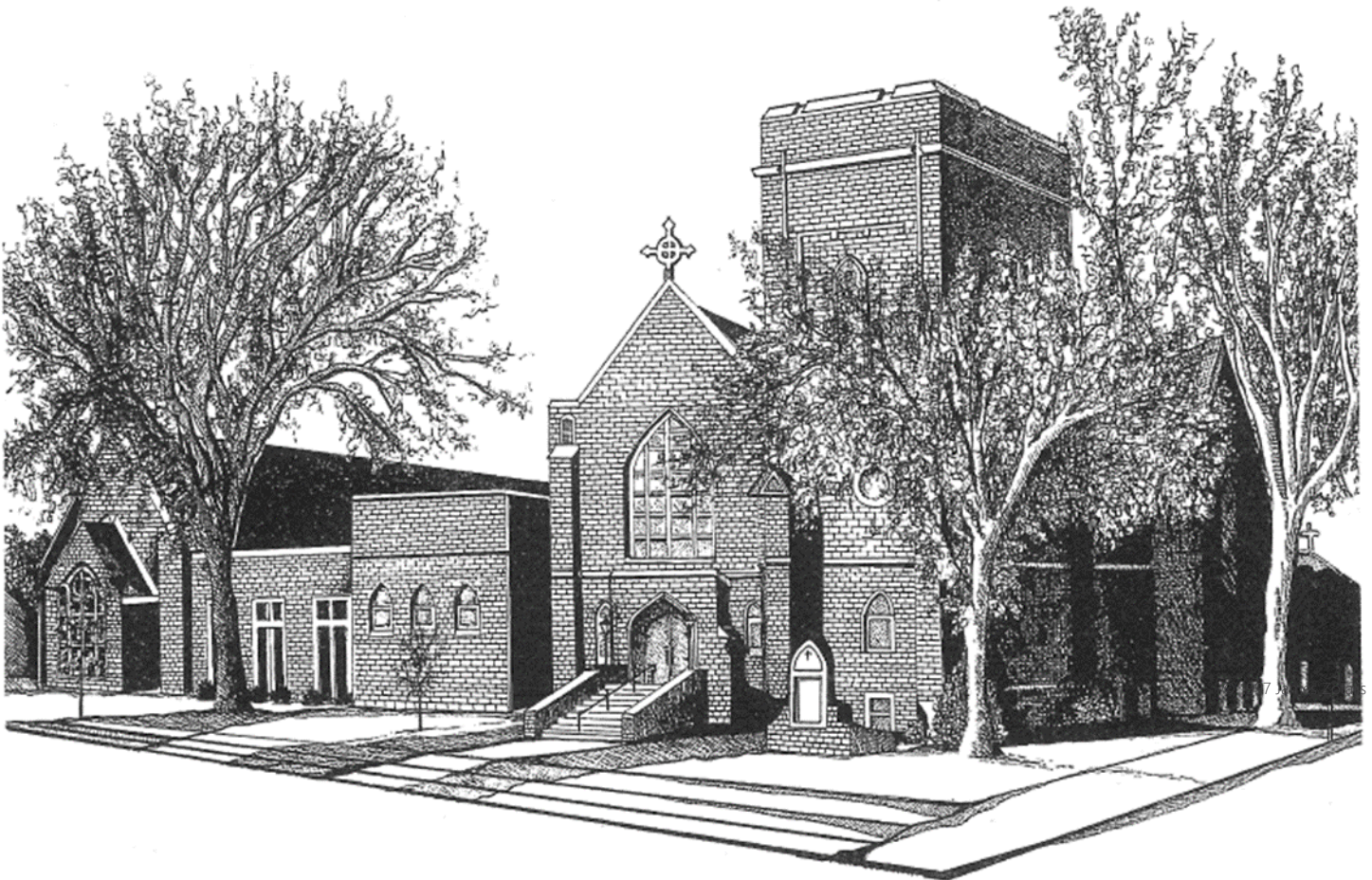


FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

MISSION

"As faithful disciples, we serve God and welcome all people with open hearts."

VISION

We, as members of First Lutheran, glorify God in all of life,
with the Bible as our authority and the Holy Spirit as our guide.

We pledge to minister to all, loving as Christ loved us.
We will seek out new avenues to spread the good news, to build relationships
with our fellow believers, as well as those who have yet to believe.

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Tiffany Sundeen	Interim Senior Pastor
Rev. Kate Bruns	Visitation Pastor
Jennifer Hubrig	Church Administrator
Mary Johnson	Office Assistant
Keith Melberg	Organist, Choir Accompanist
Linda Mellon	Handbell Choir Director
Anne Taylor	Worship Team Accompanist/Director
Harriet Wicklund	Adult Choir Director
Kristy Wicklund	Director of Children's Ministry
Jen Estad Petersen	Director of Youth & Family Ministry

CHURCH COUNCIL

Presidents – Rick & Linda West
Vice-President – Leslie Flugstad (Feb-Nov)
Secretary – Lorri Holt
Treasurer/Property – Leonard Hatzenbuhler
Adult Education – Vicki Berdan (Jul)
Children, Youth, & Families – Kristi Dinsmore
Community Life/Fellowship – Terry Gervais (Feb-Sep), Sue Toso (Nov)
Outreach – Ann Mathison (Jul)
Worship – Harriet Wicklund
Personnel – Steve Fitz
Pastor Tiffany Sundeen

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH 152ND ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA
JANUARY 28, 2024

Opening Prayer

Call to Order

Adoption of 2024 Agenda

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes: *not available*

Approval of 2023 Treasurer's Report

Remarks:

President

Pastor

Presentation of 2024 Ministry Spending Plan

2023 Nominating Committee Presentation of Ballot

Voting

Introducing 2024 Council Members

Introducing 2024 Nominating Committee

Closing Remarks by 2024 President

Closing Prayer & Benediction

Motion to Adjourn

MEMBERSHIP

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
Membership as of December 31, 2022	1394	1160
Members received during 2023:		
By baptism (children 15 & under)	10	0
By baptism (adults 16 & older)	0	0
By affirmation of faith	11	1
By transfer	1	1
From other sources and statistical adj.	0	0
Baptized members confirmed in 2023		10
Total members received in 2023	22	12
Members removed during 2023:		
By death	13	8
By transfer	24	8
For other reasons and statistical adj.	66	57
Total members removed in 2023	103	73
MEMBERSHIP END OF 2023	1313	1099

NEW MEMBERS IN 2023

Tim Anderson	Braedon & Jennifer Wallace, Liam, Diesel
Kate Bruns	Jennifer Woore, Aaron
Paul & Kim Link, Noah, Olin, Mason	

BAPTISMS IN 2023

Jeffrey Milton Christenson V	Thea Ann Mark
Jordynn Joy Donnay	Ava Grace Rader
Carson James Duenow	Lillian Rose Rader
Ramsey Irene Harig	Elin Marie Rogers
Theodore Richard Lillis	TaeLynn Douglas Van Overbeke

CONFIRMED IN 2023

John Abrahams	Dylan Kuhn
Riley Anderson	Aiden Neubauer
Tally Clark	Anja Rajaniemi
Isaiah Ibarra	Anna Sem
Ty Jyrkas	William Vaughn

