



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

—Psalm 93:4-5

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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



# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## OPENING LITURGY

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

God, we praise you and give you thanks.

**You are good, and your mercy endures forever.**

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.

**We praise you for food that nourishes us.**

You rescued your people from slavery.

**We praise you for freedom.**

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

**We bless you for your justice and mercy.**

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

**We praise you for his death and resurrection.**

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

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

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift

**and commission us again to be your servant people.**

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:

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

Send us in your love and mercy,

**that the world may know you and praise you.**

### Now Thank We All Our God



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



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



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



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

*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840*

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

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

Let us pray.

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

**Amen.**



## **Agenda**

Call to Order

Devotions

Adoption of Agenda

Statistical Information..... Pages 5-7

Minutes from 2023 Annual Meeting .....Pages 8

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

Staff Reports..... Pages 10-14

Ratification of Constitutional Changes.....Page 15

Committee Reports .....Pages 16-27

Balance Sheets and Income Statement ..... Pages 28-30

Budget Adoption

Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members ..... Insert

Election of Voting Members to the 2025 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly,  
Saturday, May 17th at Grandview University, Des Moines.

Adjournment

Lord's Prayer

## **Grace Lutheran Church Congregational Council**

Term expires

February 2025

Carter Woodruff  
Mike Hilsabeck  
Kevin Drury  
Jenny Rehder

Term expires

February 2026

Valerie Culp  
Greg Boeschen

Term expires

February 2027

Tom McCleary  
Linda Moravec  
Brian Gerling  
Stuart Mitchell

### **2024 Executive Committee**

Greg Boeschen  
Tom McCleary  
Jenny Rehder  
Kevin Drury

### **Congregational Officers**

President	Greg Boeschen
Vice President	Tom McCleary
Secretary	Jenny Rehder
Treasurer	Tom Selander
Financial Secretary	Paul Kallenbach

### **Grace Lutheran Church Staff**

The Rev. Michael Jon Schmidt  
Vicar Jesse Hershberger (2024-2025)

Kathy Bowermaster, Piano Accompanist, Music Ensemble Coordinator  
Jessye Flannery, Office Assistant for Worship  
Brian Gerling, Acting Property Manager  
Todd Haugen, Custodian  
Mike Hilsabeck, Bookkeeper  
Rich Snyder, Organist  
Michelle Voelker, Minister for Communications

## In Memorium

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

*(Names and date of death.)*

John Schall – January 7, 2024  
Louise Grotheer – January 9, 2024  
Lynn Niemuth – January 29, 2024  
Connie Heuton – February 27, 2024  
Eugene Krauss – July 8, 2024  
Rev. William Kallestad – August 21, 2024  
Joanne Johnson – September 5, 2024  
Brenda Mann – September 23, 2024

## Membership Statistics

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
<b>Membership end of 2024</b> as reported in the Congregational Report to the ELCA	<b>656</b>	<b>543</b>
Members removed during 2024		
by death - 6		
by transfer to other congregations or other reasons - 3		
Members received during 2024		
by baptism - 2		
by transfer from other congregations by affirmation of faith - 5		
baptized youth confirmed in 2024 - 1		
<b>Membership end of 2024</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>540</b>

## Statistical Report

Worship Services Conducted.....	66
Weddings held at Grace.....	0
Baptisms .....	2
Funerals.....	7
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	
Average Sunday worship attendance 2022....	56
Average Sunday worship attendance 2023....	73
Average Sunday worship attendance 2024....	78

As requested last year, we have begun tracking the in person attendance. It is more difficult to track the online presence. The numbers for this year show the average in person attendance during worship services.

# **Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting**

## **January 28, 2024**

Grace Lutheran Church Annual Congregational Meeting – January 28, 2024

1. Call to Order – Carter called the meeting to order at 10:27 AM.
2. Devotions by Pastor Mike - St Matthew 4. Opening Liturgy
3. Rich Snyder appointed Parliamentarian.
4. Adoption of Agenda approved by absence of objection.
5. Statistical Information provided in the written report. Suggestion was made to list the average attendance in person in the annual report with the caveat that we can't accurately track online participation. Discussion will be taken up by the new council.
6. Minutes from 2022 Annual Meeting approved by absence of objection.
7. Council President's Report, Pastor's Report, Staff Reports, and Committee Reports were approved by absence of objection.
8. Election of voting members for 2024 SE IA Synod Assembly May 17-18 in Coralville IA. Nominees Jessye Flannery and Eric Weber. Approved by absence of objection.
9. Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members
  - a. Nominees for council (3-yr terms): Brian Gerling and Stuart Mitchell. Linda Moravec and Tom McCleary agreed to do a second term. Motion approved by absence of objection.
  - b. Endowment committee nominee Jill Boesch. Motion approved by absence of objection.
10. Balance Sheet and Income Statement Review – Kevin Krause presented balance sheet and financials.
  - a. Endowment Committee reduced the interest rate on the loan to the congregation to 0% for 2023 and 2024 to help with the budget shortfalls.
  - b. Finance Committee – Reached \$60K loss near the end of the year. However, the congregation responded very generously, and we ended up with only a \$10K deficit. Memorials increased from \$38K in 2022 to \$78K in 2023.
  - c. Had a short-term campaign to pay for the mechanicals.
11. 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.
12. Adjournment at 11:11 AM.
13. Lord's Prayer
14. Lunch and Fellowship

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenny Rehder  
Congregational Council Secretary



## **Report from the Congregational Council President**

**Greg Boeschen**

In looking at the past year, I am reminded that we are on a journey of faith. We don't always end up where we thought we would a year later. Just as we finish what others start, the seeds we plant today will be harvested by those that come after. That is why it is important that to keep Christ at the center of what we do and listen to His will for this community of faith.

