



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God's love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God's Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God's love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God's promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God's love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God's love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You've shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You've shared the gifts of your voices as we've tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God's love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God's love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

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

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## OPENING LITURGY

### Son of God, Eternal Savior

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.**

1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,  
2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.  
3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;  
4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,

Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,  
Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.  
hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.  
Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:

you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead:  
Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;  
By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,  
by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,

fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.  
we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be.  
quench our fe - vered thirst of plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.  
grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

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## **Agenda**

Call to Order

Devotions

Adoption of Agenda

Statistical Information.....Pages 5-7

Minutes from 2022 Annual Meeting.....Page 8

Council President's Report.....Page 9

Pastor's Report.....Pages 10-11

Staff Reports.....Pages 11-13

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Election of voting members for 2024 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly  
May 17-18, in Coralville, IA

Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members

Balance Sheet and Income Statement

Budget Adoption

Adjournment

Lord's Prayer

## **Grace Lutheran Church Congregational Council**

Term Expires  
February 2024

Aaron Brandsfield  
Tom McCleary  
Linda Moravec  
Dean Watson

Term Expires  
February 2025

Kevin Drury  
Michael Hilsabeck  
Jennifer Rehder  
Carter Woodruff

Term Expires  
February 2026

Greg Boeschen  
Valerie Culp

### **2023 Executive Committee**

Carter Woodruff  
Dean Watson  
Jennifer Rehder  
Michael Hilsabeck

### **Congregational Officers**

President	Carter Woodruff
Vice President	Dean Watson
Secretary	Jennifer Rehder
Treasurer	Tom Selander
Financial Secretary	Paul Kallenbach

### **Grace Lutheran Church Staff**

The Rev. Michael Schmidt

### **Grace Staff Members**

Adam Barden, Vicar (2023-2024)  
Kathy Bowermaster, Pianist & Ensemble Director  
Kami Chicas, Administrative Assistant  
Jessica Flannery, Office Assistant for Worship  
Todd Haugen, Custodian  
Mike Hilsabeck, Bookkeeper  
Rich Snyder, Organist  
Michelle Voelker, Minister for Communication

## In Memorandum

***We remember with love and respect the following loved ones who from their labors rest.***

*(Names and date of death.)*

Richard (Dick) Johansen	01-22-2023
Jeanette Best	02-04-2023
Martha Martens	02-04-2023
Leanne Davis	02-19-2023
Helen Fanning	03-15-2023
Lorna Johns	04-05-2023
Carl Feilmann	04-11-2023
Joann Pierce	05-08-2023
Elaine Westvold	05-11-2023
Joy Averill	05-30-2023
Beth Flannery	06-05-2023
Wilma Frost	06-28-2023
Lucille Krauss	08-21-2023
Kristina Galle	08-27-2023
Max Palmer	08-27-2023
Zelma Wilson	10-11-2023
Penny Hansen	10-31-2023
Dale Bordt	11-03-2023
Marilyn Anderson	11-04-2023
John Roehrick Sr.	11-05-2023

## Membership Statistics

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
<b>Membership end of 2023</b> as reported in the Congregational Report to the ELCA	<b>676</b>	<b>565</b>
Members removed during 2023		
by death	20	20
by transfer to other congregations or other reasons	10	10
Members received during 2023		
by baptism	2	
by transfer from other congregations by affirmation of faith	8	8
baptized youth confirmed in 2023		
<b>Membership end of 2023</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>543</b>

## Statistical Report

Worship Services Conducted.....	66
Weddings held at Grace.....	1
Baptisms .....	3
Funerals.....	14
Average Sunday worship attendance 2004...	368
Average Sunday worship attendance 2005...	333
Average Sunday worship attendance 2006...	324
Average Sunday worship attendance 2007...	294
Average Sunday worship attendance 2008...	293
Average Sunday worship attendance 2009...	259
Average Sunday worship attendance 2010....	228
Average Sunday worship attendance 2011....	229
Average Sunday worship attendance 2012....	212
Average Sunday worship attendance 2013....	197
Average Sunday worship attendance 2014....	197
Average Sunday worship attendance 2015....	191
Average Sunday worship attendance 2016....	178
Average Sunday worship attendance 2017....	167
Average Sunday worship attendance 2018....	141
Average Sunday worship attendance 2019....	133
Average Sunday worship attendance 2020	
Worship moved to online in March 2020	
Worship online and in person 2021	
Worship online and in person 2022	
Worship online and in person 2023	

We are unable to track worship attendance due to the inability to accurately track online participation. Covid-19 has impacted how we gather for worship in many ways. This can be seen as negative as the in-person attendance has changed drastically. At the same time, we have navigated into a hybrid format that has allowed us to reach, connect, and build community in new ways. These ways include in-person, livestream, recorded services, and printed resources. If you know of someone for whom these ways of gathering do not work, please contact the church office so that we can work toward a solution.

