

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



LIVING CONNECTED
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS



2025 Annual Report

FLC Mission Narrative	
Welcome & Inclusion	
Statement / Staff	2
Agenda / Council & Board	
Members.....	3
2025 Annual Meeting	
Minutes	4
Budget/Financials	5
Opening Liturgy.....	6
Bishop, Council, Pastor &	
Board Reports	7-23
Ministry Pictures	24

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

Senior Pastor:

The Rev. Susan Debner

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

Kitchen Coordinator:

Angela Montero

Wedding Coordinators:

Joyce Weaver

Sonja Super

Funeral Coordinator:

Joyce Weaver

Building & Grounds:

Roger Johnson

Front Desk Security:

Joe Stinson

Director of Food Services:

Rock Hauser



Those not pictured from 2025 include: Senior Pastor Susan Debner, Roger Johnson, Joe Stinson, Drew Stolba, Sonja Super & Rock Hauser.

Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda
First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights, Minnesota
Sunday, January 18, 2026

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Litany to Open Meeting 2. Soup Supper and Table Question 3. Call to Order <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish a quorum b. Approve the agenda c. Approve minutes from 2025 Annual Meeting 4. Recognition of Outgoing Leaders 5. Election of Leaders, Boards and Council, Synod Assembly Voting members, Nominating Committee | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Pledge Drive Report 7. Board of Finance Update & Fiscal 2025 Budget 8. Charter School and Tenant Updates 9. Building Maintenance and Projects 10. Celebration of Ministry from 2025 Boards
Worship, Children Youth & Family, Spiritual Growth, Hospitality & Outreach, Memorial and Endowment (Board volunteers needed) 11. Closing Prayer |
|--|--|

Conference Assembly, Saturday, February 7

9 –10:30 AM at House of Hope, New Hope

Synod Assembly is on Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2

Lay and rostered leaders are invited to gather as the larger church and worship, connect, and vote.

5 PM Friday: Hearings, Orientations, Dinner; 6 PM Devotion, Theme, Scripture: 6:30–8 PM–Plenary 1

Saturday: 9 AM – Opening Worship; 10 AM–3 PM – Plenaries, Lunch, Speakers

Location: Lord of Life, Ramsey, 14501 Nowthen Blvd NW Ramsey, MN 55303

Thank you to our 2025 Council & Board Members!

Executive Committee

Jeff Beck (President)
 Kathy Ballard (Vice President)
 John Peterson (Treasurer)
 Karen Palm (Secretary)
 Pastoral Staff: Scott Jakel, Interim; Jill Bergman; Susan Debner, Senior Pastor

Memorial & Endowment

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

Synod Assembly Representatives

Pastor Jill Bergman and Interim Pastor, Scott Jakel
 Kathy Ballard
 Vicki Jensen

2025 Call Committee

Drew Stolba
 Jan McFall
 Ruth Dodson
 Larry Bugbee
 Bob Nelson
 Meagan Ferrise

Board of Spiritual Growth

Michelle Edwards (Chair)
 Bob Nelson (Secretary)
 Bruce Shellito
 Phil Mattison
 Emily Olson De Alveraz
 Randy Bergman
 Pastors: Jill Bergman, Scott Jakel, Susan Debner (Staff)

Board of Worship

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

Worship Environment Team

Lyn Larson
 Cheryl Ballingrud
 Dorothy Markowitz

Finance

John Peterson (Chair)
 Jay Craft (Vice Chair)
 Dirk Schmitz
 Terry Swanson
 Mel McCormack
 Rachel Page
 Jana Dietering (Staff)

Board of Children, Youth & Family

Becca Stolba (Chair)
 Junia James (Vice Chair)
 Melissa Habeck
 Marit Solem
 Joline Dittbenner
 Kevin Kaliher
 Rachel James (Staff)

Board of Hospitality & Outreach

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

Personnel Committee

Warren Watson (Chair)
 Wendy Watson
 John Peterson
 Karen Palm
 (Executive Committee Rep)
 Interim Pastor Scott Jakel,
 Senior Pastor Susan Debner

2025 Annual Meeting Minutes

First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights, MN flcch.org
January 19, 2025

Location: Martin Luther Hall

Presider: Julienne Wyckoff, President
Backup Presider: Arlen Solem, Vice President
Other Attendees able to help: Pastor Scott Jakel
Pastor Jill Bergman
Nathan Roberts

Motion, Second, Approved = -MSA-

11:15 am

Sing the Table Prayer as Congregation starts eating

- 1) Call to Order Julienne Wyckoff
 - a) Quorum Established (> 50)
- 2) Approval of Agenda -MSA- Julienne Wyckoff
- 3) Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes -MSA- Julienne Wyckoff
- 4) Call Committee update – On task for the profile as they
Want to make sure to do their due diligence Drew Stolba
- 5) Charter School update Nathan Roberts
- 6) Treasurer Report – Lost \$ 62,00 for 2024 Chris Larson
- 7) Endowment Committee – we have \$ 1.5 Million
if the Mortgage balloon of \$ 1.2 M needs a temporary
internal loan. John Peterson
- 8) Election of the LEADERS:
 - Executive Committee
 - a. John Beck President, Kathy Ballard Vice President
John Peterson Treasurer, Karen Palm Secretary
 - Synod Assembly Members
 - b. Kathy Ballard and Vicki Jensen Julienne Wyckoff
-MSA-
 - Voting Council Members:
 - a. Dorothy Markowitz, Janet Meyen, Bob Nelson, Rebecca Stolba, John Peterson
-MSA-

