

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Annual Meeting January 28, 2024

AGENDA

- I. Call to order – Judy Dehnel
- II. Opening Devotion
- III. Approval of agenda
- IV. Approval of minutes
 - a) Annual Meeting – January 22, 2023
 - b) Special Congregation – October 1, 2023
- V. Reports
 - a) Pastor Sarah Rohde
 - b) Pastor Reed Fowler
 - c) President Judy Dehnel
 - d) Faith Formation, Committees, Ministry Teams, Task Forces (written reports)
- VI. Treasurer’s report and 2024 Budget – Mark Sandbo & Lisa Wolf
- VII. Distribution of Endowment Funds – Linda Lichty
- VIII. Recognition of Volunteers
- IX. Election – Nominating Committee
- X. Closing Prayer– Good Courage Prayer (see below)
- XI. Adjournment

Good Courage Prayer

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

Annual Meeting January 22, 2023 Minutes

A quorum was established with over 90 members signed in.

President Cody Warren called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Deacon Jennifer Schneider provided the Opening Devotion with the theme of "What are we looking for?"

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mark Sandbo, seconded by Linda Lichty. The motion passed; agenda approved.

There were two sets of minutes to approve. A motion to approve the minutes from the Annual Meeting January 23, 2022 was made by Jane Allen, seconded by Corrie Walden. The motion passed; minutes approved.

A motion to approve the minutes from the Special Congregation Meeting August 28, 2022 was made by Don Blumenstein, seconded by Ginny Bendickson. The motion passed; minutes approved.

Reports

Pastor Sarah Rohde

Grace has a firm foundation. Rebuilding is easier when there's a good foundation. The Pandemic accelerated "unraveling" in all congregations. We need to discern who are we now and what's next? What do we keep and what do we let go of? There is no blueprint for coming out of a pandemic. We can't keep working harder on what we've always done. We have to try new things, new ways of doing things. Let's be a Community of Faith – and all that that means.

Deacon Jennifer Schneider presented a brief report.

President Cody Warren reviewed the past year with its challenges and accomplishments. We have much to be proud of and much to look forward to.

Committees and Ministry Teams submitted written reports which are included in the printed Annual Report.

Treasurer Mark Sandbo reviewed the 2022 Financial Report and presented the 2023 Budget. A motion to approve the 2023 budget was made by Lee Nelson, seconded by Karen Anderson.

Several questions were asked and answered. Lee Nelson called for the question. The motion passed; 2023 budget approved.

Yvonne Dovick from the Endowment Committee reported that the following grants were approved by the Committee. Each will receive \$1,000.00:

- Grace Lutheran Guatemala Ministry Team
- Dicrose AV/Bless India/Bethel Church
- DARTS Learning Buddies Program
- The CATCH House
- Kids 'N Kinship
- Cassia (Apple Valley Village Health Care)
- Grace Lutheran Choir
- 360 Communities

Outgoing leaders from Committees and Ministry Teams were recognized and presented with a cross made from wood from Bethlehem. See the attached list which is included as part of these minutes. Pastor Sarah presented a special gift for Cody Warren to acknowledge his leadership during this past year.

The Nominating Committee submitted a slate of candidates for open positions which was included in the Annual Report. Lisa Wolf added one name that had not been included on the written report: Corey Willert is up for election for a 2nd term on Risk Management. Nominations from the floor were open. No new nominations received.

A motion to elect the entire slate of candidates was made by Dick Dehnel, seconded by Ron Maye. The motion passed; all were elected. See the attached list entitled **2023 Committee Leadership** which is included as part of these minutes.

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

A motion to adjourn was made by Mark Sandbo, seconded by Mark Jesh. Motion passed; meeting adjourned at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Dehnel

Congregational Meeting

October 1, 2023

Minutes

Judy Dehnel, President, called the meeting to order at 10:35 am and provided an overview. Pastor Sarah provided an opening devotion, understanding of “vocation”.

Judy announced that a quorum had been established.

Call Committee members (Amanda Schillinger, Michael Olivier, Linda Lichty, Marlys Brandell, Mark Jesh, and Will Morgan) provided comments and thoughts about the process and about Pastor Reed specifically.

Amanda Schillinger made the following motion:

At the recommendation of the Call Committee and the Church Council for Grace Lutheran Church of Apple Valley, MN, it is moved to extend a letter of call to Reed Fowler to serve as Associate Pastor. Second provided by Marlys Thompson.

Discussion by the congregation – some positive, some negative, several questions; many thanks to the call committee for their hard, prayerful work.

Paper ballots were distributed, collected, and then counted by Amy Fleser, Charlotte Green and Frank Flicek.

Judy announced the results of the vote:

Yes: 138

No: 15

The motion carries and Pastor Reed is called to Grace!

Linda Lichty provided a closing devotion

Pete Cleary moved to adjourn, Corey Walden seconded and the meeting ended.

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Bendickson

2023 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

Judy Dehnel, President

Todd Walden, Vice-President

Mark Sandbo, Treasurer

Naomi Owen, Secretary

Ginny Bendickson, Member at Large

Marie Christianson, Member at Large

Elizabeth Lee, Member at Large

Ron Maye, Member at Large

Jeff Wangstad, Member at Large

2023 GRACE AT-A-GLANCE

Members 950

New Members 28

Transferred out 17

Baptisms 6

Confirmations 7

Funerals 11

Grace Staff *(as of 12/31/23)*

Rostered Leaders

Sarah Rohde Pastor

Reed Fowler Pastor

Program Staff

Lisa Sampson Director of Faith Formation

Administrative Staff

Lisa Wolf Director of Church Operations

Mary Culbertson Office Administrator

Facilities Staff

Eric Rasmus[^] Building & Technology

Payton Henderson Custodian

Music Staff

Steve Boehlke* Grace Choir and Bells Director

Sheryl Vande Kamp* Organist

[^] Part-time and volunteer * Part-time

Council President Judy Dehnel Executive Report



“Radically Resilient”

I subscribe to the daily devotions from the Center for Action and Contemplation. Last Sunday, they announced the theme for the devotions for 2024: Radical Resiliency. This is their definition: “Radical resilience means radical, deep attention to the deepest roots of resilience. Resilience is the capacity to withstand and recover from hardship or difficulty. It has to do with the ability to spring back into shape after you’ve been beaten down or knocked over or bent over.” That’s us. We are radically resilient!

