hugo*

With gratitude,
Jeffrey A Patry
Director of Music
Ministry



Mission Jamaica Report—Jane Bugbee

Another successful Mission Jamaica trip for 2024! We saw over 100 patients on Monday and Tuesday in clinics. On Wednesday the medical team went to the orphanage and saw every child/young adult, even the bed-bound ones. The rest of the team help build a home by doing construction and painting.

At Westhaven teams played and cared for the kids along with a lot of maintenance and painting. Roger and Gary built picnic tables!

Looking forward to returning soon with Mission Jamaica, 2025, our 20th year!! Thank you for your generous support! *YaMon!*



Director of Finance and Operations Report—Jana Dietering



It has been a busy and challenging year at First Lutheran Church with staff changes, a transition in leadership, some unexpected maintenance projects and maintaining a busy building that has seen a large number of events in 2024 (this provides additional income for FLCCH). I am extremely proud of the FLCCH staff that kept all financial and operational activities as smooth as possible, the Finance Committee who worked hard to keep FLCCH financially healthy and the maintenance committee (Jody Chandler, Larry Bugbee, Bruce Shellito, Roger Johnson and Nathan Roberts) who met monthly to review all current and future projects. Also, a big thank you to my faithful volunteers: Marilyn Lueth who enters donations into our database, and those who help count weekly offerings, Jan McFall, Cheryl Blinkman, Bobbie Sauer, Kathy Ballard and Joyce Beeksma.

Besides managing the financials including the close monitoring of the cash flow to be able to cover all fixed and unexpected expenses:

- we negotiated a new addendum to our lease with Bultum Academy.
- staff worked to fulfill the Stewardship Drive under Nathan Roberts guidance and project timeline.
- worked with the Personal Committee on staff changes and new federal payroll laws.
- were guided by Joyce Weaver in a project to upgrade and move to high speed Business Internet to better accommodate Live Streaming, Podcasting, Wi-Fi and overall work performance.

Besides the projects mentioned in the Finance Committee report we also finished the following repairs in 2024:

- Katie Luther room was reorganized and additional storage was added.
- The playground received a new fence as well as improved lighting.

- Three of our a/c units took on major repairs.
- Our fire alarm panel was replaced after a surprise failure.
- The “mud room” storage room was cleaned and completely reorganized giving more storage and meeting options

Over summer break we took on a number of projects in the school as well.

- One of the bathrooms received updated fixtures.
- A number of classrooms received cosmetic updates, both paint and floor finishes.
- We divided a classroom in half to create more space.

In the coming year we plan to have a strong focus on additional repairs to our mechanical equipment. Our sanctuary a/c unit will be updated as the current unit is nearly 40 years old. Similarly, we are looking into replacing our building management system, this will give us a great upgrade to energy efficiency in the building.

Blessings,
Jana



Marigold Preschool's, Brenda Haak honored staff, volunteers and “Farmer Dan” with the children's farewell program and garden remembrance. August 2024

Children, Youth and Family Ministries Board Report—Rachel James



Thank you, First Lutheran Church, for all your support of children, youth and family ministries in our church and community this year!

FAITH FORMATION

Confirmation Class has 7 registered students and a rotation of 4 teachers.

We held **two Confirmation Retreats**. In March, we brought a group to Recharge event at Luther Park Bible Camp. In October, we went to Gustavus Adolphus College, where we continued learning from Pastor Jill about different ways to pray including imaginative prayers, Lectio Divina prayers, labyrinth prayers and praying in nature.



We are very proud of our 2024 **Confirmands**: Chase Ingberg and Andrew Dittbenner. On Reformation Sunday, we celebrated them affirming their baptism.

Sunday School has been joyful this year, with 34 registered participants. A BIG thank you to our fantastic teachers: Janet Zarich, Ethan Dittbenner, Greta Solem, Terry Swanson, Katie Upmann, Junia James, Daniel James, Chase Ingberg and Andrew Dittbenner. They are teaching from the Spark Story Bible, using games and crafts to help the students connect with the story.