9) Recognition of the Boards and their SMART goals for 2024-2025

<u>Board</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Goal</u>
Worship	Pam Hartel	To get a Cross displayed in the Sanctuary
Spiritual Growth	Bruce Shillito	1. Distribute Bibles in English and Spanish 2. Environmental – Provided Soil Compost 3. Provide Spanish Language Bulletin 4. Promote our church to the Spanish Speaking community that surrounds us.
<u>Board</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Goal</u>
Children, Youth & Family	Rachel James	1. Vacation Bible School had 80 participants 2. VBS had 3 day leadership program for teens 3. VBS had 55% community participation 4. VBS provided Lunch daily to the participants 5. Provided 65 people with Thanksgiving dinner 6. Provided 80 people – Christmas dinner & gifts
Hospitality & Outreach	Jane Bugbee	1. Fed 30-40 Kids afterschool 2. Updated the entrance with new furniture
Finance	Chad Habeck	1. Are completing the Finance Manual

10) Approve the 2025 Budget: Jeff Beck
-MSA-

11) Closing Prayer Pastor Jill Bergman

2025 Annual Meeting Financial Report

First Lutheran Church of Columbia Heights Operational Budget 2026

	2024 Actuals	2025 Actuals	Budget 2025	Budget 2026
Revenue				
3753 Mortgage and Maintenance	\$ 68,097	\$ 71,357	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
3040 Lease/Rental Income	\$ 11,720	\$ 2,500	\$ 3,200	\$ 3,200
3050 Charter School Lease Rental	\$ 295,873	\$ 351,540	\$ 354,288	\$ 346,000
3061 Building Use Fees	\$ 24,013	\$ 21,413	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000
3047 Grant Income	\$ 28,075	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,000
3083 General Fund Interest	\$ 808	\$ 345	\$ 1,000	\$ 300
3402 Holiday Market	\$ 6,008	\$ 8,614	\$ 7,000	\$ 8,786
3400 Lutefisk Dinner	\$ 21,953	\$ 23,727	\$ 15,300	\$ 15,300
Total Benevolences	\$ 9,355	\$ 1,150	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,300
Total Special Gifts	\$ 182,834	\$ 20,500	\$ 40,500	\$ 1,800
Total HOSPITALITY & OUTREACH	\$ 15,621	\$ 19,680	\$ 18,380	\$ 18,068
Total Ministry	\$ 5,977	\$ 5,017	\$ 4,897	\$ 5,128
Total MUSIC	\$ 14,305	\$ 3,112	\$ 12,000	\$ 4,800
Total Stewardship Receipts	\$ 428,682	\$ 572,129	\$ 435,500	\$ 574,500
Total Youth	\$ 21,391	\$ 14,681	\$ 7,120	\$ 20,255
3018 Fund Transfer In	\$ 46,012			
General Fund plus SP Income	\$ 1,112,627	\$ 1,044,408	\$ 918,485	\$ 1,020,137
Gross Profit (GF+M&M Fund +SP Funds)	\$ 1,180,724	\$ 1,115,765	\$ 993,485	\$ 1,095,137
Expenditures				
Total ADMINISTRATION	\$ 62,379	\$ 88,750	\$ 71,991	\$ 87,070
Total OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 209,215	\$ 154,849	\$ 228,022	\$ 165,387
Total MINISTRY EXPENSE	\$ 5,469	\$ 6,699	\$ 8,650	\$ 8,322
Total YOUTH MINISTRY	\$ 28,724	\$ 12,158	\$ 15,300	\$ 15,500
Total Benevolences	\$ 46,775	\$ 43,570	\$ 42,000	\$ 44,590
From M&E Funding Request				\$ (10,000)
Total Benevolences after M&E reimbursement	\$ 46,775	\$ 43,570	\$ 43,500	\$ 34,590
Total Special Gifts - Designated	\$ 69,772	\$ 5,161	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,000
Total Education	\$ 6,125	\$ 7,769	\$ 6,200	\$ 7,500
Total HOSPITALITY & OUTREACH	\$ 18,870	\$ 21,456	\$ 21,924	\$ 22,107
Total Lutefisk and Holiday Market Fundraisers	\$ 11,295	\$ 10,061	\$ 11,322	\$ 14,371
Total Payroll Expenses	\$ 629,624	\$ 585,621	\$ 585,348	\$ 642,193
Total Expenditures	\$ 1,097,815	\$ 947,389	\$ 1,004,357	\$ 1,007,140
Net Operating Revenue	\$ 82,909	\$ 168,376	\$ (10,872)	\$ 87,997
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 131,795	\$ 116,038	\$ 84,000	\$ 107,600
Net Other Revenue	\$ 131,795	\$ (116,038)	\$ (84,000)	\$ (107,600)
Net Revenue	\$ (48,886)	\$ 52,338	\$ (94,872)	\$ (19,603)
Transfer for Endowment appr requests	\$ 37,609		\$ 45,000	
Net Revenue after transfer	\$ (11,277)	\$ 52,338	\$ (49,872)	\$ (19,603)
Mortgage Principal				\$ 16,164

2025 Annual Meeting Opening Liturgy

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

Founded on Faith



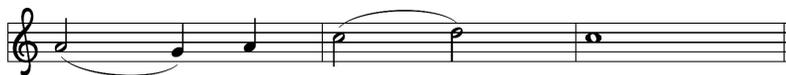
1 Found - ed on faith, the church— a - live by grace—
 2 Your cross, O Christ, re - news our life each day.
 3 E - quipped by prayer, we live the Spir - it's call.
 4 Grow - ing in grace for God's cre - at - ed earth,
 5 Found - ed on faith, called forth, em - pow' red to serve,



pro - claims the gos - pel here and ev - 'ry place.
 Bap - tized in you, we learn and teach and pray.
 Em - pow' red to serve with gifts, both great and small,
 we yearn for jus - tice, peace, and hu - man worth;
 we share God's end - less love with - out re - serve.