I have always thought that this congregation is amazingly resilient (maybe even radically) and we have shown that resiliency in the last 4+ years. Since August of 2019, we have persevered through multiple interim pastors, a global pandemic, changes in staff, and a universal changing in church culture. And yet, here we are: a growing congregation, reaching out to our community, learning new ways to be church, attracting new members, learning to listen to each other and to God.

2023 has been a year of recovery and rebuilding. The pastors, staff, and council have studied what it might mean to be church in today’s world, and what that means for Grace. We have been working together to build a foundation that will support, enable, and encourage community, growth, and change.

Is the work done? Complete? Absolutely not. Nor will it ever be done or complete. Doing the work of Christ in the world can be difficult, messy, and challenging but this community, this congregation, keeps at it. We are, after all, radically resilient!

Judy Dehnel

Pastor Sarah Rohde

Staff Report



For my annual report this year, I am reflecting on all that I've experienced and witnessed at Grace since my arrival. I have been at Grace for just over a year now, and over the course of these last fourteen months, I have certainly witnessed a spirit of healing and renewed vitality among us. When I arrived, Grace was still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the many transitions in pastoral and staff leadership. We still grieve these losses, as we also strive to lean into God's resurrecting love and the possibilities that are in front of us.

Right before Jesus ascends to be with God, Jesus says to those around him: "You are witnesses to these things." It is a final charge to them, to keep on witnessing to God's power to bring new life, even as Jesus departs from them. I believe that charge continues to us, as people of faith today, to be witnesses! And as I think over the past year, I can think of so many times when we have indeed been witnesses to the things of God in our life together: to healing, to joy, to support in difficult times, to community-building, to forgiveness, to new beginnings, to love!

As I reflect on the past year, here are some of the places where we have witnessed the Spirit at work:

- The theme of "listening" has guided the leadership of this congregation over the past year. We are learning that, to follow God, often requires stepping outside of what we know and what we've always done so that we can listen. We listen for God in Scripture, in the stories that others share with us, in the hungers and longings of our hearts and of our communities. This practice of listening strengthens our sense of belonging and awakens new ideas among us.
- More and more congregants have been involved in worship – baking communion bread, reading Scripture, serving communion, greeting at the front doors, sharing music. Worship is where we step into a vision of what the world can be when God's love is at the center, and having many of you involved week to week is a testament to that!

- We welcomed 28 new members in 2023. Young and old, families and single people, LGBTQIA+ and straight. When I ask our new members what drew them to Grace, the things I hear most often are: expansive welcome, worship services that are accessible and meaningful, the embrace of children, the many opportunities to get involved, and the spaces we provide here to talk about things that really matter.
- The farewells and the hellos on staff. We give thanks for the ministry and faithfulness of Kathy Kuehne and Joni Baldwin, and we give thanks for the new staff members that have joined the team. Over the past year, we welcomed: Payton Henderson (Custodian), Pastor Reed (Associate Pastor), Mary Culbertson (Office Administrator), and Lisa Wolf (Director of Church Operations).
- The spiritual practice of generosity continues to be alive in this congregation – in the ways we come together to support the operating costs of our ministry and building, but also in the generous support of the annual school supply and food drives, the fundraisers for Guatemala shoes, brats, lefse, the Habitat for Humanity build, etc.
- Sunday Forums and Midweek Bible Studies. These regular opportunities to learn together have nourished and challenged us. Attendance at these classes has remained strong and consistent throughout the year.
- Faith Formation – we’ve innovated children and youth ministries to focus on stronger relationships and faith development and to adapt to the changing needs of our families
- Guatemala partnership – we renewed our covenant with Mensajero de Cristo Lutheran Church and sent another delegation this past November.
- Partnership with The Link - our shared ministry and shared space continues to offer much-needed support to vulnerable young people in our community

I end on a note of gratitude: for all the people who make Grace Lutheran the community that it is, for the staff with whom I get to share the daily joys and challenges of ministry, and for God, who keeps creating a way, and who calls us to keep witnessing.

In Christ,
 Pastor Sarah Rohde
 Submitted 1/12/24

Pastor Reed Fowler

Staff Report



As I write this pastoral report, I am so mindful that I have only been part of this community for a little under three months. I am filled with gratitude for how this community of faith has welcomed me, and am honored to serve as one of your pastors. I wanted to share a few noticing's and questions as we enter into 2024.

This is a community who wants to care for each other, our neighbors, and the world. Congregational care and outreach are two of the areas you have called me to focus on in this community. As we begin refreshing existing care ministries and dream about how we care for each other now, in this moment in time, I am reminded again and again that this work moves at the speed of trust and relationship. How can we honor our capacity, honor the fullness of our lives, and move with intention – not frenetically trying to replicate what was, but to create structures that are adaptable to the needs of this congregation, our neighbors, and the world?

This is a community who wants to know each other better. Many of you have shared how wonderful it can be to be in worship, look around, and see so many new faces. Many of you have shared how isolating it can be to be in worship, look around, and see so many new faces. How can we best create spaces to share stories, to ask curious questions, to strengthen existing connections, and create new ones? How can we further strengthen our tangible practices of welcome, while also transforming and changing as we learn more about the ways embedded bias has unconsciously shaped us, and as we live in the midst of oppressive structures, trying to create something different, to live differently than we are being pushed to do?