Our **Family Choir** with Director Becca Stolba sang on Transfiguration Sunday, Palm Sunday, Mother's Day, in June, Reformation Day, and for Lessons and Carols in December.



FLY Youth group is a chance for fellowship, food, friends and faithful conversation for an average of 25 youth each Wednesday night.

SERVICE & JUSTICE



Thank you to the congregation for your prayers and support of our **Camp Firelight VBS this June!** God was present with us every day in our worship, Bible stories and activities. Both Pastor Scott and Pastor Jill were able to share the Bible lessons each day, including the stories of Jacob's Ladder, Ruth & Naomi, Jesus calming the storm, Jesus in the Temple and Philip & the Ethiopian. Our children all learned the theme verse: "Whenever I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3" and talked about how they were learning to trust God. This is our first year in 5 years doing a morning schedule for Vacation Bible School. We had 80

CYF Board Report *continued*

total VBS Participants, including 43 children participants, 17 youth volunteers and 20 adults. On June 19-21, our team of 20 youth and adults gathered for a leadership training experience and to do service-learning. We volunteered at Feed My Starving Children and learned all about Juneteenth. Fun was had too - trip to ValleyFair and ice cream!

The **ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans** in July with our group of 14 participants joining in with Lutheran youth and leaders from across the globe was our biggest event of the year! Thank you to our congregation for supporting this massive project where we learned about who we are "Created to Be" in the image of God. Our adult leaders Missy Habeck and Boyd Young really went the extra mile when we had to drive back to Minneapolis after our flight was cancelled. Our team did service in the lower 9th ward, heard from incredible speakers, and were introduced to the wider church.



We had 24 campers from First Lutheran Church attending Camp Wapo camps this year.

They learned about the theme *Always*: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

~ Hebrews 13:8.

LEADERSHIP

Thank you to our dedicated and faithful **Children, Youth and Family Board**: Melissa Habeck, Marit Solem, Joline Dittbenner, Becca



Stolba and Anna Presseller and Chase Ingberg.

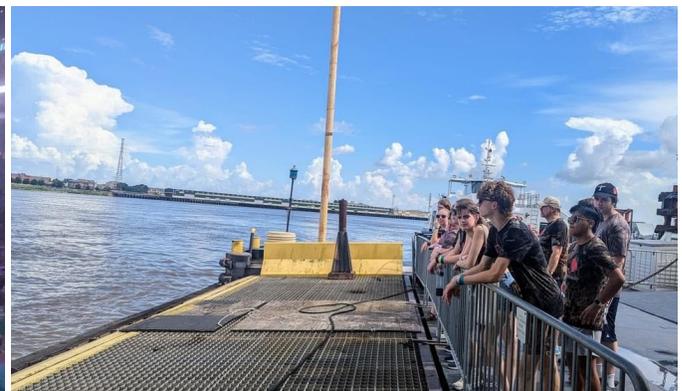
The CYF Board hosted several Family Fun Days and fundraising events this year.

- ⇒ February - Mardi Gras Lunch Fundraiser
- ⇒ March - Palm Sunday Brunch fundraiser, Palm Parade and Egg Hunt
- ⇒ April - Earth Day Adopt-A-Park Clean-up
- ⇒ May - Last Day Party with picnic and games in courtyard
- ⇒ June - Graduate Appreciation Sunday
- ⇒ July - Waterslide Family Fun Day
- ⇒ August - Youth Gathering Shareholders Dinner
- ⇒ September - First Day Party with Bounce House and treats
- ⇒ October - Fall Family Fun Day with pumpkins and treats
- ⇒ November - Spud Fest youth fundraiser
- ⇒ December - Kids Christmas Program "Great Joy for All" and Happy Birthday Jesus Party

In Christ,

Rachel James

Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries
and the Children, Youth and Family Ministries Board



Hospitality and Outreach Board Report—Nathan Roberts

Thank you to the H & O Board for their amazing leadership and volunteering this year!

