

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP YEHIEL CURRY

Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

In Christ,



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

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

—Colossians 2:6-7

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OPENING LITURGY

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

And also with you.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Amen.

Founded on Faith



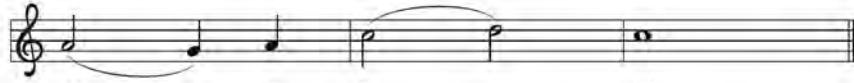
1 Found - ed on faith, the church— a - live by grace—
2 Your cross, O Christ, re - news our life each day.
3 E - quipped by prayer, we live the Spir - it's call.
4 Grow - ing in grace for God's cre - at - ed earth,
5 Found - ed on faith, called forth, em - pow'red to serve,



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



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



Al - le - lu - ia!

All Creation Sings, 1048

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Agenda

Call to Order

Devotions

Adoption of Agenda

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Proposed Welcome Statement refer to page 25

Committee Reports Pages 18-27

Candidates for Congregational Council Page 28

Balance Sheets and Income Statement

Budget Adoption

Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members

Election of Voting Members to the 2026 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly,
May 15-16 at First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids.

Adjournment

Lord's Prayer

Grace Lutheran Church Congregational Council

Term expires <u>February 2026</u>	Term expires <u>February 2027</u>	Term expires <u>February 2028</u>
Valerie Cullp Greg Boeschen	Tom McCleary Linda Moravec Brian Gerling	Pam Palmer Michael Hilsabeck

2024 Executive Committee

Greg Boeschen
Tom McCleary
Michael Hilsabeck
Brian Gerling

Congregational Officers

President	Greg Boeschen
Vice President	Tom McCleary
Secretary	Michael Hilsabeck
Treasurer	Tom Selander
Financial Secretary	Paul Kallenbach

Grace Lutheran Church Staff

The Rev. Michael Jon Schmidt
Vicar Lotegeluaki Lengai (2025-2026)

Nichole Aubert, Property Manager
Kathy Bowermaster, Piano Accompanist, Music Ensemble Coordinator
Jessye Flannery, Office Assistant for Worship
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.**

Norman Iverson, January 1, 2025
Karen Taylor, June 8, 2025
Dana Roby, August 22, 2025
Carrie Schall, September 7, 2025
Barb Powers, December 16, 2025

Membership Statistics

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
Membership end of 2025	654	540
as reported in the Congregational Report to the ELCA		
Members removed during 2025		
by death -	5	
by transfer to other congregations or other reasons -	0	
Members received during 2025		
by baptism -	5	
by transfer from other congregations by affirmation of faith -		4
baptized youth confirmed in 2025 -		1
Membership end of 2025	654	545

Statistical Report

Worship Services Conducted.....	63
Weddings held at Grace.....	4
Baptisms	5
Funerals.....	4
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	
Average Sunday worship attendance 2025...81	

Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting

Grace Lutheran Church – January 26, 2025

1. Call to Order – Greg Boeschen called the meeting to order at 10:14 A.M. A quorum was established by attendance sign in sheets.
2. Devotions by Pastor Mike - Opening Liturgy
3. Rich Snyder appointed Parliamentarian.
4. Adoption of Agenda approved by absence of objection.
5. Statistical Information provided in the written report. Motion to accept these reports approved by absence of objection.
6. Minutes from the last Annual Meeting held January 29, 2024 were reviewed. One correction made to line item 6. Amended report approved by absence of objection.
7. Council President's Report - Motion to accept this report, approved by absence of objection.
8. Staff Reports were approved by absence of objection.
9. Ratification of Constitutional Changes – Motion made to ratify vote taken on October 27, 2024. Approved by absence of objection.
10. Committee Reports were approved by absence of objection.
11. Presentation by Team GRACE on Reconciling in Christ process.
12. Balance Sheet, Income Statement, and Endowment Review – Kevin Krause presented balance sheet, financials, and the endowment fund summary.
13. 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.
14. Election of Council Members & Endowment Committee Members
 - a. Nominees for council (3-yr terms): Pam Palmer, Emma Stammer, Mike Hilsabeck. Motion approved by absence of objection.
 - b. Endowment committee nominee Kevin Drury. Motion approved by absence of objection.
15. Election of voting members for 2025 SE IA Synod Assembly, Saturday May 17th at Grandview University, Des Moines. Nominees are Rita Stackhouse and Jessye Flannery. Approved by absence of objection.
16. Adjournment at 11:13 A.M.
17. Lord's Prayer
18. Lunch and Fellowship

Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Rehder
Congregational Council Secretary

Report from the Congregational Council President Greg Boeschen

As another year ends, it always amazes me how fast it goes, and how much happens in one trip around the sun.

We continued to have large property expenses in 2025, including fixing the elevator and replacing our boiler system. Thanks to Brian Gerling for staying on top of our maintenance needs! We hired Nichole Aubert in August as our property manager to coordinate the use and maintenance of our facilities.

In April we had a council retreat to discuss the long-term needs of our property, which led to the formation of the Capital Campaign Committee this fall. Thanks to the committee for putting together a great campaign, and all those involved in gathering the information (including those who started this work back in 2020!)

Vicar Lotegeluaki Lengai joined us in August, and it is great to have his perspective (and singing voice) as part of our worship.

Grace continues to do outreach in the community, including our Little Free Pantry, and filling other area pantries on God's Work Our Hands Sunday. We are also the southeast Iowa host site for collecting and delivering Lutheran World Relief donations to the Minnesota office in the spring and fall.

The Being New Spirituality Center continued to flourish with expanded programs this year. The prayer labyrinth was built this fall with fundraising efforts led by the center. It will be a great restorative resource for the community!

Team GRACE has been working to get us to the next step in the Reconciling in Christ designation and is proposing a new welcome statement at the annual meeting that affirms all people are welcome to worship with us.

Thanks to all who served with me on council this year, and to Pastor Mike and the staff for their commitment to this congregation. I am excited about where God is leading us in 2026!