MARRIAGES IN 2023

Kristi Wentworth & Larry Goos on June 10, 2023

Marlee Barry & Dylan Miller on October 14, 2023

FUNERALS IN 2023

Russell Anderson

Norman Bailey*

Dennis Fronning*

Lois Hunt

Deborah Johnson

Todd Kjellerup

Colleen Kumm

Michael Korby

Michael Melby*

Ann Ness*

Carl Prischmann

Marilyn Rose

Anna "Bernice" Roysland

Craig Samp*

Elaine Solee

Eunice Simonson

Richard Stavaas*

Rebecca Weidl*

Laverne Weinhandl

Richard Werner

*indicates non-member

MEMBERS REMOVED BY TRANSFER IN 2023

Dane & Hannah Carlson

Gabe, Claire, Louis, & Etta

Derek & Tammy Eckley

Gary Eckley

May Koch

Daniel & Abbey Kwapinski

Jaden, Ella, & Kellan

Andrew Larson

Dustin Harris & Hayley Sokness

Brinley, Bowman, & Beckham

Brian & Kristin (Overland) Torgerson

Rylee

PASTOR TIFFANY SUNDEEN, INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... ***Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Cor 12:27).***



Dear First Lutheran Friends,

Thank you for a strengthening year of ministry together as the body of Christ. We live a time of unprecedented change and rely on the steadfast promises of Jesus Christ to lead us daily. As a congregation leadership, we spent hours and hours working through our governance model. When I arrived, many things were out of sync with the congregation's constitution. This means decision making paths were "blurry" as to who could make decisions, how committee structures were intended to function, how each congregational member could offer feedback or propose new ideas.

Throughout this year, we have been working with a temporary structure to see how it "fit" First Lutheran Church. One of the things I want to highlight is that no one makes a decision on their own. There are always at least 2-3 people involved from the appropriate committee, whom you elect at the annual meeting to represent you, who receive the idea and review it. This includes the pastoral leadership. It increases communication, equalizes power, allows for greater perspective, and reminds us that we do this all to the glory of God.

The results so far? The committees are making more decisions and leading ministry with staff persons partnering alongside the efforts. We are all in this together as a part of what Martin Luther describes as the "priesthood of all believers." We all work together, and lay leadership has increased in numbers, deepened in faith, and grown in trusting the Holy Spirit's presence among us. Book Club, special speakers, youth ministries, family support events and outings, OWLS trips, choir and handbells, dinner church, and support groups thrive.

You are the body of Christ and individually members of it at First Lutheran Church. Your presence and participation, dedication and devotion, worship and work will see FLC through to the next 150 years of ministry. The grace, greeting and gratitude experienced here exude genuine compassion. The authenticity will welcome your next senior pastor as God's vision for this place continues to unfold. Also, let me take this moment to say FLC's staff is the best! Each person feels truly called to this ministry and does it incredibly well. This holy partnership as the body of Christ holds so much promise for the present and future.

May God's generosity and presence flow through us as we begin this new year. May we learn that life through God's eyes overflows with meaning, truth, and love. May we have our ears and eyes opened by the One who brings eternal life, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Tiffany Sundeen".

Pastor Tiffany Sundeen

PASTOR KATE BRUNS, VISITATION PASTOR

What a joy it has been for me to come out of retirement to serve First Lutheran Church and its members as your visitation pastor! I began my responsibilities on January 3, 2023, and I discovered right away that no two days are alike and that every day is filled with meeting people, listening to their stories, and learning about First Lutheran.

The year started with compiling the visitation lists of Pastor Stan, Pastor David, and the church's with 44 personal visits which evolved over the past year to 52. Some of the visits were to individuals and some were to couples. I set a goal of visiting each one on the list either monthly or every six weeks, and I have continued doing that depending on their preferences. In addition, I visited folks in the hospital here at Lake Region while Pastor Tiffany visited those hospitalized in Fargo. Every month, I brought a devotion to the people residing at Mill Street Residence and offered another devotion over the radio on "Morning Watch". I was privileged to preside at the funerals for Craig Alan Samp, Todd Douglas Kjellerup, LaVerne Marion Weinhandl, and shared with Pastor Tiffany the funeral service for Carl Prischman. I also presided at the burials for Ann Ness, Norman Lee Bailey, and Becky Weidl.

Assisting in worship services and singing in the choir have been part of my "want to" not "have to" choices, but I am also grateful for the opportunities given to me to preach on Sunday mornings and at Wednesday night Dinner Church. When I arrived at First Lutheran to serve as your visitation pastor, I felt warmly welcomed and also felt needed to fill a vital place on your pastoral staff. Thank you for entrusting me with this joy-filled place to serve both you and my Lord.

Pastor Kate



PRESIDENTS' REPORT

First of all, we would like to thank the members of First Lutheran Church for the opportunity to serve you as Council Co-Presidents. Our Sunday worship attendance continues to grow. It is wonderful to see long time members, returning members, new members, and visitors in our Sanctuary to hear the word of the Lord. The year 2023 has come to an end with First Lutheran Church seeing many positive accomplishments that cause us to look to a bright future.

Our staff has and continues to do great work in the day-to-day operations of the church with Pastor Tiffany leading the way. Many thanks to Pastor Tiffany and Pastor Kate for their theological guidance and their caring pastoral care. Jen Hubrig, Church Administrator and Mary Johnson, Office Assistant work to make sure everything flows smoothly which involves a lot of effort that is done behind the scenes.

Our Sunday School Program has grown greatly in 2023 under the direction of Kristy Wicklund, Director of Children's Ministry. We have discussed the need for a Youth and Family Director for some years and in 2023 this position was created. With the hiring of Jen Enstad-Petersen to fill our Director of Youth and Family Ministry, we now have a program that serves 7th through 12th grade youth and families. Both Jen and Kristy continue to grow and make enhancements to their programs. It is simply a joy to hear the discussion and laughter as one walks down the halls of the Sunday School on Sunday mornings.

Our music program is one to be proud of and always a delight to hear. Many thanks to Keith Melberg, Organist; Harriet Wicklund, Choir Director; Linda Mellon, Hosanna Handbells Director; and Anne Taylor, Worship Team Director.

In March 2023, a Transition Team was formed to gather information about the community outside of the church to aid the Call Committee in their work. The Committee members were Rick and Linda West (Co-chairs), Roy and Shelia Graham, George and Ann Mathison, Marlene Wilde, Leslie Flugstad, Missy Mattson, Jeani Trosvig and Kari Vaughn. Eleven agencies and businesses responded to the survey with responses to the following questions: 1) What are our community's greatest assets? 2) What are our community's greatest needs? and 3) How might these unmet needs be met? In July, a summary of the survey was presented to the congregation and passed on to the Call Committee for their use in the preparation of our Ministry Site Profile.

Our Call Committee has completed a congregation survey, completed the Ministry Site Profile work and is now receiving applications and reviewing senior pastor candidates.

