



**FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
OF LINCOLN**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**

**MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST  
FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD.**

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**AGENDA**  
**ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING**  
**FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**JANUARY 28, 2024**  
**12:30 PM**

- A. Call to Order and Establishment of a quorum (Lee Rockwell, Council President)
- B. Opening Devotions (Lead Pastor Erin Heidelberger)
- C. Approve Agenda (Lee Rockwell)
- D. Approve Minutes of 153<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting January 29, 2023 (Lee Rockwell)
- E. Nominations and Elections (Sandy Latshaw, Nominating Committee Member)
  - 1. Congregational Council
  - 2. Nominating Committee
  - 3. Synod Assembly
  - 4. Endowment Fund Board
- F. 2023 membership Report (Pastor Erin Heidelberger)
- G. Staff and Leadership Recognition (Lee Rockwell)
- H. New Business
  - 1. Approve Budget for 2024 (Scott Williamson, Treasurer)
- I. Questions and Answers relating to Reports (All)
- J. Open Comments Period (Lee Rockwell)
- K. Closing Prayer (Pastor Andrew Kitzing)
- L. Adjournment (Lee Rockwell)

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THIRD  
ANNUAL MEETING  
FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**LINCOLN, NE  
JANUARY 29, 2023  
12:30 PM**

**BY ANN CARLSON, RECORDER**

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

The 153<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of First Evangelical Lutheran Church was called to order at 12:36 by President Fred Ohles. The congregation sang "Jesus Loves Me." It was determined that a quorum (5% of voting members) was established.

**B. OPENING DEVOTIONS**

Pastor Erin Heidelberger read Genesis Chapter 12, verses 1-3 and then led the opening prayer.

**C. APPROVE AGENDA**

It was moved by Lee Rockwell and seconded by Amy Tipton that the agenda be approved. The motion passed.

**D. APPROVE MINUTES OF 152<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 30, 2022**

It was moved by Kay Rockwell and seconded by Kristi Fisher that the minutes be approved. The motion passed.

**E. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

Tera Beermann, a member of the Nominating Committee, presented the nominees.

**a. CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL**

Tera read the names of the Congregational Council Nominees. (Vote for 5): Scott Williamson, Emily Sears, Rod Johnson, Trish Flury, Linda Maack, Judy Batterman, Nancy

Clay, Jenna Troutman, Amy Harrison and Dave Pfister. No nominations were made from the floor.

b. CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL VACANCY (2 YEARS)

It was moved by Kristi Fisher and seconded by Sandy Latshaw that the individual who receives the sixth number of votes will serve for a two-year term on the Congregational Council. The motion passed by acclamation.

c. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Tera read the names of the Nominating Committee Nominees. (Vote for 3): Steve Eicher, Dave Schmitter, Karen Statham, Michelle Sitorius, Carlene Falas and Gene Cotter. No nominations were received from the floor.

d. SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Tera read the names of the Synod Assembly Nominees. (Vote for 5 – at least two men and two women): Jay Sears, Kay Rockwell, Teresa Brohimer, Barb Monson, Craig Heier, Heather Chesnut, Kari Hoeft, Clay Ehlers, Verdell Bohling and Richard Bouma. No nominations were received from the floor.

e. ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD

Tera read the names of the Endowment Fund Board Nominees. (Vote for 1): Terry Kruse, Steve Janssen, and Ann Carlson. No nominations were made from the floor.

F. 2022 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Pastor Erin Heidelberger stated that there were 1,106 baptized members as of December 31, 2022, 922 of whom have been confirmed. There were no questions about the Membership Report in the Annual Meeting packet.

G. STAFF AND LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION

Fred recognized and thanked the following individuals:

Congregational Council – those completing their terms: Tony Anderson, Judy Batterman, Byron Fischer, Amy Harrison, Brian Niebuhr and Dave Pfister.

Endowment Board – completing her first term: Ann Carlson

Pastors – Pastor Erin Heidelberger, Pastor Marsha Anderson and Vicar Erick Hill

Church Staff – Kathleen Simley (Communications Director), Cyndi Crouse (Parish Coordinator), Masako Bacon (Director of Music and Worship), Boyd Bacon (Director of Music and Worship), Sharon Hardel (Director of Youth and Family Ministry), Alex Gray (Building Superintendent), Laura Gaulty (FaithTrek Coordinator), Wyatt Swanson (Church Accountant) and Bryan Hanson (Church Accountant)

Synod Assembly – Les Carlson, Gene Cotter, Sherri Cotter, Judy Batterman and Kari Hoeft

Nominating Committee – Tera Beermann, Sandra Latshaw, Norman Kempf, Jim Sandman, Barb Johnson Frank, Eunice Fischer and Lee Rockwell

Pianists and Choir Directors – Erin Niebuhr, Jan Modica, Christine Carman and Kristina Hanson

#### H. NEW BUSINESS

##### a. MOTION TO APPROVE BUDGET FOR 2023 (Brian Niebuhr, Treasurer)

Fred thanked Brian for being Treasurer of the Congregational Council for four of his six years on Council.

It was moved by Brian Niebuhr and seconded by Kari Hoeft to approve a budget of \$893,010 for fiscal year 2023.

Brian read the budget highlights:

- Projected offering receipts of \$873,510 represents an increase of 0.8% over 2022 offering receipts of \$866,270.
- Additional receipts include \$19,500, of which up to \$10,000 will come from PPP funds to achieve a balanced year end budget.
- Total Benevolence/Serving giving of \$87,351 represents 10% of projected offering receipts; with 7.0% to the ELCA & Nebraska Synod (\$61,146) and 3.0% to local

benevolences (\$26,205). Brian stated that some Fund II monies will be used to supplement benevolence giving.

- Program expenses (Worship, Learning and Hospitality/Care) total \$35,920; and increase of 11.5% over 2022 program expenses of \$31,638.
- Support expenses total \$769,739; an increase of 4.7% over 2022 support expenses of \$735,015. Most of the budgeted increase is for compensation and benefits as we work toward full staffing. In addition, our strategy of transferring funds to the Mortgage Transition Fund will continue for a fifth year.

Discussion followed. Gene Cotter asked if the Vicar Program will be reinstated if an Associate Pastor is not hired. Vicar Erick will be at First Lutheran until mid-August. The Synod will find someone to assist the church if no Associate Pastor is hired.

Judy Bailey asked for a round of applause for everyone who worked on the budget.

The motion passed.

I. OLD/UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

J. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PERTAINING TO REPORTS OF PRESIDENT, STAFF, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

It was asked if there was further news from the Call Committee. Dawn Brock thanked everyone who submitted names of possible Associate Pastor candidates to her and asked that members continue to send names. She will forward any names received to the Synod.

K. OPEN COMMENT PERIOD

Tera Beermann stated that viewing the pipe organ from the front of the Sanctuary is amazing. Fred is thankful for the beautiful Sanctuary.

ELECTION RESULTS:

**Congregational Council** – three-year terms: Scott Williamson, Judy Batterman, Emily Sears, Rod Johnson and Dave Pfister

**Congregational Council** – two-year term: Amy Harrison

**Nominating Committee** – Carlene Falos, Gene Cotter and Steve Eicher

**Synod Assembly** – Jay Sears, Clay Ehlers, Verdell Bohling, Barb Monson and Kari Hoeft

**Endowment Fund Board – Ann Carlson**

- L. CLOSING PRAYER: Pastor Erin led the closing prayer.
- M. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 1:36 PM.



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT 2023

### MINISTERIAL ACTS

Baptisms	2
Confirmations	8
Weddings	0
Funerals	12

### MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY

	Baptized	Confirmed
Membership, January 1, 2022	<u>1106</u>	<u>940</u>
Additions:		
Baptized	2	
New Members Received	14	11
Confirmation		8
Return to Active	2	2
Other		
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>
Subtractions:		
Deaths	13	13
Transfer	14	10
To Inactive	2	2
Other	5	3
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>
Membership, December 31, 2022	<b>1090</b>	<b>915</b>

We give thanks to God for the new birth of everlasting life into which each of the following was baptized in 2023: Franklin Way, Henry Rarig

And we give thanks for the blessed rest of everlasting peace, into which each of the following entered in 2023: Merlyce Jean Albrect, Hertha Lemke, Ione Johnson, Karen Lind-Olson, Victor Dormer, Jeannene Flotree, Gordon Bjerke, Marilyn Baalhorn, Carol Mason, Joan Farmer, Alan Moeller, Katheryn Bruggeman, Margaret (Myra) Meints

**MEETING DATE:** January 28, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Approve a budget of \$981,083 for Fiscal Year 2024

**BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS:** The 2024 budget recommended by the Finance Committee is based on total receipts and expenditures of \$981,083.

Projected offering receipts of \$906,500 represents an increase of 0.4% over 2023 offering receipts of \$902,575.

Additional receipts include \$74,583, of which \$41,083 is surplus funds from 2023 and \$30,000 rental income from the Las Abjeitas daycare center.

Total Benevolence/Serving giving of \$90,650 represents 10% of projected offering receipts; with 7% to the ELCA & Nebraska Synod (\$63,455) and 3% to local benevolences (\$27,195).

Program expenses (Worship, Learning, and Hospitality/Care) total \$35,220; an increase of 10.7% over 2023 program expenses of \$31,817.

Support expenses total \$856,923; an increase of 12.7% over 2023 support expenses of \$760,275. The majority of the budgeted increase is for compensation & benefits for full staffing that is now on board. In addition, our strategy of transferring funds to the Mortgage Transition Fund will continue for the sixth and final year.

**SPONSORS:** Congregational Council

## FINANCIAL RESULTS -- 2023

*Bryan Hanson and Wyatt Swanson, Church Accountants*

We had a phenomenal year financially, ending with a \$41k surplus. Thank you to everyone who contributed in 2023 to help continue the work and mission of First Lutheran Church.

Receipts in 2023 totaled \$923k, a \$37k increase over last year. Offering receipts increased by \$36k (+4.1%) while other receipts increased by \$1k. The increases are a combination of Temple talk money raised at the beginning of 2023, congregational growth, and rental income from the new daycare.

Expenses remain flat year over year, coming in at \$882k. Our expenses decreased by -\$15k (-1.6%) from 2022. We have done a fantastic job keeping expenses relatively flat over the last four years while navigating a staff transitional period. In 2024, we expect expenses to increase by \$99k, most of which is related to compensation as we have achieved full staffing in 2023.

Please reference the table below to see the trend of receipts and expenses over the last five years. You may recall that we have a contingency fund with a balance of \$67k after all associate pastor call expenses are paid. This balance comprises \$48k in PPP funds, and the remaining \$19k comes from the large surplus in 2020. This fund will continue to act as a safety net for any unforeseen challenges the church might face.

The congregation donated \$66k in additional benevolence in 2023. Your generosity makes a lasting and positive impact on these organizations. Please see page 10 for a breakdown of the various agencies/causes to which funds were donated.

The mortgage balance stands at \$1.05 million through December 2023. During the year, mortgage payments totaling \$76k were made. We made one principal pre-payment of \$35k. The capital campaign pledges will end in 2024. We expect to receive enough money from these pledges to cover the payments through 2024. In 2025, the mortgage payment will become a line item in the operating budget. We continued adding 5% of offering receipts to the mortgage transition fund in 2023, which has a balance of \$177k. We estimate the mortgage transition fund will have \$222k by the end of 2024. Currently, \$150k of these funds are in a CD earning 5% interest, which will generate a couple of thousand dollars in interest income, a much better return than in past years.

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>budget</u>
Offering Receipts	\$960k	\$913k	\$874k	\$866k	\$902k	\$907k
Other Receipts	\$9k	\$13k	\$23k	\$20k	\$21k	\$74k
Expenses	(\$973k)	(\$864k)	(\$895k)	(\$897k)	(\$882k)	(\$981k)
	<u>(\$4k)</u>	<u>\$62k</u>	<u>\$2k</u>	<u>(\$11k)</u>	<u>\$41k</u>	<u>\$0</u>
		\$48k PPP \$				
		= \$110k				
		Contingency Fund				

**OFFERING PLEDGES**

<b>AS OF 12-31-2023</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Incr/Decr</b>	<b>% Chg</b>
<b>Pledged 2023 &amp; 2024</b>					
increases	70	\$258,838	\$286,384	\$27,546	10.6%
decreases	31	\$155,261	\$137,234	-\$18,027	-11.6%
no change	75	\$236,489	\$236,489	\$0	0.0%
<b>Pledged both years</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>\$650,588</b>	<b>\$660,107</b>	<b>\$9,519</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>New pledges for 2024</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>\$40,440</b>		
<b>Pledged 2023, not 2024</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>\$46,680</b>			
<b>Pledged 2023, deceased</b>					
<b>Pledged 2023, transferred</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$5,900</b>			
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>		<b>\$703,168</b>	<b>\$700,547</b>		

	<u># pledges</u>	<u>pledge amount</u>
2015	257	\$779,318
2016	276	\$809,806
2017	261	\$823,041
2018	261	\$841,380
2019	243	\$792,062
2020	234	\$800,123
2021	186	\$669,781
2022	202	\$698,315
2023	192	\$703,168
2024	198	\$700,547

**Envelope Receipts History**

	<b># Pledges</b>	<b>Amount Pledged</b>	<b>"Pledged" Amount Received</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>"Not Pledged" Amount Received</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total Envelope Receipts</b>	<b>% Change</b>
2012	262	\$743,846	\$751,052	81.9%	\$166,134	18.1%	\$917,186	
2013	305	\$812,038	\$808,311	88.4%	\$106,100	11.6%	\$914,411	-0.3%
2014	296	\$841,289	\$850,091	91.3%	\$80,550	8.7%	\$930,641	1.8%
2015	257	\$779,318	\$772,617	83.2%	\$156,119	16.8%	\$928,736	-0.2%
2016	276	\$809,806	\$813,462	86.4%	\$128,236	13.6%	\$941,698	1.4%
2017	261	\$823,041	\$809,004	82.8%	\$167,757	17.2%	\$976,761	3.7%
2018	261	\$841,380	\$834,239	86.2%	\$133,450	13.8%	\$967,689	-0.9%
2019	243	\$792,062	\$789,567	82.9%	\$162,654	17.1%	\$952,221	-1.6%
2020	234	\$800,123	\$796,299	87.2%	\$116,492	12.8%	\$912,791	-4.1%
2021	186	\$669,781	\$667,987	77.0%	\$199,327	23.0%	\$867,314	-5.0%
2022	202	\$698,315	\$698,553	81.4%	\$159,444	18.6%	\$857,997	-1.1%
2023	192	\$703,168	\$721,219	80.8%	\$171,590	19.2%	\$892,809	4.1%
2024 Budget	198	\$700,547	\$700,547	78.1%	\$196,453	21.9%	\$897,000	0.5%

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**2024 Budget**

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
<b>RECEIPTS</b>					
Envelope Receipts	912,791	867,314	857,997	892,809	897,000
Loose Receipts	992	6,292	8,272	9,766	9,500
Sunday School / Interest	82	5	1	-	-
<b>Offering Receipts</b>	<b>913,865</b>	<b>873,611</b>	<b>866,270</b>	<b>902,575</b>	<b>906,500</b>
Misc & Building Use	3,370	1,738	4,093	3,357	3,500
PPP Funds	48,000	-	-	-	-
PPP / Contingency Fund (Fund II transfer if needed at year-end)	-	-	2,551	-	-
Carryforward Surplus Prior Year	-	-	2,449	-	41,083
Las Abejitas Bilingual Childcare Center	-	-	-	17,500	30,000
Dimensions Early Childhood Income	10,000	21,500	10,280	-	-
<b>Other Receipts</b>	<b>61,370</b>	<b>23,238</b>	<b>19,373</b>	<b>20,857</b>	<b>74,583</b>
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>975,235</b>	<b>896,849</b>	<b>885,643</b>	<b>923,432</b>	<b>981,083</b>

