

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America



## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023 Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

### Annual Report

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## *State-of-the-Church* **REPORT**





**Grace Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**

"A community of servants sharing  
in the word and work of Jesus."

**Agenda**

**129th Annual Congregational Meeting**

**February 25, 2024**

- |       |   |                         |
|-------|---|-------------------------|
| I.    | Call to Order                                   | President Robin Crowder |
| II.   | Prayer  | Pastor Pingel           |
| III.  | Declaration of a Quorum                         |                         |
| IV.   | Approval of minutes of congregational meetings: |                         |
|       | • February 19, 2023                             |                         |
|       | • May 21, 2023                                  |                         |
|       | • December 11, 2023                             |                         |
| V.    | Presentation of Annual Report                   |                         |
| VI.   | Questions and Discussion                        |                         |
| VII.  | Old Business                                    |                         |
| VIII. | New Business                                    |                         |
| IX.   | Announcements                                   |                         |
| X.    | Prayer and Adjournment                          |                         |



## **GELC Congregational Meeting**

**February 19, 2023**

Ron Almarode called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

Opening prayer was offered by Pastor Pingel.

Opening Liturgy given by Pastor Pingel and Ron Almarode.

Ron Almarode, who presided over the meeting, declared a quorum.

A motion was made by Jerry Kite to approve the minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting, motion was seconded and vote was unanimous.

Ron Almarode presented the 2022 GELC Annual Report. He reported that GELC had a very successful year with several need initiatives. He referred to page 58 of the Annual Report and the total of \$77,647 in benevolence giving, a great example of our ministry programs at work.

Jerry Kite thanked Susan Myers for her leadership with the WARM Shelter in December and January at Grace with thanks also going to the volunteers. He also thanked the many volunteers for the Renewing Homes program this past year and thanks for the many volunteers in the Refugee Resettlement Program.

Donna Gum moved to approve the Annual Report as presented. It was seconded and approved with a unanimous vote.

Pastor Pingel closed the congregational meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fred Biggers



## **GELC Congregational Meeting**

**May 21, 2023**

Opening prayer was offered by Pastor Pingel at 11:10 a.m.

President Robin Crowder opened the meeting at 11:16 a.m. He thanked outgoing Council members for their service. He then introduced the newly nominated Council members who were to be voted on by the congregation.

As ballots were distributed, President Crowder briefed the congregation on the current Council's building maintenance recommendation that was also to be voted on by the congregation.

The President then asked if there were any questions from the congregation. There were none. The congregation voted.

President Robin Crowder adjourned the meeting at 11:24 a.m.

The votes were tallied.

Vote Counts: 52 paper ballots, 1 online ballot = 53 total voting members

Vote Results: Building Maintenance Recommendation = 53 yesses.

New Council Members = 52 yesses for 5 of the 6 nominated members,  
51 yesses for 1 nominated member.

In conclusion, the Building Maintenance recommendation was approved by the congregation. All nominated Council members were approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew Sell

## **GELC Congregational Meeting**

**December 17, 2023**

President Robin Crowder called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. to vote on the proposed 2024 budget.

Ushers distributed paper copies of the budget and voting ballots to those interested.

Treasurer Ron Almarode spoke about the Stewardship Campaign and Grace's mission.

President Crowder asked for a motion to approve the budget. The motion was so moved by multiple members and seconded by multiple members of the congregation. Members were then allowed to vote.

Meeting adjourned at 11:11 a.m.

The in-person votes were tallied and the 2024 Budget Proposal was approved by the Congregation with a vote of 57 yes, one (1) no.