This is a community who wants to dwell with God. To wrestle with scripture, to take time for prayer, to take time for reflection, to repeatedly ask the question, how do we live out our faith in our day-to-day lives? Here is where I remind you, and myself, that we do not, and will not, ever have all of the answers. God's mystery, God's grace, God's love, is constantly unfolding in our embodied lives. But I do know that when we worship together, when we pray together, I feel God among us. How can we make time to slow down, breathe, sit in stillness, listen for God? When there is discomfort, or conflict, or disagreements, how can we strengthen our ability to be in those messy, in-between spaces that make up so much of our lives together?

I have felt so much renewed sense of energy and mission as we move into 2024 – I pray that as we journey together, trusting in God, that we take time to celebrate what's going well, grieve the losses we have experienced, and to continue to allow ourselves to be transformed and changed by each other, and by God in the world.

In Christ,

Pastor Reed Fowler

Respectfully submitted 1/11/24



Lisa Sampson
Director of Faith Formation
Staff Report



In last year's report I identified 2023 as a year to be adapting and trying new ministry ideas and that is what we did! Most significantly, we remodeled our Confirmation Ministry moving from a weekly format to monthly retreat-based gatherings. In early 2023, I tested retreat-style learning with each of the three grades and found that after spending a whole day together, friendships were created along with a camaraderie that wasn't there when they were spending an hour together on Wednesday nights. Retreats also provide the opportunity to more thoroughly explore Bible stories and topics using a variety of learning methods. Both parents and students have embraced the change we made in the fall.

We value children in worship and continue to welcome kids into both Praygrounds, provide Kid's Bulletins, and create spaces for them to hear and engage with stories and people of the Bible. Grace Bible School was no longer meeting the needs of families and teachers were hard to find, which presented us with a challenge of how to best address this. "Kids Connect" was created to allow kids to attend most of worship with their families, while taking them out for a short period for an age-level Bible story and activity during the sermon. The kids return to worship to participate in the prayers, communion, noisy offering, and sending. For kids who want to go deeper, Big Bible Dig was created as a once-a-month class to do an age-appropriate Bible study.

In 2024, our challenge will be to continue to search for best ministry practices to meet the needs of families, children, and youth in our busy world that has a deep need for connection to others and our Creator. It will be a joy to continue to learn and grow together in the year ahead.



Committees, Ministries & Task Force Reports

Audit Committee

Committee Chair: Ryan Fleser

Committee Members: Paul Langeness, James Peterson

Mission Statement/Purpose: To provide an independent evaluation of the financial records and the internal controls of the congregation for the purposes of providing an opinion on the reasonableness of the congregation's financial statements and recommending improvements to its internal controls. *ELCA Congregational Audit Guide*

2023 Highlights:

- The third consecutive annual audit began on May 15, 2023, and concluded on July 27, 2023, meeting 11 times.
- The audit objectives related to Grace Lutheran Church of Apple Valley financial books, records, and operations for calendar year 2022.
- Ryan completed his third and final year on the audit committee.
- Paul and James joined the audit committee for their first year.
- The financial audit guideline written last year was used and updated accordingly.

No issues were identified but eight recommendations to help with future audits were provided. The audit report was submitted in August to the church Treasurer and Accountant.

Children, Youth, and Family Ministry

Submitted by Lisa Sampson, Director of Faith Formation, on behalf of the CYF Ministry

Mission/Purpose: To encourage a broad, vital, balanced ministry that includes personal faith, education, witness, stewardship, service and fellowship. Enriching the worship experience for families including our children and youth, by modeling that God loves everyone just as they are, and by developing programs to engage all families.

While the mission and purpose of this team remains vital, we need to reexamine how to meet the needs of families today. Attendance for 2023 planned events informed us of this need. We will continue to strategize and meet with families to learn how to live into our mission.

Challenges and growing for 2024: Identifying Faith Formation events that families will find value in. Welcoming the many new families at Grace!

Clown Ministry

Chair: Brad Stone

The Clown Ministry at Grace is a club named Clowns Across the River. Our goal is to spread joy, enrich Grace Lutheran Church activities and support community and charity events. In the summer, the Clowns Across the River are busy with the local parades.

The rest of the year involves charity events including Special Olympics, Make a Wish, Crohn's and Colitis, Juvenile Diabetes, Prior Lake Little Market, nursing homes, and Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. The clowns participate in the various Grace Lutheran Church activities including the Block Party, Trunk or Treat, and monthly children's sermons.

The Clown Ministry and Grace Lutheran Church also supports a mission church called Bethel Gospel Church in Chennai India through a grant from the endowment fund. This mission church continues to thrive and bring the good news to a country where Jesus is not well known. The children of India have the month of May off from school. This is the perfect time for the traveling Bethel Vacation Bible School to reach the children in and around Chennai.

In addition, this year a nine-week program called Seeds of Hope taught teenagers how to have a healthy relationship with God and each other.

Endowment Committee

Committee Chair: Linda Lichty

Committee Members: Karen Anderson (Financial Secretary), Gary Austin, Yvonne Dovick, Kay Hocking (Recording Secretary) - Thanks to retiring member Yvonne Dovick

Mission Statement/Purpose: Entrusting the present and future of Grace Lutheran Church through thoughtful utilization of lifetime resources.

December 31, 2021 total assets:	\$294,121.18
December 31, 2022 total assets:	\$243,522.03
December 31, 2023 total assets:	\$282,800.24

2023 Interest, Dividends	\$10,699.23
2023 Ministry Growth Fund Market change	\$19,248.73
2023 Gifts to the Grace Endowment Fund: (Including 2023 All Saint's Gifts)	\$ 8,112.75 (\$ 2,513.50)

2024 Gifts from the Grace Endowment Fund:

Designated Funds:

Shirley Kindem – Grace Choir	\$ 900.00
360 Communities	\$ 900.00
The Elder Fund (Augustana)	\$ 900.00
Earl and Joanne Jensen Grace Youth Fund	\$ 900.00

Grace Fund (undesigned)

Bless India	\$ 900.00
CATCH	\$ 900.00
DARTS	\$ 900.00
Eagan Women of Note	\$ 900.00
Kids 'n Kinship	\$ 900.00
SALT	\$ 900.00
SPAS ILAG - Guatemala	\$ 900.00

Total 2024 Gifts from the Endowment Fund	\$ 9900.00
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Finance Committee

Committee Members: Mike Sorensen, Mark Brandell

Mission Statement/Purpose: To provide strategic planning and long-term vision for financial success, including monitoring Grace expenses and procedures for sound accounting practices.