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
ELCA & Nebraska Synod Benevolence	108,750	97,844	90,958	63,180	63,455
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>11.90%</b>	<b>11.20%</b>	<b>10.50%</b>	<b>7.00%</b>	<b>7.00%</b>

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
<b>Benevolence / Serving</b>					
Vicar Program (1/2)	-	-	-	8,032	-
World Hunger	6,500	8,000	8,000	2,500	3,800
LWR Disaster Relief	-	1,000	1,000	500	1,000
Food Bank / Backpack / Bridges Out Of Poverty	2,500	3,500	3,500	1,500	3,000
Lutheran Food Pantry	1,000	3,500	3,500	1,000	-
Bread For The World	500	500	500	500	500
Friendship Home	-	1,366	1,500	-	1,000
Clinic With A Heart	-	1,367	1,100	-	1,000
Lutheran Family Services	2,537	4,000	4,000	2,939	3,400
Matt Talbot Kitchen	825	1,200	-	-	-
Fresh Start	1,700	2,500	2,500	1,000	1,500
Tabitha / Meals on Wheels	3,695	6,000	5,532	4,000	5,245
Prison Ministry / Bridges To Hope	1,750	2,000	2,000	1,000	2,000
UNL Lutheran Center	-	1,000	1,000	500	1,000
UNL Intern Support	4,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	2,000
Nebraska Campus Lutheran Ministries	500	1,000	1,000	500	1,000
Social Ministry Discretionary Fund	100	-	100	606	-
Camp Carol Joy Holling	1,000	1,000	750	500	750
<b>Benevolence / Serving: Total</b>	<b>46,607</b>	<b>41,933</b>	<b>38,982</b>	<b>27,077</b>	<b>27,195</b>
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>5.10%</b>	<b>4.80%</b>	<b>4.50%</b>	<b>3.00%</b>	<b>3.00%</b>

<b>ELCA / Nebraska Synod, Benevolence / Serving</b>	<b>155,357</b>	<b>139,777</b>	<b>129,940</b>	<b>90,257</b>	<b>90,650</b>
<b>Grand Total % of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>17.00%</b>	<b>16.00%</b>	<b>15.00%</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	<b>10.00%</b>

**Fund II Benevolence Giving 2023**

Gifts of Hope	\$	24,447
Food Pantry/World Hunger	\$	7,981
Afghan refugees	\$	7,041
Kicks for Kids (cash donations)	\$	5,415
Endowment Fund	\$	4,993
Pastor Discretionary Fund	\$	2,830
Vicar Gift	\$	2,685
Lent/Advent Meals	\$	1,707
Noisy Offering	\$	1,605
WELCA	\$	1,406
Matt Talbot	\$	1,150
Nebraska Synod	\$	1,000
Other	\$	3,867
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>66,127</b>

<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
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<b>Worship</b>	<b>2020 Actual</b>	<b>2021 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2024 Budget</b>
Devotional Materials	422	391	387	350	400
Worship Supplies	7,324	6,132	4,907	5,954	5,900
Music Honoraria	-	450	600	600	600
Music/Choir	2,358	2,832	2,996	2,576	2,700
Music Conferences/Workshops	98	135	90	-	100
Organ/Piano Maintenance	1,378	1,894	1,693	1,575	1,600
Choir Fellowship	-	52	13	68	100
<b>Worship: Total</b>	<b>11,580</b>	<b>11,886</b>	<b>10,686</b>	<b>11,123</b>	<b>11,400</b>
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>1.27%</b>	<b>1.36%</b>	<b>1.23%</b>	<b>1.23%</b>	<b>1.26%</b>

<b>Learning</b>	<b>2020 Actual</b>	<b>2021 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2024 Budget</b>
Early Childhood	83	38	78	312	270
Elementary	1,261	1,007	1,638	2,481	2,250
Middle School	3,117	3,692	4,163	4,650	4,350
High School	7,079	6,999	8,181	8,066	8,300
Adults	245	199	1,991	1,422	1,690
Library & Media	-	100	-	-	-
The Lutheran	834	213	209	202	200
<b>Learning: Total</b>	<b>12,619</b>	<b>12,248</b>	<b>16,260</b>	<b>17,133</b>	<b>17,060</b>
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>1.38%</b>	<b>1.40%</b>	<b>1.88%</b>	<b>1.90%</b>	<b>1.88%</b>

<b>Hospitality / Care</b>	<b>2020 Actual</b>	<b>2021 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2024 Budget</b>
Hospitality	1,054	732	2,175	1,682	1,800
Stewardship	1,108	1,054	950	462	1,000
Fall Festival	-	-	-	1,011	1,500
All Church Retreat	-	-	-	-	1,300
Fellowship	204	200	184	20	150
Funeral Lunches	129	(263)	(147)	112	-
Stephen Ministry	1,224	20	1,530	274	500
<b>Hospitality / Care: Total</b>	<b>3,719</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>4,692</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>6,250</b>
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>0.41%</b>	<b>0.20%</b>	<b>0.54%</b>	<b>0.39%</b>	<b>0.69%</b>

<b>Support</b>	<b>2020 Actual</b>	<b>2021 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2024 Budget</b>
Compensation	419,886	426,802	421,512	431,010	496,090
Pension/Health Insurance	91,150	105,103	106,131	109,310	136,194
Payroll Tax	36,671	37,785	35,608	35,266	41,672
Continuing Education	4,083	4,929	4,296	4,083	5,000
Pastors Professional Expense	165	154	427	526	1,000
Staff Professional Expense	100	128	100	94	300
Vicar Program (1/2)	-	-	10,562	8,032	-
Staff Hospitality	98	207	37	168	200
Staff Development	303	360	120	199	300
Conferences/Workshops (staff)	-	1,156	2,815	2,940	3,100
Synod Assembly (non-staff)	-	120	1,919	1,704	1,900
Auto & Travel	6,644	1,525	6,043	6,795	3,000
Postage	1,508	1,996	1,893	1,950	1,900
Background Checks	162	351	192	121	150
Office Supplies	3,779	3,295	3,945	7,643	6,800
Banking Fees	2,123	1,925	1,962	2,400	2,500
Communications	4,382	3,807	2,747	3,314	3,000
Printer Expense	3,602	1,456	2,400	3,210	3,350
Computer Needs	1,071	421	806	1,692	1,000
Insurance	22,423	23,176	25,719	28,836	31,000
Utilities/Telephone	30,473	33,557	36,718	43,312	43,442
Janitorial Supplies	1,645	463	346	1,289	1,000
Repairs & Maintenance	11,645	27,230	12,122	16,594	15,000
Maintenance Reserve Fund	6,000	7,000	7,000	-	6,000
Mortgage Transition Fund	25,180	34,945	43,313	45,129	45,325
Service Contracts	6,295	5,645	4,272	4,323	4,250
Lawn Care/Snow Removal	1,774	5,211	2,010	335	2,250
<b>Support: Total</b>	<b>681,162</b>	<b>728,747</b>	<b>735,015</b>	<b>760,275</b>	<b>855,723</b>
<b>% of Offering Receipts</b>	<b>74.54%</b>	<b>83.42%</b>	<b>84.85%</b>	<b>84.23%</b>	<b>94.40%</b>

<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>864,437</b>	<b>894,401</b>	<b>896,593</b>	<b>882,349</b>	<b>981,083</b>
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<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>975,235</b>	<b>896,849</b>	<b>885,643</b>	<b>923,432</b>	<b>981,083</b>
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	<b>2020 Actual</b>	<b>2021 Actual</b>	<b>2022 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2024 Budget</b>
<b>RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES</b>	<b>110,798</b>	<b>2,448</b>	<b>(10,950)</b>	<b>41,083</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>DEFICIT</b>	<b>SURPLUS</b>	

transferred to  
newly created  
Contingency Fund

transfer to 2022  
budget as misc  
income

used \$3,500 of  
undesignated  
member funds;  
\$7,450 from the  
Carol Reed Fund

transfer to 2024  
budget as misc  
income

**'Called To Welcome' Building Project**

	Receipts		Disbursements				Balance	
	Fundraising	Architects	Construction	Construction Loan Advance	Construction Loan Interest	Mortgage Payment	Mortgage Pre-payment	Balance
2018	\$1,125,856	(\$81,949)	(\$220,024)	(\$29,580)				\$794,303
2019	\$884,370	(\$60,979)	(\$3,123,436)	\$1,663,000	(\$14,936)			\$147,323
2020	\$544,433	(\$32,495)	(\$751,459)	\$405,000	(\$46,489)	(\$58,630)	(\$90,000)	\$112,684
2021	\$561,446		(\$18,337)			(\$127,568)	(\$380,000)	\$98,226
2022	\$191,361					(\$87,372)	(\$162,500)	\$39,715
2023	\$109,112					(\$75,996)	(\$35,000)	\$37,831
<b>TOTALS TO-DATE</b>	<b>\$3,416,578</b>	<b>(\$81,949)</b>	<b>(\$313,495)</b>	<b>\$2,068,000</b>	<b>(\$61,425)</b>	<b>(\$349,566)</b>	<b>(\$867,500)</b>	<b>\$37,831</b>

	Remaining Pledges	
2024	\$52,650	\$0
		(\$75,996)
		(\$14,485)

- > Initial capital campaign pledges (2018-2021) \$2,740,000
- > Follow-up capital campaign pledges (2021-2024) \$688,000
- > Mortgage started August 2020 4.625% interest \$11,725 monthly payment \$2,068,000 balance 3-1-2020
- > Interest rate adjustment May 2021 3.95% interest \$10,083 monthly payment \$1,958,788 balance 12-31-2020
- > Monthly pay adjustment Jan 2022 3.95% interest \$ 7,281 monthly payment \$1,321,916 balance 12-31-2021
- > Monthly pay adjustment Jan 2023 3.95% interest \$ 6,333 monthly payment \$1,120,111 balance 12-31-2022
- > In 2025 when the follow-up capital campaign concludes the mortgage payment will be included in our operating budget \$1,052,777 balance 12-31-2023

12/31/2023**FUND II -- ACCOUNT ANALYSIS**

		<u>BALANCE</u> <u>12/31/2022</u>	<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>EXPENSES</u>	<u>INTEREST</u>	<u>TRANSFER</u>	<u>BALANCE</u> <u>12/31/2023</u>
<b>Housing Fund</b>	Checking Acct	38.19					38.19
	Money Mkt Acct	16,576.17			421.82	(16,000.00)	997.99
	Housing Loan - Pastor Andrew	0.00				16,000.00	16,000.00
<b>Memorial Fund</b>	Checking Acct	16,706.31	6,935.00	(1,203.75)		(22,000.00)	437.56
	Money Mkt Acct	11,144.76			642.55	22,000.00	33,787.31
<b>Flower Fund</b>	Checking Acct	1,002.85	1,353.00	(1,166.90)			1,188.95
	Money Mkt Acct	2,755.18			70.11		2,825.29
<b>Music Fund</b>	Checking Acct	406.71	1,965.00			(2,000.00)	371.71
	Money Mkt Acct	2,800.81			71.27	2,000.00	4,872.08
<b>Youth Fund</b>	Checking Acct	(7,353.88)	29,531.29	(20,723.03)			1,454.38
	Money Mkt Acct	6,869.63			85.07		6,954.70
<b>Capital Campaign</b>	Checking Acct	34,675.95	109,523.42	(111,427.42)			32,771.95
	Mission Investment Chkg Acct	5,038.79			20.14		5,058.93
<b>Mortgage Transition Fund</b>	Checking Acct	21,695.18	45,128.76			(63,000.00)	3,823.94
	Money Mkt Acct	6,758.97			372.42	13,000.00	20,131.39
	Certificate of Deposit (1) 5-31-24	100,843.75			911.53		101,755.28
	Certificate of Deposit (2) 5-31-24	0.00			1,072.90	50,000.00	51,072.90
<b>Maintenance Reserve Fund</b>	Checking Acct	3,557.13		(20,615.06)		19,000.00	1,942.07
	Money Mkt Acct	54,623.29			1,457.28	(19,000.00)	37,080.57
<b>Sabbatical Fund</b>	Checking Acct	371.65					371.65
	Money Mkt Acct	11,058.63			281.41		11,340.04
<b>Ministry Initiative Fund</b>	Checking Acct	556.58		(2,050.00)		2,000.00	506.58
	Money Mkt Acct	12,290.29			312.73	(2,000.00)	10,603.02
<b>Fair Trade Fund</b>	Checking Acct	2,994.37		(2,994.37)			0.00
<b>Seminary Scholarship Fund</b>	Checking Acct	149.74	1,158.36	(579.18)			728.92
	Money Mkt Acct	6,839.79			174.05		7,013.84
<b>Contingency Fund</b>	Checking Acct	(2,550.12)		(829.20)		5,500.00	2,120.68
	Money Mkt Acct	70,323.58			1,722.20	(5,500.00)	66,545.78
<b>'All Other' Designated Fund (see detail tab)</b>	Checking Acct	(2,803.00)	112,524.63	(94,994.20)		(11,000.00)	3,727.43
	Money Mkt Acct	321,714.90			8,119.24	11,000.00	340,834.14
		<u>\$699,086.20</u>	<u>\$308,119.46</u>	<u>(\$256,583.11)</u>	<u>\$15,734.72</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$766,357.27</u>



**CONTINGENCY FUND****12/31/2023****Receipts:**

2020 operating surplus	62,797.59
2020 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds	48,000.00
	<u><u>\$110,797.59</u></u>

**Interest to-date:**\$2,545.81**Disbursements to-date:**

Jan 2021 - additional 2020 benevolence contributions	(9,279.00)
Jan 2021 - Epson copier for office	(10,434.45)
May-Aug 2021 - Pastor Erin call expenses	(2,021.00)
Oct-Nov 2021 - Pastor Erin relocation	(16,077.56)
March 2022 - new phone system	(3,164.39)
Sept 2022-May 2023 - Pastor Andrew call expenses	(1,149.20)
Dec 2022 - applied PPP contingency funds to the 2022 budget	(2,551.34)
	<u><u>(\$44,676.94)</u></u>

**BALANCE**\$68,666.46**MORTGAGE TRANSITION FUND****12/31/2023****Receipts:**

Nov 2018 - check received	13,000.00	Dorothy Ekblad estate gift
Feb 2020 - check received	1,000.00	Clara Wasenius estate gift
Feb & May 2020 - memorial funds transferred	655.00	Clara & Al Wasenius memorial funds
transfer from 2019 Fund I budget	9,900.00	2% of offering receipts (1/2 year)
transfer from 2020 Fund I budget	25,180.00	3% of offering receipts
transfer from 2021 Fund I budget	34,945.00	4% of offering receipts
transfer from 2022 Fund I budget	43,313.00	5% of offering receipts
transfer from 2023 Fund I budget	45,128.76	5% of offering receipts
	<u><u>\$173,121.76</u></u>	

**Interest to-date:**\$3,661.75**BALANCE**\$176,783.51

\*\* Continue allocating 5% of offering receipts thru 2024

\*\* Balance in the fund will be approximately \$220,000 by the end of 2024

# CONGREGATION COUNCIL

**BY LEE ROCKWELL, CONGREGATIONAL PRESIDENT**

It has been an honor to serve as president of the congregation this year, to work closely with a dedicated congregational council, our Lead Pastor Erin Heidelberger, several church committees, committed staff members and our congregation.