## GELC Staff 2023-2024



### **Pastor**

Paul Pingel, Pastor	1224 Hollins Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-216-4454 pastorpingel@gmail.com
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### **Administrative Secretary**

Nancy Dowdy	22 Ashleigh Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-256-1975 Grace.lc@comcast.net
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### **Director of Music**

Mike Myers	136 Ridgeline Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	434-760-1375 mickhdking@aol.com
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## GELC Congregation Council Members 2022-2024 Term

Robin Crowder <b>President</b>	3009 Quenton Place Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-476-0180 rcrowder1954@gmail.com
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Jack Eckstrom	121 Tomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	240-344-3176 jackeck47@gmail.com
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Susan Myers	136 Ridgeline Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	434-760-1660 sparkelmyers@gmail.com
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Stephen Van Stee	400 Cattle Scales Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-325-0772 stephenvanstee@gmail.com
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Karen Walck	426 Zion Church Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	765-480-9920 kdwalck@gmail.com
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### **2023-2025 Term**

Allison Fink <b>Vice-President</b>	982 Northgate Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-448-0985 afink@mydccu.com
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Jerry Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-910-3372 Jerrykite@ntelos.net
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Linda Meyer	235 Wayneridge Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-256-2277 lameyer@ntelos.net
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Jean Morgan	321 Maple Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-4422 jc321morgan@ntelos.net
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Donna Yobs	20 Windsor Drive Fishersville, VA 22939	650-248-4882 dmyobs@yahoo.com
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Cabell Caister One Year Youth Term	611 Northgate Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	cabellcaister@gmail.com
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### ***Council Appointees***

<b>Ron Almarode,</b> <b>Treasurer</b>	417 Pelham Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-4099 AlmarodeRG@ntelos.net
<b>Charles Goodrich</b> <b>Financial Secretary</b>	201 Brandon Circle Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-949-6739 goodrich@lumos.net

### **GELC Ministry Team Leaders 2024-2025**

#### ***Congregation Engagement Round Table***

#### **Christian Education/Youth**

Cabell Caister	611 Northgate Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	cabellcaister@gmail.com
Peggy Caister	611 Northgate Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	434-964-7461 caisterpeggy@gmail.com
Kate Van Bremen	100 Tomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	614-746-4792 kvbremen@coconstruct.com
Stephen Van Stee	400 Cattle Scales Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-325-0772 stephenvanstee@gmail.com

#### **Confirmation**

Stephen Van Stee	400 Cattle Scales Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-325-0772 stephenvanstee@gmail.com
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#### **Communication**

Jack Eckstrom	121 Tomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	240-344-3176 jackeck47@gmail.com
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#### **Support Fellowship**

Sylvia Almarode	417 Pelham Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	(540) 476-5730 almarod@ntelos.net
Caroline Biggers	1192 Tinkling Spring Road Staunton, VA 24401	540-337-1951 caroline.r.biggers@gmail.com
Linda Meyer	235 Wayneridge Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-256-2277 lameyer@ntelos.net
Dottie Sheaffer	1110 St David's Lane Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-949-8479
Karen Walck	426 Zion Church Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	765-480-9920 kdwalck@gmail.com
Donna Yobs	20 Windsor Drive Fishersville, VA 22939	650-248-4882 dmyobs@yahoo.com

#### **Worship and Music**

Donna Gum	16 Toman Lane Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-0260 fdgum@ntelos.net
Jean Morgan	321 Maple Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-4422 jc321morgan@ntelos.net
Mike Myers	136 Ridgeline Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-456-4505 mickhdking@aol.com



**Altar Guild**

Jean Morgan	321 Maple Avenue Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-4422 jc321morgan@ntelos.net
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**Altar Flowers**

Waynesboro Florist	325 West Main Street Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-949-8125
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**Assisting Ministers and Communion Assistants**

Donna Gum	16 Toman Lane Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-0260 fdgum@ntelos.net
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**Covid Committee**

Ron Almarode	417 Pelham Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-649-4099 AlmarodeRG@ntelos.net
Jack Eckstrom	121 Tomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	240-344-3176 jackeck47@gmail.com

**Offering Stewards**

Pat Brady	220 Lee Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-447-6157 packy46@comcast.net
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**Ushers**

Jack Eckstrom	121 Tomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	240-344-3176 jackeck47@gmail.com
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***Community Engagement Round Table*****Evangelism****All God's Children**

Rick & Kathy Bump	131 Club Highland Nellysford, VA 22958	434-361-1824 rcbump0621@gmail.com
Linda Meyer	235 Wayneridge Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-256-2277 lameyer@ntelos.net
Donna Yobs	20 Windsor Drive Fishersville, VA 22939	650-248-4882 dmyobs@yahoo.com