Chair: Jan Meyen

Vice Chair: Larry Bugbee

Members: Jaime Alvarez, Chris Dansby, Jennifer Shull, Jane Bugbee

Community Meal

Meals: 95 meals in person - 20 takeaways

Volunteers: 7-10 each week Sept.—May



With rising food costs, we are seeing more and more neighbors coming. We also appreciate Rock and Kari and Kevin and Jill working really hard to provide low cost meals. We also serve a lot of members and families from First Lutheran who generously donate \$5 per meal each week. These donations allow this ministry to pay for all the food. We continue to be blessed with amazing volunteers, great community support, wonderful connections with church members and neighbors in need. The H & O board members took turns serving coffee and cookies each week in the link each Sunday after the 10 AM service.

Thank you to Rock & Kari Hauser, Brian Schweiger, Roy Weber, Jane Bugbee, Larry Bugbee, Kevin Kaliher, Judie Opheim, Wendy Ramirez, Betty Krahl, Pam Hartel, Chris Dansby, Jaime Alvarado, Tammy Rogne, Jenn Shull, Dave and Dianne Meyer and all the youth and families that help!

After School Program

After School: 20 - 35 students per week

Volunteers: 12 per week Sept.—May

We have a great group of students, mentors, and we continue to serve delicious and nutritious



foods for dinner. Our group has ten high schoolers, eight middle schoolers and 20 elementary students who attend over the course of a month. This year we saw a dramatic increase in Spanish speaking families. We were grateful to Angela Gallo who translated all our materials, coordinated with Spanish speaking families. We were also blessed by the efforts of volunteers who practiced their limited Spanish to help new kids. We were blessed to have a great group of regular volunteers. The gym has been full of soccer games and Katie Luther Room has been an amazing place for crafts!

Special thanks to Jane and Larry Bugbee, Rachel James, Angela Gallo, Karen Mattison, Karen Peterson, Shiloh, Ben and Molly, Paul Babekuhl, and Joe Stinson for their amazing support of this ministry.

Community Outreach

We continued hosting storytelling night one Weds a night in the Chapel. We heard from Yoga teachers, Survivors of Domestic Abuse from Dwelling Place in Columbia Heights. We heard from Palestinian neighbors who have been affected by the war in Gaza. We also heard from First Responders from Columbia Heights Police and Fire Departments. These events were attended by around 30 - 40 people with half the listeners from the FLC youth group.



We got our name and faces in the community at the Columbia Heights Parade. We also had a table and sponsored the Columbia Heights Information and Arts Fair, CH Pride, Monarch Butterfly Event.

H & O Report continues on next page

Hospitality and Outreach Board Report *continued*

We hosted two Saturday Buy Nothing Events where 50 neighbors set up tables and gave away their household items and clothes for free. Each event was attended by around 150 - 200 shoppers.



Halloween

Trick or Treaters: 120

Volunteers: 20

On a very joyful note, we had a wonderful community trick or treating event on the Thursday before Halloween. 150 people come to trick or treat around the 9 outside doors! The bounce house in the courtyard was also very popular!



Special thank you to our After School team, H & O and Worship board for handing out tricks and treats.

Drama Ministry Last Supper

We had over 200 people in attendance for the two Last Supper Performances. The cast and crew was over 30 people. This year's performance centered on the disciple Peter, his former life as a fisherman, and his deep friendship with Jesus. Because of Pastor Bonnie's leave of absence we did not have a fall drama performance.

Dad's Group

We held a monthly group for dads of small children to meet and talk about the unique challenges of being a dad. This has been a great group of 8 people.