Our Council Committee Chairs and committee members continue to do their good work. Please see their individual committee reports included in this Annual Report for details of their accomplishments. Some of our committees are looking for additional members to assist with their work. This is a great opportunity to be involved and get to know members of the congregation better through committee work.

Wednesday night Dinner Church is a relatively new event for us. It has been successful especially with the help of the Confirmation students and their families.

We want to also acknowledge all the volunteers who give their time and talents to our mission, both in our church and in our community.

In closing, we are incredibly grateful for the great teamwork that caused us to move forward and thanks to all for a positive and successful year. 1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms". May we continue to be God's faithful stewards in our church and in our community.

Peace and God Bless,

Rick and Linda West. Co-Presidents

First Lutheran Church Council

KRISTY WICKLUND, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

SUNDAY SCHOOL, FLY K-6, & VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

It has been a year of connecting and growth. We ended last school year with around 30 children on a Sunday in Sunday School and Butterflies and have entered this year closer to 40 children a Sunday. We have added two Sunday School classes and now have filled our education wing with children on Sundays of all ages! We have also added a Parent/Caregiver room to encourage connection among parents and to continue the relationships that formed in the Butterflies classroom but have moved to the bigger Sunday School classes as children have grown. FLY has also grown. We had 19 children coming on Wednesdays and this school year have 25 coming on Wednesdays to connect with friends, learn about God, to do God's work, and to have fun. VBS 2023 was also our second year in a row of having a Joint ELCA VBS and it was a huge success. We had 59 Kindergarten- 6th graders that attended Day Camp with Luther Crest and 20 children attended Butterflies VBS at First Lutheran Church. It has been amazing to watch these children grow at First Lutheran and to see relationships build between children, families, with God, and the church. A huge THANK YOU to our Children Ministry Volunteers that help make our Sunday, Wednesday, and VBS programs happen. Also, thank you to the families that have chosen First Lutheran to be the place where connection, growth, and faith formation happen.

Blessings,

Kristy Wicklund

Director of Children's Ministries

Kristy@flcff.org



BIBLICAL THEME(S)

2023 Butterflies Vacation Bible School: "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

2022 Day Camp with Luther Crest: "WHOLLY LOVE"

2022-2023 School Year: "We are building a solid foundation with Christ." "For we are God's servants working together. You are God's field, God's building." -1 Corinthians 3:9

JEN ENSTAD PETERSEN, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

“Build it and they will come” may be a great line for a movie but I have learned in the last 6 months it’s not how Youth and Family Ministry works. It’s more fitting to say build a relationship and the programming will follow. We have a lot of building that is happening and it’s a joy to be a part of the team. Thank you for your support in this area of our church family.



2023 Building Projects:

- HQ (Headquarters): a “living room” space for 7th-12th graders. We want them to know that their church is their home and a safe space to grow their faith.
- Parent/Caregiver Room: located in the education wing for comfortable conversations with other parents during the Sunday School hour.
- Confirmation: 21 students taught by Pastor Tiffany, supported by Jen, and leaders; Melissa Babolian, Linda West, and Erin Warren.
- Youth Connection: taught by Jen and Brian Becker during Sunday School.
- Monthly E.P.I.C. events for 9th-12th graders (Friendsgiving and Trivia were favorites)
- Adult connections monthly- college care packages, book studies bringing in community members.
- Jen attending school and athletic events to deepen connections.

Please pray for our youth and families-it’s a blessing to be building a faith foundation for them here at FLC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The work of the Adult Education Committee in 2023 has been focused on first establishing a committee and then determining the frequency of committee meetings. The next item of business included the creation of a survey for adult congregation members. Results of the survey provide the committee with preferred adult education options, as well as optimal times and frequency of those activities. Highlights of our committee's work in 2023 include: 1. Establishing a committee. The committee currently consists of 3 members of the congregation and Pastor Tiffany. The committee agreed to meet on an as-needed basis. 2. Creation and distribution of the Adult Education Survey. Surveys have been distributed and collected. Results from the survey have been compiled. Sincere appreciation goes out to Pastor Tiffany and congregation members who reached out to potential committee members and requested their willingness to serve on the committee. Sincere appreciation also goes out to Jen Hubrig, Church Administrator, who helped to design and create the survey as well as compile the results.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Berdan, Chair

Committee Members: Cindy Larson, Jack Pearson, Susanne Ronning, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen*, 2 vacancies

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILY COMMITTEE

Individuals Served:

Sunday School (including Butterflies): youth from birth – 6th grade.

FLY program: K-6th grade.

Confirmation students: 7th-8th grade.

EPIC: 9th-12th grade.

Youth Connection: 7th-12th grade.

Parent/adult discussions

This year we were grateful to see an increase in the number of youth participating in our programming! We have had some major transitions including an organizational change from the Education Committee to the Children, Youth, and Family Committee, and the addition of our Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Jen Enstad-Petersen.

Kristy Wicklund, Jen Enstad-Petersen, and Pastor Tiffany have their own updates on the programs that they lead, so I will just provide a few highlights of their wonderful work.

Under Kristy's leadership, our committee organized special events such as the Palm Sunday Festival, Easter Egg hunt, and End of the Sunday School year picnic. These events are great for our youngest members to experience fellowship tailored to them, and they also bring other families into our church.

Confirmation is led by Pastor Tiffany and Jen Enstad-Petersen. They have developed a great small group organization and have combined service projects, dinner church, and more into their program.

Thank you to our Sunday School and confirmation teachers, committee members, and other volunteers for making our youth programming successful!

Respectfully submitted,
Kristi Dinsmore, Chair

Committee Members: Melissa Duenow, Trista Kitzman, Megan Neubauer, Michelle Shearer, Jennifer Smestad, Erin Warren, Dani West, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen, Jen Enstad-Petersen, Kristy Wicklund*

COMMUNITY LIFE/FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

“Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people. People form and maintain communities to meet common needs.”

The work of Community Life (formally Fellowship) Committee is to foster programs and activities that support FLC’s members family and congregational life at home and in the church. The church is to be a community of believers.

Community Life Responsibility

1. Arrange for annual or special occasions as requested by church leadership to encourage fellowship.
2. Organize and coordinate the use of volunteers for social functions.
3. Work with other church committees and groups with events as needed.
4. Support our congregation members in their homes through visitation and in support groups.

In the past year we have:

1. Served at funerals.
2. Set up for the annual meeting, New Member Sunday, Lenten/Advent Services (served meals)
3. Served at Wednesday Dinner Church
4. Helped with Summer Worship, Rally Sunday, Picnic & Play/Senior Sunday, and Pastor Tiffany’s 25th anniversary of ordination.
5. Pastor Kate has been visiting with the homebound and those in nursing homes.
6. We have a support group for anyone who has lost and misses a loved one that meets monthly.
7. Had fun while meeting in the groups of OWLS (Older Wiser Lutherans) and WOW (Women of the Word).

We will continue to be where we are needed and to share our talents when possible.