The word of God re - sounds through time and space:
 Fed by your love, with thank - ful hearts, we say:
 we bring the liv - ing hope of God to all.
 a world re - stored; a faith - ful, car - ing church.
 Then let us shout a - loud the liv - ing Word!



Al - le - lu - ia!

All Creation Sings, 1048

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Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Dear friends in Christ,

As Lutherans, we are set free to love our neighbors and seek justice. In Colossians 2, we read: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (6-7).

I am abounding in thankfulness for you, church. You are an integral part of this mission as we envision a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. The ministries of congregations including yours, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together today and every day so more people may know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. From providing food to people experiencing hunger, to helping train the next generation of leaders that will lead this church, your support is at work here at home and around the world.

Your generosity to each of the three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has made it possible for us to do this work

together. Your financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices are so valued.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to continue to walk in Christ, remembering you are rooted and established in faith, and free to love and serve your neighbors. Thank you, church, for the ways you connect with and support our siblings across the ELCA and in our communities.

In Christ,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry'.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

—Colossians 2:6-7

Report from Bishop Jen Nagel, Minneapolis Area Synod



2025 Annual Report

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common goodIndeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14, 26)

This report to the worshipping communities of the Minneapolis Area Synod is an opportunity to look back on 2025, and to look ahead to 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 and our shared life as Church Together. We give thanks to you and your congregation for your partnership in this ministry we share, and for your Mission Support, financial commitments that fuel Synod ministry as well as the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Together we accompany one another in times of challenge and joy, seeking the common good as we bear witness to the love of God that makes possible our love of neighbor. Below are a few highlights of 2025.

Our Shared Life

- In May, we lived out the theme Church Together at the annual Synod Assembly
- We hosted two Tool Kit workshops in 2025, one in March and one in November
- We started a monthly virtual learning series called Learn Together Over Lunch
- We gathered rostered ministers for two Ministerium events and the Bishop's Theological Conference
- The deans of the conferences hosted regular conference meetings and the Conference Assemblies in February
- Leaders grew in their work through Peer Groups and Power and Boundaries Workshops
- There were several other gatherings of Synod leaders: Children, Youth and Family leaders, Leaders of Color, Retired Pastors and Deacons, Communicators, and more
- Global partnerships were strengthened in 2025. Archbishop Musa Filibus from the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria visited in October and a few people from our Synod visited the Leipzig District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony in September
- The new ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry was installed in October at Central Lutheran, Minneapolis
- Lay and rostered leaders have been exploring new partnerships, creative building use, and how best to steward resources
- Our Executive Committee and Synod Council are restructuring how we fund ministry together, with a focus on more support for our New Start and Strategic communities
- The Resurrection Fund began in 2017. Seeded by money received at the Holy Closure of congregations, the fund makes possible a wide array of ministry across the Synod, including a new round of Imagination Grants beginning in 2026
- Following the adoption of a resolution on Immigration at Synod Assembly, an Immigration Task Force was formed to guide our action, and a Welcome Fund was created to channel support related to immigration

Daily I see Jesus at work in and through you, dear Synod. Thank you for your dedication, for trusting me and our staff during the tender times, and for daring to boldly live into your faith and baptismal identity.

Transitions in our Synod Staff

In 2025, Karen Ohm and Peg Ihinger retired, and we adjusted the portfolios for many of the Synod staff.

Early in the year we welcomed six new staff members: Sarah Maslowski (CYF Connector), Liz Farmer (Assistant to the Bishop for Administration), Karen Alexander (Administrator for Candidacy, Roster, and Call Process), Pastor Jen Collins (Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Vitality), Pastor Ryan Fletcher (Director for Evangelical Mission), and Juan Gonzalez (Director of Family Faith).



With these changes comes much learning and growth, and some intentional changes to our processes. I'm excited about our team and the gifts we bring individually and collectively. Thanks for your patience as we grow into this new season.

You are in our prayers. God bless us with grace for this day and courage for tomorrow.
In Christ, Bishop Jen Nagel

Continued Report from Bishop Jen Nagel, Minneapolis Area Synod



2025 Annual Report



137
worshipping communities,
including 3 new starts and 8
strategic ministries



142,410
baptized members in MAS
worshipping communities



11
languages spoken in worship

Leadership

5 ordinations of new pastors and deacons	215 pastors, deacons, and Synod-authorized ministers serving in faith communities
21 rostered ministers installed into new positions	67 pastors and deacons serving in specialized ministry
50 people in candidacy program	379 retired rostered ministers
22 call processes in 21 faith communities	18 rostered ministers on leave from call

Leadership

- 13** Conference Deans (serving 12 geographical conferences, and one for chaplains)
- 17** Synod Council members
- 78** serving on other Synod committees
- 30** voting members attended the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix in August

Initiatives

- To date, more than 25% of our congregations are or have participated in Faith and Neighboring Practices, connecting deeply with neighbors in their community. We recently received another five-year grant from Lilly to continue scaling this program even more widely across the Synod.
- Our second Lilly Funded grant, Family Faith, is taking root. It seeks to support parents and caregivers in sharing faith with their children in ethnic-specific and culturally-specific ways.
- 2025 launched the inaugural year of the Minneapolis Area Synod Youth Choir.

Mission Support

\$2,643,049 pledged by congregations in Mission Support, shared between MAS and ELCA - thank you!

Senior Pastor Report—The Rev. Susan Debner



Relationships are tricky to measure. They don't come in tidy volumes, nor grow on predictable schedules. Most often, we measure them in units of time, but even those cannot carry the fullness of how well we know one another, the experiences we've shared, and the many feelings that knit us together.