One of those seeds planted by the previous council was getting the constitution and by-laws updated, which we were able to complete this year. A big thanks to Jenny Rehder for doing a lot of the heavy lifting to get that over the finish line.

We did have another year of unplanned property expenses. Heavy rains this spring led to water in the basement that took a while to diagnose and fix, including excavation work. With cleaned out pipes, new gutters, and a repaired roof, we are going into this spring in a much better position. Brian Gerling is heading up the effort to help us get more proactive with our property needs.

Despite all our property challenges, finances were very good this year. We ended with a positive balance even after the additional expenses due to increased giving and additional income from our resources. The council also worked with the Endowment and Finance committees to reduce the debt owed to the Endowment fund.

In June we welcomed Vicar Jesse Hershberger. It is great that Grace can provide real world learning experiences for the next generation of spiritual leaders, but we also benefit from their spark and joy!

Grace continues to do an amazing amount of outreach! There are local efforts like the Little Free Pantry, monthly service projects, and grants from the Endowment fund. Broader efforts include matching drives by the Mission In Action Fund, and delivering local Lutheran World Relief donations to the Minnesota office.

The Being New Spirituality Center opened in the lower level of the church this year. It provides programs that help with connection, renewal, and healing to a wider community in central Iowa.

Thanks to Pastor Mike and the staff for all their hard work this year! I am humbled by all the ways members of Grace give their time, talents, and treasure and look forward to what God has in store for us in 2025.

In Christ,

Greg Boeschen

Council President

## Pastor's Report 2024

*"We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3*

Dear Siblings in Christ,

I do give thanks for each and every one of you. It continues to be a joy to walk with you, the people of God at Grace Lutheran Church. This past year has been a year of highs and lows. We gathered for funerals to celebrate the lives of saints who from their labors rest. We have had a variety of unforeseen maintenance expenses. We have witnessed the dream of our Being New Spirituality Center at Grace Lutheran Church come into fruition. Through the ups and downs, we have grown together as a community of faith, centered in worship, held in grace, strengthened in love, and sent forth in mission. I am so proud to be a part of this wonderful community.

Our property expenses were \$60,000 above budget. This includes repairs to the roof and storm sewers. These were all necessary repairs. With the growing need for proactive maintenance with the property, we are exploring the use of staffing budget for a part time Property Manager. There are various tasks of the Administrative Assistant position that can be filled by volunteers or other staff members. This frees the funding for that position to be used in a different way. In the last weeks of 2024, Brian Gerling has been volunteering in this capacity to help us in organizing the position and job description. We are very thankful for his work on this.

We continue to enjoy the partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary. Vicar Adam Barden was with us until the end of May and we have been blessed to work with Vicar Jesse Hershberger in the months since. She has been a valued colleague in ministry since joining us in June. It will be sad to see her leave later this year. Wherever congregation or ministry she serves will be greatly blessed. We are hopeful that this partnership will continue.

I continue to be filled with gratitude for the privilege of working with the staff at Grace Lutheran Church. Mike Hilsabeck is a great addition as our Bookkeeper. He is very thorough in his work, and offers a fresh perspective on the financial needs of the congregation. Michelle Voelker continues to impress with her dedication to all of the avenues of communication. It is a lot of work keeping the website up to date, along with all of the weekly and monthly communications. I have great respect for Todd. He is joyous in his work as custodian and is always willing to help out in any way that he can.

As I reflect on the last year at Grace I am filled with gratitude. In the words of 1 Thessalonians, "(I) always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in my prayers." As I look toward the future, I am truly excited to see what God has in store for the people of God at Grace Lutheran Church and for our entire community. There is great energy around worship, Bible Study, and the offerings with the Being New Spirituality Center. We are finding our heart as a community of faith.

I give my deepest thanks for the honor and privilege of serving as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church. This is a truly special place.

In Christ,  
Pastor Mike

## **Vicar's Report 2024**

### **Jesse Hershberger**

In my first sermon here at Grace, our gospel text came from Mark 6:1-13. Jesus preaches for the first time in his hometown and is broadly rejected by the community he speaks to. It was a text that voiced some of my deepest fears when coming to Grace--because while this isn't the town or the church I grew up, and I was pretty sure the church wouldn't run me out of town, I was nervous to preach, teach, and lead worship for the first time in a new community of faith. Internship takes a leap of faith from everyone involved, to try a new thing and to trust in what the new person/place/community has in store.

I didn't need to be worried, however. I am immensely grateful for the ways that you all have welcomed me with open arms and granted me a space to learn and grow over the past several months. I could not ask for a more fruitful internship experience. The work of hosting an intern is not an easy one, but is a tremendous gift not just for the intern placed here, but for the work of God through the broader church as a whole.