Thank you to all the FANTASTIC volunteers that set up and help out when they are needed. You are appreciated more than you know.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Toso, Chair

Committee members: Terri Gervais, Lorri Holt, Cindy Larson, Sandy Kvern, JoAnn Whitlock, *Pastor Kate Bruns*

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Outreach Team of FLC was re-organized in September and it has been a busy and encouraging time. Here is a partial list of plans made and carried out in service to others on behalf of you, the members of First Lutheran. “FILL THE CUP” during Lent brought in significant money to help with local mission projects. A fund drive for HABITAT FOR HUMANITY in Fergus Falls brought in dollars to

purchase building materials for a house and the caveat is that the house will become the home of one of our own members! Our own Synod is supported by the giving of churches in this area and of course we are one of them that helps support their work.

WELCA contributed monies raised for a variety of needs. Many other charities were helped by the generosity of First Lutheran members. Food cards were purchased and given to the Salvation Army. A “Blessing Box” was installed in the narthex entryway in which items have been collected and given to the Blessing Closet on North Union to help people in need. Judy Mouritsen keeps track of these items.

First Lutheran’s famous Harvest Dinner was organized AGAIN by Harriet Wicklund and Linda Mellon and was prepared and served by church members including lots of kids and their parents. Bravo! Nearly 500 people were served.

Christmas cookies were baked by adults and kids and delivered to church members who have difficulty getting out. Sandy Pearson and her crew did a terrific job! Many people brought gifts for people at Someplace Safe and put them under the “Giving Tree” in the narthex. Michelle Lembke led this project. Sixty individuals who could benefit by some help at Christmas received groceries which they can use to make their loved ones a festive Christmas dinner. Ann Mathison, JoAn Whitlock, Steve Fitz, Leonard Hatzenbuehler, and Rick West packed the baskets which were delivered by Kris, Robin, & Emily Werner, John & Derek Abrahams, Dale Whitehead & Dan Ouren, Steve, Isaiah, Noah, & Rory Ibara, and George & Ann Mathison delivered the baskets to very grateful people. And of course, many people, some regulars and several who fill in at times, continue to deliver “Meals BY Wheels”. Others assist with the Red Cross blood drives here at church.

First Lutheran has always been a church with a heart for sharing and giving. The need in our community is greater than any of us can imagine and I am proud to be a part of a church that cherishes the words of Jesus concerning feeding, clothing, sheltering, and visiting those who have fallen on hard times. A big THANK YOU to every person who helped make these and other projects possible. We at First Lutheran Church truly are “Blessed to be a Blessing”!

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Mathison, Chair

Committee Members: Wendy Anderson, Nathan Kuhn, Karen Olson, Jennifer Woore, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen*, 1 vacancy

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

First of all, I want to thank all the volunteers that did so much work in keeping the church building and grounds in such good condition this past year.

It has been a busy year for the Property Committee. New committee members were appointed and hit the ground running.

Here is a list of some of the bigger projects in 2023.

- Cleaned the entire basement.
- Recommended hiring Service Master to do the janitorial work in the church.
- Had the heat pumps in the sanctuary cleaned and repaired.
- Had several windows professionally cleaned inside and out.

- Caulked, cleaned, and painted trim on windows on the west end of the building.
- Had the parking lot recoated and sealed.
- Replaced door locks on old wooden doors to comply with fire code.
- Had the roof checked out for leaks.
- Rick West continued to work with 3 heating companies to repair and complete deferred maintenance on the boilers and heat exchange system.
- Replaced two water faucets in kitchen.

There were other various projects done in the church this past year, too many to mention here. This committee is dedicated to the function and appearance of our church building and grounds. Thank you for supporting us and entrusting us with this important work.

Respectfully submitted,
Leonard Hatzenbuehler, Chair

Committee Members: Jody & Dale Hanson, Mark Hermes, David Holt, Ruth & Denny Hystead, Kearly Toso, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen, Jen Hubrig*

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Psalm 146:1-2)

The work of the Worship Committee this year has been focused on providing support in planning and preparing for the worship experiences of our congregation. We meet monthly to accomplish our assignments. This year, we have updated the description of the Worship Committee at First Lutheran Church for our constitution and by-laws. It now reads as follows:

Worship Committee:

- Shall provide an active and meaningful worship life for the congregation through worship planning. Including music, art, decorations, and drama; giving special attention to the liturgical year and special services.
- Shall Coordinate the activities of ushers, cantors, lectors, Altar Guild, organist, choirs & special music, Sacristans, Audio/Video operators, and any other worship volunteers or participants.
- Shall oversee the use and display of art and seasonal decoration throughout the church in keeping with the liturgical year, secular holidays, and a Christian theme.

Attendance in worship has increased this year and we are grateful to Pastor Tiffany for the creative leadership she brings to our congregation in many ways but especially through our worship experiences.

We continue to exert significant energy toward finding volunteers to participate in our worship services. We are grateful for all those who currently serve and are working to expand the number of volunteers who are comfortable filling these roles.

Highlights of our committee's work in 2023 include:

- Maintaining our committee's agenda and supporting our pastor as requested
- Working with our Pastor on planning and executing festival and other services
- Reinstated the use of 'pew pads' for recording attendance and communion participation

- Monitoring and supporting live-streaming and sound system issues
- Coordination with our Altar Guild
- Messenger articles on liturgical purpose and history

Sincere thanks to all who serve regularly as musicians, decorators, ushers, sacristans, and as members of the altar guild. We look forward to this new year, worshiping together, praying together, and giving thanks to God as we are blessed through our congregation's worship.

Respectfully submitted,

Harriet Wicklund, Chair

Committee members: Jody Hanson, Judy Jensen, Carol Thompson, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen, Pastor Kate Bruns, Keith Melberg, Linda Mellon, Anne Taylor, 2 vacancies*

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

2023 was a rewarding year for the personnel committee. After filling our open office staff positions in 2022 (Jen Hubrig, Office Administrator and Mary Johnson, Bookkeeper/Administrative Assistant) we started 2023 with three main goals.

They were:

1. Find a custodian to replace long time employee Steve Hosch after his retirement in 2022.
2. Add a Visitation Pastor to the staff after Pastor David Strom's retirement in the fall of 2022.
3. Hire a Director of Youth and Family Ministry to meet the needs of our Junior and Senior high youth and the young families of our congregation.

Custodian Position

With the help of the executive committee, it was determined that going forward we would make the custodian position a part-time position rather than a full-time position with benefits etc. This decision helped us manage our overall expenses considering the other two staff positions we needed to fill. After several months of searching, we decided to hire a cleaning service rather than hiring a part-time staff member. In May of 2023 we contracted with Service Master and have been very satisfied with their services. We want to thank the many members of the congregation that filled the open custodian position between August of 2022 and May of 2023.

A special thank you and recognition should be given to Keary and Sue Toso for all the hours they volunteered. Keary and many others also spent many hours cleaning the "boiler room" and church basement, which was badly needed.

Visitation Pastor

Pastor Kate Bruns started as our new Visitation Pastor on Jan. 3rd of 2023. She agreed to work 20 hours a week calling on our members that are no longer able to make it to church or are living at our local care centers. Pastor Kate has served several congregations in the Fergus Falls area for many years, was well known by many of our members and still has a strong desire to continue serving a church community. She has developed a list of over 50 members that she visits regularly. Since joining our congregation she's also joined the adult choir and has actively helped Pastor Tiffany with Sunday services and most recently agreed to work 10 additional hours each week in her role as visitation pastor. We are very thankful for all that Pastor Kate does for First Lutheran!

Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Kristy Wicklund continues to do an outstanding job in her part-time role as Director of Children's Ministry (children ages birth - 6th grade) here at FLC. To continue our commitment to youth ages 7th through 12th grade it was determined we should post for the position of Director of Youth and Family Ministry. Fortunately, one of the members of our congregation had past experience working with youth and felt a call at this time in her life to devote the time and energy to our junior and senior high youth. Jen Enstad-Petersen started on July 1st, 2023. Our initial thoughts were that this position would be a full-time staff position but after discussing and defining her role it was decided that Jen would work 30 hours per week. Both Kristy and Jen welcome parents that can volunteer to help with youth activities and programs. We are all very excited at the progress Jen has made since July in creating a church "home space" for our older youth and for young families.

Currently FLC has no open staff positions but our two-year Interim Senior Pastor position that Pastor Tiffany Sundeen has been filling will soon come to a close. We have been so blessed by her leadership and enthusiasm. We have come a long way from the depths of COVID-19. Pastor Tiffany has been preparing the staff and the congregation for the transition that will surely take place in the coming months as we call a new senior pastor at First. Pastor Tiffany's leadership will be felt for many years to come. Thank You Pastor Tiffany.

As we start 2024 the personnel committee and the church leadership team will be working on our church sick leave policy to make sure we are in compliance with the new Mn. state law dealing with employee sick pay. A 3.25% C.O.L.A. (cost of living adjustment) was given to all staff for the 2024 calendar year, which was right in line with state and federal govt. guidelines and many local employers in Ottertail County.

I want to thank the current members of the personnel committee for their service to FLC and for their dedication to this committee and I look forward to working with them in 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Fitz, Chair

Committee Members: Al Jensen, Andrea Loomer, Bob Ronning, Kim Ward, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen*, 1 vacancy

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

David said that "The world and everything in it belongs to God. I am not the owner of the things in my life. As a steward, I am merely the manager." (Psalm 89:11)

The Stewardship Committee is a new committee that started meeting in September. Work for our annual Stewardship Campaign, "Rooted in Abundance," started in the month of October. Commitment Sunday was held on November 19th.

We had a great response with pledge cards. Thank you so much for your pledges. We have a lot of great things happening here at FLC, and your generous gifts help make these things happen.

The Stewardship Committee is working on some educational events for 2024.

We are also working on volunteer appreciation efforts. We will send out time and talent cards in April.

Respectfully submitted,
Kris Werner, Chair

Committee Members: Steve Fitz, Kristi Goos, Donna Quam, Paul Sanderson, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen*, 1 vacancy

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The primary responsibility of the Finance Committee is to coordinate and supervise the financial activities of the congregation. This includes giving accurate reports and preparing a Ministry Spending Plan for the year.

The finance committee was re-energized with the introduction of our new trial governance model. New committee members were appointed, and we began meeting in June. We extensively reviewed each of the church's funds and began work on producing clear and accurate reports for the council and committees.

The previous years' Council entered into a contract to repair the large stained-glass window on the east side of the narthex. The work was to be completed in the Fall of 2023 and we were planning a campaign to fund these repairs. However, supply chain issues caused this project to be moved to the Spring of 2024.

We determined a need for and developed a Fundraising Policy & Procedure to help the church practice good stewardship, to act respectfully toward members of the congregation and others who are asked to support the church and its fundraiser, as well as supporting the goals of groups which participate in fundraising.

Suzanne Demuth and I had been working on getting the documentation needed from the IRS to request the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) for many months. In September we finally had all the information we needed, and Suzanne completed the paperwork requesting this credit. The amount is just under \$85,000. However, the IRS has put a hold on processing these requests and when they resume, processing times for these credits is six months or more.

The process for developing the Ministry Spending Plan for 2024 was extensive. We asked every committee to submit budget requests and Jen Hubrig met with each committee to show them their current expenses and to answer any questions about the financial practices of FLC. The Personnel Committee made a Cost-of-Living Adjustment recommendation to the Council and we reviewed every line item of the plan.

Thank you to all staff, volunteers, and members of First Lutheran Church for your faithful stewardship of God's abundance.

Respectfully submitted,
Leonard Hatzenbuehler, Chair

Committee Members: Suzanne Demuth, David Holt, Terri Spangler, Barrett Wicklund, *Pastor Tiffany Sundeen*, *Jen Hubrig*, 1 vacancy

FINANCIAL REPORTS

GENERAL FUND REVENUE & EXPENSES

As of December 31, 2023

Revenues

Contribution Revenues

Envelope Offerings	
Christmas	\$ 1,630
Easter	\$ 600
General Fund Env	\$ 457,434
Lent	\$ 677
Thanksgiving	\$ 260
Loose Offering	\$ 10,597

Miscellaneous Revenues

Local Expense only Revenue	\$ 900
Rebates and Refund Revenue	\$ 450
Reimbursed Expense Revenue	\$ 620
Thrivent Choice Dollars	\$ 3,018
Bank Interest	\$ 156

Total for Revenues **\$ 476,342**

Expenditures

Budgeted Expenses

Adult Education Exp	\$ 94
Community Life	\$ 4,525
CYF Exp	\$ 4,702
Insurance	\$ 11,601
Music Exp	\$ 169
Office & Admin	\$ 30,197
Outreach Expenses-Synod Mission Support	\$ 13,000
Personnel Exp	\$ 354,367
Property	\$ 27,840
Stewardship Exp	\$ 1,459
Utilities	\$ 41,541
Worship Exp	\$ 9,806

Miscellaneous Expenses

Bank Service Charges	\$ 102
Expenses to be Reimbursed	\$ 2,420

Total for Expenditures **\$ 501,824**

Net gain (loss) **\$ (25,482)**

Carry-over from 2022	\$ 11,336
Durner Cash Fund Transfer	\$ 20,000
Transfer from Specials account Revenue	\$ 2,941

Net Change in General Fund **\$ 8,795**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For all Accounts
December 31, 2023

Assets

Bank

General SSB Checking	24,687
SPECIAL SSB CHECKING	38,334
Thrivent Money Market	22,605
Total Bank	85,625

Other Current Assets

Dorn & Co Durner Cash	23,923
Dorn & Co Durner Investments	109,763
Total Other Current Assets	133,686

Total Assets **219,311**

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Credit Card Payable	2,688
Total Current Liabilities	2,688

Total Liabilities **2,688**

Net Assets

ADULT BIBLE STUDY FUND	425
ALTAR FLOWER FUND	560
BUILDING IMPROVEMENT FUND	13,832
CHILDRENS EDUCATION FUND	486
EASTER PLANTS/POINSETTIA FUND	112
FAMILY MINISTRY FUND	3,255
FELLOWSHIP FUND	5,713
GENERAL FUND	8,795
GOOD SAMARITAN FUND	11,957
HANDBELLS FUND	1,194
JEAN DAHLING ESTATE FUND	17,744
LIBRARY FUND	1,688
MEETING DOOR ACCESSIBILITY	700
ORGAN FUND	-21,542
OUTREACH FUND	8,857
OWLS FUND	3,345
PARKING LOT FUND	5,192
RADIO BROADCAST FUND	2,999
SENIOR CHOIR FUND	6,166
SERVICE FOODS CARDS	69
STAINED GLASS REPAIR	-12,976
UNDESIGNATED MEMORIALS FUND	9,339
WORSHIP FUND	877
YOUTH FUND	9,053
YOUTH MISSION TRIP FUND	5,098
DURNER CASH	23,923
DURNER INVESTMENTS	109,763
Total Net Assets	216,623

Total Liabilities + Net Assets **219,311**

BENEVOLENCE

First Lutheran Church experiences blessings and joy through greater generosity. In 2023, we “invested” 8% of our annual resources to benefit those outside our congregation through budgeted benevolence to the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA in addition to non-budgeted benevolence to selected organizations and individuals made possible with additional funds through the church’s designated gifts and individual giving.