**Christian Coalition for Equity and Justice**

Linda Meyer	235 Wayneridge Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-256-2277 lameyer@ntelos.net
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**Faith in Action/Stewardship**

Robin Crowder	3009 Quenton Place Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-476-0180 rcrowder1954@gmail.com
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**Mission Endowment**

Jerry Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 jerrykite@ntelos.net
David Schwiesow	Route 1, Box 596 178 Fortune's Point Lane Roseland, VA 22967	434-325-7001 schwiesow1950@gmail.com

**Mission Endowment Fund Policy**

Allison Fink	982 Northgate Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-448-0985 afink@mydccu.com
Jerry Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 jerrykite@ntelos.net
David Schwiesow	Route 1, Box 596 178 Fortune's Point Lane Roseland, VA 22967	434-325-7001 schwiesow1950@gmail.com
Stephen Van Stee	400 Cattle Scales Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-325-0772 stephenvanstee@gmail.com

**Outreach Mission**

Gwen Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 gwenma2002@yahoo.com
Jerry Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 jerrykite@ntelos.net

**Area Food Pantry**

Gwen Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 gwenma2002@yahoo.com
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**Back to School Supplies**

Amy Warren	16 Porterfield Lane Waynesboro, VA 22980	(540) 471-2362 1teacheramy3@gmail.com
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**Backpacks**

Bob Barrette	946 Stoney Creek East Nellysford, VA 22958	434-760-4419 rbarrette8@gmail.com
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**Community Pot Lucks**

Eric Hilker	766 Pine Ave Waynesboro, VA 22980	978-793-9845 hilker.eric.d@gmail.com
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**Community Support**

Donna Yobs	20 Windsor Drive Fishersville, VA 22939	650-248-4882 dmyobs@yahoo.com
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**Crop Walk**

Karen Walck	426 Zion Church Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	765-480-9920 kdwalck@gmail.com
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**Disciples Kitchen**

Gwen Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 gwenma2002@yahoo.com
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**Felt Squares**

Gloria Nelson	519 Foothills Drive Nellysford, VA 22958	434-826-8922 ibeghc@yahoo.com
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**Grace Walkers**

Gwen Kite	141 Brook Court Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1920 gwenma2002@yahoo.com
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**HERO**

Donna Yobs

20 Windsor Drive  
Fishersville, VA 22939650-248-4882  
dmyobs@yahoo.com**Hiker Ministry**

Irma Graf

P O Box 1464  
Grantham, NH 03753804-814-6841  
endATend@aol.com**Local Ministry and Giving Tree**

Jane Stein

813 Oak Aveune  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-649-0979  
kjatway@hotmail.com**Nicaraguan CICRIN Mission Trip**

Mark Radecke

2916 Plantation Lane  
Waynesboro, VA 22980570-847-2120  
radecke@susgu.edu**Quilts for Lutheran World Relief**

Gwen Kite

141 Brook Court  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-943-1920  
gwenma2002@yahoo.com**Refugee Family Resettlement**

Linda Meyer

235 Wayneridge Road  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-256-2277  
lameyer@ntelos.net**Renewing Homes Augusta Project**

Jerry Kite

141 Brook Court  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-943-1920  
jerrykite@ntelos.net**Rise Against Hunger**

Jerry Kite

141 Brook Court  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-943-1920  
jerrykite@ntelos.net**Safety Help Team**

Donna Yobs

20 Windsor Drive  
Fishersville, VA 22939650-248-4882  
dmyobs@yahoo.com**WARM Ministry**

Susan Myers

136 Ridgeline Drive  
Waynesboro, VA 22980434-760-1660  
sparkelmyers@gmail.com***Support Round Table*****Building and Maintenance Fund**