In Christ,
Greg Boeschen
Council President

Pastor's Report for 2025

“And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.” Exodus 16:10

Siblings in Christ,

I begin with this verse from Exodus because it has been on my heart for the past several weeks after discussing it in Bible Study. The context is simple; the people of Israel are worn down from travel and there is no end in sight. There is a romanticized view of their time in Egypt, and the people are longing to return. God has brought them out of slavery, passed through the reed sea on dry land, and have been fed with quail and manna. Now, in the face of uncertainty, there is gravity pulling them back to Egypt.

That is the context where Aaron speaks to the people of Israel and they turn and face the wilderness. God shows God's presence in the cloud in the direction of the wilderness. This is a profound moment in the journey. The “wilderness” is viewed as the place of death, uninhabitable and unforgiving. As they turn and face this place of uncertainty, imagining their own demise, God appears and they know the only path forward is to move through the uncertainty. With eyes set toward the wilderness, they press on to the place of transformation.

Christianity in the North American context often looks at the rear-view mirror. There is a longing for the old days. There is often a romanticized view of that time in the life of the Church. The pews were filled. Classrooms were full. While at the same time there were many who were on the outskirts looking in. There were people for whom the Church was not a place of welcome, but a place of criticism and judgement.

I believe that God has brought the Church to the edge of the wilderness. It starts to feel like a place of death. I was at a meeting recently when a gentleman from another congregation talked about a study that projected the death of the ELCA in 20-30 years. He was filled with fear. I am not. The Church has been around for thousands of years, the ELCA has not. The message has been shared for thousands of years in various ways. If anything, we are in the wilderness. I am thankful. That is the place of transformation.

In any time of uncertainty, there is gravity pulling us back to what we have known from the past. This text reminds us that the path forward is to follow where God is leading us. We have already seen the life that is present in the wilderness as the connections between Grace Lutheran, the Being New Spirituality Center, AA, and the Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa continues to strengthen. We have become a beacon of the glory of God in the wilderness. This is not the Church of the past. This is the wilderness. This is transformation.

I am truly humbled to be a part of this journey with all of you, and the opportunity to continue serving as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church.

In Christ,

Pastor Mike

Vicar's Report 2025

Intern Report by Vicar Lotegeluaki Ole L. Lengai

Context of Ministry

Grace Lutheran Church, Des Moines, serves as a vibrant community of faith rooted in the Lutheran theological understanding of **grace**. The concept of grace—**Neema** in Kiswahili, **Empuris** in Maasai, **χάρις** (*charis*) in Greek, and **Chen** in Hebrew—denotes undeserved favor granted by God. Within the Christian tradition, grace is fundamentally expressed through God's saving activity in Jesus Christ, who gave his life for all human beings.

This theological foundation is clearly embodied in the life and ministry of Grace Lutheran Church. From the outset of my internship, the congregation has reflected its name through hospitality, service, and faithful engagement with both congregational members and the wider community. I was encouraged to learn that I am the fourth intern to serve in this context, benefiting from a congregation experienced in supporting pastoral formation.

Call and Vocational Formation

I entered this internship with a strong belief that God guides vocational formation according to divine purpose. My placement at Grace Lutheran Church confirmed this belief through early conversations with Pastor Mike and the congregation's intentional focus on mentoring and formation. This internship has consistently reinforced that ministry is not about an individual, but it is about faithful service to God and God's people.

Areas of Ministry Engagement

Since beginning my internship, I have actively participated in multiple areas of congregational life, consistent with ELCA internship expectations:

- **Word and Sacrament Ministry:** Assisting in worship leadership, preaching sermons, and leading worship services, including one Tanzanian liturgy.
- **Education and Faith Formation:** Participation in Bible study and involvement in confirmation classes.
- **Leadership and Administration:** Attendance and participation in congregational committee meetings.

These experiences have contributed significantly to my development in proclamation, liturgical leadership, and congregational engagement.

Supervision and Reflection

Supervision has been consistent and intentional throughout this reporting period. I meet weekly with Pastor Mike every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. for supervision, reflection, and theological integration. Additionally, I meet monthly with the Internship Committee for broader evaluation and support. These supervisory structures have been essential in fostering accountability, self-awareness, and professional growth.

Growth and Learning Outcomes

A major milestone in my internship was preaching my first sermon and leading a worship service independently. This experience occurred in Pastor Mike's absence and required a high level of preparation and confidence. While the experience was challenging and required navigating anxiety, it served as a critical learning moment. I experienced growth in preaching, leadership presence, and trust in God's sustaining work.

Since that time, I have observed ongoing improvement in sermon delivery, worship leadership, and pastoral confidence. I remain aware of areas requiring continued development and trust that God will continue to equip me through learning, supervision, and practice.

Learning Service Agreement Goals

One of the goals outlined in my Learning Service Agreement is **home visitation and pastoral presence beyond the church building**. Due to the demands of the previous year, this goal has not yet been fully implemented. However, it remains a priority for the next phase of the internship. I believe home visitation provides meaningful opportunities for mutual learning, pastoral care, and deeper relational ministry.

Gratitude

I am deeply grateful for the Grace Lutheran Church community and the many ways its members have supported my formation through prayer, encouragement, and shared ministry. This congregation has provided a nurturing and faithful context for learning what it means to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA. I give thanks to God for all who have supported and continue to support me during this internship journey.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil 1:6 (NRSVE)

May the Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Vicar Lotegeluaki Ole L. Lengai.

Report from the Minister of Communications Michelle Voelker

The communications position continues to stay much the same – gathering news and events from members, council, and committees, and sharing it in many ways, through the weekly enews and Sunday Announcements, the website, the street sign, Facebook, and monthly newsletters. Also unchanged is how much I enjoy working with and interacting with the different committees and staff members, and now the Being New Spirituality Team during the year.

The weekly pattern of work and cycle of yearly events may stay the same, yet Grace and Grace Staff excels at looking at new ways of doing things, finding new ways to support members and the community, and of sharing our resources and sharing what we do at Grace. Thank you for supporting us for allowing me to continue to serve the Grace Community.

Here is a listing of some/most of what I work on/with/update during the year:

- Membership Directory – This resource can be used on your phone or computer. Members with an email address have access to this resource. If you prefer not to use technology,

we can get you an updated printed copy. Make sure to update your mailing address, phone numbers, and emails with the office as you have changes.