Looking back on our 2023 activities, I am optimistic that our congregation is well into recovery mode from the challenges faced due to the covid isolation. Worship attendance and fiscal giving are both growing, a dedicated staff is at work and new initiatives are underway.

There is only so much that our pastoral leadership can accomplish without a full staff. Pastor Erin was often pulled in several directions at the same time, but managed a myriad of responsibilities and challenges with grace and dedication. We were grateful that Vicar Erick was with us for much of the year. While it was a “learning year” for him, he regularly performed above and beyond expectations for a vicar. We are grateful that our call to Pastor Andrew Kitzing was accepted and he is now actively involved as our Associate Pastor and serving closely with Pastor Erin. We welcomed two new staff members, Mandy West as Parish Coordinator and Richard Harris as Facilities Maintenance Manager. We are in a strong position as we enter 2024.

A change in our Council membership occurred with the resignation of Scott Seeböhm (Council Treasurer) and the move of his family to Virginia. Jenna Troutman was selected as Scott’s replacement until our 2024 annual meeting elections. Scott Williamson has assumed the Treasurer position.

Here is a brief summary of major issues and activities faced in 2023:

- Welcomed Las Abejitas to our church facility. What was originally planned as a daycare and pre-school service expanded to include all-day care during the summer months and a before and after school service during the academic year.
- Submitted an application and was accepted as a participant in the Nebraska Synod Vitality Initiative which should provide our congregation with an important blueprint for our mission in the years ahead.

- Dealt with a longstanding roof issue with Lutheran Brotherhood and filed suit with the company to receive an equitable settlement for the hail damage sustained several years ago. An expensive boiler system component of the building heating system was repaired prior to this winter.
- Re-introduced nursery staffing during Sunday worship services.
- Participated with other churches and organizations in the June 9 and 10 Star City Pride events.
- Planned and held our second annual Fall Festival.
- Purchased and implemented a new church management software system.
- Re-activated the Ombudsman volunteer position and appointed Steve Eicher to the position.
- Held three Sunday noon Town Hall potluck dinner gatherings to review our financial position and explore various programming opportunities.
- Considered participation in the Lincoln Justice in Action organization to enhance our congregational participation in community-wide social service initiatives. Membership funding is included in the 2024 budget proposal.
- Initiated an update of the church safety plan which is being chaired by Rod Johnson.
- Encouraged council member participation in various church committees to facilitate communication between the committees and the congregational council.

Finally, a word about staffing. The position of Discipleship Director has been vacant since the resignation of Sunni Richardson several years ago. We are hopeful this position can be filled in the near future. However, financial resources are not sufficient at the present time.

I am grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm of our Congregational Council. And, on behalf of the Council, I thank the congregation for the support and encouragement you continually extend to us individually and collectively.

## MINISTRY OF THE LEAD PASTOR

BY PASTOR ERIN HEIDELBERGER

It has been an absolute joy to serve as your lead pastor for the past 2 ½ years. Here are some highlights from 2023:

Thanks to the coaching funds the council set aside in 2021 for the new lead pastor and for additional funding support from the church, I completed the **Practical Church Leadership program** through Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, SD. PCL was a 12-month graduate certificate program to help senior/lead pastors hone our administrative skill sets (areas like project management, financial development, communications, visioning/strategic planning, and community outreach) and lead our congregations with innovation and adaptive leadership. As part of the program, I designed and completed an applied project and was supported and guided throughout the year by a professional coach.

My applied project included building a team to envision, coordinate, and lead a series of **pop-up fellowship events/small group ministry**. I want to thank Amy Harrison, Barb Monson, and Barb Johnson Frank for serving on my applied project team and for all the talent and skills they lent to carrying out these events. The pop-up events started in 2022, but in 2023, we saw over 100 people attend game events. We also coordinated small groups during Lent focused on the theme of **“Better Together”** and on community-building, which seemed especially important as we continued post-Covid reengagement. A strengthened small group ministry continues to be a dream I have for First Lutheran, since it provides the opportunity to build connections within the congregation and create spiritually supportive relationships. I want to thank all of those who served as leaders/co-leaders of our Lenten Better Together groups: Richard Bouma, Nancy & Dale Clay, Faye Doolittle, Craig Heier, Steve Janssen, Shari Sorenson, and Karen Statham.

We hosted **intern Erick Hill** from August 2022-August 2023 and I served as Erick’s internship supervisor. This was my second time serving as a supervisor, and it’s a role I really enjoy. Of course, I don’t have to tell you what a blessing Vicar Erick has been to First Lutheran. I want to thank the internship committee for walking with Vicar Erick during his internship year: Jim Sandman, Tera Beerman, Kristi Fisher, Jim Handeland, and Susan Myren.

In June, **Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center** opened its doors at First Lutheran. We are blessed to have an early childhood program once again meeting in our space, and the community of Lincoln is blessed to have this available for families and kids. We continue to discern and discover how the FLC congregation can be a blessing to Las Abejitas families and staff. Thanks to the FLC Las Abejitas Advisory Team who help us support this program: Steve Eicher, Donice Kaspar, and Barb Monson.

In the spring, First Lutheran applied for and was accepted into the second cohort of churches of the Nebraska synod's **Vitality Initiative**, and we began meeting with synod staff, our coach Sunni Richardson, and the other cohort congregations in September. The Vitality Initiative is an 18-month journey of discovery, learning, listening, and discernment that is geared toward helping congregations discern their vocation and cultivate missional imagination. Big thanks to those serving on our Vitality Initiative Leadership Team! Faye Doolittle, Amy Harrison, Stephen and Tiffany Henn, Ben & Leah Middendorf, Doug Lind-Olson, Natalie Peters, and Dara Troutman.

**Staff Transitions:** At the end of May, we said goodbye to our Facilities Maintenance Manager Alex Gray and in July welcomed Richard Harris as our new one. In July we also said goodbye to our Parish Coordinator Cyndi Crouse and also welcomed Mandy West to the position. Vicar Erick was able to stay on at FLC after his internship ended until November.

I'm incredibly grateful for the arrival of our new **Associate Pastor Andrew Kitzing** who joined us in November! While I'm certainly glad that we finally have a called associate pastor to share the responsibilities of ministry, I'm even more grateful to be a part of a pastoral ministry team and for all that Pastor Andrew brings to ministry. I'm also grateful for the faithful leadership of our **Call Committee** and want to thank them for their time, talents, and prayers dedicated to the call process on our behalf: Dawn Brock, Gene Cotter, Lisa Culbertson, Dakota Fisher, Kari Hoeft, Dave Pfister, and Scott Seebohm.

I also want to say thank you to the incredible First Lutheran staff who keep our ministries going—and moving forward! Parish Coordinator Mandy West, Worship & Music Directors Masako and Boyd Bacon, Youth & Family Minister Sharon Hardel, FaithTrek Coordinator Laura Gaulty, Communications Director Kathleen Simley, Visitation Pastor Marsha Anderson, Facilities Maintenance Manager Richard Harris, accountant Wyatt Swanson and Bryan Hanson, Lyle Petersen (IT), and nursery coordinator/preschool FaithTrek teacher Erin Pfister, as well as musicians and music directors Jan Modica, Erin Niebuhr, Christine Carman, and Kristina Hanson.

There is much more...leading First Lutheran 101, our class for newcomers; welcoming new members; teaching First Lutheran 201, Communion Faith Milestone classes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Bible Milestone workshop, and Confirmation; having an FLC presence at Star City Pride; a great second All-Church Retreat; a tremendous second Fall Festival; and other things I'm no doubt failing to mention. And at the end of the day, there's the heart of what we do at First Lutheran: worship. God's work in the world is certainly not limited to the worship service. But, it *is* where God chooses to meet us, speak to us, bless us, claim us, forgive us, and make promises to us in Jesus Christ. And we get to be a part of that! We get to be the recipients of Christ's work and blessing, and we get to provide a worship service where others can encounter the living God. All of what we do is grounded in the saving work of Jesus Christ and proclaiming that to our neighbors and world.

With thanksgiving for you all!

## **MINISTRY OF THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR**

**BY PASTOR ANDREW KITZING**

Well, it has been a short year! At least for our time together. This will likely be the shortest report you ever receive from me, since it is going to cover one whole month of my time at First. I usually summarize the year, provide a list of pastoral acts I performed for the year, and list a few goals to keep me honest.

The advent season was really a good season to begin a new call. Attendance usually is ramping up for Christmas and those who live away from Lincoln are often back for a visit. It has given me the chance to meet several of our young adults who are in school or have moved away, while getting to know our regular worshippers.

Christmas was such a good time, even though I don't care much for the holiday (thought I'd save that insight until after I was installed!). The young family service was perfect, and the rest of the Christmas services went very well. And with that, my year is well summarized.

Thank you for your warm welcome and generous hospitality. Lori and I are really overwhelmed by your kindness. We can't thank you enough.

Pastoral Acts:

Funerals – 1

My only goal for this year is to settle into a routine and get comfortable with all my new responsibilities. I hope that doesn't take long, as I thrive on predictability and routines. I feel much more comfortable when I know what to expect, but such is life sometimes.

Once again, thank you for everything and for being a blessing to myself, Lori, and this community.

# COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY AT FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

BY KATHLEEN SIMLEY, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

And then he told them, *“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.”* - Mark 16:15

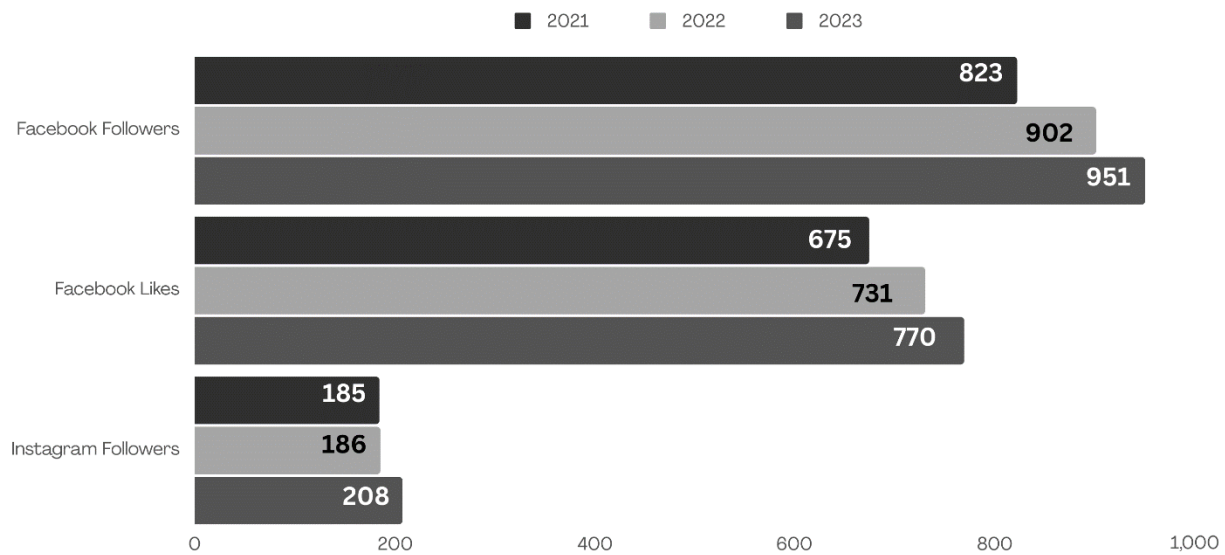
Our lives can get so filled with busyness, entertainment, family life and responsibilities. We get so distracted that we sometimes forget to pursue one of the most central commands of our faith: to share the Good News of Jesus with everyone.

This passage in Mark is known as the “great commission” from Jesus. Jesus speaks to his disciples from his resurrected body, offering them a parting charge to share God’s story of love with the world. Jesus’ work was complete and now it was up to his followers to share the events they had witnessed with the world. As the disciples shared with others, they made more disciples who could reach more and more people with the story of Jesus. Today, that same mission endures for me and for you.

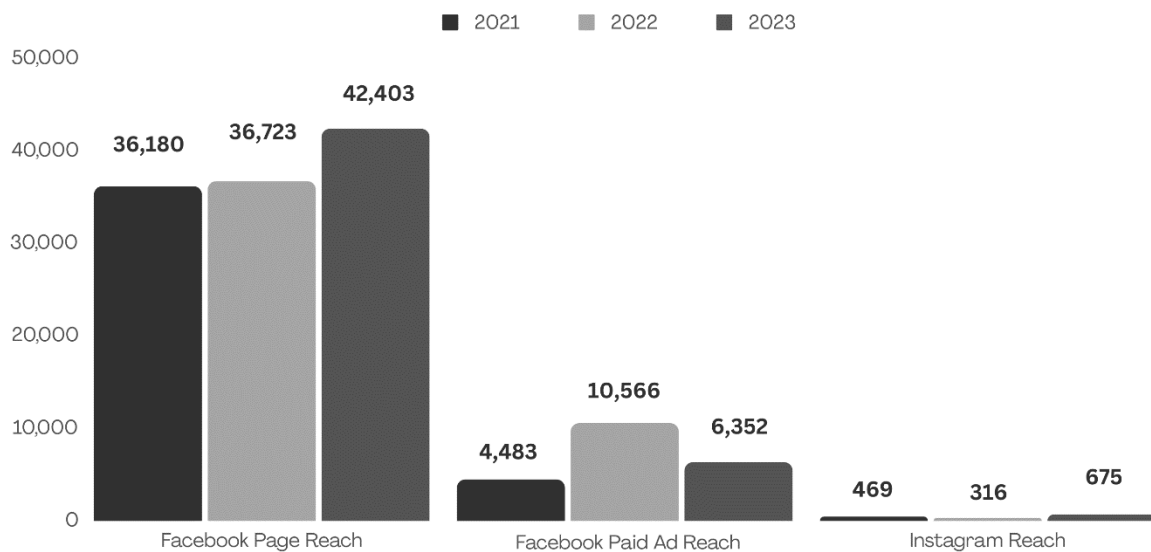
As your Communications Director, I am humbled and honored to share how First Lutheran Church is carrying out Jesus’ great commission in the world today. Whether you are serving a meal at Matt Talbot Kitchen, donating shoes and socks for kids in need, making a purchase at the Gifts of Hope Alternative Market, reading a book to a child at the Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center or giving praise to God by sharing music during worship, there’s a story of Good News to be told. Each time I tell one of your stories – as a published news article, social media post, website story, e-newsletter, video or photo - I pray God’s love, mercy and grace shines through and speaks to the heart, spirit or mind of someone – whether it be you, someone down the street, across town or in another part of the country or world. As you read my annual report, especially the data graphs, be mindful that most every number represents a person – someone in the world who was reached with one of your stories, a story of Good News, because you, First Lutheran, are carrying out Jesus’ great commission!