2023 Highlights:

- Made recommendations to reduce costs associated with General P & L.
- Partnered with the stewardship committee for Mortgage reduction.

Looking to 2024:

- This team hopes to meet regularly in 2024, and will reengage with goals and tasks with better direction from leadership.

Guatemala Ministry

Committee Chair: Chuck Swanson

Committee Members: Marge Hoffmann, Melissa Loe, Cathy Peregrino, Megan Skalsky, Sophie Skalsky, Patricia Wick, Lisa Wolf

2023 Highlights:

- The 2023 highlights of Grace Lutheran's partnership with Messenger of Christ Lutheran Church in Santa Elena, Guatemala, included the renewal of a three-year Covenant and a visit to their congregation in November.
- Eight members of Grace traveled to Guatemala to "walk together" with our friends in Santa Elena through worship, service, and fellowship.
- They also visited ILAG's elementary school and the Milagro Women's Center in Guatemala City.

Holiday Boutique and Lefse Sale Task Force

Task Force Chair: Linda Lichty

Task Force Members: Karen Anderson, Dianna Austin, Eric Rasmus, Vanessa Utell, Lisa Wolf, Dani Wolf

Attendance: 1835 guests during the day

Vendors: 54 vendors occupied 73 booths

Total income after expenses:

- Vendor Registration: \$ 3788.37
- Lefse: \$ 5574.99
- Diner: \$ 1016.41
- Bake Sale: \$ 1377.48
- Desserts: \$ 560.90

Holiday Boutique and Lefse Sale Task Force, cont.

Vendor and Lefse proceeds were donated to:

- The Neighborhood
- The Grace Choir
- The Grace General Fund for the boiler

Diner proceeds are designated for ILAG.

Bake Sale proceeds are designated for the Property Committee.

Date for the next Boutique and Sale: November 9, 2024

Music Ministry

Submitted by Steve Boehlke, Grace Choir and Bells Director

2023 was a good year for the music at Grace. Two new people joined the Bells, and five new people joined the Choir.

- In the spring we were able to purchase a new piano for Friendship Hall. The Minnesota Valley Men's Chorale helped by providing half the costs.
- Sheryl Vande Kamp continues to be the organist and lead Grace in our weekly worship with her organ playing.
- We are grateful for the many people that provided special music on the 4th Sunday of the month and during the summer.
- The popup "Grace Orchestra" that provided music on the 3rd Sunday of Advent was a huge success, and we hope to continue this musical event. We want to thank all who participated.
- We are thankful to the many voices that provide leadership by singing in small ensembles and as Cantors. You provide a strong addition to the worship at Grace. We are working to involve you more in worship.
- Finally, I am thankful to be working with the members of the Grace Bells and Grace Choir. They are a dedicated group of members that help provide musical leadership each Sunday.

If you have any questions or would like to be involved in the music at Grace, please contact me and we will find a spot for you.

Nominating Committee

Committee Chair: Lisa Wolf

Committee Members: Sally Schumack, Bob Allen

Mission Statement/Purpose: The Nominating Committee helps match Grace members with committees and teams where they can use their skills and passion. A slate of candidates qualified and willing to serve in elected positions within the congregation is presented at the annual meeting.

Outreach Ministry

Chair: Carla Screeden

Members: Jayne Carrington, Patty Kerlin, Candy Leuthe, Amanda Peterson, Becky Prasek

Mission Statement/Purpose: The Outreach Ministry serves to help connect our congregation with our surrounding community by supporting a number of organizations with our time, Talents, and treasures.

Outreach narrowed its focus to five events throughout 2023, all generously supported by the congregation. In early 2023, the committee had a very small (four) but loyal membership, and we are overjoyed to have added two new members, with a third joining us in 2024. Our organizational partners continue to express their gratitude for Grace's incredible response to their community need.

Highlights from 2023:

- March Minnesota Food Share Month. Five grocery carts of food and \$1387 to SOTV Food shelf.
- Habitat for Humanity. Farmington August 14-18 included 12 Grace volunteers plus a meal provided on the 15th.
- Westview School Drive in August resulted in three grocery carts of needed school supplies and \$583.
- Every Meal supporting Ceder Park Elementary. \$2270 donated toward the meals and 8-10 volunteers distribute food at the school each Friday during the school year.
- Giving Tree during November. \$2645 in Gift Cards for six community organizations plus kids clothing, Christmas items for the elderly, warm clothing for the young adults, and infant needs for Kaitlyn's Closet.

Personnel Committee

Committee Chair: Jane Allen

Committee Members: Marlys Brandell, Will Morgan, Sharon Engelland

Mission Statement/Purpose: The Personnel Committee supports and fulfills the vision of Grace Lutheran Church by providing human resources expertise to help Grace Lutheran Church support its employees through community, collaboration, research, and shared best practices. The committee makes recommendations as needed to the Church Council regarding policies of employment at Grace Lutheran Church. The committee also ensures goals are in compliance with GLC bylaws and vision statement.

2023 Highlights:

- Updated job descriptions for Director of Church Operations, Office Administrator, and Custodian.

Personnel Committee, cont.

- Recruited for the Director of Church Operations position.
- Recruited for the Office Administrator position.
- Recruited for the Custodian position.
- Reviewed and revised the Personnel Manual to align with updated GLC bylaws.
- Assisted with other personnel-related matters.
- Conducted several exit interviews in 2023.