- The website at gracedm.org Find the calendar, news, worship, bulletins, announcements, newsletters, forms & applications, secure giving, archives, and more here.
- The Friendly Visitor – a monthly newsletter published February – November and twice in December with council and finance reports, letters from Staff, photos, and interest items, as well as events to look for in the future.
- The Tuesday e-news – notifying members and other subscribers about upcoming events at Grace and in the community, meetings, short term needs, and other pertinent news.
- Weekly Announcements – Prayer concerns, celebrations, education times/topics, the days events, and other items as space allows. This document often holds much more information than what is able to be announced in worship, and can be found in our Resources section a few days prior to Sunday worship.
- Membership Mailings: we continue to mail monthly newsletters and weekly bulletin, announcements and sermon to those who wish to receive them and cannot attend worship often. Contact the office if you would like to be added to this list.
- The Street sign – Programming worship & bible study times, welcomes, events, community messages, and more.
- Advertising in community publications: local web pages, neighborhood newsletters add more local recognition and familiarity as opposed to city-wide publications that cost more.
- Facebook – Broadcast and archived worship services. Advertising and promoting Grace events such as fundraisers, garage sales, and more. The private page Abiding Grace created during the pandemic continues to be used occasionally for sharing of information, especially when events need to be cancelled due to weather. However activity is small because of the small percentage of members who use Facebook on a regular basis.
- 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.
- Ordering promotional materials as needed, such as Grace pens, bags, etc.
- Directory Signage and Bulletin Boards within the building – with greater building use by outside groups, having information easily seen at a glance increases community understanding.
- Communicating with committee members and volunteers to print/publish/mail materials as needed.
- Maintaining copier systems and publishing programs – both of which will be replaced this year. Our copier is becoming finicky as it nears the end of its 5 year lease. The publishing program we love will be unsupported by MS at the end of the summer, which means retooling many of our publications as we will be unable to even open those documents sometime in October. Please be kind to staff this summer while we work through new equipment!
- Working with Interns and new staff to share all of the technology we have available, and as roles shift. We have a great team that works well together, and is always willing to help each other out.

Sincerely,
Michelle Voelker, Minister for Communications.

Report from the Church Bookkeeper Mike Hilsabeck

As expected, much of my time in 2025 was spent on day-to-day accounting activities including deposits (123 bank deposits), accounts payable (paid 839 invoices to 143 different vendors), and payroll (twice a month).

Also, a significant amount of my time in 2025 was spent moving our records room to a new location within the building. This involved reviewing and sorting 150 boxes of old accounting documents (receivables and payables) and historical records (member and event related). All church historical records and items were retained and secured. Accounting records were sorted – retaining documents from the last 7 years and destroying much of the rest. Destruction involved hiring a certified document service to shred twelve 96-gallon containers filled with old documents.

Following are some of the 2025 financial highlights...

In addition to regular offerings, the congregation also gave \$74,448 to other Grace Lutheran ministries. These are:

Mission Action fund - \$43,145 (a single gift from party wishing anonymity)
Spirituality Center - \$14,350
Little Free Pantry - \$6,350
Christmas Offerings - \$3,880
Lutheran World Relief - \$1,915
Altar Flower Offering - \$1,805
Food Pantry - \$993
Member Care - \$310
Misc. other ministries - \$1,700

We received \$5,655 from Benevity – a corporate volunteer employee-designated matching fund. We also received \$2,632 from Thrivent Choice – a Christian-based, not-for-profit financial services organization that sets aside funds for customers to direct to nonprofits or churches.

The building maintenance costs were significantly lower for 2025 as compared to 2024 (\$53,256 for 2025 compared to \$94,628 for 2024).

The Memorial fund received \$43,233 in gifts and funded \$133,470 in projects, leaving a balance of \$48,109. These projects include:

- \$86,898 toward the “Building a Legacy” Capital Campaign
- \$22,000 toward part of the building tuckpointing work
- \$20,174 toward construction of the Labyrinth and Prayer Garden
- \$2,000 for Lutheran World Relief
- \$798 for new Alter Guild banners
- \$600 for various honorariums
- \$500 for Member Care
- \$500 for the Being New Team

The Capital Campaign reserve account funded the following projects in 2025:

- \$123,050 for installation of the new boiler system
- \$22,400 toward part of the building tuckpointing work
- \$11,200 for new gutters and leaf guards on parts of the building

Report from Worship & Music Ministry

We continue to place emphasis on traditional worship with a gentle touch. We have increased the use of the All Creation Sings hymnal this last year.

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, Vicars Jesse and Lotegeluaki, and me. We have been meeting every couple of months to select hymns for upcoming services. Please be gentle in your critique and generous in suggestions.

We have been using resources from A Sanctified Art during Advent and Lent. These materials are very thoughtful, insightful, and create a different tone as we gather in worship.

Submitted by Pastor Mike on behalf of the Worship and Music Team

Property Manager Report – Nichole Aubert

A Year of Progress and an Even Bigger Year Ahead

2025 has been a meaningful year for Grace Lutheran Church. As we prepare to celebrate our 100th anniversary, I truly believe that 2026 will be even more exciting and impactful, especially as our "Building a Legacy" capital campaign continues to move forward.

First and foremost, I want to take a moment to recognize and thank the incredible men of our Men's Group and Willing Workers. These gentlemen have given so much of their time—volunteering on Thursday mornings, weekends, and late nights—often behind the scenes where their work goes unnoticed. But their contributions are vital to the life and growth of our church.

You probably know who they are: Rich Snyder, Brian Gerling, Carter Woodruff, Tom McCleary, Paul Nelson, and Chuck Denton—if I missed anyone, my apologies.

In 2025 alone, these men logged over 600 volunteer hours. Their dedication has been nothing short of amazing. Seeing how many projects they've completed—many checked off my own to-do list—has been truly inspiring. Their work has saved the church thousands of dollars by handling much of the work ourselves.