I am especially grateful for the ways in which this community balances the importance of tradition with the flexibility to try new things. I have so appreciated the faithfulness with which you hold true to traditions without letting them become idols that prevent the community from moving forward. There are always growing pains when trying new things, like new hymnals, styles of preaching, or the use of the Narrative Lectionary, but our hope is that in trying new things we continue to expand our understanding of where God is and how God shows up in our lives.

As a newcomer to Grace, it has been a joy to hear from so many of you who have been parts of this community for longer--your stories and your memories are a gift. For those who, like me, are newer to Grace, your fresh ideas and excitement help us all to grow. Every Sunday, watching the sun come through the stained glass, I am reminded that our community of faith is similar to a stained glass window--each individual piece beautiful and shining on its own, but together creating something even more incredible. No matter what role Grace plays on your faith journey, please know that you have been a crucial part of mine, as I prepare to continue on the path towards ordination after the completion of my internship in May. I will be a better pastor, and a better person, because of the time I have spent among this incredible community of faith.

In Christ,

Vicar Jesse

## **Report from the Minister for Communications**

### **Michelle Voelker**

While the focus and scope of my position has changed over the years I have had the privilege of being on staff here, there is a definite pattern to my weeks in sharing the news of Grace. Mondays focus is for responding to weekend emails and messages, checking signups, updating the website and calendar, drafting communications. Tuesdays are filled with staff meetings and enews and announcement prep. Wednesdays are for proofing, printing, assembling, and mailing. Thursdays focus is a return to the website, plus Facebook, programming the street sign, and

newsletters. And yet, no two weeks are the same. In between these regular activities I get to chat with people who call or stop in, manage supplies and difficult equipment - *nothing* sets a copier off like a printing deadline, manage the directory, distribution lists, and volunteer signups, prepare funeral bulletins, manage the phone, gather information for the Monthly Friendly Visitor, update building directories and signage, help promote the Being New Center, and handle advertising.

My favorite part of the week, however, is getting to interact with the different people & groups who meet at Grace. In each of the past two years I have thought the building was busy again. However this year, with regularly occurring committee, team, and ministry group meetings, the Being New Spirituality Center, and several outside groups and families looking for rental space, the building truly has been full in 2024.

We have an amazing staff with great synergy, able to handle the odd things that crop up, covering vacations and staff changes, laughing about the ridiculous, carrying for, celebrating, and sharing worries together. We also have some amazing volunteers who have stepped in to help: Kathy Bowermaster who helps with proofing our various publications, and Jill Boeschen who has stepped in to take over tasks that were handled by volunteers prior to 2020.

We've explored new ways to advertise, shifting budgets from not-fruitful city-wide ads to more local options such as the Beavertown Sidewalk – a quarterly publication sent to nearly 6,000 nearby residents and sponsorship of local events. We have purchased logo bags to hand out at Grace events like Christmas Eve and the annual Pet Blessing , and have brought back the Grace logo pens for you to share with others. Updates to the website are ongoing - we expanded the Member Testimonial features, added a page for Being New, are planning a page for the Little Free Pantry. We are also exploring other social media options.

If you aren't familiar with the website, please explore it – you can find updated Grace news, worship and education times, a continually updated events calendar, bulletins, announcements, secure giving, staff contacts, online worship and archived videos. But wait – there's more! Go see!

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

Michelle Voelker

## **Report from the Church Bookkeeper**

### **Mike Hilsabeck**

As always, much of my time in 2024 was spent on day-to-day activities including deposits (approximately 150 bank deposits), accounts payable (paid 751 invoices to 121 different vendors), and payroll (twice a month).

Also, I spent time coordinating property management activities, including:

- Extensive church roof repairs.
- Mitigation of lower-level water issues.
- The installation of the new pop machine, located next to the Innovation Lab.
- Miscellaneous repairs throughout the building.

***Following is some of the 2024 financial highlights...***

We paid \$155,000 on the Endowment Building Loan (\$7,619.50 from Memorials, \$22,380.50 from Thrivent Choice, and \$125,000 loan forgiveness by the Endowment Committee). This leaves a balance of \$100,000.

In July, the church received a \$22,420 grant from the Morris P Grotheer and Louise N Grotheer Charitable Fund (through the Thrivent Charitable Grant).

The Church gave \$14,995 to the UNDUE Medical Debt / Iowa Campaign - \$4,995 was raised by the congregation, and \$10,000 was given by the Mission Action Fund. Every \$1 helps relieve about \$100 worth of medical debt for Iowa families in need.

We gave \$5,000 to Hope Ministries Bethel Mission for the purchase of a new freezer.

\$13,230 was given to the Lutheran Disaster Response for hurricane relief. \$3,230 was raised by the congregation, and \$10,000 was given from the Mission Action Fund.

\$10,000 was given to Dorothy's House, which provides a safe recovery place for those in Iowa whose lives have been interrupted by human trafficking, exploitation and prostitution.

\$1,574 was given to the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry of Des Moines.

\$2,210 was given to the DMARC Food Pantry.