## **Minutes of Annual Congregational Meeting January 30, 2023**

Call to Order –Alex called the meeting to order at 10:27 AM.

Devotions by Pastor Mike Hebrews 13:16. Opening Liturgy

Rich Snyder was appointed Parliamentarian.

Adoption of Agenda approved by absence of objection.

Statistical Information provided in the written report.

Minutes from 2022 Annual Meeting approved by absence of objection.

Council President's Report, Pastor's Report, Staff Reports, and Committee Reports were approved by absence of objection.

Election of voting members for 2023 SE IA Synod Assembly May 15-16; format is virtual, no travel required. Nominees Carter Woodruff and Jenny Rehder. Approved by absence of objection.

Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members

Nominees for council (3-yr terms): Greg Boeschen and Val Culp (second term). Approved by absence of objection. Council will have 10 members for 2023. Jenny moved that the next iteration of council discuss the reduction of council members that requires a change to the Constitution and Bylaws. Motion approved by absence of objection.

Endowment committee nominees Bruce Bergman and Kari Dostalík, approved by absence of objection.

Balance Sheet and Income Statement Review – Kevin Krause presented balance sheet and financials.

Noted the \$71K unrealized gain (loss) in the Endowment Fund due to the volatile stock market.

Ended 2022 with a surplus mostly due to increase in unpledged money and decrease in expenses. However, insurance costs are increasing so will continue to monitor this cost.

Clarifying question about the Mission Action Fund; restricted fund with its own account. More information coming in the next newsletter.

Largest increases for 2023; funding intern for full 12 months, property expenses, staff.

Budget Adoption – Kevin Krause presented the proposed budget as recommended by the Congregational Council. Motion made to approve the budget as presented, seconded, and passed by voice vote.

Presentation about Service Project for LSI. Collected household items for new LSI clients in the Refugee Resettlement Project. Blessing Prayer.

Adjournment at 11:22 AM.

Lord's Prayer

Lunch and Fellowship

Respectfully submitted, Jenny Rehder, Congregational Council Secretary



## **Council President's Report**

In preparing this report, it occurred to me that I should go back and read some of my predecessors' reports. It seems that they all started with something like - "this being an *unusual unprecedented, interesting, difficult, or quite* the year".

This year has been no different. I would like to thank those who served before me. 2023 presented many challenges; The year began with multiple roof leaks that caused damage inside the building. Because of the expenses that were above budget and pledges being under budget, we were seeing a deficit of \$60,000 by mid-year. This number was down to \$32,000 November. Even with expenses being as high as they were, members stepped up to catch up pledges for the year and we made budget.

We will eventually need to address replacement of the roof. Hopefully, the giving will be such that we can start to build some reserves into future budgets.

We were faced with the difficult but necessary decision of using reserves to replace our air conditioning units on the east side of the sanctuary. The replacement cost was \$80,000, we were roughly \$20,000 short and asked the congregation to contribute to a special campaign. The congregation stepped up to the challenge and we raised this money in short order. We have our second intern in as many years and are budgeting for a 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2024. Thank you to Vicar Adam and Pastor Mike for your leadership and spiritual guidance.

We started the year with the goal of updating our constitution and bylaws. The constitution has been updated and submitted to the synod. Unfortunately, the draft was sent back to us as we were told that the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions need to be submitted together. Hopefully we will have this completed and voted on by the congregation by the next congregational meeting.

A photo wall and directory were completed in 2023. Thank you to council person Greg Boeschen and everyone involved. It is good to be able to put faces with names, especially for our new members.

We started a revenue task force to address what will be an eventual shortfall if we continue to do things the way we always have. This means looking for alternative revenue streams. This team has worked very hard to look at other revenue streams as our average giving per member is higher than at any time in memory. We will hopefully see some of those discussions come to fruition in 2024.

With 2023 in the rear window and we look forward to 2024, I am so thankful for our members' generosity and willingness to serve. I'd like to thank the congregation for allowing me to serve.

Gods Peace be with you,  
Carter Woodruff,  
Church Council President

## Pastor's Report 2023 - Pastor Michael Schmidt

*Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off. Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite." But Joab replied, "My son, why do you want to go? You don't have any news that will bring you a reward." He said, "Come what may, I will run."*

*So Joab said, "Run!" Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.  
2 Samuel 18:21-23*

The year was marked with loss, as we gathered for nearly twenty funerals. The emotional toll that took on the community of faith, and on me, was considerable. Grief is ever present. In addition, there were the "goodbyes" that were said within the congregational staff. Vicar Bunny departed for Wartburg Seminary, with Emma Stammer close behind to make room for an increased role within the Johnston Community Schools Vocal Music Department. This fall, Denise Friesth retired in order to spend more time in the role of Grandmother. Each of these took a toll as well.