We've got a scant 3 months to our credit in this relationship as parish and pastor, and so, so many more ahead of us! Two things are continually overflowing in my heart, so far:

- 1) **Gratitude** I am thankful for the Spirit's gleeful work in bringing us to each other. The Holy Spirit managed to inspire the Minneapolis Area Synod Staff, the First Lutheran Call Committee, the congregation, and myself to all move in the same direction at the same time. That is impressive and humbling! It's also why the relationship between congregation and pastor is a "call," because it all starts in God's imagination. I am so delighted to be caught up with you in all that God is already doing and dreaming at First. I pray for us to keep growing together through generous use of gifts like listening, forgiveness, humility, trust, laughter, and prayer.
- 2) **Shared Values** I was drawn to First by the core values that we share, most notably a passion for the well-being of neighbors and neighborhood, and the flexibility to join what God is already doing among, around, and through you. The list of shared values just keeps expanding! I love the collaborative, supportive spirit of the congregation and staff, the compassion and respect shown to all people, and the openness to experimenting with new things. There's also a generous pragmatism here—whatever the congregation has, it uses to the fullest and easily shares. These are characteristics that have existed at First for many generations.

We will lean into these shared values in 2026, and, I'm sure, discover even more. The richness of God's gifts at First is an ever-expanding story, and I am excited to join you in its faithful and unpredictable unfolding.

In Christ,
The Rev. Susan K. Debner
Senior Pastor

*Jeremiah 29:7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...
and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Pastoral Acts and Statistics

2024 Statistics		2025 Statistics	
Baptisms	3	Baptisms	2
Marriages (renewal)	1	Marriage	1
Confirmations	2	Confirmations	6
Funerals	17	Funerals	10
New Members	17	New Members	15
Average Worship Attendance	124*	Average Worship Attendance	127*

* 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, Jeff Beck



As I reflect on the year, I already know I will miss some things, big and small. Some events I think are big now will quickly fade, while small things may prove critical. As a congregation, we have so much happening, and the full annual report will give you the best snapshot of that. But I will focus a bit on what needs to be done in support of our mission and church family.

We started 2025 ramping up the call for a new Senior Pastor, even as we parted ways with Associate Pastor Jill in May. Across this time of vacancy, we had excellent support from our staff, Interim Pastor Scott Jakel, our congregational leaders, and volunteers. Thank you! So many of you stepped into roles outside what you normally do, and that was wonderful.

We redid the mortgage, which was challenging work to do faithfully without a full pastoral staff team for support. I was impressed to see the way the banker dealt with the needs of our congregation and reflected positively on how our congregation is viewed in the community. The kindness and support we received from the bank was a mirror of how we try to treat our community.

We also worked with our tenant to sign contracts for 2025-27. This took combined efforts from the staff, FLC volunteers, and Bultum leadership. Together, we were able to secure that relationship for another season, which gives us valuable stability.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Call Committee for their work this year which culminated with a vote to call a new Senior Pastor on Sunday, October 19. Their endless hours of work and faithfulness to their charge deserve a rowdy round of applause! Please join me in thanking Larry Bugbee, Ruth Dodson, Meagan Ferrise, Jan McFall, Bob Nelson and Drew Stolba. Likewise, join me in continuing to welcome our new Senior Pastor, Susan Debner. I'm very excited to work together in charting the year/years ahead.

We have a long list of exciting challenges ahead of us, and we have a neighborhood and a world where God is doing exciting things that we get to join. I am thankful for the solid base we built up this year that will keep growing and pushing us deeper into our community in years to come.

Jeff Beck
Council President

Personnel Committee—Warren Watson



The 2025 Personnel Committee consisted of Karen Palm, John Peterson (representing the Board of Finance), Wendy Watson and Warren Watson (Chair). Karin Berdal joined the Committee mid-year as a non-voting observer member. Pastor Scott and then Pastor Susan attended our meetings as well.

Among other responsibilities, the Personnel Committee is chartered to update all Staff job descriptions. When we update a job description, we include the employee and their supervisor in the process as well as the Sr. Pastor. We updated four (4) Staff job descriptions in 2025 and we expect to update 5 more job descriptions in 2026.

The Personnel Committee also invested our time to create a current version of the Church's Personnel Policy. The previous version was a decade+ old and therefore this "updated" Policy is really a totally new document. This Policy is critical in setting the expectations of all employees and the lay leaders of our congregation. The Personnel Policy is a living document and will be updated in 2026 to reflect the new employment policies from the State and Federal Government.

In addition to updating the remaining Staff job descriptions and the Personnel Policy in 2026, the Personnel Committee will be studying the benefit offerings that we make available to our employees. Currently we offer each eligible employee an annual stipend against which they can pay certain healthcare expenses. In 2026 we will be analyzing additional benefits to see what can be offered. We are committed to doing what we can to offer our employees the most beneficial benefits the Church can make happen.

Thankfully in 2026 all current members of the Personnel Committee will be returning for another year of service. THANKS to everyone (members and observer!!!) for a highly productive and meaningful 2025!! We look forward to 2026!

Warren Watson
Personnel Committee Chair

Senior Ministry Report

The Young at Heart is a group of senior citizens who meet for social, service and informational meetings and occasional motor coach travel.

Events this past year included an elegant and festive Christmas luncheon with entertainment, a trip to New York City and various local cultural events. Most events are held during the daytime, with transportation options.

Established in 1965, Paul Christensen inherited and has maintained the Young at Heart Group since 2005!



Worship & Music Ministry Report—Jeffrey Patry



Epiphany blessings to you from the music department at First Lutheran! As we find our footing after the busy Christmas season, I want to give you a brief snapshot of our year at FLC. It has been a very busy but wonderful year!

First, it has been a delight welcoming Pastor Susan. We are indeed blessed to have her leadership at FLC and I look forward to working with her for many years!