Goals for 2024:

- Assist pastors with the annual performance appraisal process.
- Continue to provide guidance and assistance with personnel-related matters.
- Review and update the current Personnel Manual; include new MN Safe & Sick Leave law.

Property Committee

Committee Chair: Dave Bendickson

Committee Members: Mark Owen, Craig Egerman, Dan Wetenkamp, Pete Cleary

This year the Property Committee again managed two fundraisers that helped to raise money to assist with property-related expenses for the church. We hosted a brat sale in July here at church and a bake sale held in conjunction with the craft sale in November. In 2023 those fundraisers helped raise over \$3,500.00.

Each year the Property Committee establishes a lawn mowing schedule among commission members and volunteers to keep the lawn looking good and to avoid paying an outside company to do this. The Property Committee also helps to organize volunteers for shoveling and snow blowing the sidewalks of the church property.

The Property Committee oversees the general maintenance of the plants and trees on the church property. This includes helping with the spring start up and fall closing of the sprinkler system, as well as activities such as planting, splitting, weeding, and trimming of various plants, general outside cleaning, and managing the mulch beds around the church.

The Property Committee works on various property upkeep and maintenance projects both inside and outside of the building. Projects this year included repairing some holes on the outside of the building, painting the new upstairs offices, installation of a new locking mailbox, and installation of new privacy fences around the air conditioning units. We also assisted with the effort to replace the sanctuary lights in the six side areas with new LED units. We were also involved in the planning phase for the new rain garden.

Property Committee, cont.

The committee helped other committees this year as well. Each year the Property Committee helps in the Christmas season with decorating the church. This includes getting the items out of the basement storage area, bringing those items upstairs, and helping with decorating the church. After the Christmas season is over, everything is broken down and moved back to the basement storage area.

Racial Justice Ministry Team

Chair: Dave Leuthe

Members: Ron Maye, Theresa Schulz, Ingrid Anderson Sampo, Laurie Ollhoff, Bob Discher, Amanda Peterson

Mission Statement/Purpose: The team seeks to shine a light on injustice and build relationships that will equip us for serving our various communities through our faith sharing. Our program's purpose is built on three pillars:

- Exploring white culture and our unearned advantages
- Learning to understand differing cultures and traditions
- Connecting with diverse communities at Grace and beyond

2023 Highlights:

During 2023, we paused the efforts of our previous three years to work with Pastor Sarah and Deacon Jennifer to discern our most important priorities. We also met with Pastor Reed in November to get to know them and to begin to discern potential efforts we could help lead that will serve the congregation and community best in 2024.

Goals for 2024:

Our priorities for moving forward are to: 1) come into alignment with our congregational leaders around a collective vision as we grow into what God is calling us to be, and 2) inspire and invite dialogue and development of relationships with members of our congregation.

As we listen and learn more from each other about what we believe about how we see racial justice happening in the world around us, we are confident that the Holy Spirit will work through each of us to see ways that we can live out our calling in respectful and faith-deepening conversations with others we get to know in our lives. We also believe that listening to others share their thoughts, beliefs, and ideas, will enrich and inspire our own stories that we can share. As we practice appreciating other perspectives, it will better equip us to have deeper conversations with our families, friends, neighbors, and others we meet daily in the world.

Racial Justice Ministry Team, cont.

We hope to accomplish these goals through forums, temple talks, sharing of congregational stories, book studies, small groups, and one-on-one conversations with the people we meet and get to know better. It is also our priority to re-establish and maintain a better website for sharing information and stories. We view racial justice as part of our daily experience of living life together in harmony with everyone we meet in church and also in the world, as we live our lives appreciating the gift of neighbors that God has blessed us with.

Is racial justice important to you? We invite you to take part in some upcoming racial justice learning opportunities—book discussions, forums, and outreach to name a few.

Do you want to make a difference? The Racial Justice Team encourages you to come and see—consider assisting our team with projects and events or even joining our team's efforts.

Reconciling in Christ Ministry

Submitted by Melissa Loe, RIC chairperson, on behalf of the RIC Ministry Team

The RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Ministry Team aims to support Grace Lutheran Church by helping GLC to welcome people and families of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and to work to promote equity and inclusion, especially for those among us who are members of marginalized groups.

In 2023, we found ourselves questioning our role, purpose, and scope of work at Grace. Our activities were few this year, but we invested in deep and thoughtful conversations with one another and with our pastoral staff, and we have ended the year with a clearer understanding of our role, a renewed commitment, and a growth in membership.

In 2023 we:

- assisted in leading the congregation in celebrating RIC Sunday in January,
- helped organize and lead Pride Sunday at Grace in June,
- welcomed several new members,
- and engaged in prayer and dialogue to clarify our role at Grace:
 - Communication
 - Education
 - Lamentation
 - Celebration

Risk Management Committee

Committee Chair: Corey S. Willert

Committee Members: Allen Bosch, Kellie Lewis

Mission Statement/Purpose: Assess the areas of risk to our people's property and faithfully seek ways to reduce, transfer, or eliminate that risk. Work to determine and establish—with approval of the Congregation, Council, policies, regulations, and instructions—governing the use of the church facility and its equipment.

2023 Highlights:

- Recorded digital inventory of building contents for insurance purposes.
- Continue to evaluate Graces' insurance policy/premiums/coverage with Church Mutual to ensure adequate coverage. Premium increases are expected.
- Evaluated a need for and recommended an upgraded electronic card-key system for front door access. Installation was completed in 2023.
- Continue to evaluate Grace's security system needs including video, alarms, fire.
- Continue to review/evaluate Policies and Procedures.

Looking Ahead:

Risk is all around us, we will continue to do our part to ensure Grace operates in a safe and effective manner.