We also had a difficult year financially. We started the year behind budget. At one point we were at a \$60,000 deficit on the year. It was not until the incredible generosity shown in December that we made budget for the year. It was still a deficit on the year, but we came in ahead of the budgeted deficit. That was stunning, and I continue to be amazed at the generosity of this community of faith.

In the last three months of 2023, I received a great deal of unsolicited affirmation in both my call to serve Grace Lutheran Church and my gifts as a pastor. I cannot begin to express how thankful I am for these conversations, and the show of support on Pastor Appreciation Sunday. I ended 2023 with a renewed sense of calling to Grace Lutheran Church. This is truly an amazing community of faith, and I thank God every day for the honor of serving here.

The quote from 2 Samuel 18 hangs on the wall in my office, "Come what may, I will run." It is one of my favorite passages in the entire Bible. Ahimaaz desires to run and share the news of Absalom's death with King David. He is reminded that there is nothing to gain personally from this. The king will not be happy and likely angry with the messenger. It is the care and compassion of Ahimaaz that compels him to proclaim, "Come what may, I will run." His sincere witness impacted the message and the way that it was heard by King David.

We live in a time and place where the message of the Christian Church is often seen with suspicion. There are many who do not feel welcome, who do not trust the message, and who respond with anger toward the messenger. I may not be a runner, but in the words of Ahimaaz, "Come what may, I want to run."

We have a message of love to share with the world. We have a gift as a community of faith to be welcoming, to break down barriers, and to make a difference. May the world around us hear the message of God's love because our care and compassion is easily seen.

Although the word "difficult" comes to mind, there is a message to share. Come what may, I will run.

In Christ,  
Pastor Mike

## **Intern Report 2023 by Vicar Adam Barden**

It's hard to imagine that my time here at Grace Lutheran is already over halfway through. It seems like only yesterday that I first walked into the sanctuary to be installed as your Vicar. Since that day, I have had the pleasure of serving in such a welcoming and supportive environment where I can explore my call and the various aspects of pastoral ministry. It has been a pleasure to get to see all of the ways that God is at work in the community of Grace.

In the seven months I have been here, I have been working to become more comfortable as a leader while addressing areas where I need to grow. I have led worship and preached, participated in council and staff meetings, and collaborated with Moore elementary in starting their personal pantry. I have helped lead bible studies, helped plan an internship retreat, and have used my musical gifts for Sunday school, Choir, the internship retreat and the Christmas Services. In the coming months, I will be focusing on aspects of ministry I have not addressed yet. Ultimately, I hope that in the final months of my time here at Grace Lutheran, I am able to find my voice as a leader in the Church and demonstrate it confidently.

I want to take a moment to say thank you to the members of the internship committee and Pastor Mike for accompanying me on this journey. They have been supportive of me and have been great at giving feedback and ideas as I work to address the areas of church leadership where I still need to grow. They have been a listening ear as we talk about what is happening in the congregation, the greater church, and my personal life as I face the challenges of oncoming matrimony. I would also like to thank the staff and council for allowing me to gain the administrative experience that I lacked in my journey previously. Finally, I want to thank you, the congregation of Grace Lutheran. You have been welcoming, patient, and gracious as I have slowly crawled out of my introverted shell.

As I close this report, I am called back to the prayer that Pastor Mike and I use to end the weekly morning prayers. It is a constant reminder of God's presence on our journeys through life.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart! I hope Grace Lutheran Church continues to be a place where future ministers can grow into their call as future leaders in the Church. I hope I get to see where the Lord continues to lead this community of faith in the years to come.

Peace and Blessings to you all!

Vicar Adam Barden

## **Report from the Director of Communications Michelle Voelker**

2023 has been a busy transition year.

Vicar Adam has been a great addition to the office and staff, and fits right in. Denise prepared well for her absence during the hiring period, and Mike Hilsabeck and Kami Chicas are welcome additions.

Other than filling in during absences, and a little training, the majority of my tasks have remained the same – sharing news of Grace and the local community, which gives me the excuse to spend time with all of the lovely people who do things around Grace.

**Membership Directory** – with many thanks to the planning, leadership, and organization of Greg Boeschen we were able to publish an updated version of the Member Directory! Related, we are working on getting the hallway photo wall updated now that we are nearly fully staffed.