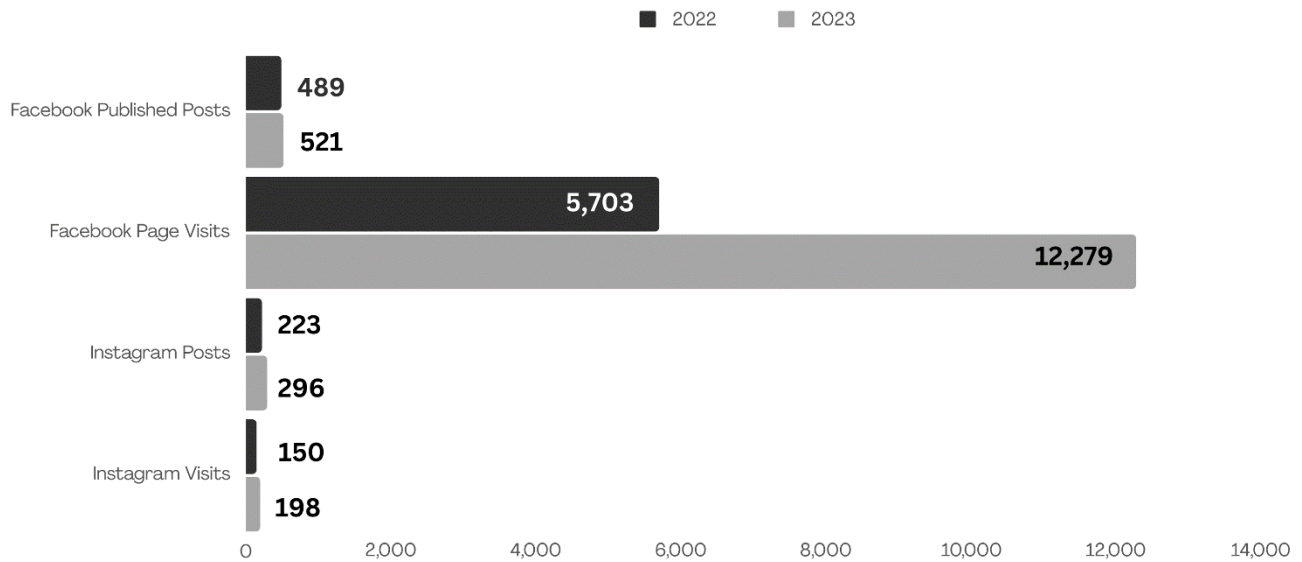
## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING



## SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



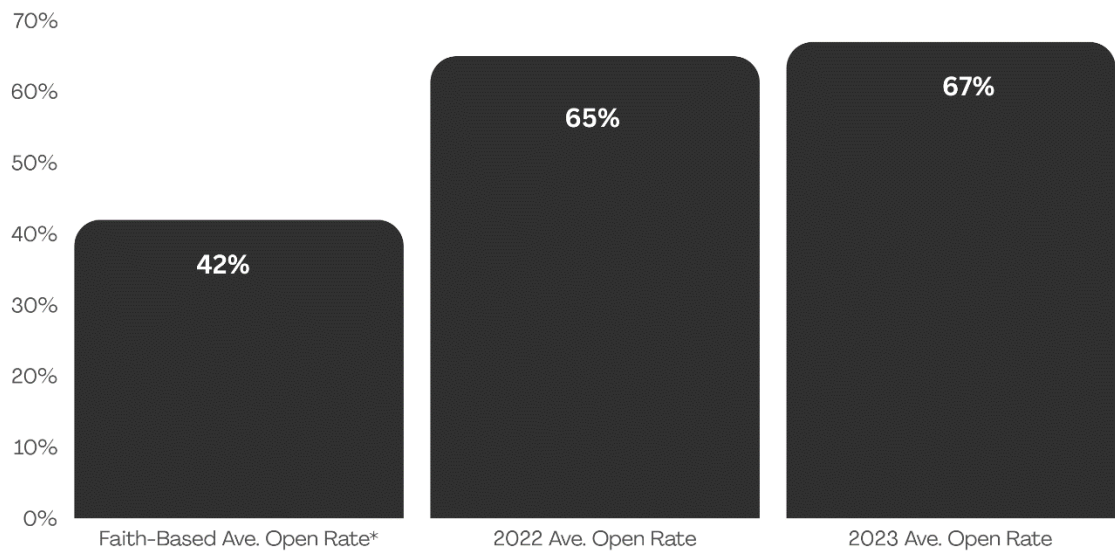
## SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



### MORE SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH FACTS

- 3,795** The most people reached with a Facebook post (January 31, 2023). The post announced the opening of the Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center at First Lutheran Church. The post received 205 reactions and 53 comments and was shared 27 times.
- 10.7K** The total number of likes or reactions, saves, comments, shares and replies to our Facebook posts. This was a 60.7% increase of engagement from 2022.
- 73-74%** Of our Facebook and Instagram followers are women, with 30.6% of them being 65+ years or older.
- 45-54** Is the age range of our largest following of Instagram followers with 13.8% being women and 9.4% men.

# FIRST THINGS FIRST E-NEWSLETTER

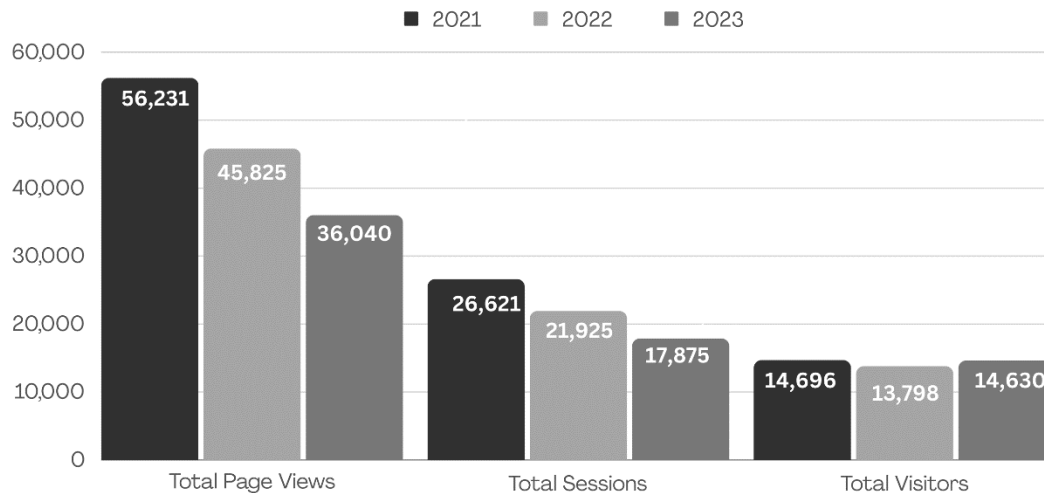


\*According to a report published December 2023 by Constant Contact

## “BY THE NUMBER” EMAIL CAMPAIGN OUTREACH FACTS

- 138** Total emails were sent. This includes 51 *First Things First* weekly e-newsletters, 48 FaithTrek weekly e-newsletters for parents of 3 yrs-5<sup>th</sup> grade, 4 *First Look* weekly e-newsletters for parents of middle and high school students, 13 Lent/Easter and Advent/Christmas weekly devotions, 14 death notices and 8 general announcement emails.
- 540** People subscribe to our *First Things First* weekly e-newsletter. This is a decrease of 11 from 2022 and factors in new subscribers, unsubscribes and removal of bounced emails.
- 72%** The highest open rate in 2023 for a *First Things First* e-newsletter. Six e-newsletters had this highest open rate.
- 12%** The average click rate of links in *First Things First* emails. This is a 3% increase compared to 2022.

## WEBSITE TRAFFIC



*(Total Sessions = Number of visitors who actually engaged with a web page)*

### INSIGHTFUL WEBSITE OUTREACH FACTS

- 11,550** Total number of home page views on our website. The top three page views were: #1 Home Page, #2 Calendar and #3 About Us.
- 2,667** Total livestream page views – an increase of 1 compared to 2022.
- 675** Total sessions on our livestream page. This is the number of visitors who engaged with the web page and are most likely to have watched a livestream recording. This is a decrease of 312 compared to 2022.

## OTHER INTERESTING ONLINE WORSHIP OUTREACH FACTS

- 12**            \*The average number of live viewers of the weekly livestream worship service on Facebook. This is a decrease of 2 compared to 2022.
- 21**            \*The average number of weekly viewers of the recorded livestream worship services on Facebook. This is an increase of 4 compared to 2022.
- 186**           Total people who watched the weekly sermons on Vimeo (our online video storage site).
- 41%**           Of those who watched the weekly sermon on Vimeo watched or listened to 100% of it. The average overall watch time of all videos is 30%.
- 36**            Individuals engaged with a recording of an entire livestream worship service on Vimeo. The weekly practice of uploading an entire livestream worship service to Vimeo began on September 24. These recordings were shared each week in the *First Things First* e-newsletter.
- 33%**           The average % watched of full livestream worship services on Vimeo (September 24-December 31).

*\*The average number of viewers is based on data collected from Facebook at the end of the day every Monday of each week, following the previous day livestream worship service. This reporting process is required by the Synod when reporting livestream worship "attendance." Weekly viewership is actually much higher if you factor in the number of people who watch a livestream service days or weeks later.*

## OTHER OUTREACH DATA

- 290**    News posts on our website ([www.flclincoln.org/news](http://www.flclincoln.org/news)).
- 52**      Livestreamed Sunday worship services.
- 4**        Livestreamed and/or recorded Celebrations of Life.
- 160**    Videos were recorded and/or created and uploaded to Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/flclincoln>). Includes videos of worship, sermons, music, special events, Adult Forum, etc.
- 46**      Video recordings of weekly sermons were shared on social media and our News webpage every Tuesday.
- 5**        Videos recorded of Lenten reflection messages were shared in *First Things First* e-newsletter, on social media and our News webpage.

- 3 Videos recorded of the Advent mid-week worship services were shared in the weekly Advent devotional email. The reflection messages from each worship service were shared on social media.
- 10 Weekly Lenten/Easter and Advent/Christmas devotional emails were sent.
- 51 *First Things First* e-newsletters were published and sent.
- 51 *First Glance* publications were produced as worship bulletin inserts.

## COLLABORATIVE WORK

### Worship & Music

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Committee</b>       | <p>Created monthly/quarterly online volunteer worship assistant sign ups.</p> <p>Recruited readers for both worship services on Sunday.</p> <p>Recorded and published an updated training video for Altar Guild, in collaboration with Tracy Knezevic.</p> <p>Ensured livestream worship services were scheduled, set up and streamed every Sunday morning and during Holy Week and Christmas Eve.</p> <p>Ensured mid-week Lenten and Advent Holden Prayer services were recorded and shared on social media, along with the reflections and/or messages from each service.</p> <p>Uploaded sermons from each week's livestream worship to Vimeo and shared on social media and as a News post on our website every Tuesday.</p> <p>Uploaded the full livestream worship services to Vimeo each week (starting September 24) and shared them in the <i>First Things First</i> e-newsletter.</p> <p>Attended the Worship &amp; Music Committee meeting in September to share analytical data on three years of livestreaming worship. The committee agreed to assume oversight of the livestream ministry.</p> <p>Sent weekly devotional emails during Lent and Advent.</p> <p>Promoted the Christmas Eve and Day worship services extensively, with a special emphasis on the new 1:30 PM service for kids and families.</p> |
| <b>Endowment Board</b> | <p>Set up the Endowment Fund online college scholarship application and designed brochures for Memorial Day and All Saints/Veteran's Day giving.</p>   |

**Stewardship  
Committee**

Created the Stewardship web page (<https://fclincoln.org/stewardship>) to include the pledge and discipleship plan for members to complete online.

Re-created a new discipleship plan for 2024 and promoted it and pledge giving every week through *First Things First* e-newsletter and *First Glance*.

Uploaded the weekly *Mission Moment* temple talks during worship to the Stewardship webpage and shared in the weekly *First Things First* e-newsletter.

Sorted and compiled data from the 2024 Discipleship Plans and shared with staff and appropriate committees and ministry contacts to facilitate engagement of members in ministries they expressed interest in.

**Fellowship  
Committee**

Created online signups for events and promoted each of them (e.g. Lent/Advent soup lunches and suppers, Easter Egg Hunt, Thanksgiving Day dinner, Christmas Day dinner).

**Social Ministry  
Committee**

Promoted hunger and clothing projects (e.g. Kicks for Kids, Backpack Program, CROP Walk).

**Adult Forum**

Uploaded video recordings to Vimeo from Sunday sessions and shared them on the Adult Forum ministry web page.

**Stephen Ministry**

Created a variety of promotional TV slides, social media posts and articles in *First Glance* and *First Things First*.

**Call Committee**

Created and updated the Call Process web page as progress continued in calling a new Associate Pastor.

**FaithTrek**

Published and sent *Weekly Blast* emails to 56 parents of kids, ages 3-5<sup>th</sup> grade, in collaboration with FaithTrek Coordinator, Laura Gaulty, and set up an online signup for FaithTrek teachers.

Produced the movie, *Out of Time: Christmas Pageant*, which premiered at the congregational Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 17.

**Youth & Family  
Ministry**

Published and sent monthly *First Look* emails (starting in September) to 62 parents of middle and high school youth, in collaboration with Sharon Hardel, Youth & Family Ministry Director.

Recorded interviews with four middle and high school youth about their past summer camp experiences and published them to social media and the *First Things First* e-newsletter to promote Camp Sunday on April 30.

Promoted youth ministry activities, accompaniment trips and fundraisers in a variety of ways, including The Waffleman fundraiser in the Lincoln Journal Star Neighborhood Extra.

## **Columbarium**

### **Committee**

Updated the digital *Book of Remembrance* on the Columbarium webpage, as needed.

### **Hospitality & Care**

Served as a staff liaison with five members committed to member-to-member care and who prepared a summary of how current ministries are offering care and offered recommendations on enhancing care ministries. The report was shared with Pastor Erin and Church Council members.

Recruited greeters for Sunday worship services and other special events (e.g. New Member classes) and created a Sunday morning Greeter Guide with tips on offering hospitality and welcome that was shared with members who were new to greeting.

Designed a laminated pew card listing all the ways someone can connect with First Lutheran that made its premiere in the Sanctuary pews on Christmas Eve.

### **First Friday Jazz**

Managed the *First Friday Jazz* Facebook page and promoted concerts with Facebook posts and paid ads. I attended concerts and did follow-up promotion on Facebook with a music video compilation from the concerts.

## **Fall Festival**

### **Committee**

Created and carried out an extensive marketing plan. Recruited 75+ volunteers. Attended the event to take photos and capture video; created a follow-up video that was published on social media, on our webpage and in the weekly e-newsletter.

### **Vicar Committee**

Assisted in promoting and hosting a farewell reception for Vicar Erick Hill on August 14.

## **All-Church**

### **Retreat**

Created promotion and set up online registration for the All-Church Retreat on September 9 at Carol Joy Holling.



**Gifts of Hope**  
**Alternative Giving**

**Market**                      Designed and published online shopping catalog and set up and managed the online store. I also developed and carried out the marketing plan.

**SUMMARY**

As you can see through all of the collaborative work that was done in 2023, carrying out Jesus' great commission goes well beyond me. It requires a team. It doesn't matter who you are, what your age is, where you live or the title that you have, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we all have a role to play in sharing the Good News. Every disciple must be a disciple-maker. It can be as close as the house next door, your colleagues' offices down the hall or the locker next to yours at the gym. The point is, the Great Commission confirms that we all have a place to go, work to do and people to share the Good News with. So, go forth, fellow disciples, and author new stories of Good News to be told in 2024!

# WORSHIP AND MUSIC MINISTRY

BY MASAKO BACON, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Thanks to all who served with their gifts and their precious time this year:

- Many musicians who share their musical gifts in a group or individually and people. Each music group makes a small ministry team. It always amazes me to see how people support each other for their musical growth and for spiritual growth.
- All who served as Worship Assistants or on the Worship and Music Committee. Every worship service relies on Worship Assistants to lead and to support the liturgy. A special appreciation for Don and Peg Westerhold who stepped down as the 10:45 AM Head Usher after serving many years on this role. We are currently in search for this position.

The highlight of 2023 was the growth in some music ministry groups.

♪ **Adult Choir** welcomed 4 new members.

♪ **Jazz Team** added 3 new young players.

♪ **String Ensemble** 1 new member and a few others started taking string lessons and expressed interests for the future.