In addition to regular giving, the congregation raised approximately \$93,500 for church ministries such as:

Alter Flowers – \$1,792

Being New Spirituality Center – \$2,463

Capital Campaign – \$4,790

Christmas offering – \$3,495

Easter/Lent offering – \$3,825

Hurricane Relief – \$3,230

Little Free Pantry – \$6,018

Lutheran World Relief – \$3,129

Medical Debt Relief – \$4,995

Mission Action Fund – \$44,644 (\$38,978 was from a generous gift by a contributor who wishes to remain anonymous)

## **Report from the Worship & Music Ministry**

### **Pastor Mike Schmidt**

Through a generous donation from the family of Lynn Niemuth we were able to purchase copies of the new hymnal All Creation Sings. This has been a great resource for congregational singing.

Rich Snyder facilitates music during worship on all but one Sunday per month. Kathy Bowermaster covers one Sunday each month.

Kathy Bowermaster serves as a volunteer leader/coordinator for the Chancel Choir and handbell choir and schedules the liturgists. This is a volunteer position.

Hymn selection has been done by Rich Snyder, Vicar Jesse, and me. We have been meeting every couple of months to select hymns for upcoming services. Selecting hymns is a rather stressful process, knowing that most people have definite opinions on worship music. Please be gentle in your critique and generous in suggestions.

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

## **Report from the Acting Property Manager**

### **Brian Gerling**

Activities accomplished in the short time I have been in the position of property management at Grace:

- \*Look into gutters issues and help schedule the work needed. Looking into the north side of the church drainage, needing to see how we can adjust the downspouts not to drain so close to the church.

- \*Help with finding the information around the church so we know where it is/protect the documents if stored in a room. Still need to get organized, lots of work still needed.

- \*Looked into boiler issues, still a lot of work to be done.

- \*Working on gathering information on areas that need to be worked on to maintain the Church properties: Room inspections, spring cleanup/fall cleanup, janitors cleaning areas, etc. There is a lot yet to be put together on this area.

- \* update Pastor on what's being worked on at the Church.

There are many things that we need to do to help track/schedule/maintain so that we can be proactive in getting ahead of issues so that we don't add further cost to maintain the church property.

## **Children and Youth Report**

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.

Confirmation Classes have been taking place on Monday evenings with a class of 7 students. This is co-taught by Pastor Mike and Vicar Jesse.

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



## **Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Des Moines IA Summary of Changes to the new Model Constitution and Bylaws – 10/27/2024**

Updates made to the Draft Constitution, which includes the Bylaws, are highlighted in this document. The new Model Constitution and Bylaws from the Synod effective November 2022 specifies that there is a single document that contains both the Constitution and Bylaws instead of separate documents. Most of the updated Model is almost identical to previous Grace Lutheran Constitution effective since January 1995 and the Bylaws effective since January 2011.

**Chapters 2-9, 14-19 are generally required verbiage from the ELCA; the following updates were approved by the council.**

C5.03.j. new wording as per the ELCA

C5.05. added the related Endowment Fund bylaws to this section.

C9.01. added “congregational council”

C9.15. new sentence as per ELCA

C9.21. added “congregational council”

C16.01. clarified Congregation Council

**Chapters 10-13 are Congregation-specific Sections.**

C10.01. added the related Congregation Meeting bylaws to this section.

C10.02. added “pastor” and “10” percent

C10.03. added “voting” members

C10.04. added “5” percent for a quorum

C11.01. added the related Officers bylaws to this section.

C11.02. clarified “congregation council”

C12.01. “Deacon” added. Updated the number of council members to “not fewer than five members”.

C12.02. deacon added plus Grace has council serve for 3 years

C12.04.d. added sentence about annual evaluation for the rostered minister

C12.05.c. added the statement “may enter into contracts up to the value of the reserve fund”

C12.05.d. updated to “may incur obligations of more than 5% in excess of the anticipated budget only after approval by a Congregation Meeting”.

C12.06. new statement added

C13.01. added the related Executive Committee bylaws to this section.

C13.02. added the related Nominating Committee bylaws to this section.

C13.03. added the related Staff Support Committee bylaws to this section

## **Outreach in 2024**

### **2024 Altar Guild Report**

The Grace Lutheran Church Altar Guild prepares the altar space for worship services and assists with communion setup, serving, and cleanup. Other responsibilities include any special preparation for the seasons of the church year, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter; and coordinating with pastoral staff for such special events as baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

The group handles the care and maintenance of the paraments, linens, banners, and candles as needed for worship services. The following items are purchased throughout the year:

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

A smaller group is designated to set up for funerals. These are volunteers who help to prepare for the services as needed to meet the requests of the families for the worship space. We also have two members who coordinate with wedding parties for ceremonies taking place at Grace.

Altar Guild members met regularly throughout 2024. We used that time for fellowship and to discuss the group's duties for the upcoming months. We closed out the year by hosting a Christmas tree decorating event and inviting potential new volunteers.

Altar Guild ended 2024 with nine volunteers and is looking forward to growing the ranks in 2025. If you're interested in joining Altar Guild, please reach out to any current member for info! The time commitment varies and schedules can be flexible. 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.