**The website at [gracedm.org](http://gracedm.org)** Find the calendar, news, worship, bulletins, announcements, newsletters, forms & applications, secure giving, and archives here. We are working to refresh and update committee and outreach pages in early 2024.

- **The Tuesday enews** – for upcoming events, meetings, short term needs.
- **The Friendly Visitor** – Monthly reports, articles, photos, and interest items, as well as events to look for in the future.
- **Weekly Announcements** – Prayer concerns, celebrations, education times/topics, the days events, and other items as space allows.
- **The street sign** - Worship & bible study times, welcomes, events, other messages determined by staff.
- **Facebook** - Morning Prayer twice a week, worship services broadcast and archived. Advertising Grace events. The private page Abiding Grace continues to be a good location for occasional sharing of information.
- **Post Cards/Mailings** to the membership & neighborhood as needed
- **Worship Materials** printed, published online, and mailed after Jessye's meticulous work, with me occasionally filling in during a rare need..
- **Membership Mailings:** we continue to mail monthly newsletters and weekly bulletin/announcement/sermon to those who request it.

Thank you for allowing me to continue to serve the Grace Community.

Michelle Voelker, Minister for Communications.

## **Report from the Bookkeeper Mike Hilsabeck**

I have been a member of Grace for 5 years now. In early November 2023 I stepped into the role of Bookkeeper for Grace Lutheran following the retirement of Denise Friesth. Her job as Minister of Administration was separated into 2 part-time positions – an Administrative Assistant (filled by Kami Chicas) and a Bookkeeper (myself).

In my role I oversee our Church finances. Specifically, I am responsible for vendor accounts payable, payroll, payroll taxes, fund receipts/disbursements (e.g., Endowment Fund, Memorials), bank deposits, and other tasks that I'm still discovering.

These first couple of months I've spent much of my time learning our processes and systems. I am especially grateful for the many hours devoted to my training by Denise Friesth, Tom

Selander, Paul Kallenbach, Kevin Krause, and our office staff. Their patience and encouragement have been amazing, as well as indispensable to my success.

I feel very blessed to serve in this capacity and to do so for a church I love.

Blessings, Mike Hilsabeck

## **Report from the Worship & Music Ministry Pastor Mike Schmidt**

This year has been one of significant changes with Worship and Music. Our longtime Minister for Worship and Music, Emma Stammer, resigned to allow more time for an increased roll within the Johnston Community Schools Vocal Music department. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity to work with Emma for nearly nine years, and also for the care she took in making sure it would be a smooth transition. Documents were prepared to help guide hymn selection, worship planning, and the work with Grace Bells and the Chancel Choir.

The work that was part of the Minister for Worship and Music job description has been split up, in order to decrease budget expenses. Rich Snyder now facilitates music during worship on all but one Sunday per month. Kathy Bowermaster covers one Sunday each month.

Kathy Bowermaster has also agreed to lead the Chancel Choir. This started as a volunteer position and will move to a stipend position for 2024. The choir has grown this year and I am very thankful for Kathy's direction. She has also helped with Grace Bells for select services.

Hymn selection has been absorbed by Rich Snyder, Vicar Adam, and me. We have been meeting every couple of months to select hymns for upcoming services. This process has led to an even greater appreciation for all of the work that Emma has done in recent years. Selecting hymns is a rather stressful process, knowing that most people have definite opinions on worship music.

We have started to increase the collaboration between the Altar Guild and the staff in planning for Seasons within the church year. This has been a welcome change, and I am thankful for the increased input and involvement.

Submitted by Pastor Mike

## **Children and Youth Report**

The ministry with Children and Youth continues to rebuild after the jarring impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year continues the rebuild of education with our preschool through high school youth. The Sunday morning education hour has been led by several wonderful volunteers. In the Sunday School Room, the lessons have been led by Deanna Weber and Courtney Brandsfield. The Middle and High School time has been led by Jessica Flannery, Jenie Schmidt, and Carol Woodruff. These classes have also been involved with service projects through the monthly missional opportunities at Grace and other opportunities to assist the families of Moore Elementary.

I want to offer a huge THANK YOU to all of these volunteers, and the many others who have a positive impact on our children and youth.

As these ministries continue to grow, we are looking for other ideas and volunteers. If you would

like to be a part of this growth, please reach out to me at [mike@gracedm.org](mailto:mike@gracedm.org).

Submitted by Pastor Mike, on behalf of the Children and Youth volunteers

## **Report from the Stewardship Committee**

The Stewardship Committee in conjunction with the Finance Committee set two goals for 2023. They were as follows:

Reach a budget goal of \$415,00 for 2024. This was a slight budget decrease from the 2023 budget of \$445,000. This was determined to be reachable primarily by staffing changes for 2024. This also allowed Grace to continue to participate in the internship program.