**Faith Trek Music:** Another highlight is the transformation of Children's Choirs. Faith Trek started sharing their musical gifts together. As the result, it has been a redeeming experience to reach out to children and families who never participated in music program. Many shared their joy of listening to children's praise at the beginning of the worship service every other month. It was not an easy decision to stop having long celebrated history of Wednesday evening Children's Choirs; however, the decision was made upon decreased numbers of participants and requests from a few families who were wishing to participate in the choir if it were held on Sundays (due to athletic conflicts). It was a significant modification for Faith Trek Sunday morning program as well as Children's Choir program. I am so grateful for Laura Gaulty and Sharon Hardel for sharing their precious program time, and also Erin Niebuhr and Jan Modica for creating completely new curriculum to work this new format. Erin continues to direct **Youth Orff Ensemble**, as well for the alternate months, which involves a few different families.

**Revision of Guidance to Worship Assistants:** Worship and Music took several months to review and to revise the instruction list for Worship Assistants, which was last updated in 2012. It

reflects changes to the remodeled building and language that is more easily understood. Big kudos go to Martha Tanner who compiled all the member's suggestions to implement in the revision. Tracy Knezvic revised Altar Guild sections in details with her experiences to encourage new people to serve as Altar Guild.

**Installation of the Second Camera for Livestreaming:** The second camera was purchased with the memorial fund for Johnny Christensen. Brian Niebuhr installed it. It has significantly increased the coverage area and allows clearer views.

*Soli Deo Gloria!* - To God alone be the glory!

## YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

BY SHARON HARDEL, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Wow! Another year has come and gone. 2023 felt like we were coming out of the pandemic. More activities were planned and new partnerships were made. One new activity for the 2023 year was to kick it off with a New Year's Eve Party at noon for families with young children. We played games, had pizza and rang in the New Year with confetti and noise makers. A fun time was had by all.

Other new initiatives for 2023 included:

Partnering with Sheridan Lutheran, Southwood Lutheran, Shepherd of the Hills, and Our Saviour's Lutheran for youth activities. We held a Lock-in, a Progressive Dinner where we shared a different part of the meal at each other's congregations, a Kickball Tournament, and a trip to Roca Farm. We are hoping to expand this partnership with other congregations in 2024.



Family Planting Day where the congregation was invited to help plant vegetables and herbs in the planting boxes in the outdoor classroom to provide fresh food for Las Abejitas. We planted



tomatoes, cucumbers, and a variety of peppers. The garden grew very well, and many vegetables were shared with families in addition to the meals prepared at the church.

We made changes to the spring Confirmation program by “taking it on the road”. We had our educational programming the first Wednesday of each month and then went out into the Lincoln area to serve local community nonprofits like Matt

Talbot, The Barnabas Community, The Center for People, and the Lincoln Lutheran Food Pantry. I had the privilege of setting up these service activities and learned so much about each organization and continue to plan things with our youth to include working with these organizations. We changed the program once again in the fall and are now calling it “Discipleship University”. Students basically receive “credits” for attending the educational sessions on Wednesday nights (core courses) and for service activities, youth group activities, and participation in worship / congregational

ministries (elective courses) throughout the year. Each student has a binder to track the credits and Pastor Erin and I sign off on each session. This seems to be going well so far and we plan to continue with this program style for the foreseeable future. We had 8 students affirm their baptism on Reformation Sunday and this year they got to design their own stoles. This was well received by the students, and it was fun to see their creativity take shape on the stoles. We had a lovely breakfast with so many good breakfast casseroles and pastries donated by our members.



In addition to the youth activities with the other congregations mentioned above, we tried some new gathering times as well as some favorite activities from the past on Sunday evenings. Some of our activities included day off school card games in coffee shops and volunteering at local nonprofits. One of the new favorites was a banana scavenger hunt where youth measured various items like the altar length in bananas, then we



enjoyed banana sundaes. We also enjoyed a scavenger hunt with the Lutheran Center pastor and students after worshipping with them and providing a baked potato bar lunch. We took in a movie or two including a Drive-In Star Wars movie at Falconwood Park, helped with Kicks for Kids and the Fall Festival and delivered the 1300+ food collected in November to the food pantry and helped to sort it. Youth also

participated in Synod events, LYON (Lutheran Youth of Nebraska) and MSG (Middle School Gathering) and one of our youth and I served on the MSG planning team. Many youth and children participated in summer camp as well.

Due to summer schedules, it is very difficult for youth to experience a weeklong summer trip opportunity. In 2023 we were fortunate to be able to offer three different trips. Youth helped with hurricane clean up, in food pantries and had some adventures in Sarasota and Fort Myers FL, (we joined First Lutheran in Fremont for this trip),







others shared in adventures and camp clean up at the Wilderness Canoe Base in Grand Marais MN, while others went on the Synod Youth Trip to Denver, Colorado where they served with Special Olympics and at various non-profit organizations. We were able to support our youth on these trips with fundraisers like the Annual

Spaghetti Feed,

Baked Potato Bar at First Friday Jazz, a Mother's Day Brunch and an Envelope Challenge. We also brought back a favorite, The Waffleman, and offered yard clean up for members in the spring. Thanks to all who traveled with the youth, prayed for the youth and advisors and



contributed to our fundraising efforts.



We held a weeklong VBS at First Lutheran over the summer which was our second year partnering with Our Saviour's Lutheran. This has been such a great partnership as we share the work and have more kids attending. Summer 2024 VBS is already on the calendar and will be held at Our Saviour's.



The second annual Congregational Retreat was held at Camp Carol Joy Holling at the Hazel Dillon Lodge. Members of all ages came out and a good time was had by all.

Learning time on Sunday mornings is filled with various lessons and activities for both the middle and high school students (ages meet together due to lack of volunteers to teach). We began the year using "Echo the Story" which led students through stories in the Old Testament and how we are part of that story today. In the fall we began using the ELCA Youth Gathering Curriculum. We also joined Adult Forum for topics that related to youth and the intergenerational events that were planned, like the Christmas pageant and Gratitude Sunday.

I attended the ELCA Network Extravaganza which is an educational and restorative event for anyone working in youth and children's ministry. I also participated in Synod sponsored learning events and webinars,, as well as ELCA Network webinar trainings throughout the year.



In addition to youth ministry, I serve on the Adult Forum committee and facilitate the Monday Coffee Talk Group and the Thursday Gather and Gab Zoom Group. These groups meet weekly and enjoy staying in touch with each other. The Coffee Group tends to be less structured and conversation is about whatever comes up that day, however, occasionally we read a book or article together. The Gather and Gab group has guided discussions based on readings or videos they receive earlier in the week. We began the year using articles from "The Wired Word" which relate recent news events to our faith and Bible passages. We also used a Homebrewed Theology video series on Bonhoeffer for several weeks and are currently using "Reachable Reconciliation" talk sheets.

All in all, 2023 has been a good year. It is nice to feel we are coming out of the pandemic and to see youth and families engaging in ministries again. As always, we still need volunteers to help with these ministries to continue offering them and support those that participate in them. If you would like to volunteer, please fill out our discipleship form so I can contact you and get you plugged in. Thanks to all those who have been prayer partners, drivers, advisors, game leaders, meal preparers, activity and service project coordinators, attended extracurricular events at school functions and supported our youth and families in any way, we are blessed to have you.

We kick off 2024 with "Traveling With the Wisemen" mini VBS and God's Work Our Hands event on Jan. 2 – 4. I am excited to begin the new year with learning, serving, and most importantly finding Jesus like the wisemen did.

# **FAITHTREK**

**BY LAURA GRAULTY, FAITHTREK COORDINATOR**

This was my second year as FaithTrek Coordinator. Last year we started with an average of seven 4 yr-2nd graders and four 3-5th graders. This year we started a brand new class for preschoolers and we have 2-4 cherubs in attendance. We have averaged seven K-2nd graders, and eight 4-5th graders. I'm proud of the growth I see and pray for continued growth. I continue with a weekly email, called the "Weekly Blast", that includes parent information and a connection activity from the lesson taught that week for them to do at home. I am also responsible for the children's sermon on the first Sunday of the month.

Here are some monthly highlights:

## **January**

I initiated and am still trying to get adults and cherubs to introduce themselves during the Noisy Offering.

## **February**

Cherubs decorated Meals on Wheels sacks for Valentine's Day.  
Pastor Erin led the 3-5th graders in a "Get to Know Your Bible" class.

## **March**

March 19 and 26 - There were first communion classes for some of the cherubs and 12 received their first communion on Maundy Thursday. Sharon Hardel and I hosted a movie night at the church.

## **April**

Easter and then a session planning for the End-of-the-FaithTrek-Year Breakfast.

## **May-August:**

I helped with the vegetable planting in our garden and hosted 10 cherubs with parents for ice cream, games and a movie at my house.

## **September:**



Attended the Congregational Retreat for my first time. (Very Fun!) We started FaithTrek with a boom! We may need to look into another classroom if our numbers continue to grow.

**October:**

There was a great turnout of cherubs at our annual Fall Festival!

**November:**

I helped Sharon plan Gratitude Sunday and began filling roles and filming scenes for the Christmas Pageant.

**December**

On December 17 the *"Out of Time"* Multigenerational Pageant was presented to a packed Activity Center. I'm thankful for Mark Mesarch, and especially Judy Bailey, for their help with direction and insights and Kathleen Simley for producing the final video that premiered at the pageant. I also volunteered to help Sharon with the pizza/movie night for our Mini VBS in January.



## **ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**BY PATRICK HAYDEN-ROY, COMMITTEE CHAIR**

During 2023 the Adult Education Committee continued to carry out planning and presentation of the Adult Forum series. The Committee works to present sessions that inform congregants about issues of concern for our Christian faith, that minister to the needs of our congregants, and that inform and deepen their understanding of the faith. Among the topics covered this year were the social ministry work of our Church, the work of Literacy Lincoln in providing language learning for immigrants, the Mosaic ministry of the ELCA, the causes of political polarization in our society, among others.

One change in the Committee this year involved the transition in the chair position of the Committee. After many long years of attentive and effective chairing of the Committee, Connie Kisling passed on the baton. The Committee wants to recognize her long commitment to this ministry, and to thank her for all her hard work. She continues to serve on the Committee for which we are also thankful.

Thanks as well to other Committee members: Rod and Anne Johnson, Lyle Petersen, Sharon Hardel, Brian Niebuhr, Jim Kisling, Gordon Saksena (particular thanks to Gordon for his expert technical services Sunday mornings). In addition, thanks to Elaine Kruse and Gene Brass, both of whom stepped off the Committee after long service.

## **COLUMBARIUM COMMITTEE**

**BY TOM TIEDGEN, CHAIR**

The committee consists of 6 members, a council representative and the Lead Pastor. The members are: Tom Tiedgen (chair), Bill Shaner (vice-chair), Kay Rockwell (secretary), Dale Bowder, Jan Modica, Dale Ripa, council representative Amy Tipton and Lead Pastor Erin Heidelberger.

### **2023 Highlights:**

- The committee met twice in 2023 – April 14 and October 16.
- 106, of the 152, niches have been reserved and paid for (6 were sold this year).
- There are 49 individuals inured in the Columbarium.
- Dale Bowder and Dale Ripa were re-appointed for another three-year term. Terms end May 31, 2026.
- On Memorial Day, a *Service of Remembrance* was held to recognize all lost loved ones.
- Jeff and Linda Culbertson continue to take care of the Memorial Garden space.

First Lutheran Church's website has a link to the Columbarium where you can find documents to reserve a niche. Niches are \$1000 each, which includes canister for ashes, bronze nameplate and perpetual care. Also located on the Columbarium link is the *Book of Remembrance* which includes each inured individual's picture and life story.

## ENDOWMENT BOARD

BY ANN CARLSON, CHAIR

### Committee Board Member Review:

Ann Carlson, 2nd Term, 1<sup>st</sup> Year

Karen Peppmuller, 1<sup>st</sup> Term, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

Steve Doolittle, 1<sup>st</sup> Term, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Tracy Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Term, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Terry Kruse – 1<sup>st</sup> Term, 1 year term

**Board Highlights:** The Board welcomed Terry Kruse as a new member. Terry filled the remainder of Tyler Mainquist's three-year term.

**Investment Fund Activity:** The purpose of the First Lutheran Church Endowment Board is to grow the portfolio such that the annual distributions do not expend any of the principal of the fund and the portfolio meets a socially responsible investment strategy. It shall be the policy of the Board to distribute up to 6% of the preceding three-year average balance, while never expending the donated principal of the fund.

In 2023, the Board elected to distribute \$18,250.00, which amounts to approximately a 3% distribution strategy. In 2022, a 2.8% distribution strategy was used.

Other than a bank balance, the Endowment Board assets are invested with the ELCA Ministry Growth Fund.

**Fund Distributions:** The Board's bylaws dictate that a minimum of 10% of the fund's annual income be distributed to fulfill three areas: Education, Outreach and Missions of ELCA. This year's distributions include:

*Education - \$9,000.00 (49.31%)*

- Ten scholarships at \$900 each to FLC Scholarship Applicants

*Outreach - \$4,000.00 (21.92%)*

- FLC Pastor's Discretionary Fund - \$2,000.00
- Las Abejitas Scholarship - \$500.00

- *A grant from the Immanuel Foundation for Las Abejitas Scholarships was completed. As a part of that application, the Endowment Board voted to give \$500.00 for Las Abejitas Scholarships.*
- Center for People - \$500.00
- The Liberian Dream Foundation - \$1,000.00
  - *The funds will be used to purchase assorted drugs/medicines and other health related supplies as well as assorted educational materials in Sinoe County, Republic of Liberia.*

*Missions of the ELCA - \$5,250.00 (28.77%)*

- WELCA (quilts) - \$750.00
  - *The funds will be used to purchase batting for our Lutheran World Relief quilts.*
- Nebraska Synod - \$1,500.00
  - *The funds will be used to help fund several special projects to maintain and expand the synod archives, which will preserve the Lutheran history in Nebraska.*
- Lutheran Disaster Relief Middle East Crisis - \$1,000.00
- ELCA World Hunger - \$1,000.00
- Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries - \$1,000.00
  - *The funds will go toward the Seminary Scholarship Endowment.*

**Concluding Remarks:** The Board would like to thank our congregation for its support and contributions. Your gifts support our First Lutheran family and community to carry on the ministry you believe in.

## **FAITH TO GO**

**BY TERA BEERMANN, MINISTRY CHAIR**

The *Faith To Go* group continues to meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays at the early hour of 6:30 a.m. via Zoom. Zoom allows for members to participate from home, even when they are out of town. This year we've heard from about 20 First Lutheran members and staff who shared a glimpse of their daily life. We were blessed to hear from Vicar Erick when he started as Vicar and again as he finished his time at First Lutheran. As you can imagine, our conversations vary as we invite students, those working inside or outside the home and those enjoying retirement. Speakers share about their family, interests, involvement at First Lutheran, and what drew them to First Lutheran, etc.

Small groups are a wonderful way to get to know each other and create connections. This is an invitation to join the conversation.

## **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

**BY JUDY BATTERMAN, CHAIR**

The goal of this committee is to provide fun and fellowship for the congregation. Many of our events revolve around food, breaking bread together and having fun. We continue to serve coffee between services on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month. We welcomed a couple of new committee members (Linda Bogenreif, Karen Moser and Verla Youngquist). Scott Williamson left the committee to take on additional Council duties. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm and welcome newcomers.