2024 was a busy & successful year for Hospitality & Outreach. We held 5 meet your neighbors, held 2 "Buy Nothing" events, increased the numbers in our "After school" events, continued our Community Lunches, and completed the repurposing Katie Luther. We assisted at 3 Community Events, providing free water & lemonade. We have begun the refurbishing of the commons & link. The desk is new, and the blinds have been replaced to cut the UV rays & still to see through.



Commons Shades & Desk

With the generous support of the Memorial and Endowment and donations from the congregation we were able to install new shades in the Common area. The shades help reduce fading on the carpet and decrease energy costs in the summer.

We also purchased a new desk and moved the location directly across from the front doors. This improves safety and is more accessible to visitors.

Thank you to Jane and Larry Bugbee, Dorothy Markowitz, Jody Chandler, our security guard Joe Stinson, and the volunteers who help at the front desk.

Nathan Roberts' update: Communion Service at The Legends at Silver Lake Village

We have a group of a dozen seniors who meet monthly on the 3rd Monday of the Month at 2 PM for a Communion Service with Pastor Nathan Roberts. We are excited to connect and grow this community of faith!

Report prepared by Nathan Roberts, Larry Bugbee, and Jan Meyen.



New furniture has been ordered to arrive after the first of the year. The furniture for the nursery link is being ordered & paid for thanks to the Watsons.

I am happy to say that all our members are returning next year. Thank you to Larry & Jane Bugbee, Chris Dansby, Jamie Alvarez, & Jennifer Shull, and Staff member, Nathan Roberts.

In service, Jan Meyen



Board of Worship Report—Dorothy Markowitz



One might say “it takes a Congregation to provide a meaningful worship service.” Yes, the pastors are the backbone of our worship, but without the many volunteers, Sundays and liturgy seasons would not be quite the same.

Thanks to everyone who gives of their time and talents during worship whether it be Sunday or Wednesday or any day for that matter. The talents of the readers, greeters, acolytes, ushers, musicians, communion preparers and those that decorate the sanctuary are all appreciated so very much. In addition, the many gifts of our staff are a continual blessing to all of us.

The Board of Worship has the responsibility of organizing the ushers and readers for each Sunday and making sure that communion is prepared and that there are volunteers to serve.

Along with the WET team, we enhanced the worship spaces during the various seasons of the church year.

Our Board Members this year were Cheryl Ballingrud, Leesa Betzold, Pam Hartel, Jan McFall, our staff representative Jeffrey Patry and me. We have a lively meeting and enjoy discussing the various parts of our worship service and space.

Our 2024 goals were:

- Continued work on the addition of a new cross to the worship space. Pam Hartel has been the leader for this project. Our work was temporarily stopped when the company we have been working with went out of business. To be continued.....
- While we have guidelines for reading and ushering and other assignments, we are

working to put these documents in a place where they are available online for volunteers to have easy access. We would like to eventually create a worship manual.

- Increase the number of ushers. It always seems to be a struggle to recruit new ushers.

Please feel free to contact the Board of Worship with your willingness to volunteer on Sunday mornings, help with decorating or to share any ideas you might have for us.

We are there to enhance your worship experience and welcome new members to the board.

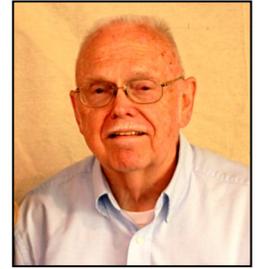
Once again, thanks to the volunteers who make our job easier and who graciously give of their time and talents. We would love to have new members on our ministry board.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy Markowitz
Chair, Worship Board



Board of Spiritual Growth Report—Phil Mattison



It's well known that a healthy diet plus regular exercise results in muscle growth. It's also true that a good spiritual diet plus spiritual exercise results in spiritual growth. As you read this report, consider which topics deal with spiritual diet and which are spiritual exercise, and which are both. And think about the balance in your own life, and what would help you grow in spirit.

Chair for our board is Bob Nelson, Vice-Chair is Bruce Shellito, Phil Mattison is a member, Randy Bergman provides input on Adult Forums, and Pastor Jill Bergman is our staff support person.