Stewardship Committee

Committee Chair: Amanda Schillinger

Committee Members: Scot DeGraff, Paula Albright, Thomas Renner, Deb Hansmeier

The Stewardship committee led Grace's annual giving campaign this year. Our theme was "For Such a Time as This." This guiding phrase comes from the book of Esther. Our campaign featured members sharing why they give to Grace, forums on our church's finances and the different ways people can give to Grace, a display reflecting the activities and work our church does, assisting members in signing up for Breeze, and the collection of commitment cards from the congregation on December 10 for Commitment Sunday. We want to thank everyone for their support, participation, and commitment to Grace.

Grace Lutheran Church	
Balance Sheet	
As of December 31, 2023	
	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 725,332.17
Total Accounts Receivable	\$ 0.00
Total Current Assets	\$ 732,982.10
Fixed Assets	
1520. Building	5,927,097.35
1540. Eq/Furnishings	277,579.18
1560. Land Improvements	27,669.50
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 6,232,346.03
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 6,965,328.13
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Total Accounts Payable	\$ 15,125.53
Total Credit Cards	\$ 1,034.61
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 16,160.14
Long-Term Liabilities	
2425. 2012 Building Mortgage	1,910,570.19
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 1,910,570.19
Total Liabilities	\$ 1,926,730.33
Equity	
3100. Memorial Fund	24,853.51
Total 3200. Endowment Fund	\$ 283,900.68
Opening Bal Equity	1,314,801.48
Retained Earnings	3,269,428.80
Net Income	145,613.33
Total Equity	\$ 5,038,597.80
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 6,965,328.13

Grace Lutheran Church Profit and Loss by Class

January - December 2023

	Funds In/Out	General operations	TOTAL	2023 Budget
Income				
4000. GENERAL				
4010. Offerings				
4011. Member Contributions		952,458.29	952,458.29	1,100,000.00
4012. Loose		4,337.49	4,337.49	1,000.00
4017. Thrivent Choice		2,690.20	2,690.20	5,000.00
Employee Retention Credit		126,826.47	126,826.47	0
4021. On-line giving fees		-7,161.32	-7,161.32	-9,300.00
Total 4010. Offerings	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,079,151.13	\$ 1,079,151.13	\$1,096,700.00
Total 4050. Facility Use	\$ 0.00	\$ 17,541.00	\$ 17,541.00	\$15,700.00
4060. Investment Income		402.77	402.77	300
Total 4000. GENERAL	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,097,094.90	\$ 1,097,094.90	\$1,112,700.00
Total 4100. BENEVOLENCE	\$ 2,575.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 2,575.00	\$0.00
Total Fundraising	\$ 20,565.62	\$ 0.00	\$ 20,565.62	
Total Income	\$ 23,140.62	\$ 1,097,094.90	\$ 1,120,235.52	\$1,112,700.00
Expenses				
6000. ADMINISTRATION				
Total 6010. Personnel	\$ 0.00	\$ 614,194.83	\$ 614,194.83	\$693,584.91
Total 6030. Office	\$ 0.00	\$ 33,830.49	\$ 33,830.49	\$42,400.00
Total 6040. Marketing/Communications	\$ 0.00	\$ 3,883.91	\$ 3,883.91	\$930.00
Total 6050. Technology	\$ 0.00	\$ 26,895.65	\$ 26,895.65	\$24,400.00
6060. Debt			0.00	0
Debt - Interest		95,211.85	95,211.85	95,895.96
Total 6060. Debt	\$ 0.00	\$ 95,211.85	\$ 95,211.85	\$95,895.96
Total 6000. ADMINISTRATION	\$ 0.00	\$ 774,016.73	\$ 774,016.73	\$857,210.87
Total 6100. BENEVOLENCE	-\$ 535.00	\$ 33,035.00	\$ 32,500.00	\$32,200.00
Total 6200. FAITH FORMATION	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,770.34	\$ 1,770.34	\$5,320.00
Total MINISTRY TEAMS/TASK FORCES	\$ 11,347.09	\$ 920.50	\$ 12,267.59	\$ 2,850.00
Total 6560. COUNCIL USE	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,314.60	\$ 1,314.60	\$2,450.00
Total 6570. STEWARDSHIP	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,156.67	\$ 1,156.67	\$1,700.00
Total 6600. WORSHIP/MUSIC	\$ 3,094.95	\$ 8,979.73	\$ 12,074.68	\$8,585.00
Total 6800. PROPERTY/MAINTENANCE	\$ 1,885.45	\$ 137,636.13	\$ 139,521.58	\$119,750.00
Total Expenses	\$ 15,792.49	\$ 958,829.70	\$ 974,622.19	\$1,030,065.87
Surplus/Deficit	\$ 7,348.13	\$ 138,265.20	\$ 145,613.33	\$82,634.13
Principal paid on Debt (reflected on Balance Sheet)		-\$ 172,088.15	-\$ 172,088.15	-\$171,404.04
Net Income	\$ 7,348.13	-\$ 33,822.95	-\$ 26,474.82	-\$ 88,769.91