In January we met with Pastor Erin to help map out our year's events. During the seasons of Lent and Advent we facilitated and served the soup lunches and suppers with help from the congregation who made soup and baked bread. The free-will offerings from the Lenten meals went to Clinic With a Heart and Friendship Home. Easter weekend, we provided an Easter Egg Hunt for children in the congregation along with a puppet show – thanks to Bev White and hosted the Easter breakfast serving over 120 people. During the year, we facilitated the pot-luck meals preceding the Town Hall Meetings (April, August and November). We also assisted with the serving and providing of refreshments for the End-of-Year FaithTrek and Senior Recognition in May, for Vicar Erick's reception in August and Gratitude Sunday in November. In July we hosted the annual tailgate prior to a Saltdogs baseball game with 41 in attendance. We assisted with the October Fall Festival as needed and planned an intergenerational Halloween party which we reluctantly had to cancel due to low registration. We again hosted Thanksgiving Day Dinner for 40+ attendees and Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day, providing the turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy. The attendees always provide ample amounts of good food. We are always ready to step in and help whenever and wherever needed.

Committee members include: Ann Allen, Judy Bailey, Judy Batterman, Linda Bogenreif, Linda Carlson, Pat DeWald, Carlene Falos, Karen Moser, Cindy Schuster, Carol Tesar, Gordon Wolfe, Verla Youngquist



## **FIRST FRIDAY JAZZ**

**BY LEE ROCKWELL, PLANNING TEAM CHAIR**

It was exciting to see a return to normal for our 2023 jazz concerts. Attendance seemed to increase slightly on a month-to-month basis and the December concert numbers reached the level of our pre-covid concerts. At best, we attract around 250 participants from throughout Lincoln. We have a small, but highly efficient, committee. My thanks to Steve Janssen for booking each month's performers, Steve Lenzen and his crew for cooking and serving the monthly lunches and Kathleen Simley for her publicity efforts.

We are pleased to report that these concerts are self-supporting, not requiring any financial support from the church. This has been the case from our first year (2011) and every year since then. Any excess revenue has been used to support enhancements to the Activity Center, including the purchase and installation of the sound baffles plus enhanced sound and lighting. Each concert is an outreach effort to the Lincoln community, and audience members are generous in food items donated for our food pantry.

We hope to see many of our congregation members the first Friday of each month from October through May from 11:30 AM-1:00 PM.

## **2023 GIFTS OF HOPE ALTERNATIVE GIVING MARKET**

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY BARB JOHNSON FRANK AND KAREN LENZEN**

**FOR THE GOH TEAM**

Gifts of Hope Alternative Giving Market, an Advent tradition at First Lutheran Church for well over a dozen years, was available in 2023 through an interactive online catalog from December 2-3 and in-person on Sunday, December 3. The market's purposes are:

- To provide members of the congregation, the community and beyond (through an online catalog) opportunities to more closely align holiday giving practices with the deepest meaning of the Advent and Christmas seasons
- To live more fully into First Lutheran Church's Welcome Statement
- To raise awareness of local, regional and international needs and offer education about groups and organizations that are at work to address them
- To nurture connections that continue beyond the market itself

### **2023 Highlights**

- A record 16 partner groups were involved: Border Servant Corps, ELCA Good Gifts, Eripoto for Girls and Women (Tanzania), First Lutheran Food Backpack program, First Lutheran's Lutheran World Relief Quilters, Friendship Home, I've Got a Name, Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center, Lincoln Bike Kitchen, Lutheran World Federation-Jerusalem Olive Oil/Augusta Victoria Hospital, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska Veterans Programs, Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach, Mission Marketplace/Bethlehem Lutheran/Wahoo (ELCA Disaster Response, ½ of proceeds designated for relief of the ongoing famine in South Sudan, ½ for general ELCA Disaster Response), Nursing Scholarships and Houses for Health (Tanzania), PFLAG-Lincoln, ELCA Global Mission support for microloans and for needs of women and children in Cameroon and Madagascar.
- New member-initiated partnerships included I've Got a Name, Friendship Home, Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center and First Lutheran Food Backpacks. Betty Wilken gifted her collection of handmade items from years of service with ELCA Global Mission in Cameroon and Madagascar, with proceeds supporting micro-loans in those regions. Judy Batterman gathered donations of handmade items from ten First Lutheran makers to benefit Lutheran Family Services Veterans Programs. Bethlehem Lutheran Church

(Wahoo, NE) Mission Marketplace volunteers collaborated with First Lutheran's Nuer members to benefit ELCA Disaster Response efforts.

- Networking among representatives of community agencies was evident.
- More than 40 members of the congregation were involved in planning and implementing Gifts of Hope Market.
- Feedback from planners, participants and community representatives was enthusiastic and encouraging.
- Kathleen Simley's partnership and creative work in developing the interactive online catalog and her clear messaging about the Gifts of Hope "why" were exceptional contributions.

### **2023 Gifts of Hope Donations: \$24,025.98**

Border Servant Corps (U.S.-Mexico Border Region)	\$ 870.04
Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center (Lincoln)	\$2,907.03
Eripoto for Girls and Women (Tanzania)	\$769.72
Lincoln Bike Kitchen (Lincoln)	\$711.47
ELCA Good Gifts (World Hunger and Beyond)	\$1,186.20
Matt Talbot Street Outreach (Lincoln)	\$988.21
ELCA Global Mission (Cameroon and Madagascar)	\$665.44
Mission Market Place (ELCA Disaster Response/South Sudan)	\$1,583.93
Food Bank Backpacks (FLC Neighborhood Schools)	\$1,573.02
Nebraska Synod Nursing/Houses for Health (Tanzania)	\$6,071.47
Friendship Home (Lincoln)	\$673.89
Lutheran World Federation-Jerusalem (Augusta Victoria Hospital)	\$1,613.02
I've Got a Name (Nebraska)	\$1,766.47
PFLAG-Lincoln	\$503.99
Lutheran Family Services Veterans Programs (Nebraska)	\$844.43
FLC Lutheran World Relief Quilters	\$822.65
Other donation: Tabitha Meals on Wheels	\$225.00

Together, our Gifts of Hope giving, totaling offers welcome, safety, income from farm animals, transportation, street outreach to the most vulnerable, nursing care, warmth, microloans, safe drinking water, disaster relief, food, shelter, opportunities to receive an education, access to health care, life-giving counseling, quality care for infants and preschoolers and much, much more. Thanks be to God for the very clear presence of God's Spirit and for the Advent promise of hope and healing that never fails!

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

**BY SANDY LATSHAW, COMMITTEE MEMBER**

The 2023 Nominating Committee began meeting on September 3 to determine the committee positions to be filled for 2024 and to develop a list of potential candidates for each committee. The committee met periodically throughout the fall to review and expand those lists and communicated frequently via email.

Nominating committee members included Tera Beerman, Norm Kempf, Sandy Latshaw, Gene Cotter, Steve Eicher and Carlene Falos. Emily Sears served as the Congregational Council representative.

The nominating committee is pleased to present this year's outstanding candidates for four committees. A sincere and heartfelt thank you to each nominee for your willingness to serve First Lutheran Church.

Congregational Council: John Bonaiuto, Ann Bouma, Patrick Hayden-Roy, Kari Hoeft, Owen Paulsen, Karen Statham, Jenna Troutman, Bev White, and Brandon Wiebelhaus. The congregation will be electing five members to a three-year term and two members to a one-year term to fill two Congregational Council uncompleted terms.

Nominating Committee: Courtney Anderson, Les Carlson, Steve Janssen, Jan Modica, Erin Niebuhr, and Gay Sutter. The congregation will be electing three members to a two-year term.

Endowment Board: Craig Heier, Karen Peppmuller, Madalyn Popken, and Dave Timperley. The congregation will be electing two members to a three-year term.

Synod Assembly: Tony Anderson, Linda Jensen, Joan Johnson, Len Nelson, Carol Olson, Linda Rasmussen, Angie Ripa, Dale Ripa, and Jay Sears. The congregation will be electing five members to a one-year term. At least two representatives must be female, and two must be male.

# **PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

**BY NORM KEMPF, COMMITTEE CHAIR**

**Committee Chair:** Norman Kempf

**Committee Members:** Bob Batterman, Richard Draper, Les Carlson, Norm Kempf, Rod Johnson, and Pastor Erin Heidelberger , Steve Lenzen, Steve Doolittle, Steve Dickey, Joel Nelson, and Richard Harris

## **2023 Highlights:**

- Spread mulch on beds for the school play yard and church plantings.
- Juniper shrubs trimmed.
- Flooring installed in day care area and other updates completed.
- Property committee members (Steve Lenzen) volunteered to do mowing and property maintenance.
- Boiler repair completed.
- Parking signs for day care installed.
- Child proofed the playground fence.
- Fixed chairs in the chapel.
- Continued work with Lutheran Brotherhood to resolve the roof damage.
- Broken stained glass window in room 4 repaired and molding replaced.
- Repairs made to FLC Van.
- LES easement executed.
- Water pump in furnace room repaired.
- New water heater installed in the north wing.
- Bats to Rats hired to eliminate the bat problem in the church.
- Property Committee assisted in setting up for The Fall Festival.
- Dishwasher repaired.

## **2024 Goals:**

- Replace concrete sidewalk on north side of church.
- Repair or replace third boiler.
- Monitor the condition of the parking lot.
- Review and update boiler needs

## **LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF QUILTERS**

**BY KAREN CLEMENTON AND MARY PHELAN, QUILTING TEAM LEADERS**

The First Lutheran Church quilters' group continues to meet on the fourth Thursday of every month, from January through October. We begin at 9:00 a.m. and work for around three hours.

Approximately six to ten members meet each month to assemble (pin) the finished quilt tops, batting and backs. Members stitch the pinned quilts together at home and also tie the quilts at home. In addition, we make kits that are sewn by members of the congregation. In 2023, we completed 117 quilts, distributed as follows:

Completed quilts boxed and shipped to Lutheran World Relief	107
Quilts sold at Gifts of Hope	8
Quilts donated to the Camp Carol Joy Holling 2023 Quilt Auction	2
Total quilts completed for 2023	117

While we do not know at the time of shipment where our quilts will be sent, Lutheran World Relief does let us know at a later time.

As noted above, we also donate several of the quilts we make during the year to the Camp Carol Joy Holling Quilt Auction.

The First Lutheran Church Endowment Board has graciously purchased the batting for the quilts for a number of years. Currently, the cost of a roll of batting is approximately \$150.00. We can complete approximately 25 quilts from one roll of batting. Through the Gifts of Hope campaign, we are hoping to raise monies to be used to offset the cost of some of the batting we purchase during the year. We would also like to use some of the money to reimburse the church for the cost of shipping the quilts. In addition, we often need to purchase fabric for quilt backs to use with donated fabric to complete the quilt tops. We sometimes purchase fabrics for the quilt tops when we do not receive enough donated fabric to make tops and kits.

## **SOCIAL MINISTRY TEAM**

**BY KAREN LENZEN, TEAM MEMBER**

**Members:** Karen Lenzen, Linda Bogenreif, Cindy Lilleoien, Sandy Latshaw, Donice Kaspar, Barb Johnson Frank, Rebecca Pfabe (Council Liaison)

### **2023 Highlights**

- **Food Bank / LPS backpack ministry** – First Lutheran funds backpacks for Pyrtle and Morley elementary schools. One or two members assist each week with the distribution at Pyrtle.
- **Food Bank's Lincoln High food market** – First provides one or two volunteers at the monthly market to assist patrons selecting food.
- **Lutheran Food Pantry** - Members continue to fill our food cart. A team of four First Lutheran members pack orders twice monthly. Several also purchase needed items in bulk quantities using designated financial donations from First members, who are great supporters of this ministry!
- **CROP Walk** – The city-wide team put together a blended in-person and virtual walk again this year. FLC walkers raised \$1,305. Sandy serves on the city-wide team.
- **Matt Talbot** – We served an average of 165 meals per month. We provide a hearty meal on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday. Numbers were up in 2023 so the need continues. A dedicated group does advance meal prep and the serving. Others provide the fruit and desert for each meal.
- **Meals on Wheels** - Weekend delivery was discontinued by Tabitha in Fall 2023. This meant First Lutheran's Sunday route program ceased. A number of First members are involved in Meals on Wheels delivery during the week. This has been a long-standing area of service for our members.
- **Kicks for Kids** – The 8th year of this ministry provided 464 pairs of shoes and five pairs of socks, as requested, for students in thirteen elementary and four middle schools, as well as some refugee and Las Abejitas pre-school students. Kicks for Kids Nebraska funded 128 of the pairs of shoes which we processed and delivered in addition to adding socks for those students. We continue to fill emergency needs as they arise, due to your generous financial contributions.

- **Diaper & Baby Wipes Drive** – In May we conducted a diaper drive for the Center for People. 5,606 diapers and 6,578 baby wipes were collected. The Center for People helps provide these essential items to families all over Lincoln.
- **Adult Forum** - On 9/17/2023 we presented an adult forum highlighting the various ministries this team works with. It was in conjunction with the Stewardship Drive.
- **Fall Festival (October)** – A large display was created for the Fall Festival to highlight the many ways First Lutheran serves in our community and beyond. It was amazing how many areas we work with and it received good feedback.
- **Gifts of Hope** – Team members participated in planning and staffing Gifts of Hope in December. A separate report is included elsewhere in this annual meeting packet.

#### **2024 Goals:**

- Continue supporting the Food Bank/LPS backpack program.
- Kicks for Kids – continue this ministry. We will continue helping the Kicks for Kids Nebraska non-profit. Our team assists in prepping and delivering shoes they are providing (but need more volunteers to help.)
- Matt Talbot - Continue serving a nutritious meal each month.
- Research short-term serving opportunities to offer throughout the year.
- Continue supporting local agencies through service events or in-gatherings of needed items. This includes highlighting the work of agencies we have not served in the past.



# STEPHEN MINISTRY

**BY FAYE DOOLITTLE AND AMY HARRISON, STEPHEN LEADERS**

What happened during 2023?

- Stephen Ministry continued to serve the congregation and the community through confidential one-to-one care as it has since 2008.
- Stephen Ministry received 4 new care receivers seeking care and support from Stephen Ministry.
- Twelve people, from both the congregation and the community, shared their challenging life circumstances with a Stephen Minister.
- Training topics included Job Loss and Christian Identity, Self-Compassion, Living Loss, Christian Care and Christian Advanced Care.
- Stephen Leaders participated in online training offered by the Stephen Ministry headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri.
- We conducted an abbreviated Stephen Ministry Facilitator training where facilitators were asked to reflect upon the talents they bring to Stephen Ministry. Facilitators are Trish Flury, Gordon Wolfe, Jan Wigodsky and Kim Janssen.
- People who served as Stephen Ministers:  
Jim Bohl, Kim Janssen, Linda Maack, Gay Sutter, Cindy Timperley, Robin Westhoff, Jan Wigodsky, Bev DeGeorge, Trish Flury, Sharon Hardel, Linda Jensen, Martha Tanner, Gordon Wolfe.
- We said goodbye to a talented Stephen Minister, Martha Tanner, who moved on to focus on new adventures.
- Amy Harrison and Kathleen Simley collaborated on how to bring awareness to Stephen Ministry and Kathleen began a focused informational campaign to feature Stephen Ministry to the congregation using different media platforms. Stephen Ministry was featured on Facebook, First Things First, Instagram, and the TVs in the Commons and Gathering Area. Kathleen shared her personal experience receiving a Stephen Minister highlighting the powerful impact Stephen Ministry had on her life when dealing with grief. Because of Kathleen's efforts more members of the congregation are now aware of the caring and compassionate benefits of Stephen Ministry.