- The Altar Guild's regular budget for 2024 was \$3,000.00.
- The altar flower budget is a \$2,000 pass-through budget, offset by individual/family contributions for weekly altar flowers, poinsettias, and Easter lilies.

Thank you to:

- The 2024 Altar Guild volunteers for their dedicated service: Sue Anderson, Jill Boesch, Kathy Bowermaster, Gail Peterson, Jenny Rehder, Jane Ridnour, Amy Schmelzer, Rita Stackhouse, and Carol Woodruff. Kathy also served as altar flower coordinator.
- The Willing Workers and Men's Group for their assistance throughout the year.

We would like to offer a special tribute to Gail Peterson, who is retiring from the Altar Guild in 2025. Gail has been leader and co-leader of the group and has worked with numerous pastors and volunteers through her many years of service. Her knowledge and experience have been invaluable to new members joining the team. Thank you, Gail!

Report respectfully submitted by the Grace Lutheran Church Altar Guild.

## Being New Spirituality Center

We believe that contemplative insight and practice are key to the transformation of our spirits, touching that deep place of heart and of being that lives in each of us, whether we are part of a faith tradition or not. We are a resource for Central Iowa and beyond, creating events to which all are welcome, as well as opening space for offerings that others bring.

The Being New Spirituality Center (BNSC) began as an inspiration from the Holy Spirit given to the Being New Team at Grace Lutheran Church, commissioned by the Council in September 2023. Members of the team included Cathy Watson, Jessica Flannery, Mary Freimuth-Helt, Julie Honsey, Mike Hilsabeck, Pam Hellman-Palmer, Ashley Ocken, Joan Fumetti, Cindy Mackey and Betsy Happe.

We launched the BNSC with an open house in July 2024. Our offering of events includes communal prayer and festival events and regularly scheduled weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly events that include Sunday morning Preparation for Worship, book discussions, Wednesday drop-ins, yoga, energy and sound healing, and SoulCollage.

We offer members of the congregation Spiritual Direction through Deb Richards [yobel49@yahoo.com](mailto:yobel49@yahoo.com). A team has been formed to plan and build a Labyrinth Garden in the place where the preschool playground sits. The Recovery Café, a program for nurturing healing and hope to people suffering from addictions and other mental health challenges, meets weekly in the Center with plans to coordinate programming with the Center.

From the start, the Center partnered with Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa (COCI). Through that partnership, BNSC has become known to other faith-based groups interested in partnering in event programming and planning, as well as shared communication and newsletter postings. Some of those groups include St. Catherine of Sienna Dialogue Series, the Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community (DMIEC), Universal Dances of Peace, and Emmaus House.

One of our priorities was to obtain the technology that would enable us to offer hybrid events – gatherings of people in person at the same time with people online through Zoom – so that people from a distance can attend. Our newsletter goes out to people in the Des Moines area, throughout Iowa, and other parts of the country, as well as people living in Canada.

In September, we hosted 37 people at Center Events. In October, we hosted 103, and in November, 107. Those numbers do not include people who joined events on Zoom or attended Sunday morning Preparation for Worship.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Willing Workers for all they have done to create a warm and inviting space. Thanks also to Todd Haugen for his willingness to do whatever we ask, whether that be moving chairs or stepping in to take a group picture.

If you are interested in the events offered at the Center, visit us on our website: <https://gracedm.org/support-of-others/being-new-spirituality-center/>

We do all that we do to ground us, our community, and our world in love,

BNSC Planning Team: Julie Honsey, Cathy Watson, Michelle Voelker, Joan Fumetti, Cindy Mackey, Deb Richards, and Jesse Hershberger, Vicar

## **Companion Congregation Committee**

We have had other things on our plate to do in the last few years and those who were originally involved are mostly gone. We had a wonderful relationship and it was a rewarding experience. Presently, some of the things we were doing have been done with the non-profit, Empower Tanzania.

Our good friend, Pastor Ombeni, died last year, as shared in the Friendly Visitor. Our good friend Azza, who loved to preach and work with people and solve problems, died several years ago. Namkunda, his wife, and a beloved sister in Christ has been in poor health and moved to live with a daughter. Phaniel moved to a city after his wife Rehema died. There are a couple of people left, but not many, as it is here.

The current pastor would love to begin communicating again, but we need more interest to build on here. If you would like to join us, please come to a rebuilding meeting, for a discussion about possibilities, Wednesday, January 29, before choir, at 5:30. If that does not work for you, we can find another time that will. Please let the office know or let me know.

Mary Freimuth Helt

## **Cradle Roll Report 2024**

The Cradle Roll program ministers to the parents of 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 on 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 seven children enrolled in the Grace Cradle Roll. This is the smallest number ever enrolled in the program. There has been a decrease in the number of families with young children since Covid.

Due to the fact there are no longer Sunday School classes for three- and four-year olds, three of the seven children have been held over and will receive supplemental materials at Easter 2025.

Two children enrolled in the Cradle Roll program were baptized during 2024. 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 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 and supplemental materials.

2024 Budget: \$400.00

Expenses: \$274.84

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Peterson

Cradle Roll Coordinator

## **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 “Committee” acts as custodian of the Fund.

The Committee approved the following, which were distributed in March of 2024.