Annual Resources	
Total Income to FLC Budget	\$476,342
Total Income to other benevolence	\$ 27,229
Total Annual Resources	\$503,571

Non-Budgeted Benevolence	
Bootstrap Africa	\$ 575
Christmas Food Baskets	\$ 1,403
Fergus Falls Area Food Shelf	\$ 200
Habitat for Humanity-Faith Build	\$ 7,055
Lake Region Cancer Center	\$ 6,336
Lutheran Disaster Response	\$ 974
Lutheran Social Services	\$ 120
Salvation Army (Aldi gift cards)	\$ 2,000
Salvation Army (family in need)	\$ 730
Various Persons in Need per Pastors	\$ 5,366
VBS for Local Children	\$ 275
WELCA	\$ 2,195
Total Non-Budgeted Benevolence	\$ 27,229

Budgeted Benevolence	
NW MN Synod Mission Support	\$13,000
Total Budgeted Giving	\$13,000

Benevolence	
Total Budgeted Benevolence	\$13,000
Total Non-Budgeted Benevolence	\$27,229
Total 2023 Benevolence	\$40,229

Percent of Annual Resources Given	8%
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BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

2023 Building Improvement Fund	
Balance 1/1/2023	\$ 11,862
Income	
<i>Offerings</i>	\$ 3,496
<i>Facility Rental Revenues</i>	\$ 640
<i>Fund Maintenance Transfer</i>	\$ 11,100
Total Income	\$ 15,236
Expenses	
<i>Heating Repairs</i>	\$ 13,266
Total Expenses	\$ 13,266
Balance 12/31/2023	\$ 13,832

2023 Parking Lot Fund	
Balance 1/1/2023	\$18,714
Income	
<i>Rents</i>	\$ 5,292
Total Income	\$ 5,292
Expenses	
<i>Railroad Lease</i>	\$ 1,000
<i>snow removal</i>	\$ 2,180
<i>Blacktop</i>	\$13,997
<i>Fund Maintenance Transfer</i>	\$ 1,637
Total Expenses	\$18,814
Balance 12/31/2023	\$ 5,192

PROPOSED 2024 MINISTRY SPENDING PLAN

	2023 Actual	2024 Intent
WORSHIP	\$ 9,975	\$ 12,847
Adult Choir	\$ -	\$ 500
Decorating	\$ 624	\$ 600
Dinner Church Musicians	\$ -	\$ 800
Handbell Choir Music	\$ 169	\$ 600
Instrument Maintenance	\$ 2,311	\$ 2,500
Lighting/Sound/Livestream	\$ 1,360	\$ 2,600
Music Licenses	\$ 927	\$ 927
Special Music	\$ 1,144	\$ 750
Worship Supplies	\$ 2,587	\$ 2,370
Worship Team Musicians	\$ 853	\$ 1,200
OUTREACH	\$ 13,000	\$ 24,000
Benevolences	\$ -	\$ 6,000
Synod Mission Support	\$ 13,000	\$ 18,000
EDUCATION	\$ 4,796	\$ 8,490
Adult Education	\$ 94	\$ 690
Confirmation	\$ 330	\$ 600
Daycamp/VBS	\$ 3,174	\$ 2,000
Sunday School/FLY	\$ 836	\$ 4,000
Youth Activities	\$ 362	\$ 1,200
COMMUNITY LIFE	\$ 4,526	\$ 7,510
Appreciation Events	\$ 196	\$ 1,400
Church Meals	\$ -	\$ 500
Coffee/Donuts	\$ -	\$ 400
Dinner Church Meals	\$ 4,290	\$ 4,160
Funerals/Kitchen Supplies	\$ 31	\$ 500
New Member Reception	\$ -	\$ 400
Other Caring Ministries	\$ 9	\$ 150
ADMIN AND LEADERSHIP	\$ 34,178	\$ 34,022
Bank Service Charges	\$ 102	\$ -
Call Committee	\$ -	\$ 1,500
Devotionals	\$ 420	\$ 510
Expenses to be reimbursed	\$ 2,420	\$ -
Meetings	\$ 695	\$ 1,180
Office	\$ 26,824	\$ 25,550
Publicity/Advertising	\$ 569	\$ 619
Subscriptions & Dues	\$ 1,689	\$ 2,363
Stewardship	\$ 1,459	\$ 2,300
PERSONNEL EXPENSE	\$ 354,367	\$ 394,131
Background checks	\$ 183	\$ 200
Compensation & Benefits	\$ 333,720	\$ 384,241
Substitute Organist	\$ -	\$ 450
Other Employee Benefits	\$ 20,464	\$ 9,240
UTILITIES	\$ 41,541	\$ 47,225
Electricity	\$ 20,057	\$ 21,000
Gas	\$ 15,447	\$ 19,425
Telephone	\$ 1,915	\$ 2,300
Water & Waste	\$ 4,122	\$ 4,500
PROPERTY	\$ 27,840	\$ 51,289
Supplies	\$ 1,136	\$ 1,300
Taxes (property assessment)	\$ 624	\$ 700
Building Equipment Maintenance	\$ 4,636	\$ 15,000
Vehicle Maintenance	\$ 455	\$ 500
Service Contracts	\$ 20,989	\$ 33,789
INSURANCE	\$ 11,601	\$ 15,641
Total	\$ 501,824	\$ 595,155

WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (WELCA) 2023

Our Purpose

As women of the ELCA we are called to grow in faith, support one another, and engage in ministry and action to promote healing and wholeness in the church society and world.

Fellowship

All women of First Lutheran Church are members of WELCA, and of the ELCA Northwest Minnesota Synodical Organization, and of Conference 7. This includes the WELCA board, Hannah Circle, and Love Days Quilters. All are welcome to participate in these activities.

Hannah Circle

Circle meets on the 4th Wednesday monthly, with the exception of July and August. We gather at 1:00 p.m. in the Narthex for fellowship, refreshments, and Bible Study from the Gather magazine with Pastor Tiffany or Pastor Kate. WELCA board minutes and future activities are discussed.

The Conference 7 Spring Gathering was held in April at First Lutheran Church, Battle Lake, Mn. The theme was "Following in His Footsteps".