## 2024 Goals

- Continue to provide confidential one-to-one care to our congregation and our community
- Continue to support and provide continuing education to current Stephen Ministers
- Continue to educate the congregation about this Christian caregiving ministry
- Train a new class of Stephen Ministers

If you are wondering if meeting with a Stephen Minister is appropriate for you or someone you know--

- Contact a pastor or a Stephen Leader to learn more about this confidential ministry of presence or send an email to [stephen.ministry@flclincoln.org](mailto:stephen.ministry@flclincoln.org)
- Check out [stephenministries.org](http://stephenministries.org) to learn how Stephen Ministry has impacted people's lives.

Thank you to the congregation for their continued support, for the Stephen Ministers who faithfully give of their time and presence, and for the people who share their journey one-to-one with a Stephen Minister.

# **STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

**BY MARK WEMHOFF, COMMITTEE CHAIR**

## **2023 Highlights:**

This year we teamed up with other committees and put on a Fall Festival since it was such a great success last year. This was well received and all the feedback we received was positive. I think the turnout from the community was better than last year. The dunk tank was a hit and thanks to Bishop Johnson and Vicar Erick for manning the platform with me. The Stewardship Committee did send out our annual stewardship letter to fill out commitment cards.

Overall, there were 4 more pledges than last year. Almost 40% of members increased their pledge and the average increase was over 11%. About 17% of members decreased their pledge and 39% stayed the same.

- 2020, 234 Pledges
- 2021, 186 Pledges
- 2022, 202 Pledges
- 2023, 192 Pledges
- 2024, 196 Pledges (As of 11/30)

## **2024 Goals:**

Continue to tell our story of ministry within our church as well as how that ministry reaches outside our church walls.

Continue to try and increase the percentage of members who use Simply Giving for electronic automated giving.

Continue our yearly stewardship appeal and decide if we continue the Fall Festival or go back to our traditional Stewardship Meal.

Continue to reach out to all our members no matter their current state to let them know they are a part of the stewardship of First Lutheran.

## **TANZANIA HEALTH**

**BY KAREN CLEMENTSON**

Since 1993 our Nebraska Lutheran Synod has been in partnership with the Northern Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Tanzania.

One aspect of this partnership has been First Lutheran's support of Machame Hospital's School of Nursing program which began in 2010. In all of Africa there is a severe shortage of health care workers which makes this program so very important! Tuition, room and board and all school fees amount to \$1700 per year, equaling \$5100 for the three-year diploma program. The Nebraska Synod administers the program and Robert Kasworm of CHI/Immanuel has managed the program since its inception.

Since 2010, through First Lutheran's Gifts of Hope Campaign, monies have been raised to see five students realize their dreams of becoming a nurse, enriching their lives, that of their family's and of the many patients they will care for.

Presently, First Lutheran Church is sponsoring two students- Grace Mwakabete has completed her first year, while Aziza Mchomvu has completed her first semester. Please see below for monies forwarded to the Neb. Synod in support of these students in 2023.

- August 31, 2023, tuition for Grace Mwakabete for the school year 2023-2024.
- October 31, 2023, tuition for Aziza Mchomvu for the school year 2023-2024.

December 3, 2023, Gifts of Hope raised \$4317.47 towards supporting the above-named students towards their diplomas.

## **WOMEN OF THE ELCA (WELCA)**

**BY LINDA BOGENREIF, TREASURER**

WELCA's stated mission is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. First Lutheran Church has 3 active Circles: Esther, Lydia, and Martha.

Circles meet monthly for fellowship and Bible study. The magazine, Gather, produced by ELCA, with stories and studies written by women in the ministry, is used as the source for study and discussion. Each Circle member pays for her subscription, with the magazine delivered to her home for private reading and review. Lessons are designed so that if a meeting is missed study is not hampered.

Circles take up a collection at each meeting. Half of these monthly funds go to the State WELCA association. The half that remains with Circles is used to donate to First Lutheran's youth travels, memorial donations for WELCA members, registration fees for anyone wanting to attend a State WELCA event, and at year end, each Circle designates donations to be made to charities/issues of their choice.

A Thankoffering was collected in November. The total of \$401, was remitted to the national Women of the ELCA. The funds will be used to promote women's ministries.

The Property Committee was made aware of a saving account held by WELCA that was originally (and faithfully) collected for kitchen needs. A list was created by a member of Property Committee of needed items and will be acted on in 2024.

Esther Circle meets at 10:00 am on the third Thursday of the month at Church. They do not meet in inclement weather. Lydia Circle meets at 2 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month in members homes. Martha Circle meets at 9:30am on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at Church.

Circles are open to all First Lutheran women. Please feel free to join a Circle meeting!

First Lutheran's WELCA has traditionally held the funds for the needs of the quilters of First Lutheran. We would like to express gratitude for the support of the First Lutheran Endowment Board, Gifts of Hope, private donors, and for the superb work of the First Lutheran members who devote their time, skill and often, their own funds to provide the beautiful 115 quilts provided to Lutheran World Relief in 2023.

Funds held by First Lutheran WELCA as of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023:

WELCA: \$2,033.92

Quilting: \$1,632.39

Savings: \$10,085.67

# **WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE**

**BY MARTHA TANNER, COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Committee members during 2023: Boyd Bacon, Masako Bacon, Solveig Bischoff, Jan Christensen, Molly Goninan, Pastor Erin Heidelberger, Tracy Knezevic, Ryan Luckey, Dave Pfister, Harold Sutter, Martha Tanner, Bonita Thomsen, Jan Wigodsky, Gordon Youngquist

Worship and Music Committee met five times during 2023. A major project undertaken this year was revising the training handbook for worship assistants. This document had not been updated since 2012 and did not incorporate our new worship practices, which have changed since COVID and the renovation of the sanctuary. The committee edited the document so that it reflects current worship practice. The document can be shared with those volunteering for worship assistant roles for the first time. The text will also be printed on cards that can be kept in the commons and given to worship assistants for quick training or a refresher on Sunday mornings.

Another major project was continued recruitment of people to volunteer as worship assistants. The goal is to have all slots filled prior to Sunday morning. All of the roles are essential to the worship service. New strategies have included personal one-on-one recruiting, offering multiple ways to sign up (online and paper forms), and publishing the sign-up calendar several months in advance.

In September, Kathleen Simley met with the committee to assess worship livestreaming which started three years ago. Viewership has reached a plateau with about 20 people viewing the livestream and 20 people accessing the recording each week. We are still committed to offering this option and discussed ideas for increasing engagement. Livestreaming will fall under the purview of this committee going forward; it has not had an administrative “home” up to now. We were also able to purchase a second camera for livestreaming this year thanks to a donation from Jan Christensen in memory of her son John.

Tracy Knezevic stepped down as Altar Guild chair in August. During her tenure, Tracy created many training materials, updated Altar Guild processes, and recruited new volunteers. The committee is grateful for all of her excellent work. Going forward, members of the Altar Guild will share leadership responsibilities, with one volunteer serving as weekly chair for each Saturday/Sunday.

Other items of business for the year included helping with decorations for Advent/Christmas and setup for special services, providing feedback to staff on worship plans, and recruiting new committee members.

## NOMINEES

*In addition to biographical information, all nominees were asked to respond to two requests:*

1. How do you see your gifts and expertise being used in the position you may be serving?
2. Share your thoughts on First Lutheran's mission and where you see God leading/calling us as a congregation and disciples of Christ.

### CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL (Vote for 5)

#### John Bonaiuto

Occupation: Retired Educator, Non-Profit Executive, Lobbyist

1. My interest in serving in this position is to support and build upon the work of the Church Council. My gifts and expertise for this position is understanding the role of a board member making worship, business, and policy decisions.
2. I believe First Lutheran has a dynamic Mission Statement, and I see my role as a Council Board Member making decisions and policy to fulfill as well as build upon our mission to make First Lutheran an accepting place for ALL Gods children to worship and grow.



#### Ann Bouma

Occupation: Instructor

1. Serving on Congregational Council will give me a chance to be more involved with First Lutheran. I will be able to assist in making decisions and bring my own viewpoint to the discussion as well as understand how other viewpoints impact the church. The main talent that God has given me is teaching. I have been teaching English to a wide range of international students for many years. This has given me an appreciation of how the many cultures have impacted our society and our church. Because I have taught Sunday school for many years, I understand the importance of our mission of Christian education. Finally, with my service to the bell choir, I know that music is important to the worship service as well. All of these areas have my support as we make financial decisions.
2. We are a community of lifelong learners who serve Christ who calls us to create a community in our church, community and the world. We serve Christ through worship, activities, and education for the members of our congregation as well as welcoming those who are unchurched. We show Christ's love through city outreach to provide help to those that need it with meals, and services. Finally our congregation is called to assist the international community by helping organizations that meet needs around the world.





## **Patrick Hayden-Roy**

Occupation: College Professor

1. I want to give back to the church and to work with others on living out our calling. I'm good at working collaboratively with others, at organizing activities, communicating and meeting deadlines and taking responsibility for commitments.
2. I feel called to live out the gifts we have that come from our rich heritage while finding new ways to expand our ministry. One challenge congregations face is how to attract new members without losing their distinctive gifts. With First, I think these are our strong musical ministry, the quality of preaching, and the strong social ministry tradition.



## **Kari Hoeft**

Occupation: Insurance

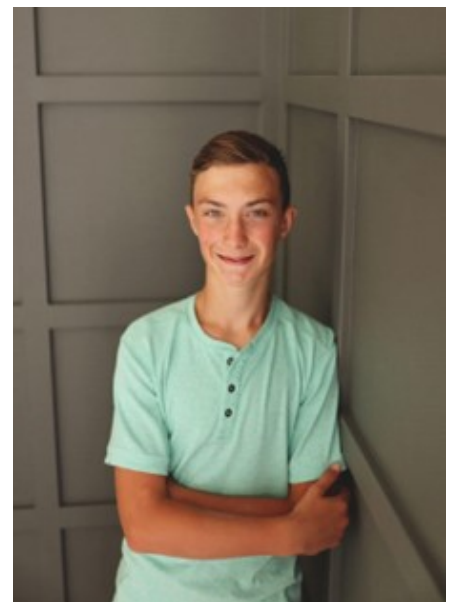
1. First Lutheran has provided so much for us over the years, I would like to use my experience to help serve the congregation. Having experience as a business owner, an employee within an organization, as well as serving on a variety of committees within First Lutheran, I believe I can offer meaningful perspectives to the council. I have a passion for communication, service, financial stewardship, and conscious discernment.
2. I believe First Lutheran has a mission and vision to not only invite the community to worship with us, but also to go into the community and share God's love. There are many opportunities to help meet our neighbors where they are and share the word in different meaningful ways.



## **Owen Paulsen**

Occupation: Student

1. This gives me an opportunity to serv my church community in a new way. I have experience with youth activities at FLC.
2. I don't have any thoughts at this time on our mission or where I see God leading our congregation.



## **Karen Statham**

Occupation: Surveyor Consultant for Public Health– DHHS

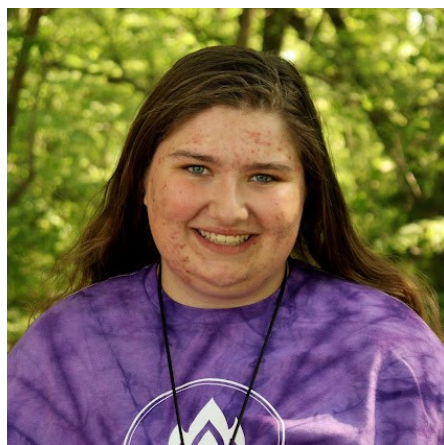
1. As a long time member of First Lutheran (1985), I've been blessed with access to all that First Lutheran offers. Serving, teaching, leadership, ministry, counseling, education, love, support and care, my list goes on and on. Acting in a role on the counsel is a small way of giving back to this church/congregation that has cared so long for me. Working in Public Health, I've had extraordinary experiences in working with and for a wide variety of individuals and groups with different needs and perspectives. In addition, my work requires working with co-workers towards both broad and specific shared goals. The Church counsel brings together a wide variety of individuals all working towards shared goals.
2. First Lutheran has been a leader in the neighborhood, the community and the larger church for decades. God has called this congregation through opportunities as well as individuals and staff to continue that work. As a congregation we have heeded that call through our responses in a wide variety of ministries focused on service. I believe, Gods' call to us has been for us to continue the work of being servants.



## **Jenna Troutman**

Occupation: Special Programs/Experience Director; Copple Family YMCA

1. I want to serve on church council because I want to help serve my church community. First Lutheran has helped me so much in different ways throughout my life and I want to be able to give back. I've learned many things about myself in this church and I've been able to discern what I want to do in life in large part because of this church. I want to be able to give back to the church that has helped me grow, and one way that I can do that is by serving on church council. I have been a member at First since birth and have seen the church through many times. I've been involved in many places, specifically with the youth, and in music. I continue to help with Youth Group and serve as an adult on our High School Accompaniment trips. I've also served on church council the last few months. As a director at the Y, I've learned many skills. I've written a budget and have had to maintain it. I've been able to support and manage staff, which has given me an understanding of how to work well with people.
2. I love First Lutheran's mission. I have truly enjoyed seeing First Lutheran in many different times. I believe that as the years continue God will lead us to continue to make a difference in our community, as well as continuing to make a difference on our youth, our young adults, and through all generations. I want our church to continue to be a welcoming place that invites people of all backgrounds to join in.



## Bev White

Occupation: Retired

1. I am committed to the mission statement of welcoming and including all people. I see everyone as a valued member of this congregation. I would like to support meaningful, consistent life sustaining relationships inside the church and in the community.

I've only been a member of first for a little over a year. I was raised in a Lutheran church along with participating all my life as an active member. I would like to learn more about the working at First and be a partner in the future directions. I tend to think beyond what has been done in the past by saying "how can it be made better" to meet the needs of everyone.

I have many years in the teach field, as a teacher of students with a variety of needs and as a district leader for professional staff learning. In our last congregation, I was on the church council for six years helping to lead through many congregational changes. I was on the Education committee for twenty plus years before becoming the director of Christian Education. I directed Summer Sunday Fun (Vacation Bible School) for thirty years progressing from five morning a week during the summer to generational events and activities on Sunday and weekends.

2. I see us sharing the word of God, along with working together.



## Brandon Wiebelhaus

Occupation: CEO of Lincoln Restoration Services

1. Through a decade of owning and operating a construction and restoration business I have gained an expertise in building and structural care. I also have a wealth of knowledge in business operation and finances through my education and business ownership. With these gifts I can be used as a liaison during our current construction project and with future operations.
2. I feel our mission speaks to my personal belief that everyone has something, big or small, to offer that can help make the world a better place for all. I think God is leading us and calling us together to combine all of those offerings together to make the largest impact possible.





## NOMINATING COMMITTEE (Vote for 3)

### Courtney Anderson

Occupation: Teacher, LPS

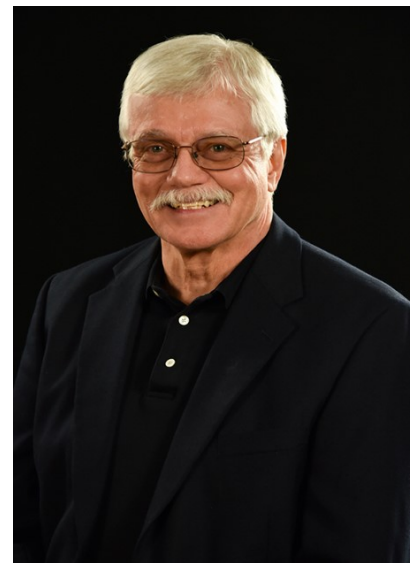
1. I wanted to respond to the call I received to serve, and with my previous experiences, I felt this may be a good role for me and align with my strengths. This experience may utilize my strengths of building relationships with people, and making connections among people. My past experiences as a volunteer coordinator and organizer for school and church activities will serve me as I help reach out to and connect with people and identify areas where members of our church may want to serve and/or run for office.
2. We are called to serve as Christ would have us serve. Our church mission is to invite, accept and support all people. We work together in our mission to call others to the Lord in worship and praise. As disciples of Christ, God leads and calls us to support and teach each other as we serve together to carry out His mission for us.