Our goals for 2024 were:

- ⇒ Make the Bible more accessible
- ⇒ Promote care of the earth
- ⇒ Create a Spanish language bulletin
- ⇒ Offer a cooperative Spanish language learning event

On Pentecost Sunday, Bob Nelson and Mel Robinson passed out free Bibles, as well as many (50-75) QR code cards for a Gideon Bible app, which gives access to the Bible in many languages. The Gideons have also provided New Testaments in English and Spanish for After School Kids. On May 5, we hosted a compost distribution event. Along with help from our youth, we distributed 4 cubic yards of compost! The leftovers found a home in our church garden. Look for this event again next spring, probably closer to 40th Ave.

A topic that received a lot of attention this year was how we can best meet the needs of our neighbors who primarily speak Spanish. In the latter part of the year, we sponsored Angela Gallo to generate Spanish translations of the bulletin and announcements each Sunday. During July, we had sessions in the commons after worship to learn some Spanish vocabulary; attendance was very good. (And some of us continued the process online at home with DuoLingo or other free programs). In November, Angela constructed a beautiful Ofrenda in our commons, during a Mexican tradition called Dia de



Los Muertos recognizing those who have passed away. Several FLC members were touched and added pictures or other remembrances of their loved ones. In December, Memorial and Endowment sponsored the attendance of four of us at an online workshop sponsored by Wartburg Seminary (three sessions) on developing Latine Ministry Competencies. We hope to develop this topic further in 2025.

Randy Bergman has worked with us to schedule Adult Forum sessions on the first Sunday of each month during the school year. In October, Mark Bornhoft presented a discussion based on his book, "Our Cultural Journeys in the Digital Age: From Where do we Get our Guidance?", in which he describes the faith journeys of Christians from different parts of the globe. In December, Pastor Scott led a discussion of "Holiday Traditions".

Pastor Jill coordinated three podcast series during the year. First was a daily podcast series by FLC members and staff during Lent, focusing on Mark. Second was a series of three podcasts by members in an interview format regarding stewardship of our finances. And third was a daily podcast series during Advent connecting Old Testament prophecies with New Testament fulfillments.

We support two weekly Bible Studies, one before and after worship services led by Michelle Edwards, and one at 6pm on Wednesday's. All are welcome to participate as their circumstances permit. In addition, all are invited to participate in two monthly prayer sessions. The first is Healing Prayers, led by one of our pastors in the front of the sanctuary at about 11:15 after worship. Watch your bulletin for dates of Healing Prayers. The second is prayers for all concerns, but especially for the church council and our Call Committee. That meeting is on Tuesdays from 5:30 to 6:30pm, just prior to the monthly council meeting.

Many diet opportunities, many exercise opportunities. May we all grow in spirit!

Call Committee Report—By Pastor Scott Jakel

On Sunday, Nov. 10, 2024, we held a special congregational meeting and elected the following six members of FLC to be the Call Committee: *Drew Stolba, Meagan Ferrise, Jan McFall, Ruth Dodson, Bob Nelson, and Larry Bugbee.*

They have been quite active in their work in 2024 and in the early days of 2025 to prepare for and help secure the person who will be our next senior pastor. They will be interviewing pastoral candidates and recommending one for the senior pastor position.

As part of that preparation process, they're facilitating various avenues to hear from the congregation's members, staff, and community to be able to review, assess, and claim the priorities, strengths and growth areas of the congregation. While they are doing this work, the church council and other members of the church are working with the staff and other leaders on initiatives that need to be addressed along the way - in advance of calling this pastor. This will involve them getting feedback and focusing on our

community challenges as well as opportunities the congregation will face in the next 5-10 years.

Finally, the Call Committee will work with the Finance Board and Personnel Committee as well as with the Church Council to determine an appropriate compensation package and a job description, among other things.