Here are just a few highlights from what they accomplished this year:

- Cleared out the old paint room and built shelves to create the new records storage
- Disposed of over 60 cans of outdated paint
- Installed the drop ceiling in the beautifully renovated hallway
- Painted several areas, including the stunning new hallway
- Painted Room 101 for the Quilters and helped relocate them from downstairs near Msindo Hall—moving heavy tables along the way
- Replaced over 32 ceiling tiles and 20 partial tiles—brightening up the space

- Started switching from traditional bulbs to energy-efficient LED lighting, which will save money in the long run
- Replaced countless light bulbs and cleaned light covers throughout the building
- Continued faithfully changing filters to keep the air fresh and clean
- Packed up the library books and cleared shelves and furniture for the November pastoral event
- Replaced the carpet strip requested by Pastor Mike—before I even arrived, it was already done!
- Began deep cleaning the carpets across the church
- Helped prepare for Christmas by making sure all trees and decorations for the Altar Guild were ready
- Cleaned and stained the church house deck
- Started replacing garden fence posts

And on a personal note, they even prepared my office by bringing in a marker board and hanging it before I even had to ask.

These men are truly the backbone of so much good work here. Their generosity with time and effort is deeply appreciated, and I hope they know how much they're valued.

To all of you—thank you. Your work makes a real difference. And I think a nice steak dinner—maybe with your wives or families—would be a fitting way to say thanks. I'll let you figure out the details!

Brian, I also want to give a special shout-out to you. Thank you for your warm welcome and ongoing support as I've stepped into this role. I may never fully match your proactive efforts with the church's systems, but your guidance has been invaluable. I truly appreciate everything you do.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Next year, our focus will be on improving and enhancing what we already have. I plan to put together a detailed cleaning schedule to make sure every corner of the building gets the attention it needs. I want this house of worship to shine before any construction begins—because after all, this is God's house, and it deserves our very best.

What I've Been Working On:

Since I joined Grace, I've been dedicated to several key projects:

- Created the 44-page "Building a Legacy" capital campaign catalog
- Updated Facility Use Policies and Procedures
- Developed rental contract forms for community groups and outside organizations
- Put together a preventative maintenance plan to keep our systems running smoothly for the long haul
- Collaborating with Todd to set new expectations for building management—so we can work together seamlessly
- Developed interior color schemes and design ideas for rental spaces—visions I look forward to sharing with you soon

Thank you all for your continued support and partnership. I'm excited about what 2026 will bring for Grace, and I look forward to working together to see our church grow, renew, and deepen its faith.

God Bless.

Nichole Aubert

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. Valerie Culp, Rich Snyder, and Laynne Weber have also assisted.

Confirmation Classes have been taking place on Wednesday evenings this year with a class of 9 students. This is co-taught by Pastor Mike and Vicar Lotegeluaki.

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.

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

Outreach in 2025

2025 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 preparations 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.

Members rotate responsibilities throughout the year, with two volunteers generally serving each month. The larger group is involved for Holy Week, Easter, Advent and Christmas preparations.

A smaller group of volunteers assists with funerals and memorial services by preparing the worship space 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. We thank the Willing Workers for their assistance with special requests during the year.

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

- Communion wafers, wine and grape juice, cups and other communion supplies
- Candles and oil
- Cleaning supplies
- Seasonal supplies and decorations

The Altar Guild's regular budget for 2025 was \$1,000. The altar flower budget is a separate \$2,000 pass-through budget that is offset by individual/family contributions for weekly altar flowers, poinsettias and Easter lilies.

In 2025 we used memorial funds to purchase new banners for All Saints and Christ the King Sundays.

Altar Guild members meet regularly throughout the year for fellowship and planning. If you're interested in knowing more about Altar Guild, please feel free to reach out to any member for information. We welcome new members! The time commitment varies and schedules can be flexible.

Respectfully submitted by the Grace Lutheran Church Altar Guild: Sue Anderson, Jill Boeschen, Kathy Bowermaster, Karri Brandsfield, Mary Jo McCleary, Jenny Rehder, Jane Ridnour, Rita Stackhouse and Carol Woodruff.

Being New Spirituality Center

Being New Spirituality Center

The Being New Spirituality Center is a ministry of Grace Lutheran Church, a community within a community. In a time marked by deep division, fear, and fatigue, Being New offers a place to grow in wisdom and compassion and to be strengthened in body, mind, and heart, so that participants may faithfully engage the world as it is. Through Christian practices, Center events equip people to meet life's circumstances with greater steadiness, humility, courage, and love, as they are formed more fully into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus taught transformation as:

- inward rather than external
- a change of perception and being
- awakening to inner light
- lived through abiding presence

Being New aims to offer events that support this kind of transformation and invite people into new life in Christ. Programming emphasizes teaching practices that develop inward attention, a change in how we see and understand ourselves and others, and a growing awareness of God's presence at work within us. These approaches help participants move beyond external behaviors alone toward deeper, lasting transformation.

Practices such as Centering Prayer and silent meditation are central to this work. Through stillness and shared silence, participants learn to slow down, listen more deeply, and become more attentive to what is shaping their thoughts, reactions, and relationships. Over time, these practices foster greater patience, humility, and compassion, helping participants live more fully from Christ's abiding presence in their everyday lives.

Jesus taught within a community of faithful followers, demonstrating that community is fundamental to transformation. None of us can do the work of inner change apart from a sacred community. An essential part of the work of Being New is the cultivation of such communities, providing support for people as they grow into the likeness of Christ and are equipped for loving service in the world, especially among those most in need.

Being New hosts ongoing as well as series and one-time events. Ongoing events include the monthly Silent Prayer and Meditation for Peace and Justice; First Fridays, an exploration into what it means to live contemplatively; SoulCollage; Energy and Sound Healing; Circle of Compassion; and Recovery Café. Series events include Ethical AI, book discussions, Enneagram, Wisdom, and the Awakening Joy course. One-time events include Centering Prayer retreats and the St. Catherine of Siena Dialogue Series events at Sheslow Auditorium, hosting nationally and internationally-recognized advocates, authors, and speakers.

For the six months from July 2025 to December 31, 2025, Being New hosted 137 events with 1,062 attendees. We were grateful to partner with other spiritual communities in offering events, including Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa, the Franciscan Way of Life, Emmaus House, Boundless Compassion Network, and the St. Catherine of Siena Dialogue Series.

Being New Planning Team: Julie Honsey, Joan Fumetti, Michelle Voelker, Deb Richards

Companion Congregation Committee

Several people joined the Committee this year: Carol, Carter, Marla, Jessye. Thanks to Vicar Lotegeluaki, we have been able to communicate with our Msindo and Mararo friends.