### **Awards to Grace Lutheran Church “Grace”:**

- \$2,700 for security cameras and a doorbell

### **Other Awards:**

- \$940 to Lutheran Services in Iowa for soundproofing therapy offices
- \$2,000 to DSM Refugee Support to cover transportation to YMCA Camp & Camp Hantesa
- \$1,000 to Mentor Iowa to sponsor their bowling event
- \$1,998 to Urban Bicycle Ministry to purchase sleeping bags for the homeless

A total of **\$8,637 was awarded**. Requests for grants totaled \$24,760.

Since its inception, the Endowment Fund has awarded **\$500,148** to **204** projects

In addition, the Committee approved a special distribution to Grace of \$125,000 to be used to pay down the outstanding debt to the Endowment Fund. Grace also used other funds to pay down an additional \$30,000 of outstanding debt. The current outstanding balance of \$100,000 is expected to be paid down over the next 10 years at \$10,000 per year at a 0% interest rate.

Your Endowment Committee,

Kari Dostalick (chair), Jill Boesch (secretary), Bruce Bergman, Kristin Medhurst, and Eric Weber

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

Committee members: Julie Honsey, Michelle Voelker, Loree Nelson, Linda Gronert, Tammy Denton, Rich Snyder

We are at a crossroads with the garden, wanting to continue sharing with local food pantries and the Little Free Pantry, but needing more help. We had a few longtime dedicated members of the gardening committee retire at the end of 2023, however the rest of us were not quite ready to give up the peace and joy we find working in the garden. And those who willingly stepped in to help us in previous years did not envision spending as much time in the garden as we all found necessary in 2024.

We are reaching out to different community groups as well as the neighborhood, looking for one week commitments in caring for the gardening during the growing season. Julie Honsey and Michelle Voelker are willing to plan, help plant in Spring, help with the final harvest/cleanup in Fall, and guide all volunteers, as well as take one week during the summer to care for the garden. Advertising on the Street Sign last fall brought two very interested and dedicated gardeners who are willing to help throughout the summer.

Those committed to the garden for 2025 will meet in early April to decide how to proceed, how much of the garden to plant, and whether we start adding more perennial foods that require less frequent care.

The food we produce is greatly appreciated by those who frequent the Little Free Pantry, who often offer to help harvest or water when they encounter someone working in the garden. And the garden itself is in great shape, with an active compost, beautiful soil in easy to access raised beds, new landscape fabric suppressing weeds, and an easily accessible water spigot in the garden for ease of watering. If part of the garden lays fallow for a year or two, know that we will continue to recruit and build community around this amazing and productive space.

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

The LFP Team at Grace stocks the Little Free Pantry, located outside on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street near the garden, with approximately 50 items nine times a week. We maintain this service to the community thanks to donations, which include money, food, and personal care items.

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. Each month, we shop to restock our backstock room so there are items available to refill the LFP. We spent an average of \$886 per month this year on diapers, toilet paper, soap, and feminine products, in addition to shelf-stable food. This translates to 500 – 600 packaged items a month, some of which are multi-pack items that can be distributed individually, such as Ramen noodles, oatmeal, bar soap, etc.

As devoted financial stewards of your contribution dollars we strive to find the lowest prices, buying items on sale and in bulk. Our monthly shopping usually includes trips to Aldi, Walmart, Sam's Club, Dollar Tree, and HyVee. Occasionally, we find deals at Fareway, Costco, and Menards.



We remain thankful for the donations received from the congregation and neighbors in the community which make this outreach possible. We look forward to your continued support in 2025.

<b>2024 YTD Activity</b>		
<b>Beginning Balance</b>		<b>13,462.85</b>
<b>Deposits</b>		<b>6,190.67</b>
Member contributions	4,578.00	
Merle Hay Neighborhood Assoc.	100.00	
Garage Sale	1,512.67	
<b>Expenses</b>		<b>10,636.17</b>
Purchases to Restock Pantry	10,636.17	
<b>Balance as of 12/27/2024</b>		<b>9,017.35</b>

**Little Free Pantry Team:** Tammy Denton, Kari Dostalick, Kathy Bowermaster, Pam Hellman, Martha Mitchell, Jenny Rehder, Jon & Cherie Rissman, Dean & Cathy Watson, Carter & Carol Woodruff, and Roe & Barbara Zimany.

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

We tried a new thing this year: Grace Lutheran Church became the central Iowa collection point for Lutheran World Relief kits and quilt donations in October. This semi-annual event involves planning, renting a truck, getting the word out to area churches, providing some refreshments, loading their boxes of kits and quilts, and hauling them to the LWR Warehouse in Saint Paul, MN, forwarding all the monetary donations and reporting the details to the Southeast Iowa Synodical Women’s Organization. By partnering with 32 local churches, the truck was completely filled with 686 boxes, with a total of 3890 kits and quilts being delivered to LWR and \$2614 was collected to help with shipping. Our team partnered with the Willing Workers and the Saturday Men’s Group to accomplish this feat. The fellowship was enthusiastic between our team and all the participants from other churches. We’ll be doing this again in the Spring.