Currently, the Call Committee is assembling appropriate information about the congregation and leadership capacities necessary to be the senior pastor of FLC. They'll create a key resource called a Ministry Site Profile to summarize this data. This document will be shared with the bishop and with all potential pastoral candidates, after being presented to the congregation for consideration. A presentation to review the substance of this document will be scheduled later this winter.

Please join the Call Committee as you and they regularly spend time in prayer along the way.



Call Committee Commissioning

The synod representatives from the Minneapolis Area Synod along with our Bishop Jen Nagel, will give the Call Committee and our church solid support in this journey.

In the ELCA we are very fortunate that our pastoral candidates go through a process that allows congregations to get the best ELCA candidates available to meet the criteria for a church like First Lutheran. This is one of the many essential benefits of maintaining a solid partnership with our synod and the ELCA.

Thank you for your consideration on these matters. It's our intention to give updates to the congregation along the way. As you can tell, we're bathing this process in prayer so that God's name is glorified, and God's will be done in this holy adventure! Stay tuned!

Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner—Ruth Dodson

It takes about 120 people over the course of the week to prepare for First Lutheran's Annual Scandinavian Lutefisk & Meatball dinner.

In 2024, we served 934 meals and raised over \$13,000 for our church benevolences, for camp credits and for the church budget.

By far the compliments we heard most often (besides how full people are) were how welcome and well cared for guests feel when they come to our dinner. And that

happens because of all of you, your smiling faces and helpful hands.

This event has always felt more like a congregational event, rather than a fund raiser or just a big dinner. It is a treat to work with young and not so young volunteers and get to know each other better. On top of that, we get to enjoy doing something that many of us don't do very often. *Thank you, thank you for another very successful dinner!*



Lutefisk Committee:
*Ruth Dodson
Cheryl Ballingrud
Dorothy Markowitz
Sonja Super
Michelle Young*



Memorial and Endowment Committee Report

Members:

Council Appointments

		<u>Term Expires</u>
John Peterson	Chair	January 2025
Chad Habeck	Vice Chair	January 2027
Robert Nelson	Secretary	January 2026
Chris Larson	Treasurer	January 2026
Paul Turner		January 2026
Drew Stolba		January 2027
Board of Worship Appointment:	Jan McFall	January 2025
Board of Spiritual Growth:	Bruce Shellito	January 2025
Church Treasurer:	Chris Larson	January 2025

Thank you to Jan McFall and Bruce Shellito for their service to the Committee. Representatives from the Boards of Worship and Spiritual Growth will be needed for 2025.

Description of Funds

The Memorial Fund consists of gifts received from congregation members and friends in memory of loved ones. These gifts are often designated for a program or activity that was near and dear to the individual being memorialized. The Endowment Fund consists of gifts given for the long-term, future benefit of the congregation, as well as the earnings generated by those gifts. The Endowment Fund is a "permanent" fund in that the gifts received - or principal - are held in perpetuity ("Dollars Forever"). Only the earnings generated by the investment of these gifts are spent. Our investments have grown considerably in the past few years. These funds enable projects and purchases that would otherwise not be possible.

Summary of 2024 Activities

THE GOAL FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND IN 2024 WAS TO INCREASE ITS UNDESIGNATED BASE BY 3%, WHICH IS \$31,800.00.

The Committee has approved the following requests for 2024 expenditures; College Scholarship Awards \$4,000.00; ELCA Youth Gathering \$9,609.00; Benevolences \$15,000.00; Pastor Bonnie Sabbatical \$4,000.00; Design Planning for Sanctuary Cross, for Rose Window, and for Welcome Center \$15,000.00; New Commons Blinds and Shades \$10,000.00.

	Total	\$57,609.00
	Less carry over from past approvals:	6,500.00
		<u>51,109.00</u>

Planned Activities for 2025

THE GOAL FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND IN 2025 IS TO INCREASE ITS UNDESIGNATED BASE BY 3%, WHICH IS ~\$31,800.00.