Our staff at FLC is top-notch. I want to offer many thanks to Joyce, Jana, Nathan, Rachel, Jody and Roger. I am grateful to have this wonderful staff to work with every day! I need to also thank Drew Stolba & Chris Larson for their leadership in the IT/Livestreaming Department. Without them, we would not have a livestream option. My thanks and appreciation also go to Drew for leading our Campanile Handbell Ensemble and to Becca Stolba who leads our Family Choir.

We continue to provide rehearsal space each week for the Caritas Vocal Ensemble (Sunday afternoon) and Chorus Polaris (Tuesday

evening). I am always thankful that we can offer our space to these ensembles. It is a great reminder that our church is not only ours but a community building where we can offer meeting space, rehearsal space and concerts to our community.

The First Lutheran Sanctuary continues to be very popular for concerts. Why is that so? Here are the reasons: We have a wonderful acoustic great for music, and we have top instruments (piano and organ). Our Steinway piano was renovated for two months this past summer thanks to two very generous donors. I want to thank Pat McNabb for letting us “borrow” her piano while ours was out being renovated. This year we hosted concerts by the *Lake Wobegon Brass Band*, *Caritas Vocal Ensemble*, *Singers in Accord*, *Magnum Chorum*, *Northern Lights Chorale*, *Chorus Polaris*, *Bells of the Lakes*, *Partners in Praise Women’s Choir*, *Mississippi Valley Orchestra*, *Synod Band*, *Prior Lake Brass* and *Augsburg Centennial Singers*.

The music department also presented the annual *Christmas at*

First Concert, and we hosted the annual summer piano recital of students of Dr. Soojung Hong. Whew! What an exhausting but great year of music making!

Finally, I want to thank our numerous FLC ensembles and musicians for a spectacular year of music. Many thanks to the Sanctuary Choir, Contemporary Ensemble, Family Choir, Campanile Handbell Ensemble, Instrumentalists and Small Groups 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!



Jeffrey Patry and Pastor Susan
Piano/Organ Recital at Church of St.
Bartholomew, Wayzata, MN
November 2025

Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; Praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Psalm 150

Director of Finance and Operations Report—Jana Dietering



Each gift First Lutheran Church receives is managed with intentionality to either carry out the important ministries, disburse benevolences, pay for mortgage and maintenance costs and cover Special Projects purchases such as a new van and new Kitchen Equipment etc. That's why the Finance Committee, in cooperation with the Finance Director, puts a lot of work and time at the end of every year to review the current financials and to set up a sound budget for the next year. This was completed and presented at the Town Hall Meeting.

While expenses have seen an inflation increase, so has the revenue. This helped to turn the original 2025 budgeted net loss of \$84 K into a net gain of \$52K. This was partially due to savings in our maintenance budget, as the maintenance team (Jody, Roger, Larry, Paul, Bruce) saved significant labor costs by doing the work themselves. Also, a couple of projects that were planned in 2025 are not being finished until January 2026 (the exterior door replacement and some mechanical repairs). We also expected payment for the 2025 compilation of our Financial Statements that will not be finished and paid for until January 2026. And last, we had savings for tenant repairs, as only minor maintenance projects had to be completed.

As part of the generosity of our congregation we were able to make the following benevolence payments to our ministry and mission partners:

Minneapolis Area Synod:	\$24,500
SACA:	\$7,690
Lake Wapogasset Camp:	\$3,720
Mission Jamaica:	\$3,220
Hope 4 Youth:	\$2,720
Pushpa:	\$1,220
WELCA:	\$500

While we faced unexpected repair costs in 2025, strategic investments addressed critical infrastructure needs. One of the biggest expenses was the installation of a new air conditioner for a total of \$152K. That was paid for with funds that were invested in a Mission Investment CD. The Council also approved a onetime \$110,000 payment toward the Mortgage to bring down the mortgage loan payment. That was funded out of that same CD.

Other projects that were completed in 2025 were as follows:

- replaced carpet in room 117
- parking lot crack repair (prolonging the life of the new asphalt)
- commons bathrooms LED lighting conversion
- repair of front exterior door for fire safety and increased security)
- Minor upstairs bathroom remodels
- Playground lighting improvement

Maintenance Projects in the pipeline for next year include the Building Controls Improvement (will help reduce energy costs), the repair of exterior doors #2 and #6 for fire safety and increased security, 2026 tenant improvements and the replacement of the hot water heater. The budget for 2026 also includes \$10K for mechanical repairs scheduled as needed.

Overall, First Lutheran Church continues to be a thriving financially sound community thanks to each of you!

Blessings,
Jana

Holiday Market Report

It's not possible to have this event without *everyone's* help! This year, a few local vendors rented tablespace and were delighted to shop and be part of the wonderful festivities. We would like to thank everyone who donated baked goods, cookies, crafts and their time to make the Holiday Market a success. And a big thanks to all of you who shopped and enjoyed the delicious lunch and treats. Over \$7,000 was allocated towards missions from this annual event.
Team Gratitude! Cheryl, Dorothy & Lyn



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 6 registered students. We had a Confirmation retreat that included hiking in a state park, visiting an apple orchard, and reflecting on why we are Christians. Our fall unit has been Honoring the Faith of our Neighbors, and we had guest Jewish and Islamic speakers.



We are very proud of our 2025 **Confirmands**: Oliver Habeck, Gunnar Peterson, Kate Peterson, Mason Spevacek, Mya Spevacek, and Zoe Tapp. On Reformation Sunday, we celebrated them affirming their baptism.



Sunday School has been joyful this year, with 35 registered participants. A BIG thank you to our fantastic teachers: Janet Zarich, Greta Solem, Terry Swanson, Junia James, Daniel James, Sarah Taylor, Dana McHenry-Levienn. 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 has been expanding into Spanish-language songs and singing in worship throughout the year.