At Grace, we held two All Ages Service Project events for kit-making and quilt tying this year. The cost of supplies (\$3751.37) was supported by a generous donation from the Grace Mission Action Fund (\$2000) in November 2023, and from donations received this year from members of the congregation (\$2327.41). We were able to make and ship:

- 90 Quilts
- 234 Personal Care Kits
- 200 School Kits
- 60 Baby Care Kits

Marla Gowdey and Vicar Jesse Hershberger joined us for quilting this year, each adding their unique spark. We welcome new team members with enthusiasm!

Our current account balance is \$1273.61. Plans are under way for more kit and quilt production in Spring 2025. Thank you to all who participate in and support our mission.

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

## **Lydia-Martha Circle**

Lydia-Martha Circle met this year beginning in the spring on March 28, 2024 until our end of the year meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Although we are more of a social gathering group, we completed several projects this year in support of Grace activities and the neighborhood. In May we made and delivered 40 Lovebug May Day treats to Calvin Manor. At our July meeting we welcomed Vicar Jesse and Administrative Assistant Kami Chicas. In August, we completed an outreach project for Moore Elementary School's teachers and staff by providing 50 welcome back treat bags. At our September meeting, we made pocket crosses and packaged them for Grace's Christmas bags to our homebound members. We made 40 Halloween trick or treat bags for the Little Free Pantry in October. We finished the year with our November/December combined meeting by making cocoa mix packages for the Little Free Pantry.

Lydia-Martha Circle meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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

## **Member Care Report 2024**

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 \$249.00 from Thrivent Choice Dollars, \$619.00 from the Easter Breakfast and \$529.47 from the Grace Car Show held in June. This money will help MCT continue this ministry to Grace members.

In late November, MC joined Martha/Lydia Circle and Grace Members in Assembling Christmas bags for 30 Grace Members. MC provided funds totaling \$76.79 to purchase items for the bags.

This year we were fortunate to have Jessye Flannery and Alexas Calahan join the MC Team. If you would like more information regarding Member Care, please contact one of the members listed at the end of this report.

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.

For 2024:

Income

Beginning balance	\$1,730.44
Thrivent Choice Dollars	\$ 249.00
Grace Easter Breakfast	\$ 619.00
Grace Car Show	\$ 529.47
Misc	\$ 220.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,347.91</b>

Supplies/Cards/Postage/ Gift Cards/Groceries	\$ 474.58
Christmas Bag supplies	\$ 76.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 551.37</b>

2024 Member Care Team members

Jill Boesch, Alexis Calahan, Jessye Flannery, Joie Gronert, Mary Helt, Gail Peterson, Jane Ridnour, Sally Thielking

### Mission Action Fund 2024 Activity

The Mission Action Fund was formed in response to Jesus' admonition to care for those who are struggling to care for themselves. The members of the committee are Pastr Schmidt, Kristin Medhurst, Aaron Brandsfield, Don Schouten, and Brian Gerling. It is funded completely by voluntary donations dedicated to that specific purpose, and, as such, is not subject to approval as the congregation's budget. Still, it is part of Grace's impact in the world. In 2024, the fund was applied to seven projects.

1. \$3,060.41 was used to fund supplies for Moore Elementary's hygiene pantry.
2. \$5,000 was used to help Hope Ministry to replace a freezer that died in their Hope Café.
3. \$1574.50 was used to enable the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry for the purchase of tents for homeless people.
4. \$1,373.57 was used by Grace's God's work Our Hands effort to make care gifts for residents of Hope Ministry's Women's Shelter.
5. \$10,000 was used for the RIP Medical Debt project (they changed their name from Undo Medical Debt). Generously, the congregation added another \$5,983.10 to our appeal making the total amount \$15,983.10. RIP Medical Debt leveraged this to retire a total of

\$2,54,555.96 of debt for 1,710 residents of Iowa. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIVING FOR THIS PROJECT!

6. \$10,376.18 was used to support Dorothy's House. Dorothy's House works to rescue women from human trafficking and works with them until they are able to confidently function in the mainstream economy. We thank the God's work Our Hands effort for making care kits for the current clients of Dorothy's House.
7. \$10,000 was given to Lutheran Disaster Relief to aid victims of the terrible hurricanes that devastated the Southeastern U.S. last fall. In addition to this, a member of the congregation contributed an additional \$200 (THANK YOU) making the total donation \$10,200.

This makes the total expenditure for the Mission Action Fund be \$41,384.66 augmented by another \$6,183.10 from the congregation. The fund is always looking for projects to participate in whether they be local, state, national, or international. All members of the congregation are welcome to make recommendations. Simply contact one of the committee's members. Also, the activities of the committee are limited to the amount of the donations given to the committee, so if you have the desire and the means to contribute to these kinds of projects, please do so. Such giving should be over and above your giving to Grace's budget and designated specifically to the Mission Action Fund.

## **2024 Stewardship Committee Report**

The Stewardship Committee in conjunction with the Finance Committee set a pledged offering goal of \$390,000 for 2025. This would be an increase of \$15,000 (4%) from the 2024 pledged offering budget of 2024.