The Committee has received the following requests for 2025 expenditure; College Scholarship Awards \$1,000.00; Chicago Mission Trip \$2,500.00; Benevolences \$12,000.00; New Commons Furniture \$10,000.00; Upgrade the Building Management System \$30,000.00

	Total	\$56,500.00
	Less carry over from past approvals:	4,000.00
		<u>\$52,500.00</u>

Thank you to all in the congregation who continue to support the Endowment and Memorial Funds.

Respectfully,
John W. Peterson and Robert Nelson

Report of the Board of Finance—Chris Larson



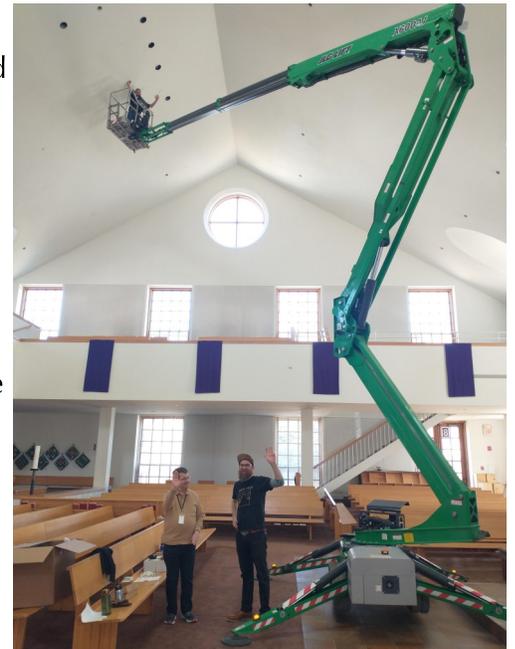
Dear First Lutheran Members,

Greetings from the Board of Finance! Our board works closely with Jana Dietering, FLC's Director of Finance and Operations, as well as the Senior Pastor, to oversee the financial health of the congregation and provide good stewardship of the congregation's financial gifts and capital resources. Members of the Finance Board in 2024 included Chad Habeck (Chair), Jeff Beck (Vice-Chair), John Peterson, Rock Hauser, Jill Presseller and Chris Larson (Treasurer).

2024 proved to be a challenging financial year for FLC. Our envelope/electronic gifts were right on budget throughout the first five months of the year. But starting in June, our giving fell behind and never fully recovered. We expect to end the year by about 15% below budget in both general fund and mortgage & maintenance giving. We had to transfer \$45,000 from our limited undesignated reserves during the year, as well as borrow \$20,000 from the perpetual reserve (basically our internal line of credit). But we were fortunate to end the year with the blessing of three large special gifts during the months of November and December, which allowed us to repay the funds borrowed from the perpetual reserve in 2024 rather than include the repayment of those funds as a budgeted item in 2025.

Despite these financial challenges, we were still able to complete a number of facility maintenance projects in 2024 (some planned and others unexpected), including:

- Replacement of the sanctuary light bulbs, many of which had burned out.
- Installation of hand dryers in the bathrooms (the cost of this project was covered by a grant from Anoka County).
- Repair of the retaining wall by the offices, which was bowing and on the verge of caving in.
- Repair of the sanctuary air conditioner. This was a short-term fix, as the entire unit is beyond its useful life and will need to be replaced in 2025. (Estimated replacement cost is \$180,000.)
- Addition of blinds to the narthex (lobby) windows (the cost of this project was covered by endowment earnings).
- Facilities updates required by our charter school lease, including dividing one of the new classrooms, adding additional sinks in the boy's restroom and adding a fence to the playground.



Many other projects were completed this year, none of which would have happened without devoted volunteers and financial support from all our members. Thank you all for sharing your time, talents and resources with our congregation.