Our Msindo Pastor, Ombeni Mmbaga died and was buried in a commemorative tomb recognizing his contributions at Msindo and other places. We sent money for the fundraiser for the tomb, located on the church grounds. More information to come.

We hope to start communicating with the new pastor in the near future.

Mary, Jane, Rich, Carol, Carter, Marla, Jessye.

2025 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 2025.

Awards to Grace Lutheran Church:

- \$8,841 to Grace Lutheran Church for a labyrinth project kit to be installed in the west end of the former Grace daycare playground
- \$932 to Grace Lutheran Church for eight 72" x 30" tables for room 102

Other Awards:

- \$3,673 to Lutheran Lakeside Camp for 24 banquet tables and a heated buffet
- \$1,500 to Lutheran Services in Iowa for compost for 23 community gardens as part of its Global Greens program
- \$2,378 to Valley Disaster Relief for three additional chainsaws to support its mission of assisting families who cannot afford tree services in the Des Moines metro

A total of \$17,324 was awarded. Requests for grants totaled \$33,504.

Since inception, the Endowment fund has awarded a total of \$517,337 to 210 projects.

Your Endowment Committee,

Kari Dostalik (chair), Jill Boeschen (secretary), Bruce Bergman, Kristin Medhurst, and Kevin Drury

Report from the Grace Garden Committee

2025 team: Michelle Voelker, Carol Woodruff, Tammy Denton, Julie Honsey, Pam Connelly, Sherri Kustch

2025 was an experimental year for us, as the amount of work was too much for the number of gardeners available to help. As each gardener who has volunteered in the garden will tell you, for each hour we spend in the garden, we see two or three people stop by the Little Free Pantry. Some are leaving items, some are taking items. Often, those who need assistance come to the garden fence offering thanks to use for adding vegetables, asking if we have (carrots, tomatoes, etc.) or offer to help. Fresh food is appreciated and difficult to come by. In addition, food pantries across the city and state continue to see record numbers of usage. So we did not want to give up the garden if we could avoid it.

We advertised to the community, and found two individuals who were interested in helping – despite being new to gardening.

We implemented a few changes to reduce the workload, and to offer some agency to those who enjoy the fresh food the garden provides:

1. Instead of each garden volunteer taking a full week – which means watering, weeding, AND harvesting, which can be time consuming during the heat of summer, we each took claimed one day a week. This allows:

- A rotating schedule for watering – only the beds that needed it the most were watered on any given day, which saved time, and was especially helpful during water bans.
- Continuous harvesting through the week. Crops did not become overwhelming (hello green beans!), small containers with several different vegetables were placed in the little free pantry almost daily.
- Gardeners leaving town for a few weeks were able to do so knowing that the garden would still be taken care of by several others each week.

2. Two beds were designated self-harvest. The two Westernmost beds were planted with multiple crops: Tomatoes, beans, carrots, squash, radishes, snap peas, and peppers. Carol Woodruff created signs that were placed at the Little Free Pantry telling visitors which crops were available to harvest. The rest of the garden was roped off. This worked quite well, and was done respectfully. As with the LFP, most who ventured into the garden took just what they needed.

3. We moved the sweet potatoes into the garden itself, meaning one raised bed needed nothing more than watering during the season, allowing volunteers to focus on other areas. Harvesting required more digging, vs. the ease of dumping out the grow bags we had used in previous years. However this saved us the cost of replacing the soil in those bags, as it had been used for several years and the harvests had been dwindling. The harvest this year was outstanding. We may use the bags in future years if we have enough volunteers.

4. We increased intercropping with flowers that repel pests and attract pollinators, and will continue to build on that, although avoiding the extra tall marigolds that, while beautiful, ultimately got in our way as we harvested.

5. Todd placed lawn cuttings in the garden for us to use as mulch, which suppressed weeds, helped slow evaporation, especially during the watering ban, and ultimately adds nutrients to the soils when turned back in at the end of the season.

6. The willing workers have been slowly replacing rotted fence posts, which is greatly appreciated, and set up the rain barrel again, after several years. This allowed us to water the self-harvest section of the garden during the watering ban and during the hottest days of the year.

7. We replaced some of the shredding landscape fabric to suppress weeds in the aisles.

We plan to operate much the same way in 2026, while looking at perennial vegetable options, and continuing to alter what we plant based on insect pressure. If you know of any gardeners who might want to help us harvest for the Little Free Pantry, water, or take one day a week during part of the summer, please direct them to the office. Thank you!

Little Free Pantry (LFP)

We have continued to see growth in this outreach through donations by our members and our neighbors in the community. Every month, Kari and Tammy purchase food to replenish our backstock room, ensuring that there are always items ready to restock the Little Free Pantry (LFP) each day to help lessen the burden of food insecurity.

This year, the LFP Team distributed over **19,000** food and personal hygiene items. Additionally, fresh vegetables harvested from the Grace Garden were donated throughout the season, and food is often donated directly in the pantry from the community.

In June, we hosted a community garage sale where we accepted donations from our members and the neighborhood to raise funds for the Little Free Pantry. Sales were based on free-will donation, where shoppers could contribute any amount they wished at checkout, making items accessible regardless of their financial means. All remaining items were donated to local thrift stores. We are grateful to all the volunteers who helped make this fundraiser a success.

We also remain thankful for the monetary and food donations received from our congregational members and neighbors in the community throughout the year which make this outreach possible. We look forward to your continued support in 2026.

2025 YTD Activity	
Beginning Balance	10,590.49
Deposits	8,835.53
Member contributions	6,154.00
Soup Suppers	218.00
God's Work Our Hands Donation	100.00
GLC Ladies Group Donation	160.85
Merle Hay Neighborhood Assoc.	100.00
Garage Sale	2,102.68
Expenses	8,354.21
Purchases to Restock Pantry	8,354.21
Balance as of 12/31/2025	11,071.81

Little Free Pantry Team: Tammy Denton, Kari Dostalik, Kathy Bowermaster, Pam Hellman Palmer, Jon & Cherie Rissman, Tom & Becky Selander, Dean & Cathy Watson, and Carter & Carol Woodruff.