FLY Youth group is a chance for fellowship, food, friends and faithful conversation for an average of 20 youth each Wednesday night.



Play and Pray Dates were piloted this summer as a way to keep connected to our young children on Sunday mornings. We've had between 4-10 kids join each Sunday for a story, activity and prayer in the courtyard after worship.



SERVICE & JUSTICE

Magnified! Vacation Bible School

In June, we had 40 kids, 12 youth and 15 adults participate in our Vacation Bible School, for a total of 67 participants. We learned about the Bigness of God in the Smallest of Things. Kids came to our program through our Sunday School families, our After School program, a local daycare, and neighborhood.

A big thank you to all the youth and adults who volunteered as crew leaders, kitchen crew, check-in team, station leaders and bus drivers.



Service Learning Trip to Chicago

Our team of 14 youth and adults participated in a Service Learning Trip to Chicago July 19-24.



CYF Board Report continues on next page

CYF Board Report *continued*

We served in urban gardens, fixing bikes, giving out food and clothing at a homeless shelter, helping refugee families, and in low-income senior living communities. Highlights included attending Trinity UCC Church on the Southside, taking in a Cubs game at Wrigley Field and navigating public transit.

Bible Camp at Lake Wapogasset

In August, we had 19 campers from First Lutheran attending SEEDS, Family and Youth Camp at Camp Wapo in Amery, WI.

We focused on the theme: Breathe - an invitation to slow down, notice God's presence, and take in the peace and hope the Holy Spirit brings. Also, we had 2 high school students from First Lutheran serving as camp counselors this summer: Henry & Junia. Thank you to the congregation for your generous support of our campership program, making sure all kids get to go to camp.



LEADERSHIP

Thank you to our dedicated and faithful **Children, Youth and Family Board**: Becca Stolba, Missy Habeck, Marit Solem, Joline Dittbenner, Kevin Kaliher, and Junia James.

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

- ⇒ February - Youth Service Project to Second Harvest Heartland
- ⇒ March - Communion Class
- ⇒ April - 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 & Chicago Dogs Fundraiser
- ⇒ July - Waterslide Family Fun Day
- ⇒ August - Youth Leadership 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 "Not So Silent Night" and Happy Birthday Jesus Party

In Christ,

Rachel James

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

Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner—Ruth Dodson

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

We generally serve over 900 meals as a fundraiser for our church benevolences, camp credits and for the church budget.

Families and friends come from all over MN as well as WI and other states. We hear 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 for a very successful dinner!** Lutefisk Committee: Ruth Dodson, Cheryl Ballingrud, Dorothy Markowitz, Sonja Super, Michelle Young



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: Jennifer Shull

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

Sunday Community Meal
Meals: 95 meals in person

20 takeaways

Volunteers: 7-10 each week
Sept. - May

Thank you to our congregation for helping us serve over 100 meals to the community each week!

Community Lunch continues to be a great outreach to the community with around 20 - 30 neighbors each week. 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. This year we got an amazing grant for our kitchen! Anoka County granted us funds to purchase a new ice machine and kitchen fridge. 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 & Jill Kaliher, Judie Opheim, Wendy Ramirez, Joline and Jesse Dittbenner, Paul Babekuhl, Pam Hartel, Chris Dansby, Jaime Alvarado, Tammy Rogne, Jenn Shull, and all the youth and families that help!



After School: 20 - 35 students per week
Volunteers: 12 per week year round

Thank you for making it possible for us to have a year-round After School program! Normally we only do Sept. - May, but we had a lot of students learning English this year. We wanted to help them be ready for school!

So, during the summer we moved the program to 2 - 4 pm to accommodate the summer school schedule. We had strong attendance all summer. We also visited water parks on many hot days. It was very fun for kids who don't have the resources to do these types of activities during the summer. We received an additional grant for \$750 from Fairview hospital to support our food programs this year! Thank you to "Mama" Jane Bugbee for getting us this grant!

We have a great group of students, mentors, and we continue to serve delicious and nutritious foods for dinner. Our group has 5 high schoolers, 10 middle schoolers and 20 elementary students who attend over the course of a month. This year we had a majority of Spanish speaking families. We were grateful to Angela Gallo who translated all our materials, and 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!



H & O Report continues on next page

Hospitality and Outreach Board Report *continued*

We held community dinners to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas this year. Each dinner had around 100 people. A lot of great participation from After School students and their families. Thank you to everyone who donated gift cards for SACA to hand out to Youth.

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



Community Outreach

We continued to host storytelling nights on Weds. in the Chapel. We heard stories from local artists and LGBTQ camping accessibility. These events were attended by around 30 - 40 people with half the listeners from the FLC youth group. Our largest storytelling was Rev. Angela Denker speaking about the rise in white supremacists' groups in MN and it drew a crowd of 200 people.



Columbia Heights Pride and the Monarch Butterfly Event. We got our names and faces in the community with a table and sponsorship.

Interfaith Peace Breakfast, Murzyn Hall. FLC helped to host a table alongside 200 neighbors, non-profit, elected, and faith leaders.



Buy Nothing Events

We also hosted three community events where 50 neighbors set up tables and gave away their household items and clothes for free.



Trick or Treaters: 200 Volunteers: 20

We hosted another very successful community trick or treating event on the Tuesday before Halloween with candy, treats and a bounce house around the front doors and in the courtyard. *Special thank you to our After School team and the H & O board for handing out tricks and treats.*



New furniture!

With the generous support of the Memorial and Endowment and donations from the congregation we were able to buy new seating furniture for the commons. The stain glass window in the commons was used as our color pallet.



Service at The Legends at Silver Lake Village

We have a group of seniors who meet 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!

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 with 8 people meeting twice a month.