Women's Day at Luther Crest was held in the last week of June.

The ELCA Northwest Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization Annual Convention was held in September at Zion Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Mn. The theme was "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself".

The Conference 7 Fall Gathering was held in October at Augustana Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls, Mn. Their theme was "Women Supporting Women".

Pioneer Care invited Hannah Circle to provide the November "Sunshine Aide" program for First Lutheran members who reside there.

Mission

Our annual campaign "Coins, Cash, and Checks Changes Lives" held in October received a generous response. All proceeds are given to local and global missions.

The annual Thankoffering was held in November. Donations are sent directly to the National ELCA offices, to address concerns of women and children in crisis.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) quilts and school backpacks are on-going projects.

Thank you to our Congregation for your donations of school supplies to fill the school backpacks and all fabrics donated for the quilts.

2023 WELCA Board: Gayle Fitz, Donna Quam, Judy Mouritsen, Sandra Pearson, Joan Anderson and Katie Haugrud

WELCA 2023 ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance as of January 1, 2023

Checking	\$	226
Savings	\$	1,287

Receipts

Sunshine Money	\$	276
Circle Offerings	\$	1,364
Thankoffering	\$	600
Fall Event (Cash & Checks Change Lives)	\$	1,236
Registration for Conf 7 Meeting	\$	216
Funeral serving from FLC	\$	400
Memorial	\$	10
Interest on savings account	\$	16

Total Receipts	\$	4,119
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Disbursements

FLC Altar Flowers	\$	45
WELCA Conf 7 registrations	\$	216
WELCA Conf 7 offering and fee	\$	180
WELCA Convention offering	\$	50
Benevolences		
A Place to Belong	\$	250
Blessing Closet	\$	200
ELCA-Young Adults in Global Mission (Maddie Trosvig)	\$	275
KBRF Morning Watch	\$	250
KBRF Worning Watch (for pastors)	\$	50
LutherCrest	\$	250
LSS-Camp Knutson	\$	200
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$	200
OBA	\$	500
Pioneer Home Foundation	\$	200
Someplace Safe	\$	350
WELCA Synodical	\$	250
WELCA Thankoffering	\$	600

Total Disbursements	\$	4,066
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Balance on hand December 31, 2023

Checking	\$	279
Savings	\$	1,303

Sandy Pearson, Treasurer

THE FOUNDATION

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH FOUNDATION ENDOWMENT FUND INCOME AND EXPENSE For Year End December 31, 2023

Income		
Memorials	\$	7,764
Income from Investments	\$	<u>69,716</u>
Total Income	\$	77,480
Dedicated Income	\$	<u>14,201</u>
Income Available for Benevolence 2023	\$	<u><u>63,280</u></u>
<u>BENEVOLENCE: Paid in 2023</u>		
A Place to Belong	\$	1,000
Archives Supplies	\$	1,535
Bibles Youth	\$	437
ELCA Global Mission	\$	500
Food Cards Salvation Army	\$	4,442
Food Shelf	\$	4,500
Jail Inc.	\$	400
Jeff Firzkappes	\$	1,000
Lake Region Half House	\$	500
Luther Crest Bible Camp Operation funds	\$	5,000
Luther Seminary Rural Focus	\$	2,000
Meals By Wheels	\$	2,500
Mill Street Chapel	\$	1,500
Morning Watch	\$	500
Otter Cove Children's Museum	\$	500
Pastor Development	\$	1,550
Quilts for High School	\$	1,200
Salvation Army	\$	4,000
Scholarships - Church Colleges	\$	1,500
Scholarships to Luther Crest for Kids	\$	1,468
Shop With A Hero	\$	3,000
Some Place Safe	\$	1,200
United Way Feeding Backpack Program	\$	5,000
United Way Imagination Library	\$	1,000
Women Quilters Love Day	\$	1,500
Total Benevolence	\$	<u>47,731</u>
Other Expenses - Stamps	\$	<u>83</u>
Total Amount Expense	\$	<u><u>47,815</u></u>

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH FOUNDATION
ENDOWMENT FUND
For Year End December 31, 2023

Bank Accounts

Treasury Money Market	\$	10,771
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Total Bank Accounts	\$	74,493
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Investment Accounts

American Balance Fund	\$	8,458
Otter Tail Power Stock	\$	205,288
Star Fund M Nelson Scholarship	\$	17,280
Vanguard Total Bond Market Index	\$	657,151
Vanguard Total International Bond Market Index	\$	79,584
Vanguard Total International Stock Market Index	\$	30,688
Vanguard Total Stock Market Index	\$	715,982
DL "Lindy" Thoreson & Harriet K Thoreson		
Balance Stock Fund	\$	259,730
Franklin Income Series	\$	87,094
Franklin Strategic Income	\$	60,894
Franklin Templeton Utilities	\$	107,722
Templeton Global Bond	\$	<u>45,793</u>

Total Investments	\$	<u>2,275,664</u>
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Total Endowment Fund	\$	<u>2,350,157</u>
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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tim Johnson -President
Linda Mellon Vice-President
Vicki Hanneman Secretary
Leonard Hatzenbuhler Treasurer
Brad Larson Trustee
Jennifer Smestad Trustee
Barret Wicklund Trustee

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CEMETERY

First Lutheran's two cemeteries are open to all First Lutheran members as well as people from other faiths and traditions. The largest cemetery, referred to as the North Cemetery is in Fergus Falls Township about three miles northwest of the church. The other cemetery, referred to as the South Cemetery is located in Dane Prairie Township approximately 21/2 miles southeast of the church. The committee's goal is to keep these areas well groomed, i.e., grass mowed regularly, weed control, trees pruned, and removal of old flowers and ornaments and to keep driveways in good condition. Our main objective is to assist families in selecting a proper burial plot for their loved ones at the time of need. Another important task is to see that a written notice is sent to each family of their plot selection including the rules and regulations of the cemetery. All plot ownership records are available at the church. The committee also assists local funeral homes and monument companies in locating and marking grave plots when requested. Within the North Cemetery is a shelter in which a detailed directory is housed to assist families and other visitors in locating the resting place of their loved ones.

During the calendar year of 2023 there were a total of 6 burials in the North Cemetery and 1 burial in the South Cemetery. The committee continues to maintain both cemeteries to the highest standards so as to make them inviting to all who choose to visit their deceased loved ones.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Hermes, Secretary

Committee Members: Terry Gervais (President), Mary Johnson (Vice-President), Leonard Hatzenbuhler (Treasurer), Steve Leitte, Keary Toso, Gerry Toso, Lowell Wendel, McKenna Kvern, Todd Kvern

**First Lutheran Church Cemeteries
For Year End December 31, 2023**

Maintenance Account

Balance January 1, 2023		\$	2,148
Income			
From Headstone	\$	1,546	
Dividend from investments	\$	3,441	
Columbaria	\$	10,000	
Total Income And Transfer		\$	14,987
Expense			
Columbaria Down Payment	\$	3,935	
Directory Update	\$	241	
Tree Removal	\$	1,400	
Supplies	\$	308	
Mowing	\$	750	
Total Expense		\$	6,634
Balance December 31, 2023		\$	10,501

Permanent Care Account

Balance January 1, 2023		\$	2,770
Income:			
Memorial	\$	2,120	
Lot Sold	\$	1,800	
Interment Fee	\$	850	
Transfer Fee	\$	25	
Interest	\$	5	
		\$	4,800
Amount transferred to Investment		\$	6,200
Balance December 31, 2023		\$	1,369

Head Stone Account

Balance January 1, 2023		\$	1,546
Income			
Total Income			
Transfer to Maintenance		\$	1,546
Total Expense		\$	1,546
Balance December 31, 2023		\$	-

Continued on next page.