Lutheran World Relief Team Annual Report for 2025

The LWR team and our work continue to grow and change. In 2025, we hosted two central Iowa LWR Ingatherings. In April and October, we loaded up trucks with a total of 2604 quilts and 3914 Kits and drove them to the LWR warehouse in St Paul. Thank you to Paul Nelson and Carter Woodruff for wrangling those trucks, and to the Saturday Men's Group, the Willing Workers, and our family members for loading all those boxes!

Two All Ages Service Projects were conducted this year, to make a total of 201 personal care kits, 60 baby care kits, and 200 school kits. The supply cost for the kits was \$1974.73. Our team completed a whopping 113 quilts this year!

We added a new member in 2025: Marcia Karns, a longtime LWR quilter at her previous church, who sought us out after moving to Des Moines. We sent off our beloved team member, Jesse Hershburger at the end of her internship with a special group-made gift: a patchwork bookbag/backpack.

Two special drawstring backpack sewing days were held in the summer. We had 14 volunteers who cut, sewed, and corded drawstring backpacks for school kits.

Financially, we started the year with \$1773.61, and ended with \$3598.53 in reserve. Donations totaling \$1935.00 were received this year from the congregation. We were especially blessed by a generous memorial gift of \$2000 from the family of our late team member, Beth Flannery. We also were given multitudes of fabric, supplies, and two pingpong tables (perfect size for quilting). Helen Ringgenberg made dozens of cozy flannel diapers and baby blankets, and Lyne Wall put her artistic talent into tie-dying lots of beautiful sheets for quilt tops and backs.

The men's groups have been painting, repairing and cleaning rooms 101 and 103 for us to move into very soon. We'll have greater accessibility, better HVAC control, fewer flooding issues and nicer bathrooms near our new quilting space. We plan to upgrade to a larger ironing station too. We are very grateful for all the support from the staff of Grace and the congregation. We welcome new participants on Thursday mornings at 9:00.

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

Grace Lutheran Ladies Group (Lydia-Martha Circle)

Lydia-Martha Circle met this year beginning in the spring on March 27, 2025 until our end of the year meeting on December 4th, 2025. Although we are more of a social gathering group, we completed several projects this year in support of Grace activities and the neighborhood. In April we made and delivered 40 May Day baskets to Calvin Manor. At our May meeting Mary Freimuth Helt discussed and explained Reconciling with Christ. Deb Richards shared a conversation on "The Fruits of the Spirit: Noticing where the Holy Spirit is at work on our lives" in June. July found us preparing 60 welcome back gift bags which were delivered to Perkins Elementary School Teachers and Staff. We also renamed our group as Grace Lutheran Ladies Group. August found us sharing our talents with one another and Mary Freimuth Helt caught us up on Lutheran Lakeside Camp. In September we welcomed Vicar Lotegeluaki Lengal to our group. We also made 40 Halloween trick or treat bags for the Little Free Pantry. In October we made and packaged our gifts for the homebound Christmas gift bags. We finished the year with our November/December combined meeting by sharing our favorite Christmas cookies with each other and making cocoa mix and soup/cracker kits for the Little Free Pantry.

The decision was made to disband after our December 4th meeting.

Martha Mitchell and Marilyn Nizzi, Co-Chairs

Member Care Team Report 2025

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, hospital visits, contact with relatives, and helping with funeral lunches. This may be a one-time occasion or one that is ongoing. 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 holiday and "Thinking of You" cards. They also may receive phone calls and/or visits.

This year we were fortunate to receive \$500 from the Martha Martin Memorial, \$559 from the Easter Breakfast, \$84 from a Soup Supper designation, and \$210 from contributions. This money will help MCT continue this ministry to Grace members.

In late November, MCT joined Martha/Lydia Circle and Grace Members in assembling 19 Christmas bags for 26 people (individuals and couples) plus 3 mailings. MCT provided funds totaling \$118.18 to purchase items for the bags. Sometimes members make purchases and don't ask for reimbursement, so the expenses are more than indicated.

If you would like more information regarding Member Care, please contact one of the members listed at the end of this report. Please also consider joining Grace's Member Care Team. Some of us rotate months to be in charge with backup from others. Some of us prepare meals for the freezer to be shared with church members who could benefit.

All Grace members are in our thoughts and prayers. Please consider reaching out to others to let them know you are thinking about them. A simple phone call or card would be appreciated.

For 2025:

	2025 Beginning balance	\$ 2796.54
Income		
Contributions		\$ 310.00
Martha Martin Memorial		\$ 500.00
Soup Supper designation		\$ 84.00
Grace Easter Breakfast		\$ 559.00
Misc		<u>\$ 20.00</u>
	Total Income	\$ 1473.00
Expense		
Supplies/Cards/Postage/ Cards/Groceries		\$ 148.20
Gift Christmas Bag supplies		\$ 118.18
Urban Bike Ministry Items		<u>\$ 499.17</u>
	Total Expense	\$765.55
	2025 Ending Balance	\$ 3503.99

2025 Member Care Team members Jill Boeschen, Jessye Flannery, Joie Gronert, Mary Helt, Jane Ridnour, and Sally Thielking

Mission Action Fund

2025 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 Pastor 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 as it is part of Grace's impact in the world. In 2025, the fund was applied to sixteen projects.

1. \$10,000 to Lutheran Services in Iowa after the Trump administration cancelled their funding to serve immigrants already in Iowa.
2. \$2,954.89 for supplies to make food buckets. They were not used this year because there was fortunately only limited flooding in Iowa, but they are ready to be used in the future
3. \$1,400 to pay rent for an indigent person.
4. \$2,000 to Joppa who give relief and aid to homeless people.
5. \$2,000 to The Trevor Project, a suicide and crisis intervention organization.
6. \$2,000 to the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine to support a health care program defunded by the Iowa legislature.
7. \$2,000 to the Greater Greenfield Community Foundation to help with their tornado recovery.
8. \$2,000 To DMARC food pantry.
9. \$2,000 to Grow It Forward Community Food Center in Manitowoc, WI, to help them expand their service facilities.
10. \$2,000 to E3 Community Learning and Resource Center, Tampa, FL, to purchase books and equipment to expand a reading lab at an elementary school serving underprivileged K-3 students.
11. \$2,230.97 to Interfaith Alliance of Iowa and to YSS, Youth Opportunity Center.
12. \$714.89 for costs of the Reconciled In Christ presentation held at Grace
13. \$2,500 to Embrace Iowa.
14. \$200 for supplies used for the community meal Grace offered at Moore Elementary.
15. \$2,000 to the Food Bank of Iowa.
16. \$8,000 to Doctors Without Borders to aid their service in war torn areas.