Have a higher percentage of our projected income represented by pledged offerings. In 2023, pledged offerings made up 82% (365,000 of 445,000) of anticipated revenue. In the last few years, unpledged offerings have made up a larger percent of our budgeted income. Unpledged offerings are revenue that is not as predictable as pledged offerings. This has made it increasingly difficult to manage the budget in the current year and develop a budget for the next year. We asked the congregation to pledge for 2024 what they felt they could reasonably commit to fulfilling in 2024.

So, how did we do....

Pledged offerings came in at \$393,854! With a 5% uncollectable allowance (for unpredictable occurrences in 2024), we have a solid \$375,000 pledged offerings number for 2024. This is an increase from \$365,000 in 2023 and represents 90% (375,000 of 415,000) of the proposed budget for 2024. This is a great job by the congregation! This also decreased our unpledged offerings from \$50,000 in the 2023 budget to \$20,000 in the 2024 budget. The remaining balance of the budget is made up of building rental and other miscellaneous income.

The Stewardship Committee would first like to thank the congregation for its response to the stewardship campaign...not only in pledged amounts but timeliness in getting pledges in. This is beyond helpful! Additional thanks go to the Finance Committee for its close coordination on the budgeting process. Both committees must work hand-in-hand to have a successful campaign.

You'll notice that this report has been focused on resources...no mention of time and talent. The committee would also like to thank anyone that has donated their time and talents to the church in the past year. Grace's mission is an important one, and it cannot happen without all members of the congregation working together and contributing their time and talents.

The Stewardship Committee

## **Outreach in 2023**

### **Little Free Pantry (LFP)**

Tackling food insecurity is at the forefront of our outreach at Grace and much of what we do works toward the goal of ensuring no one goes hungry. In 2019, Grace Lutheran erected a Little Free Pantry on an outdoor site accessible 24/7 to help with the rising food insecurity in our

surrounding area, where nearly 72% of students at Moore Elementary School qualify for free & reduced lunch.

Thanks to an Immanuel Vision Foundation grant, we were able to expand our Little Free Pantry in 2023. The Little Free Pantry backstock room is stocked monthly with shelf stable food and personal care items by two dedicated shoppers, Tammy Denton and Kari Dostalík. A team of 16 awesome volunteers then stock the Little Free Pantry with approximately 50 items 1-2 times a day. We have distributed approximately 28,500 shelf stable items through our Little Free Pantry in 2023, in addition to the items dropped off and placed directly into the pantry by the community!

<b>Beginning Balance</b>	\$ 2,270.46
<b>Deposits:</b>	
Merle Hay Neighborhood Assoc.	\$ 33.33
Principal Foundation	\$ 295.00
Lydia/Martha Circle	\$ 750.00
Donations	\$ 5,301.00
Immanuel Vision Grant-2023	\$ 6,308.00
Immanuel Vision Grant-2024	\$ 7,400.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Supplies	\$ (62.46)
Pantry Items Purchased	\$ (8,932.48)
<b>Ending Balance</b>	\$ 13,462.85

We want to thank members of the congregation who continue to donate food and money, both in-person and via our Amazon wish list. Neighbors often place items into the Little Free Pantry as well, with current pantry needs communicated via the church marquee, Facebook posts, the church newsletter, and bulletins.

While the backstock room and team of dedicated volunteers have greatly improved the flow and use of our Little Free Pantry, we're looking forward to expanding the program in 2024 to include more cultural foods and personal care products, thanks to another Immanuel Vision Foundation grant.

We look forward to your continued support!

**Little Free Pantry Team:** Tammy Denton, Kari Dostalík, Pam Hellman, Martha Mitchell, Jenny Rehder, Cherie Rissman, Jon Rissman, Amy Schmelzer, Emily Stowell, Cathy Watson, Dean Watson, Deanna Weber, Carter Woodruff, Carol Woodruff, Barbara Zimany, and Ro Zimany.

## Altar Guild

The Altar Guild members at Grace prepare the altar for Sunday worship and assist with communion preparations and cleanup. Other responsibilities include any special preparation for the seasons of the church year such as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, and special events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.

The group handles the care and maintenance of the paraments, linens, banners, and candles as needed for worship services. Like everyone else, we did see an increase in the cost of some supplies in 2023. The following items were purchased throughout the year:

- Communion supplies
- Candle oil
- Cleaning supplies
- Seasonal supplies and decorations

A smaller group is designated for handling funerals. These are volunteers who help to prepare for the services as needed to meet the requests of the families for the worship space.

Altar Guild members continued regular meetings. We used that time for fellowship and to discuss the group's duties for the next month. We ended our year by decorating the church for Christmas.