What does this allow Grace to do? First, this is in line with Grace's mission and with the increased costs of maintaining the church property. Grace was significantly over budget in 2024 for property expenses and it is already anticipated that Grace will have tuckpointing expenses in 2025 to keep the masonry of the facility watertight. Second, it allows Grace to continue to participate in the internship program with Wartburg Seminary and also allows an increase in salaries for the Grace staff and the great work that they do. The final goal is for Grace to begin making a \$10,000 annual debt payment to the Grace Endowment Fund.

So, how did we do....

Pledged offerings came in at \$383,070, or 98.2% of our goal. Knowing that the congregation usually follows through with its pledges, a conservative number of \$380,000 was budgeted for pledged offerings for 2025. The church council feels that this will allow for a balanced budget for 2025 but close attention will still have to be kept on church property expenses. This is one budget area is this not always controllable but is necessary to keep up the facility. The remaining balance of the budget after pledged offerings is made up of unpledged offerings, and other income which would include building rental and other miscellaneous income. These offerings have increased in the past year and that has helped to balancing the budget.

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

## **TeamGRACE Annual Report**

### Reconciling in Christ

The Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Program is for Lutheran communities that publicly welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. It is a way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran Church.

In 2023, the Council charged two interested Grace members with beginning the process of becoming an officially recognized **Reconciling In Christ** congregation.

Jessye Flannery and Mary Freimuth Helt recruited a small group that has begun meeting monthly to work through the required steps to become a RIC partner. The first step was to find a name for the group that better told our story than the rather nebulous acronym RIC and TeamGRACE was formed: **G**rowing, **R**econciling in Christ, **A**llying, **C**elebrating, **E**mpowering. We feel this is an excellent representation of our goals and purpose.

As Lutherans, we believe that only through God's grace are we saved and that God bestows this grace upon us regardless of our works or merit. If you are interested in learning more about the Reconciling In Christ process or have any other questions, the team is happy to chat with you and answer questions. The TeamGRACE members are: Jessye Flannery, Mary Freimuth Helt, Amy Batten, Kelley Brown, Isaac McCleary, Jenny Rehder, and Amy Schmelzer.

## **Visiting Friends**

The purpose of Visiting Friends is to bring loving care, attention, and concern to those who are isolated from our church family due to age, illness, or circumstance. By reaching out beyond the church walls, it is our hope that God's real presence may be sensed and felt wherever two or three are gathered. Visiting Friends shares the Good News with members who are unable to get to the church by distributing communion to our friends at home.

In past years, Visiting Friends traveled to several local facilities and private residences to visit and share the bread and wine. While no home or facility visits took place between March and December 2020 (and continuing into 2021) due to COVID, Visiting Friends kept in touch through telephone conversations and by mailing cards.

Throughout the past year, Visiting Friends delivered greeting cards, Easter lilies, and communion to several residences and two local facilities.

If you would like to know more about Visiting Friends, have questions about the ministry, or know of someone who may benefit from the ministry, please contact:

Cheryl Weatherington ([cweatherwasrn@gmail.com](mailto:cweatherwasrn@gmail.com)) (515-669-0441)

Martha Mitchell ([iwork4Him@gmail.com](mailto:iwork4Him@gmail.com)) 515-491-3062)

Cherie Rissman ([cherierissman@gmail.com](mailto:cherierissman@gmail.com)) 515-205-8939)

## **Report of the Finance Committee**

The Church results were above budget in 2024. Overall, a surplus of \$4,258 was achieved as compared to a breakeven budget. This was a strong result considering property expense was over budget by \$59,628 due to several unplanned projects. Strong pledged activity during the year offset this overage.

Debt to the Endowment decreased \$155,000 during the year through an Endowment grant of \$125,000 and a payment of \$30,000 from reserve funds. This activity is not reflected in the income statement.

Highlights of actual activity include the following:

- Pledged offerings were above budget by \$26,802, use of church increased with additional activity and other income included certain matching funds.
- Expenses were above budget. This was primarily due to the property projects (roof repairs \$37,050, HVAC repairs \$16,565 and drainage issues \$27,069) and property insurance due to continually increasing premiums. These increases were offset by lower utilities.

Budgeted activity for 2025 reflects a break even budget. Highlights include the following:

- Pledged offering activity is above prior year budget but below 2024 actual activity, pledging units are down but average giving is comparable.
- Pledged offerings are based on the actual pledge cards received and not historical results.
- Unpledged offerings are based on historical results and consider the transfer of activity to pledged offerings.
- Budget for 2025 includes the Vicar position for the full year.
- Total staffing costs are approximately \$230,000 and represent 53% of the total operational costs of the Church. All staff received increases in the 2025 budget.
- The budget for the professional leadership positions includes salary, employer taxes, pension and medical insurance.



- Synod Benevolence is unchanged.
- Maintenance was increased \$15,000 for expected projects, insurance was increased \$5,000 due to higher premiums and utilities was decreased \$5,000 to reflect the lower costs.
- All other expense activity is comparable to the prior year.
- There is no budget for debt paydown, should activity be favorable in 2025, a paydown of debt of \$10,000 will be considered.
- There is no activity for interest on outstanding debt as the Endowment Committee has temporarily suspended the payment of interest.

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 [LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA](https://LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA).



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in America