### Les Carlson

Occupation: Retired University of Nebraska faculty member

1. I was asked to be a nominee and I agreed to do so because the nominating committee's purpose is to identify FLC members who may become the next elected leaders of this congregation. Thus, this committee plays an important part in building the future FLC leadership foundation. Since lay leadership serves a critical role in determining FLC's direction and since I've been a member of FLC for many years, I'm interested in helping to pinpoint those individuals who may become leaders in our congregation. I've previously been council vice president for two churches to which Linda and I belonged prior to "coming home" to FLC in 2008. Consequently, I may have developed some insight regarding the qualifications necessary to serve in church based-leadership positions. Moreover and most import, I also believe there are FLC individuals who have these qualifications but who still need to be identified and asked to participate as lay leaders. I hope to help in this regard.
2. I'll answer this by sharing some of the thoughts I put into the prayers I typically write when I offer a prayer prior to FLC Property Committee (PC) meetings. That is, I ask that the PC be guided in what we attempt and accomplish with the end result of our efforts being achievements that enhance our physical structure as a welcoming place for all. To that end, I also ask that PC members listen to all ideas and concerns regarding our property and that we are successful in our ongoing endeavors to make FLC a safe, warm, and hospitable environment for worship, gathering, and contemplation. In summary, I believe God is leading and calling us to continue to be a welcoming place like that which I just described.



## Steve Janssen

Occupation: Account Manager

1. I've served at First Lutheran in various ways including council treasurer, building committee, budget committee, youth group sponsor, Sunday School teacher, choir and brass. I'm familiar with the operation and mission of First Lutheran as well as the many ways we serve and welcome.
2. First Lutheran is a family that welcomes and supports all who seek belonging, while maintaining an outward focus towards serving God's people. I feel that we strive to love God and love one another.



## Jan Modica

Occupation: Claims Adjuster

1. I was asked and I feel it is a place I can help serve. I have been a part of First Lutheran Church for many years. The things that I have been a part of while at First Lutheran bring me in contact and get to know lots of First Lutheran's Parishioner's.
2. I feel God is calling us in growing God's church and our faith together as a family in Christ.



## Erin Niebuhr

Occupation: Music Teacher/Music Therapist

1. Nominating committee has an important job in the election process of the church. Its mission of selecting candidates is very critical, as it establishes the leadership of the church for the next several years. I want to help create a quality slate of candidates to move the church forward in its mission. Because I have been a member of First for so many years and have served in many capacities throughout the church life, I have gotten to know many people from all backgrounds. I believe I can use those connections to help create a robust and viable slate of candidates for the election.
2. I have always been deeply committed to First Lutheran's mission and whole heartedly believe in our welcome statement. While I know at times it may seem like we struggle to bring in members and keep them active, I believe we are a strong congregation with much to offer. I stand by our mission to be disciples of God and serve Christ in our community. Our family has received so much love, caring and help from this church that I look forward to giving back should I be elected to nominating committee.



## Gay Sutter

Occupation: Retired

1. First, because I was asked. Though it can be challenging to find people willing to serve on the different committees, it is rewarding to talk to people, answer their questions and, hopefully, help them see ways their gifts could benefit First Lutheran. As a 40 year member of First Lutheran, I've had the pleasure to meet and work with many people in the congregation.
2. Our Welcoming Sttaement is the foundation of First being welcoming to ALL and our belief that all are created in God's image. I'm amazed to see all the ways First reaches out not only to our members, but to our community and beyond. I see our mission to continue to reach out and serve all, showing God's Love.



## SYNOD ASSEMBLY VOTING MEMBERS (Vote for 5 - At least 2 men and 2 women)

### Tony Anderson

Occupation: Network Systems Engineer ALLO

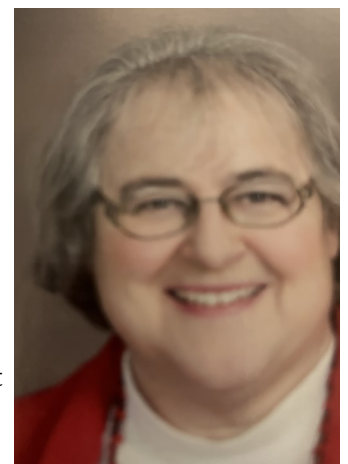
1. I see this as a new and interesting opportunity to serve the church. I have served in a few different roles with the church at the local level and I would like to bring that experience to the broader church organization. I have served a couple of terms on the council and have experience in and understanding of the needs of the church community. I feel that I am a good listener and consensus seeker and I try to understand other points of view. I think these qualities would be helpful in the role of synod delegate.
2. I see FLC's mission as calling us to serve others as God would have us serve, and teaching and sustaining us as we walk in this mission. I feel that God is leading us to continue to walk in this mission; to wrap our arms around all of God's children in love.



### Linda Jensen

Occupation: Retired

1. Since Retiring I enjoy doing service, and doing it for our church. Prior to retirement I was a nurse, and learned to communicate with the public, and education needed to continue in the line of work. I feel that I can help balance with communicating and collaborating as a team. Through my work experience I've served on several committees.
2. I like the new mission statement that all are welcome, and feel that is an important part of being a Christian and extending that welcoming spirit in all that I do.





## Joan Johnson

Occupation: Retired

1. In the past, I have served as a Council member, Scientist in Congregation committee member, helped organize Taize services, and continue to be a reader and Communion Assistant. I am retired and have time to serve in this role. I have found over the years, that I enjoy short term serving opportunities. Although I'm not sure if these apply, but my background is in the medical field and in the computer software field. In the medical field, I worked in hospital laboratories where providing accurate test results were critical. In the computer field, I've done end user training, customer support, quality assurance testing, and written documentation.
2. I believe that God is calling us to continue to live up to the Welcome Statement that was drafted several years ago and to recommit our work to that Statement.



## Len Nelson

Occupation: Retired Professor of Agronomy

1. Attending the Synod assembly will give me a better understanding of how the Nebraska synod functions. It is also an opportunity to bring issues from First Lutheran to the attention of the Synod. I hope that my many years in Nebraska and at First Lutheran will give me some insight as to my response to the issues being addressed.
2. First Lutheran has been a beacon for the Nebraska Synod for many years. This includes leadership of personnel and budgeting. As the challenges of reduced budgets and retracting membership continue, I hope we can continue on the path where God leads us.



## Carol Olson

Occupation: Physical Therapist, Spiritual Director

1. I am eager to participate in the process of listening to other perspectives, engagement with delegates, and balancing a prayerful consideration of the business at hand. I would appreciate the opportunity to represent and serve First Lutheran in this way. Even though I have not attended an Assembly before, I have watched it via livestream over the past several years. I'm happy to learn more about how the Synod Assembly works by participating in it. One gift I bring is an awareness of the spiritual gifts of others through my training as a Spiritual Director. At First Lutheran, I have helped in this way by helping to plan spiritual offerings such as the Lenten Prayer Vigil earlier this year, and presenting at the Adult Forum on various contemplative practices. My heart is always trying to tune into the work of the Divine, and I see that as my role as a voting member of the Nebraska Synod Assembly. From this perspective, I believe that the work of the Holy Spirit continues not only at First



## **Carol Olson continued.....**

Lutheran, but also statewide and beyond.

2. First Lutheran has great potential to impact the spiritual growth of many people. We each hold a unique connection to the Divine, and it is from this unique connection that we grow spiritually. Receiving the wisdom gained by the sharing of these gifts will guide our congregation. Spiritual gifts are expressed through a multitude of ways: serving our neighbors, praying and worshiping together, and supporting our community are a few examples. Weaving our various spiritual gifts and strengths together will surely lead to a more vibrant life at First Lutheran and beyond.

## **Linda Rassmussen**

Occupation: Retired

1. This is a way I can serve First Lutheran and the Church. I have never been a representative at this meeting, yet I have attended many years sitting in the guest rows. I believe I'm a listener who takes these issues of church in consideration and who understands the mission of our Church and First's mission. With patience and prayerful consideration for wisdom I will endeavor to be a faithful representative for First Lutheran.
2. With our mission statement, and our leadership in place, I believe First will be growing in all its endeavors. We are a congregation that will be teaching God's word and demonstrating how that lesson is acted upon in community and world.



## **Angie Ripa**

Occupation: Retired

1. I'm very interested in the mission of the ELCA at the synod level—especially at this time when post COVID attendance of, not only First Lutheran, but all churches is declining. Discussion and solutions are needed for the challenges we face today. I've been a member at First Lutheran for 40 years and have had the opportunity to serve on various committees and work with many members of First Lutheran. I love listening to all sides of a conversation before forming an opinion on any given topic.
2. I think First Lutheran does an excellent job at welcoming everyone and reaching out into the community to do more. Love that we are very inclusive and that all are welcome to God's table.





## Dale Ripa

Occupation: Retired

1. My interest in the workings of the ELCA and the Nebraska Synod and the best interest in First Lutheran Church. Being a member since 1983, I have served on Church Council and various committees, I feel with these interactions and understanding of our church I can represent our people of First Lutheran at the Synod Assembly.
2. We welcome all as God welcomes all. First has the staff and the facilities to grow and serve our community and the ELCA. Our outreach is needed to teach the people of the area who we are and the great things we can do as one.



## Jay Sears

Occupation: Retired Education Lobbyist

1. I view service to the church as honoring my faith in God. I have spent most of my adult life serving the educators of Nebraska through my work with the Nebraska State Education association. I used my skills of negotiation and persuasion to influence policy favorable to educators. My experience in speaking to diverse groups of people has prepared me to work collaboratively with fellow Synod Assembly members.
2. Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is not an easy mission. It is what we are called to do as Christians. Each one of us can do our part to accomplish this mission. First Lutheran has always been a “welcoming” church that celebrates the uniqueness of individuals. Our current efforts to carry out this mission can be seen in our outreach to the community, Las Abejitas Bilingual Education Center, First Friday Jazz, the Synod Vitality Initiative and many more activities. There are numerous opportunities for individuals to support First Lutheran’s mission.



## ENDOWMENT BOARD (Vote for 2)

### Craig Heier

Occupation: Part-time Warehouse worker

1. I like the purpose of the Endowment Board, namely distributing funds to those who need them for things like college and seminary education. I have previously served on the Gifts and Memorials Committee. The purpose of that committee is to disperse funds according to the request of the families.
2. I see FLC’s mission as that of being Christ in our neighborhood, city, state and beyond. Through monies and time, we serve others in many ways,



## **Craig Heier Continued.....**

Including feeding the hungry (Matt Talbot Kitchen), providing relief in times of natural disaster (Lutheran Disaster Relief), and clothing those who need it (Kicks for Kids). We also have a mission of preaching and teaching the Good News to all.

## **Karen Peppmuller**

Occupation: CPA– Exec Financial Asst at Lincoln Industries

1. To use my finance and accounting background and experience as a way to provide service to FLC. The

Endowment Fund is such a wonderful way for FLC to supplement additional outreach and mission support. The Endowment Fund Board members need a variety of attributes. I have experience with accounting and financial statements, risk management and evaluating investment performance. I take fiduciary responsibilities very seriously and have served on various committees with current and prior employers as well as other Boards. I am finishing up a current three year term on the Endowment Fund Board and it has been a true pleasure to work with the Board members and see the Endowment Fund investment earnings be used for some amazing projects, programs, and education support.

2. I think it was Vicar Erick who had a past sermon whose message was “Go out and \_\_\_\_”. One thing that has always been so incredible about First Lutheran is the amount of support we provide outside our church doors. That includes a physical presence like serving at Matt Talbot, the City Mission or other community projects, but also financial support for global, regional or local organizations. WE have so many amazing dedicated people in our Congregation that use their time and talents, and they are an inspiration to me.



## **Madalyn Popken**

Occupation: Retired

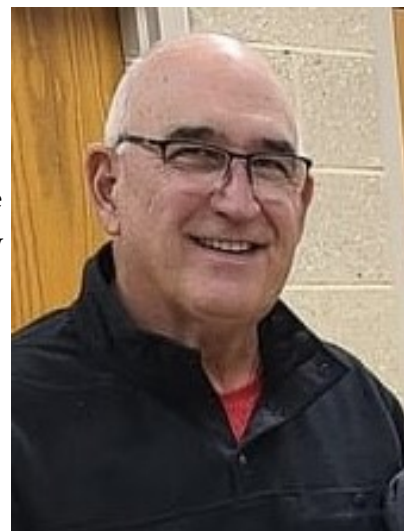
1. I believe my accounting background and experience would allow me to contribute to the Board. Before my retirement, I worked 47 years for the City of Lincoln Finance Department administering payroll for 2500+ City employees. I have also previously served on the church audit committee and have been a member of the church since 1977.
2. I believe our mission is serving everyone regardless of their circumstances. This congregation is welcoming to anyone entering it's doors. First Lutheran has a vibrant community of faith.



## **Dave Timperly**

Occupation: Retired Chiropractor

1. To help the church on important decisions that have to be made for the financial well being of the church and serve the Board the best way I can. I've served on a large corporation Board of Directors as a Treasurer outside of my own practice learning leadership and fiscal responsibility that are useful for this position.
2. First Lutheran is on the right track of doing the right things as a strong church in the community with strong leadership and openness to all.



# MINISTRY OF THE VISITATION PASTOR

BY PASTOR MARSHA ANDERSON

*"The body of Christ broken for YOU; the blood of Christ shed for YOU."*

This is the Message, the Good News I am entrusted to share with the Homebound every time I bring them communion. It is a gift; it is a humbling experience; it is pure Grace.

Every month I visit between 15 and 22 folks who are unable to come to worship on a weekend with us. Many of them have been long-time members of First Lutheran. All of them wish they could be with us but medical conditions prevent them from doing so. Those who are able to do so read and value the daily devotional books they receive. They are always thankful for visits, cards, and calls from First Lutheran friends, other friends and family.

I and our Eucharistic Ministers are intentionally connected to the Visitation Ministry as part of the larger Ministry of Caring. This means that the Homebound receive communion at least once a month and sometimes twice. Currently, there are 12 active Eucharistic Ministers and there is a need for more in the coming year: Tim Maack, Bob/Carlene Falos, Carla Osberg, Terry Kruse, Trish Flury, Norm Kempf, Nancy Hoppner, Linda Hinkle, Carolyn Benson, Jeanne Hellerich and Kim Janssen.

In 2023 we celebrated the lives of seven of these folks who entered fully into the resurrected life, and we continue to pray for their families as they mourn their loss:

Hertha Lemke

\*Jeannene Flotree

\*Vic Dormer

Carol Mason

Joan Farmer

Kathy Bruggeman

Myra Meintz

\*I officiated at their funeral/memorial services.

We give thanks to God for their witness to the faith they received and lived from their baptism. Each life contained amazing stories of God's love and direction in their lives and how their lives touched others. It is my privilege to hear some of those stories as I visit.

As part of this Visitation Ministry, I am occasionally called on by one of the pastors to also visit someone who has a special need and I am always glad to do so.

So ,I continue to look forward to this continuing ministry and ask that you will pray for all the homebound, our sisters and brothers in Christ, and for me and others who visit with them.