Altar Guild grew by three members in 2023 for a total of 11 servants. Everyone will continue their service for 2024. If you're interested in joining Altar Guild, please reach out to any current member for info! We have found it most beneficial to everyone's circumstances to maintain a collective leadership and whomever is available to take the lead on a certain item or issue does so.

Thank you to:

The Willing Workers and Men's Group for their assistance throughout the year.

The 2023 Altar Guild volunteers for their dedicated service: Sue Anderson, Jill Boesch, Kathy Bowermaster, Gail Peterson, Jenny Rehder, Jane Ridnour, Amy Schmelzer, Rita Stackhouse, Emily Stowell, Hilary Woodhouse and Carol Woodruff. Kathy also served as altar flower coordinator.

Budgeted amount for 2024 (including altar flowers): \$3,000.  
Expenses for 2023: \$3,386.

Report respectfully submitted by the Grace Lutheran Church Altar Guild

## **Report from Cradle Roll**

The Cradle Roll program ministers to parents with children between the ages of birth through age three.

"Splash!" materials from Augsburg Fortress press are used. Each month the parents receive a "Parent Page" appropriate for the age of their child. A music CD is included with the first parent page and again at the child's 1st and 2nd birthdays. The materials are supplemented with additional materials at Christmas, Easter, and the child's third birthday.



There are currently eleven children enrolled in the Grace Cradle Roll. Due to the fact there are no longer Sunday School classes for three- and four-year olds, three of the eleven children have been held over and will receive supplemental materials at Easter and/or Christmas 2024.

Two children enrolled in the Cradle Roll program were baptized during 2023. At the time of baptism, the parents are presented with a bible for their child. A dove with the child's name and baptismal date is added to the Baptismal Roll in the sanctuary. The dove is sent to the parents prior to the first anniversary of their child's baptism. The bibles were purchased with funds received from the Grace Endowment Fund. The doves and baptismal napkins were made and donated by Len and Helen Ringgenberg in memory of their grandson, Alec Freese.

Expenses include "Splash!" materials, postage, mailing and supplemental materials.

2023 Budget: \$400.00  
Expenditures: \$180.99

Respectfully submitted,  
Gail Peterson  
Cradle Roll Coordinator

### **Lydia-Martha Circle**

Lydia-Martha Circle met this year beginning in the spring on March 23, 2023 until our end of the year meeting on December 7th, 2023. Although we are more of a social gathering group, we do continue to support the church neighborhood having donated \$750 to the Little Free Pantry for food and school supplies, \$50 to the Orgel Kids Piper Organ Program, \$100 along with a \$250 Thrivent Grant to Keep the Kids Warm through the Merle Hay Neighborhood Association for winter clothing for Moore Elementary School students. We also made 50 May Baskets filled with candy for Calvin Manor residents and 35 snowman tea light candles for our homebound members Christmas gift bags.

Lydia-Martha Circle meets on the 4th Thursday of each month from March through December at 9:30 a.m. in Grace Hall. The November/December meeting is a combined meeting. New members are always welcome.

Martha Mitchell and Marilyn Nizzi, Co-Chairs

### **Report from the Grace Garden Committee**

Committee members: Julie Honsey, Marion Nehmer, Carla Peterman, Michelle Voelker, Loree Nelson, Linda Gronert, Tammy Denton, Rich Snyder, Ashley Oaken

**We welcomed** several new gardeners who helped out in 2023: Tammy Denton, Rich Snyder, Ashley Oaken. Michelle Voelker took a hiatus for most of the season, and we had a few gardeners benched for the season due to injuries so the extra help was much appreciated. Marion Nehmer and Carla Peterman are retiring from the Grace Garden after many years of caring planting and harvests.

Each year after we decide what we will grow – based on previous years’ successes and struggles – each person signs up to contribute specific seeds and plants. Planting and cleanup are a group effort, while other crops are planted as appropriate. Gardeners rotate during the bulk of the season, typically harvesting and watering for one week out of every 4 and helping each other with harvests during the heavier tomato and bean crop season.

In 2023 Carla Peterman expertly scaled back our plans based on the help available at the beginning of the year, leaving 2 beds unplanted.

In 2024 we look to plant more peppers, eggplant, and other produce that can be harvested with less frequency, and will continue to scale back on beans and tomato plants. We have planted fewer and fewer rows of beans and fewer tomato plants over the years, yet our soil has been enhanced by the raised beds and years of compost, so the plants thrive and produce record amounts of produce to donate. Produce is donated to local Food Pantries in the surrounding community, while some is added to the Little Free Pantry.