Investment Funds

Balance January 1, 2023	\$	73,897
Amount invested	\$	6,200
Increase (Decrease)in value	\$	3,103
Balance December 31, 2023	\$	83,201

All Funds

Fund Balance January 01, 2023	\$	80,361
Fund Balance December, 31, 2023	\$	95,071
Value Increase (Decrease)	\$	14,710

Leonard Hatzenbuhler
Treasurer

151ST ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 29, 2023

These minutes cannot be located at this time. If you have a copy of them, please turn them in to the church office.

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT



Luther Crest Strives towards Vision 2025

On behalf of the Luther Crest Board, I want to **thank you** for your partnership and support over the past year. The Luther Crest Board acknowledges and appreciates the partnership and the efforts made over the past year, especially considering the changes the organization has faced. Collaboration, teamwork, and dedication are essential in navigating transitions and challenges. Pastor Maddie Elliott was installed as the new Executive Director of Luther Crest and we are so thankful for the gift she brings to the ministry and organization of Luther Crest. If there are any specific actions, plans, or initiatives you'd like to discuss or if there are further updates or questions related to Luther Crest, please feel free to share, and I'd be happy to assist or provide information accordingly. As the board, we want Luther Crest to be grounded in faith and ministry and this will happen through the Luther Crest Strategic Vision 2025.

Overall, Luther Crest's shared vision through 2025 reflects a commitment to its mission and values, with a strong emphasis on youth and families, direct experiences, and financial sustainability. The organization seeks to adapt to changing cultural trends while remaining faithful to its core purpose of inspiring faith, stewardship, and community in God's creation.

With Gratitude and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Greg Tvrdek".

Greg Tvrdek - Luther Crest Board President



Annual Report to Congregations: January 2024

PioneerCare’s mission is to promote quality of life in a Christ-like way for those we serve by providing diverse and holistic care, focusing always on individual dignity and worth.

Warmest greetings to our congregational partners in our shared ministry of caring for those in need. Church engagement has continued to guide Pioneer in fulfilling its valuable mission.

PioneerCare leadership – including those serving as Auxiliary, Foundation, and Corporate Board members – help position our organization for a secure future. Your congregation’s elected delegates to Pioneer also serve a formal role in PioneerCare’s governance. Many others serve as volunteers and faithfully engage with loved ones here, and for that we are grateful.

In August 2023, we gathered advice and input from many of you for a planned project for PioneerCare that enhances care and quality of life, and at the same time, provides continued financial viability to provide that care. Building from your input, we have launched a three-year, \$2 million *Securing the Future* capital campaign. Together with your support of this campaign, we build on PioneerCare’s proven commitment to promote quality of life in a Christ-like way for our loved ones, friends, and neighbors – now and into the future.

As we advance into 2024 and beyond, PioneerCare will engage closely with our sponsoring congregations in this creative endeavor to secure the future of aging in our community. Meantime, we invite you to access details about the *Securing the Future* capital campaign at:

www.pioneercare.org/securing-the-future

CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP

Thanks to Bonnie Denzel, Patricia Lindholm*, Dean Monke*, Pastor Paul Nelson*, David Schneeberger, and Peggy Underwood for their volunteer leadership of the campaign. Staff leadership includes Steve Guttormson, Nathan Johnson, and Karen Wulfekuhle. Pastor Jon Olson and Pastor Phillip Reitz have provided campaign consulting services.

*Campaign Co-Chairs

PIONEERCARE KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions regarding PioneerCare, please contact us:

Nathan Johnson, PioneerCare CEO	Phone 218.998.1518
Pr. Krehl Stringer, PioneerCare Chaplain	Phone 218.998.1504
Sara Watkins, Administrator of PioneerCare Center	Phone 218.998.1516
Karen Wulfekuhle, Director of Pioneer Cottages Memory Care	Phone 218.998.9677
Marie Tysdal, Director of Pioneer Pointe Retirement Living	Phone 218.739.7772
Steve Guttormson, PioneerCare Foundation	Phone 218.998.1501



NORTHWESTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD



Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.
You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus." Luke 2:30-31*

Dear Beloved in Christ of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod,

This message is written in the season of Advent, a season I have loved since I was old enough to know that there were seasons. There is something about this season's mix of melancholy and hope, darkness and light, that resonates with me. Children are central to the stories of Advent and Christmas – both in their preciousness and in their vulnerability. Every parent knows the agonizing mix of hope and fear that we carry for our children. As I write this, there is a devastating war happening in the land where the stories of our faith unfolded. And tragically, this war's devastating cost is landing mostly on children. *"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children..." (Matt 2:16).* Join me in praying every day for a just peace in the lands of Israel and Palestine and for protection of the children.

As a parent and now grandparent, I know that the most desperate prayers we pray are for our children. When I visit congregation members and leaders across the synod, one deep question is always lurking: "What will our children's and grandchildren's experience of church be?" What I have learned is that making it about our kids means making it about faith in Jesus, plain and simple. We must give up needing our kids' experience of church to be like ours was, and instead pray for and work toward a church where children simply have a deep faith in Jesus Christ and a community of faith that loves them. It's back to basics! Back to basics often involves letting go of cherished traditions, buildings and ways of doing things that may have worked for us, but now only hinder us from focusing on growing our and our children's faith.

So, much of our work this last year has and will continue to focus on how to become a church where a child's faith can grow. This does not mean throwing programs and events at our kids, hoping something sticks. IT MEANS MAKING OUR LIFE TOGETHER ABOUT OUR FAITH IN JESUS and then generously, freely and often, sharing our faith with our children. Jesus-loving adults are the force that shapes the faith of children. This means freeing up communities to expend less energy on "keeping this thing going," and much more on hearing the gospel, praying, dwelling in God's word, serving the neighbor and seeking Jesus in our everyday life.

Hence, this year has been filled with hard and focused work of continuing to build out a robust network of support and accountability for lay ministers who serve in Word and Sacrament ministry under the mentorship of a seminary-trained, ordained pastor. Our process for vitality of smaller member congregations, "Rural Revival," has drawn us deeply into finding right-sized ways of providing word and sacrament ministry tailored to the unique needs of each community. While neither of these efforts look like "youth ministry," they really are because they free people to be more focused on the basics, more focused on following Jesus. ANY church that is focused on following Jesus is a church that is for the children.

So that is my simple appeal to you as you gather for your annual meetings this year. Let's make it all about being Jesus-followers sharing our faith with everyone, starting with our children.

Your Partner in Christ's Mission,

Bishop Bill Tesch