This makes the total expenditure for the Mission Action Fund be \$44,000.75 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. This year, we received recommendations from Marilyn Nizzi, Kayleigh Medhurst, Cathy Watson, Jennifer Rehder, and Jill Boeschen which we greatly appreciate. We are also very grateful to the God's Work Our Hands people for supplying the manpower needed to carry out some of our projects. Finally, 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.

2025 Stewardship Committee Report

The Stewardship committee in conjunction with the Finance committee set a pledged offering goal of \$400,000 for 2026. This would match the pledged offerings received from the congregation in 2024 and represents a 2.5% increase from our 2025 goal of \$390,000.

What does this allow Grace to do? First, it allows Grace to continue to participate in the internship program with Wartburg Seminary. It also allows Grace to fund our existing programs and staff. 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 \$363,416, or 91% of our goal. This also represents a decrease of \$19,650 in our pledged offerings compared to 2025. Knowing that the congregation usually follows through with its pledges, \$360,000 was conservatively budgeted for pledged offerings for 2026. The remaining balance of the budget after pledged offerings is comprised of unpledged offerings, and other income which would include building rental and other miscellaneous income. These offerings have been helpful for balancing the budget. Additionally, anticipated building work funded by the capital campaign should allow Grace to hold the line or even reduce expenses for maintenance and facility repairs.

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

You will notice that this report has 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...which is substantial. 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.

Since January of 2024, TeamGRACE, led by Jessye Flannery & Mary Freimuth Helt, have been working through the steps the congregation needs to complete to submit Grace for certification as a RIC congregation.

The final step in that process is the creation of a welcome statement that will affirm our acceptance of all groups. As part of the 2026 Annual Meeting, we are putting that statement before the congregation for a vote of acceptance.

“Grace Lutheran Church commits to welcoming and celebrating all people; those in the LGBTQIA+ community, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and their allies.

We commit to the work of anti-racism, liberation, social and environmental justice for all of God's creation. We affirm the sacredness of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. We affirm the sacredness of all those who have experienced exclusion because of race, ability, age, or culture. We affirm the sacredness of those who wrestle with addiction, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us.

No matter the labels others may place upon you, or the labels you may place upon yourself, here at Grace you will find a home among friends in need of a Savior. You are welcome here.”

We want to express our thanks for the respectful way in which the entire congregation has approached the RIC process. While this is the final step of our certification application, it is not the final step in the journey. We received feedback that the majority of respondents want to continue to have educational opportunities on the topics we have been contemplating this year. So we invite you to join TeamGRACE as we move into the next phase of being a welcoming and affirming space for all.

The TeamGRACE

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.

Visiting Friends may carry the Good News to members who are unable to get to church and they may deliver/distribute communion to our friends at home.

During the past year, Visiting Friends traveled to several facilities and private residences to visit and distribute communion.

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

Cherie Rissman
cherierissman@gmail.com

Martha Mitchell
iwork4Him@gmail.com

Report of the Finance Committee

The Church results were above budget in 2025. Overall, a surplus of \$11,448 was achieved as compared to a breakeven budget. This was a strong result considering pledged offerings were behind budget. Lower expense activity offset this shortfall.

During the year significant expense occurred for repairs of the boiler and the elevator. Additionally, Capital Campaign monies were used to fund \$11,200 for gutter replacement, \$42,400 for tuck-pointing of brickwork and \$123,050 for boiler replacement. Certain monies from memorials were transferred to the Capital campaign to help fund these costs. This activity is not reflected in these financial results.

Monies from the Capital campaign are reflected in the reserves.

Highlights of actual activity include the following:

- Pledged offerings were below budget by \$16,111, this shortfall was offset by higher miscellaneous one time income activity.
- Expenses were below budget. This was primarily due to the property manager position being vacant for a portion of the year. Utilities were also lower than budget.

Budgeted activity for 2026 reflects a \$12,500 deficit budget. Highlights include the following:

- Pledged offering activity is \$20,000 below the prior year budget and comparable to 2025 actual activity, pledging units are down but average giving is higher.
- 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 2026 includes the Vicar position for the full year.
- Total staffing costs are approximately \$230,000 and represent 54% of the total operational costs of the Church. Staff wages were not increased in the 2026 budget due to the deficit activity.
- The budget for the professional leadership positions includes salary, employer taxes and pension costs.
- Synod Benevolence is unchanged.
- All expense activity is comparable to the prior year.
- There is no budget for debt pay down.
- There is no activity for interest on outstanding debt as the Endowment Committee has temporarily suspended the payment of interest.

While a deficit budget is not ideal, past surpluses are able to fund this shortfall if additional income is not achieved during the year.

Your Finance Committee,

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

Candidates for Congregational Council

Chuck Denton

Tammy and I have been members at Grace since 1989. We have a son Gary (wife Samantha) and a daughter Leslie (husband Christian).

I retired from Wells Fargo in 2022 and currently work for CKF (a cabinet and countertop company). I enjoy spending time with family and friends, working on home remodeling projects, woodworking, and exercising.

At Grace I have been a part of the property team for many years. Helping with various projects around the church. I volunteer with the Tech crew on Sunday mornings and help with the monthly Saturday work group.

Jessica Flannery

Jessica and her family started coming to Grace in the mid-90s when she was in preschool. Since 2017 Jessica has worked part-time on staff at Grace compiling the weekly bulletin and PowerPoint. She participates in member care, TeamGRACE, and Thursday Bible Study. Jessica has worked for the State of Iowa for the past eight years. When not working, she enjoys traveling and spending time with her friends and family.