**Improvements:** With the addition of the path leading to the Little Free Pantry, Chuck Denton added a water spigot in the garden to keep the hose from crossing the path. It has been a welcome addition and makes watering the garden easier. Since it has been a few years, we also added compost to each bed in late October.

**Budget:** We used all of our budget, some for plants and seeds, the majority for adding needed compost

The compost bins on site produce compost to top dress a few beds or fill the sweet potato plant bags each year, depending on the materials available. The bins were quite full and mixed at the end of 2023 so should provide top dressing for several beds in 2024.

Thank you for allowing us to make use of this space, and to share a passion for growing & a love of working in the soil, to continually learn, and to share friendships while helping others.

## **Report from Member Care**

The Grace Member Care Team continues the ministry of assisting Grace members in time of need. This includes prayers and may include providing meals, transportation, visits, cards and/or phone calls. Due to the situation this may be a one-time occasion or one that may extend over a period of time. Grace members may request MCT contact through Pastor Mike or by calling the church office.

The MCT reaches out to those on the Prayer List, the homebound and Grace’s treasured senior members. They receive Birthday, Holiday, and “Thinking of You” cards. They also may receive phone calls and/or visits.

This year we were fortunate to receive \$202.83 proceeds from the Easter Breakfast and \$513.00 from the Grace Car Show held in June. This money will help MCT continue this ministry to Grace members.

All Grace members are in our thoughts and prayers. We would like to suggest you take the time to reach out to others to let them know you are thinking about them. A simple phone call or card would be appreciated.

There is a need for additional members on the team. If you would like to participate in this ministry, please contact one of the members listed at the end of this report.

For 2023:

Income	
Beginning balance	\$1,644.80
Grace Easter Breakfast	\$ 202.83
Grace Car Show	\$ 553.00
Total	\$2,400.63

Expenditures	
Supplies/Cards/Postage/ Gift Cards/Groceries	\$ 728.39
Total	\$ 728.39

2023 Member Care Team members

Jill Boesch, Joie Gronert, Mary Helt, Gail Peterson, Jane Ridnour, Sally Thielking

## **Report from the Lutheran World Relief Team**

This was a year of both joyful celebration and deep sadness for the Lutheran World Relief Team and Grace Lutheran Church in 2023. It was joyful because we celebrated our 75th year of working together with LWR for people in need around the world! We also welcomed two new members of our team: Theresa Gerling and Lyne Wall. The year was sad because we said "goodbye for now" to two of our long-serving members, Gladys Peterson and Beth Flannery who passed away. Gladys made quilts for many years and was frequently seen at the ironing board. Beth served as an enthusiastic committee chair, as a quilter, kitmaker, and super shopper for a long time. We began making memorial quilts to place in the Grace Little Free Pantry this year to honor our beloved members who have gone on ahead.

After searching in the church archives, a historical display was placed in the Gathering Hall during our Spring LWR Drive to celebrate our 75 years of service. We were blessed to have a visit from LWR's Reverend Tim Krick, Manager, Congregational Engagement. Along with Vicar Bunny Stoutes, he lead worship on February 19, and gave a moving presentation about the work of LWR during the education hour, thanking us for our involvement. We made 233 personal care kits, 20 baby care kits, and tied 42 quilts together in the Spring. Members of the congregation donated \$1455 for kit and quilt making in the Spring. Spring expenses were \$1061.93.

We were honored to be featured in an article in LWR's Faith in Action newsletter in June. Another congregation-wide kitmaking and quilt tying event was held on September 24th. We created 203 school kits, 30 baby care kits and tied 39 quilts in the Fall. Since the congregation was having a mini capital campaign around the same time, we opted to request funds from Grace's Mission Action Fund instead of having another fundraiser. We were granted \$2000 toward quilt and kit making! We also received \$350 in other donations. Fall expenses were \$1403.14. We have begun purchasing batting to use in our quilts to make them lighter to ship, and more warm and cozy.

The year began with \$1357.64 in our reserve account and ended 2023 with \$2697.57 remaining.

This agrees with church records. We thank the congregation for all the generosity and support.

The LWR Team: Alice Kulzer, Allison Olson, Barb Zimany, Cathy Watson, Gail Peterson, Helen Ringgenberg, Jessye Flannery, Jill Boeschen, Kathy Piltingsrud, Lyne Wall, Mary Jo McCleary, Mary Weaverling, Nancy Crowfoot, Theresa Gerling

## **Mission Action Fund Report – 2023**

The Mission Action Fund was established in 2022. The goal of the fund is to:

to be able to respond quickly to needs in the immediate neighborhood and beyond (statewide, nationally, and internationally), and not to be used for the Congregational Budget. This fund is ideally meant to be used in one of two ways.