Drama Ministry

200 attendees 12 - 30 cast and crew members

We had two wonderful performances. The Last Supper was a great multi-generational performance based on the life of Mary Magdalene (see picture on back cover).

The Fall play was "Noah and the Snowstorm Conspiracy" a modern comedy based on Noah and the Ark.



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

Board of Worship Report—Dorothy Markowitz



I said this last year, and it is worth repeating: 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. Our staff continues to provide invigorating worship experiences. A special thanks to Pastor Scott, Rachel and Nathan for stepping up to fill vacancies we encountered during 2025. We welcomed Pastor Susan in the fall and thank her for immediately immersing herself in our congregation.

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 enhance worship spaces during the various seasons of the church year. We contribute ideas on how to improve our worship experience.

Board Members this year were Cheryl Ballingrud, Leesa Betzold, Ruth Dodson, Pam Hartel, Jan McFall, Tammy Schmitz and myself. Our staff representative is Jeffrey Patry, Director of Music Ministry. We have lively meetings and enjoy discussing the various parts of our worship service and space.

Our 2025 goals were:

- 1) Continued work on the addition of a new cross to the worship space. Pam Hartel has been the leader for this project. Due to the expense of the project we envisioned, we are proceeding to look for appealing but less expensive options.
- 2) We continue to revise guidelines for reading and ushering and other assignments. Working with Joyce, we have made some progress putting these digital documents in a place where they are available online for volunteers to have easy access.
- 3) We are working on “altar guild” organization. Seems we could use more volunteers to help set up communion.

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 your participation.

Once again, thanks to the volunteers who make our job easier and who graciously give of their time and talents.

Respectfully submitted
Dorothy Markowitz
Chair, Worship Board

Board of Spiritual Growth Report—Michelle Edwards



As we look back on 2025 and consider the work of the Spiritual Growth Board, I'd like you to consider the words of Paul to the Corinthians (3:7-9).

*So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but **only God who gives the growth.** The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and each will receive wages according to their own labor. For we are God's coworkers, working together; **you are God's field, God's building.***

We have a wonderful team of planters and waterers on our board who have worked alongside others to nurture and foster spiritual growth in our First Lutheran community. We are privileged and humbled to be God's coworkers, and to God be the glory for all the growth!

Our board this year included Emily Olson De Alveraz, Randy Bergman, Michelle Edwards (Chair), Phil Mattison, Bob Nelson (Secretary) and Bruce Shellito. We began the year with Pastor Jill Bergman as our staff support person. After she and Randy left in the spring, Pastor Scott Jakel joined our board. We finished the year with Pastor Susan Debner joining us.

We created three smart goals for the year:

- 1) Host an adult forum with a representative from the synod to present us with information on how FLC can support immigrant families living in fear of deportation. Following the forum, SGB will work with other leaders at FLC to determine how best to use the information to provide safety on our property or in our community of faith.
- 2) Continue the podcast ministry with three podcast series: one for Lent, one for Advent, and an additional one, possibly in the summer.
- 3) Provide a cross-cultural experience with learning opportunities with immigrant cultures to generate broader appreciation of other cultures and strengthen our sense of community.

As the year progressed, we found we needed to modify each of our goals to meet changing needs and circumstances.

As we all know, the immigrant situation has changed throughout the past year. This led to a great many discussions of how best to determine the needs of our

immigrant neighbors, and how to best meet those needs. The forum was postponed as we struggled to find the best way forward. At this time, with new leadership and input from Pastor Susan, we will reevaluate this goal for 2026. We will be prayerfully looking for the best way to welcome and walk alongside our neighbors.

Our podcast ministry is alive and well! We presented a series during the Lenten season based on the gospel of John. Thanks to all those who volunteered to read scripture and share their reflections. And a big shout-out to Drew Stolba for his work in recording, editing and posting the podcast!

Because of all that was going on in our congregation in the summer, we did not do the summer podcast. But the Advent podcast came together beautifully! Again, volunteers stepped up, and Drew was able to do his part. This podcast is focused on the Christmas story from the gospels of both Matthew and Luke and offers a series of peaceful moments of reflection during a very busy season.

SGB will be supporting the Christmas part for the After School program to meet our third goal for the year. One thing we will add to the mix is a flyer – in both English and Spanish – that will highlight the ministries and services available at FLC.

Other activities for the year include the monthly prayer meeting before council meetings, several Adult Forums on Sunday mornings, the mid-week Bible study led by Phil Mattison, and the Sunday morning Bible study. In the summer, while Bible study took a break, Madonna Wagner led a discussion group on the armor of God. There was enthusiastic response, with 12-15 people attending each week!

We can look back on 2025 as a year of growth for our board and for our congregation. We can look forward to 2026 with fresh challenges, new leadership in Pastor Susan, and many fresh blessings.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23

Memorial and Endowment Committee Report

Members:

Council Appointments

		<u>Term Expires</u>
John Peterson	Chair	January 2028
Chad Habeck	Vice Chair	January 2027
Robert Nelson	Secretary	January 2029
Chris Larson	Treasurer	January 2026
Paul Turner		January 2029
Drew Stolba		January 2027
Board of Worship Appointment:	Jan McFall	January 2026
Board of Spiritual Growth:	Bruce Shellito	January 2026

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 2026.

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.