**Grace Lutheran Church
2024 Budget Overview**

	Actual as of 12/31/23	2024 Budget	
Income			
4000. GENERAL			
4010. Offerings			
4011. Member Contributions	952,458.29	980,415.00	60% from pledged, 40% non-pledged, per previous years' trends
4012. Loose	4,337.49	4,000.00	
4017. Thrivent Choice	2,690.20	3,000.00	
4019. Designated			
Employee Retention Credit	126,826.47	-	
Total 4019. Designated	\$126,826.47	\$ 0.00	
4021. On-line giving fees	(7,161.32)	(7,843.32)	always looking for ways to reduce this
Total 4010. Offerings	\$1,079,151.13	\$979,571.68	
4050. Facility Use			
Members	550.00	500.00	
Nonmembers	2,291.00	2,300.00	
The Link	14,700.00	14,700.00	
Total 4050. Facility Use	\$17,541.00	\$ 17,500.00	
4060. Investment Income	402.77	360.00	
Total 4000. GENERAL	\$1,097,094.90	\$ 997,431.68	
4100-4800. BENEVOLENCE & FUNDRAISERS	\$ 23,140.62	\$ 0.00	These are funds from fundraisers. They are not budgeted but recorded as they come in.
Total Income	\$ 1,120,235.52	\$ 997,431.68	
Expenses			
6000. ADMINISTRATION			
Total 6010. Personnel	\$ 614,194.83	\$ 641,628.17	Includes salaries (3.2% increase), benefits, continuing ed, payroll processing
Total 6030. Office	\$ 33,830.49	\$ 41,093.00	Includes equipment rental, property insurance, work comp insurance, outside audit.
Total 6040. Marketing/Communications	\$ 3,883.91	\$ 26,500.00	Includes \$25,000 for website overhaul
Total 6050. Technology	\$ 26,895.65	\$ 22,000.00	
6060. Debt			
Debt - Principal	172,088.15	180,481.86	
Debt - Interest	95,211.85	86,854.14	
Total 6060. Debt	\$ 267,300.00	\$ 267,336.00	
Total 6000. ADMINISTRATION	\$ 946,104.88	\$ 998,557.17	Includes above categories: Personnel, Office, Marketing, Technology, Debt
Total 6100. BENEVOLENCE	\$ 32,500.00	\$ 32,700.00	Standing commitments (St. Paul Area Synod, Catch House, ILAG, SALT).
Total 6200. FAITH FORMATION	\$ 1,770.34	\$ 4,300.00	
Total 6500/6510. MINISTRY TEAMS/TASK FORCES	\$ 12,267.59	\$ 4,500.00	Includes funding for speakers, initiatives and funds for the 60th Anniversary Celebration. 2023 is higher because it includes costs for the Guatemala Trip.
Total 6560. COUNCIL USE	\$ 1,314.60	\$ 1,975.00	
Total 6570. STEWARDSHIP	\$ 1,156.67	\$ 21,220.00	Includes \$20,000 budgeted for capital campaign consultant
Total 6600. WORSHIP/MUSIC	\$ 12,074.68	\$ 7,850.00	Includes altar guild, pulpit supply, outside musicians, piano & organ tuning & repair, 2023 included cost for musicians for the Wed. services.
Total 6800. PROPERTY/MAINTENANCE	\$ 139,521.58	\$ 124,740.00	Includes equipment repair, inspections, parking lot, etc.. 2023 included a new security system and office relocation expenses.
Total Expenses	\$ 1,146,710.34	\$ 1,195,842.17	
Net Operating Income	-\$ 26,474.82	-\$ 198,410.49	

Thank you to these committee members who have completed their term of office. We appreciate the gift of your time and talents.

Judy Dehnel – Council President
Jeff Wangstad – Council member
Dave Bendickson – Property
Ryan Fleser – Audit
Yvonne Dovick – Endowment Fund
Bob Allen – Nominating
Jane Allen – Personnel
Will Morgan – Personnel
Marlys Brandell – Personnel

We are very grateful for the contributions of all the members serving on committees, ministry teams, and task forces.

2024 GLC Leadership
BOLD indicates election

Term number follows name. Terms are 2 years unless otherwise stated

Church Council

Bob Allen (1)
Melissa Loe (1)
Naomi Owen (2)
Ginny Bendickson (1)
Marie Christianson (2)
Elizabeth Lee (1)
Ron Maye (1)
Mark Sandbo (1)
Todd Walden (1)

Property

Pete Cleary (1)
Russ Damlo (1)
Craig Eggerman (2)
Mark Owen (1)
Dan Wetenkamp (1)

Stewardship

Lee Nelson (1)
Amanda Schillinger (2)
Paula Albright (1)
Scott DeGraff (2)
Deb Hansmeier (1)
Thomas Renner (1)

Audit (3-year term)

James Peterson (1)
Patricia Wick (1)
Paul Langeness (1)

Endowment Fund

Shirley Hansen (1)
Linda Hofstadter (1)
Gary Austin (2)
Karen Anderson (2)
Kay Hocking (1)
Linda Lichty (2)

Nominating

Janet Nelson (1)
Sally Schumack (1)

Personnel

Craig Albright (1)
Doug Droske (1)
Sharon Engelland (1)

Risk Management

Mike Utell (1)
Allen Bosch (1)
Kellie Lewis (1)
Corey Willert (2)

Finance

Mark Brandell (1)
Brian Loe (1)
Mike Sorenson (2)
Paula Tigerman (1)



2023 ANNUAL REPORT of the Saint Paul Area Synod

January 2024

You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

Psalm 65:11 (ELW)

The year 2023 brought us again to in-person worship and events after the long disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. What we did not do as a synod was to return to everything as it had been before. Recognizing that God always calls us forward into a new future, congregations discovered myriad ways to build on the lessons and new practices learned during the pandemic. Likewise, the synod embraced new ways of doing familiar things and experimented with new ideas and programs.

Here are some highlights of the investment of time and energy by the synod office during 2023. All these are made possible because of the generous financial support that passes from congregations to the synod. Thank you for helping us be a church together as we all find ways to be faithful to our callings in a changing and complex world.

An undeniable highlight was the presentation of a check for \$1,000,000 to Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota during Synod Assembly last May. The check is for renovations to a building that will house the Families Together East Side Preschool on the lower level of Grace Lutheran Church in St. Paul. This partnership is one of the pillars of The Planting Hope Campaign, which has raised \$1,473,861 to date at the end of December 2023. This is one half of our overall campaign goal.

In addition to this transformational work with LSS-MN, in 2023 we also launched the first summer of paid internships, funded through The Planting Hope Campaign. From June through August, nine young adults served in a variety of congregations and Lutheran agencies. We are grateful for the work of Pastor Bristol Reading (St. Luke, St. Paul) in overseeing this project. Also, we gave significant financial support to congregational vitality through the campaign. Those investments are detailed later in this report.