- 1) Instances where a Grace member is involved in direct or indirect service to others by being engaged in a community or service activity. The intent here is to get Grace members actively involved in Grace's mission and to live a life differently through Christ.
- 2) Instances where a need exists outside of the Grace community. An example may be any time the Lutheran Disaster Response is mobilized for an emergency (statewide or nationally).

The Mission Action Fund team consists of Aaron Brandsfield, Kristin Medhurst, Don Schouten, and Pastor Mike. This team reviews applications for use of funds and looks for ways the fund can be used to support other agencies. Application information can be found at:

<https://gracedm.org/resources/mission-action-fund/>

Donations may also be directed to the Mission Action Fund.

The Mission Action Fund was used to support these projects at Grace Lutheran in 2023:

Neighborhood Food Pantry Fill-Up (April Mission Opportunity) \$1562.17

Kindness Bags for the YMCA Supportive Housing (August Mission Opportunity) \$1958.11

Personal Pantry for Moore Elementary families (God's Work, Our Hands) \$4370.91

Lutheran World Relief (September Mission Opportunity) \$2,000

End of year gifts to agencies included:

Embrace Iowa \$15,000

Dorothy's House \$9,000

Lutheran Services in Iowa \$9,000

Lutheran World Relief \$5,000

We look forward to the continued outreach of the Mission Action Fund.

Respectfully,

Pastor Mike, on behalf of the Mission Action Fund team

## **Report of the Endowment Committee**

The purpose of the Grace Lutheran Church Endowment Fund is to promote faithful Christian stewardship by providing a congregational plan to receive grants, gifts or bequest of money to be used to enhance the total program and mission of the Church beyond that supported through regular giving and apart from the general operation of the congregation. The Endowment Fund Committee acts as custodian of the Fund.

The Endowment Committee approved the following distributions of 2022 income, which was distributed in March of 2023.

Awards to Grace Lutheran Church:

- \$3,475 for Walkway path for Food Pantry

Other Awards:

- \$2,380 to Lutheran Lakeside Camp for resealing of Jerusalem Cabin
- \$2,500 to Another Child Foundation for Living Water Mission Network

A total of \$8,355 was awarded. Requests for grants totaled \$8,355.

Since inception, the Endowment fund has awarded a total of \$368,318 to 198 projects.

During the year the Committee reduced the interest rate on their loan to Grace Church to 0% for the calendar year 2023 to assist the Church's financial condition. This reduction will impact the Committee's ability to provide grants in the future until this income is resumed. It is expected that the rate will remain at 0% throughout 2024.

Your Endowment Committee,

Kari Dostalík (Chairman), Kristin Medhurst (Secretary), Bruce Berman, Gary Nehmer and Eric Weber

## Report of the Finance Committee

The Church results were above budget in 2023. Overall, a deficit of \$9,925 was achieved as compared to a deficit budget of \$12,000. This was a strong recovery from the large deficit position the Church was in during the summer and fall.

Highlights of actual activity include the following:

- Pledged and unpledged offerings were below the prior year and budget.
- Overall, expenses were below budget. This was primarily due to lower costs for utilities, debt service and staff turnover offset by higher insurance and maintenance.

Budgeted activity for 2024 reflects a break even budget. Highlights include the following:

- Pledged offering activity is above 2023 actual activity, pledging units are down but average giving is up.
- Pledged offerings are based on the actual pledge cards received and not historical results.
- Unpledged offerings are based on historical results and considers the transfer of activity to pledged offerings.
- Budget for 2024 includes the intern pastor position for the full year.
- The choir director position is not being replaced. The office administrator position was split into a finance and receptionist position for 2024.
- Total staffing costs are approximately \$226,000 and represent 54% of the total operational costs of the Church.
- The budget for the professional leadership positions includes salary, employer taxes, pension and medical insurance.
- Synod Benevolence is unchanged from 2023.
- Insurance and maintenance accounts were both increased \$5,000 to reflect the higher level of expected activity.
- All other expense activity is comparable to the prior year.
- There is no activity for debt service as the payment of interest was suspended for 2023 and 2024 due to the financial condition of the church.

Not included in these results is the activity of the Capital Campaign.

- During 2022, \$15,400 was received from members and \$20,676 was spent on lights for the sanctuary.
- During 2023, \$59,030 was received from members and an additional \$13,621 was spent on lights for the sanctuary, \$81,577 was spent on AC replacement.
- Since Inception (2020), \$232,371 has been received and \$207,778 spent primarily on building mechanical systems.

Your Finance Committee,

*Kevin Krause (chair), Kevin Drury, Paul Kallenbach (Financial Secretary), Tom Selander (Treasurer)*

Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice. Read stories and learn more at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://elca.org/SOFIA).



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