Carol Woodruff

Carol and her husband, Carter, were married at Grace in 1985 and joined in 1986, in addition to attending when she was young. They have a son, Dmitri, and two daughters, Emily and Bailey, as well as a son-in-law, Alex (Bailey's husband). Carol has been involved in many activities at Grace over the years including (but not limited to!) leading Sunday School (both adult and children), Choir, Bell Choir (leading children and playing adult), Altar Guild, Companion Congregation Committee (including traveling to Tanzania), lectoring, and more. She retired as Vice-President of Information Systems at EquiTrust Life Insurance Company in 2023. In retirement, she enjoys knitting, crocheting, reading to pre-schoolers and elementary age children through United Way, traveling, water aerobics, yoga, doing puzzles, and having more time with family and friends. She also served on the Merle Hay Neighborhood Association Board for the last 5 years and is completing her tenure in January.

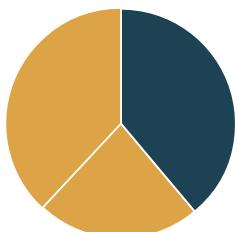
MISSION SUPPORT: WHAT DOES MY OFFERING DO?

Southeastern Iowa Synod

Every week, Lutherans across the country gather to worship. Many of us give to our congregation as part of this experience. ELCA members give about \$1.6 billion annually as regular offerings to ELCA congregations and worshiping communities. When you give your offering, most of it stays with your congregation to fund its vital work. A portion — about 5%, on average across the ELCA — becomes Mission Support, given by your congregation to your synod. In FY2024 the Southeastern Iowa Synod shared \$1,074,448 in Mission Support for ELCA churchwide ministries which is 51% of our annual \$2,106,761 budget and represents about 6.1% on average from our congregations. Because of Mission Support, our hands can do God's work in more places than any one person or congregation could alone. Together we experience the way of Jesus; discover community, justice and love; and help more people experience the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.



Your **MISSION SUPPORT** funds a variety of churchwide ministries.

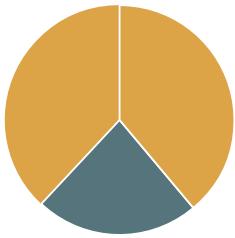


38% BUILDS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES in the United States by enabling us to:

Thank you for \$408,290 from the Southeastern Iowa Synod for these ministries!

- Plant and support hundreds of worshiping communities.
- Revitalize congregational ministries and reach out to their surrounding communities.
- Promote leadership opportunities, discernment and education through leadership initiatives.
- Support the work of seven ELCA seminaries and 27 ELCA colleges and universities.
- Host events and leadership opportunities for youth and young adults.
- Support regional work through directors for evangelical mission as well as candidacy and leadership managers.
- Prepare and implement a system for recruiting and assigning rostered ministers.

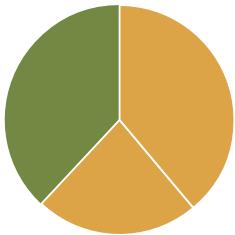




Another **23% GROWS THE GLOBAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** and addresses issues around the world, enabling us to:

Thank you for \$247,123 from the Southeastern Iowa Synod for these ministries!

- Accompany new Lutheran churches, expand ministries and train leaders and evangelists.
- Send missionaries to accompany communities around the world.
- Address social inequities and work for justice.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with 149 other churches through the Lutheran World Federation to strengthen the church and its global work.
- Foster relationships between ELCA synods and 65 companion churches, for a total of 127 official relationships.
- Work with leaders and members of our African-descent, American Indian, Alaska Native, Arab, Middle Eastern, Asian, Pacific Islander and Latiné communities.



Finally, **39% STRENGTHENS AND SUSTAINS THE MINISTRY and MISSION** of the whole church, enabling us to:

Thank you for \$419,035 from the Southeastern Iowa Synod for these ministries!

- Offer ministry resources and opportunities to lay leaders for networking.
- Develop social messages of the ELCA as topical documents to focus attention and action on timely, pressing matters of concern to church and society.
- Sustain ecumenical and interfaith relations.
- Partner with congregations and ministries across the church as they explore new, innovative ways of being church in a constantly changing world.
- Invest in technology and communications.
- Engage in research and strategic planning.
- Create and share resources for faith, discipleship, prayer, stewardship and worship.



Thank you for your ongoing support and faithful partnership! For stories of your impact, visit LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA. To find additional Mission Support resources, visit ELCA.org/SOFIA. Scan the QR code to view the new Mission Support video "What Does My Offering Do?"



The 2025 Annual Report is now available!

This year's report highlights how mission support to the Southeastern Iowa Synod is faithfully stewarded across Synod Ministries and ELCA Churchwide programs.

Through inspiring stories, you'll see how the Spirit has opened our hearts:

- **Pastor Katie Jensen's journey of calling**
- **Iglesia Camino de Emaús fostering Scripture-based ministry**
- **St. Paul Lutheran's inclusive youth programs**
- **St. Mark's Neighborhood Food Fridge outreach**

Partnerships with Lutheran Campus Ministries, Lutheran Services in Iowa, the CaSTLE Project, and our seminaries show the broad impact of collaboration.

Using the report in your church context:

- **Budget Wisely:** Learn from synod allocations and set priorities for your ministries.
- **Replicate Ministries:** Inspire programs like inclusive youth events, Scripture-based small groups, or neighborhood outreach.
- **Stewardship & Giving:** Share stories to show how donations make an impact locally and globally with your congregation.
- **Fundraising Ideas:** Sponsor ministries, host special offerings, or celebrate annual giving.
- **Collaborate:** Explore partnerships and collective efforts that magnify your mission.

Join in celebrating the faithfulness of our congregations, leaders, and ministry partners by reading the report to see the Spirit at work in call, word, presence, and love.

SPIRIT, OPEN OUR HEARTS



Access the full report:



THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY, GOD IS AT WORK ACROSS THE ELCA.

MISSION SUPPORT

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.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Part of our church's long tradition of meeting human needs, ELCA World Hunger testifies to our hope for and commitment to God's promise of a time when we will hunger and thirst no more. ELCA World Hunger walks alongside communities in more than 60 countries — including the United States — to create unique solutions to hunger and poverty.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

WHERE NEEDED MOST

Where Needed Most supports the powerful ways we work together around the world — supporting leaders, inspiring young people, fueling ministries and championing global mission. Gifts to Where Needed Most support and sustain the people, congregations, synods and ministries working around the world to realize the hope-filled future God promises.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
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