Summary of 2025 Activities

THE GOAL FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND IN 2025 WAS 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 (To be allocated by the Finance Board); New Commons Furniture \$10,000.00; Upgrade the Building Management System \$30,000.00

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

Planned Activities for 2026

THE GOAL FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND IN 2026 IS TO INCREASE ITS UNDESIGNATED BASE BY 3%, WHICH IS ~\$32,000.00.

a) Flooring in Katie Luther	\$12,000.00
b) Benevolence funding	\$10,000.00
c) Youth Jamaica Trip Scholarships	\$14,882.00
d) Many computer upgrades/software updates	\$10,000.00
e) Office upgrades (for Senior Pastor)	<u>\$4,000.00</u>
	Total \$50,882.00
	Plus carry over from past approvals:
f) HVAC control system (2025)	\$23,912.50
g) Sanctuary cross/rose window (2024)	\$12,287.50
h) A/V (2023)	<u>\$11,173.26</u>
	Overall total of approved projects \$98,255.26

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

Respectfully, Robert Nelson

Report of the Board of Finance—Jay Craft



Greetings Dear First Lutheran Members,

Thank you to this year's board members Mel McCormick (vice chair), Dirk Schmitz, Terry Swanson, John Peterson (treasurer), Jana Dietering (staff) and Rachel Page (for part of the year).

Despite this being the first year on the board for most members, we had some major issues to consider. Our mortgage was set to come due in June. The discussion was to refinance or pay off the mortgage. The board and council did approve refinancing with the option of paying it off at a later time.

Another issue was the resigning of the lease by Bultum. A lease was completed for the 2026/2027 school year.

Thanks to some special gifts we will be getting a new church bus in 2026 (we are waiting because of a recall). Also, funds were allocated for a new A/C unit.



As a board we are involved in many aspects of the church's finances. The board assisted with this year's Stewardship campaign. Thank you all for your continued support. Several special funding requests were approved and sent to M&E for their approval and funding.

The board also reviewed our staffing needs and assisted in calling Pastor Susan. Included in the 2026 budget were some adjustments to our payroll.

Thanks again to some special gifts, we should finish 2025 in fairly good shape.

Looking forward to 2026. We are dealing with large, aging infrastructure and that may mean some additional challenges.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jay Craft, chair



Mission Jamaica Report—Jane Bugbee

2025 Mission Jamaica season we built a new home with an area for a bathroom (pit toilet-no running water). Our team had great donations to build this home, costing around \$7,500. The young man had two children, that could not be returned to him unless he had an indoor toilet.

We also had medical clinics on two days up in the mountains. Filling prescriptions, offering wound care and treating other assorted maladies. Jamaican patients are so thankful for our care. The FLC medical team was able to help finish the home we built on its final day!

Please pray for 2026 Mission Jamaica, our teams, and our friends in Jamaica as we help rebuild more homes and their lives after the devastating Hurricane Melissa.



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 care and commitment of the congregation, volunteers and staff.



In December, Pastor Susan, Rachel James and I, (with help from the Wagners) surprised a few of our homebound members with Christmas Stockings and Kathy's beautiful cards! (*Sweet Ardis Hanson had retired early the day of my visit but was delighted to throw on her robe and catch up over coffee & cookies!*)

It is a pleasure to be part of such a graceful and generous faith community.

With respect & gratitude,
Joyce Weaver, Senior Administrator

2025 was a year with many transitions as the diligent work of the Call Committee brought us Senior Pastor Susan Debner and Interim Pastor Scott Jakel departed after 22 months of leadership. It was a good opportunity for staff and volunteers to work together, try new things and embrace change!

In addition to leading various ministries, volunteers are an intricate part of our day to day operations. They have helped cover a mirage of tasks such as computer work, greeting guests, answering phones, mailings, database entry, money counting, funerals, baptisms, home communion, Sunday bus pick-up, to name a few.

A Special Thank You to: Marilyn Lueth for excellence in managing contributions and lead in money counting.

Counter Team: Joyce Beeksmas, Cheryl Blinkman, Bobbi Sauer.

Front Desk Volunteers: Matt Palm, Faith White, Madonna & Troy Wagner, Kathy Ballard, Jon Lueth.

Sunday Bus Drivers: Roger Johnson, Jay Craft, Charles Pierson III, Pam Sigurdson.

Home Communion Servers are a vital ministry at First Lutheran. We appreciate those who've served Communion to our shut-ins over the years; more recently: Cheryl Ballingrud, Jane Bugbee, Gloria Christensen, Lois Feirer, Karen Mattison, Janet Meyen, Phil Mattison (also The Legends), Wendy Watson, Nathan Roberts (The Legends).

Kathy Ballard and Karen (Rockney) Peterson have been instrumental in helping us celebrate the birthdays and holidays of our 60-90 homebound members (or those without internet) with homemade cards and holiday gifts, for several years.



Merle Olson



Leona Peterson



Dianne Colvin



Betty Hallgren



Ardis Hanson



Helen Grafstrom



Adlore/Mabel Braaten



In loving memory of
Dorothy Roehlke
(age 91) 12/23/2025



Malcom Watson

LET US CELEBRATE WITH HONOR; MEMBERS WHO ARE 90+ YEARS YOUNG!

Aasen, Nellie (95)
Bruss, Mildred (92)
Casanova, Leonard (97)
Grafstrom, Helen (104)
Guzy, Robert (92)
Hallgren, Betty (94)
Hanson, Ardis (95)

Hedlund, Lorraine (99)
Hoberg, Dona (95)
Hoium, Vernon (95)
Larson, Bernice (95)
Larson, Dorothy (94)
Lennox, Jeanette (94)
Niznik, Jacqueline (93)

Olson, Merle (93)
Opheim, Dorothea (95)
Pearce, Doris (92)
Peterson, Leona (98)
Proft, Margaret (95)
Sheppard, Marilyn (94)
Sogge, Betty (95)

Strandlund, Marvin (96)
Wahlstrom, Donald (93)
Watson, Malcolm (98)
Webb, Russell (95)
Zumwalde, Jacqueline (94)



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 -
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Thank you for a fabulous 2025 at First!



In Worship, Friendship & Prayer