In Faith,
Chris Larson,
Congregation Treasurer

Ministry Updates & Thank You—Joyce Weaver

I have the pleasure of overseeing the church office and many business administrative tasks. This affords a wonderful opportunity to serve the people of First Lutheran and as the first point of contact in welcoming our faith community. And, to witness firsthand, the love and commitment of the congregation, volunteers and staff.

2024 was a nostalgic year with Pastor Bonnie's extended medical leave and resignation after seven years of profound leadership. It was also the year Derek Sabot resigned from FLC after serving seven years as a part-time custodian.

On a positive note, we were busy housing three separate, thriving educational schools (Bultum Academy, Marigold & Meadowlark) and were delighted to have Head Custodian, Roger Johnson, back on staff from his brief retirement of 26 years of service!

Volunteers are an intricate part of our weekly and day to day operations, facility rentals, scheduling, and updates on office equipment and technology. With very little training, they have adapted to using workroom equipment, computer work, greeting guests, answering phones, assembling mailings, assisting with database management, tending to funerals, baptisms & other pastoral needs, as well as maintaining Sunday bus transportation and leading ministry teams and events.

We are grateful and blessed as a community! Thank you to each of you who give with such generosity.

A **'shout-out!'** to a few volunteers & ministry leaders I've had the pleasure to work with who may not be listed in other reports...

- * **Funeral Coordinators/Assistants:**
Cheryl Ballingrud, Jan Meyen, Pam Hartel, Judy & Paul Eddy, Jane & Larry Bugbee, Karen Mattison, Gloria Christensen, DiAnn Meyer, Madonna & Troy Wagner (and all who jump in when needed!)
- * **Baptismal Greeters:**
Karen Mattison & Faith White
- * **Sunday Bus Drivers:**
Jay Craft, Roger Johnson, Charles Pierson III, Pam Sigurdson
- * **Front Desk/Mailing Volunteers:**
Kathy Ballard, Judy Eddy, Matt Palm, Karen Peterson, Faith White, Jon Lueth, Dave Meyer, Madonna Wagner
- * **FLC Book Club Group:** *Char Zarich*
- * **55+ Singles Group:** *Faith White*
- * **Young at Heart Team:**
Paul Christensen, Paul Turner, Faith White, Bob & Joyce Beeksma, Paul & Judy Eddy
- * **The Gathering:**
Jane Bugbee & Jill Casmey
- * **Meal on Wheels:** *Anita Dillenburg*
- * **Our Many Faithful Ushers, Readers & Greeters!**

With respect & gratitude,
Joyce Weaver, Senior Administrator



Pastor Bonnie Wilcox 'squealed' with delight over her post-surgery wiglet made by Gloria Christensen!
January 2024



Karen Peterson & Judy Eddy assemble last year's Annual Report
January 2024



Pat Stinson, one of the many satisfied guests at our Fix-It Clinic!
May 2024



Memorial Tribute Luncheon for Scott Linder, retired Lieutenant with Col. Heights Fire Dept. & colleague of Dave Meyer (pictured) & Bruce Shellito
February 2024



FLC sponsored the first sewing school for PUSHPA seven years ago. Since then, hundreds of students have graduated, a second school was built, and our ministry support continues to *help these people help themselves*.

In 2005, PUSHPA was founded by Franklin Gummadi and his wife, Shirley, to address a developing need in the Guntur region of India where Franklin was born. At the time, the Indian government provided incentive for nomadic tribes in the Guntur district to abandon their migratory lifestyle and settle into organized villages, challenging the tribal people to develop cooperative communities and transition to permanent homes and sustainable jobs. **Find out more:** pushpaprojects.org



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH / 1555 40TH AVE NE
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MN 55421
PHONE: 763-788-9653 / WEB: FLCCH.ORG

YOUTUBE - VIEW LIVE STREAMED WORSHIP

FACEBOOK - FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS -
@FIRSTLUTHERANCOLUMBIAHEIGHTS

Thank you for a terrific 2024 at First!



In Worship, Friendship & Prayer