Alongside the work of The Planting Hope Campaign, congregations like yours continue to contribute toward our budget of \$1,885,000 in mission support. Fiscal Year 2023 ends on January 31, 2024 and we hope to be at the goal by then. Again, thank you for seeing how your congregation's work is supported and expanded through our common funding of synod and ELCA churchwide ministries. Despite needing to navigate new realities in a post-pandemic world, God continues to crown our efforts with God's abundance. The synod's financial work is guided by David Roinas.

During 2023 there were 28 persons in the candidacy process, preparing to serve the wider church as

pastors or deacons. Currently, 22 persons are serving their first call in the Saint Paul Area Synod. They also participate in a structured program of First Call Theological Education (FCTE). Both candidacy work and FCTE are led by Deacon Krista Lind. This past year two candidates received calls in other synods. As you might imagine, this work is important for the church today and for the church in the coming years.

Candidates ordained in 2023 include Pastor Jennifer Luong, Pastor Jua Jay Her, Pastor Carrie Stiles, Pastor Amy Vigesaa, Pastor Reed Fowler, Deacon Katherine Lindberg. We also received Pastor Stanley Ayashim, recently ordained in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, as a first call pastor through our partnership with the Lutheran World Federation. We welcome these seven new rostered ministers.

In addition to first call candidates, the synod staff works with call committees in more than two dozen congregations each year. In addition, the call manual was revised this past year and new protocols were developed to assist congregations to be open and ready to receive candidates who are persons of color or from the LGBTQIA community. As a synod, we know how important the gifts of all leaders are to the work of God's church.

During times of transition, the synod finds pastors and deacons to serve in interim roles. Those serving in interim ministry meet monthly for prayer, mutual support and learning and are directed by Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer. With Rachel Holsten, front office administrator and registrar, Rolf coordinated the Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders in February, which brought together 165 participants from 52 congregations. The two most attended workshops addressed issues of racism and implicit bias, issues which matter to all of us in this synod. In 2023, the synod also inaugurated the Deeper Dive series, a Zoom gathering for presidents and vice presidents. Twenty-four congregations participated in this inaugural series of monthly leadership training and support.

The synod also provides other initiatives to address congregational vitality. These workshops, which include Tools for the Church, Spiritual Gifts, Stewardship for All Seasons, Building a Culture of Generosity, and Liberating Structures, are led by Pastor Justin Grimm and members of the vitality team. In 2023, participants numbered more than 300.

Serving as mission developers and redevelopers during 2023 were Pastor Liz Eide, Lutheran Church of Peace; Pastor Jon Yurk, Christ the Servant; Pastor Thomas Tsen, Minnesota Faith Chinese; Pastor Dale Stiles, St. Paul in Wyoming; Pastor William Siong and Pastor Jua Jay Her at Eternal Flame; Pastor Gilo Agwa, Foundation of Life; Pastor Jodi Houge, Humble Walk; Deacon Kari Olson, Shobi's Table; and Pastor Ana Becerra, Cristo Rey. Pastors Ben and Kristen Eisele (Farmington Lutheran) completed an exploration for mission possibilities in Rosemount. When asked what is new (or renewed) in this synod, it's easy to see fresh ideas in all these settings.

During 2023 church groups were again able to travel to our partner churches in Guatemala and Tanzania. Five congregational groups were hosted by the Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG). Two members of the Guatemala Committee, Janet Metcalfe and Jennifer Reinhardt, participated in an ELCA Global Mission international consultation in November. In 2023, 200 individuals from 16 congregations, nine affiliate organizations and two colleges traveled to the Iringa Diocese. As bishop, I was also thankful to be with our partners in Tanzania this past November.

The generosity of members of the synod supports our global companions with scholarships, emergency aid, congregation-to-congregation partnerships, and through prayer. Staff members Kirsten Levorson and Susan Seidel oversee the work of Bega Kwa Bega, which we undertake with our siblings in Tanzania.

A grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. allowed additional opportunities for pastors to be well equipped for today's challenges. Synod pastors of color and the synod program staff participated in a facilitated retreat in Sedona, Ariz., in February. In addition, this past year 19 pastors, deacons, mentors, and a facilitator were a part of the Second Act cohort for rostered ministers in their fourth through tenth years of service. Our Lilly grant programs are directed by Leslie Ortiz.

Behind the scenes, Mary Smith oversaw the launch of our new website (spas-elca.org), along with 51 editions of the weekly News and Events newsletter, 40 companion synod newsletters, 300 social media posts, and other essential communication from the synod. (You can sign up to receive our newsletters at spas-elca.org/subscribe-to-synod-news.)

With all this creative work of the synod staff, you may wonder what the bishop does. As bishop, I work on governance with the Synod Council and Executive Committee, as well as meeting with the finance committee. I ordain new pastors and deacons and preach regularly (29 times in congregations, synod and churchwide events in 2023). I help plan the Bishop's Theological Conference and gatherings of the ministerium. I represent the synod on institutional boards and at ecumenical and inter-religious gatherings. I am a member of the Conference of Bishops and through 2023 served as a liaison bishop on the ELCA Church Council, as well as co-chairing the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue. I work with congregations in times of conflict and oversee the discipline of rostered ministers, when needed. Best of all, I serve as a pastor for the pastors and deacons in this synod, meeting regularly with individual leaders.

If you have visited the synod office, you know that we are not a large-scale operation; but if you think about the range of ministry we do together in this synod, you know our collective impact is mighty. We can do so much because of the dedicated talent of the individuals on the synod staff. I am grateful for all that Rachel, Mary, David, Kirsten, Susan, Rolf, Justin, Krista and Leslie have accomplished this past year. I am also grateful for the work Ryan and Astine Bose did in the first half of the year as our short-term volunteers in Iringa. I hope you will join me in thanking the synod staff when you see or speak to them.

Yours in God's service,



Bishop Patricia Lull



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