Ron Almarode,

417 Pelham Drive  
Waynesboro, VA 22980540-649-4099  
AlmarodeRG@ntelos.net

Jack Eckstrom

121 Tomasville Drive  
Waynesboro, VA 22980240-344-3176  
jackeck47@gmail.com

### **Church Property**

Fred Biggers	1192 Tinkling Spring Road Staunton, VA 24401	434-981-1954 fred.s.biggers@gmail.com
Ron Myers	228 Claybrook Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	757-870-4041 augusta254@comcast.net
Karen Walck	426 Zion Church Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	765-480-9920 kdwalck@gmail.com
Rew Walck	426 Zion Church Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	765-480-9916 rewalck@gmail.com

### **Columbarium and Memorial Garden**

Brad Keefer	2000 Cherokee Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-942-4290 deltanode@comcast.net
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### **Finance**

Ron Almarode	417 Pelham Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-943-1753 almaroderg@ntelos.net
Susan Myers	136 Ridgeline Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	434-760-1660 sparkelmyers@gmail.com

### **Thanksgiving and Memorial Fund**

Robin Crowder	3009 Quenton Place Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-476-0180 rcrowder1954@gmail.com
Susan Myers	136 Ridgeline Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	434-760-1660 sparkelmyers@gmail.com

### **Personnel**

Antoinette Eckstrom	121 Thomasville Drive Waynesboro, VA 22980	301-788-1994 andieck@me.com
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### **Strategic Planning**

Bob Barrette	946 Stoney Creek East Nellysford, VA 22958	434-760-4419 rbarrette8@gmail.com
Robin Crowder	3009 Quenton Place Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-476-0180 rcrowder1954@gmail.com

### **Technology**

Owen Keefer	2000 Cherokee Road Waynesboro, VA 22980	540-942-4290 deltanode@comcast.net
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SERVANTS  GOD

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights January 17, 2023***

- Pastor Pingel reported:
  - ♦ Good numerical news in terms of more members, financial news, etc.
  - ♦ Grace is involved in so many good things where Grace is representing Christ and being a blessing.
  - ♦ He will be going to Nicaragua along with five others from Grace on a mission trip to a children's school and home, February 11-18.
- Ron Almarode, Treasurer, reported that Grace finished in terms of pledge giving of record income, \$14,000 above budget, which speaks greatly to the congregation's response and to our inability to guess what that might be. Spending was \$3,600 above budget due to property expenses being up. These were necessary maintenance items.
- The Strategic Planning committee is currently working on communications and the need to look at ways we communicate within the organization.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights February 21, 2023***

- The Strategic Planning committee identified the key objectives to focus on, starting with the objective of full church engagement. The goal is to gather information and share it with the congregation to increase participation in the life of the church and the community.
- Grace is allowed three (3) representatives to the Virginia Synod Assembly this summer (June). Pastor Pingel, Donna Gum and Lily Pingel are planning to attend.
- Grace will be sharing Lenten Worship with Bethlehem, St. James and Zion focusing on the Apocrypha, a part of Holy Scripture in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, but we know little of it in the Lutheran and other Protestant Churches.
- Owen Keefer requested \$3,200 for additional cameras to enhance the service recordings, which was approved by the Council.
- Outreach Mission reported a very active congregation in the church as well as the community.
- Grace has been notified that we may have an opportunity to be involved with the ordination of the new bishop. The date is Saturday, October 21, 2023.
- The church secretary has agreed to do the Council minutes for an additional \$100/month, not as part of her salary but an honorarium.



### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights March 21, 2023***

- The Treasurer reported that this financial report is somewhat below budget at this time, although it is not alarming at all.
- The Coronavirus Committee is staying on top of the issue.
- The Strategic Planning Committee reported that the first part of the committee's plan was to compile a list of Grace's ministries. Thanks went out to Karen Walck and Pastor for making that happen. The second part is taking a look at the future with the development of a comprehensive communication review of how we operate at the church and how we can make it better.
- President Crowder reported that this past week we received documents on how the money would be distributed from the Elliott estate and that the church is not responsible for taxes, etc. It was requested in the will that these monies be used for building maintenance.
- Pastor reported that five other congregations will be joining Grace on Palm Sunday outdoors for the Palm Sunday Reading. There will be two Maundy Thursday services, 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. with stripping of the altar, foot washing and holy communion. Good Friday's and Easter Vigil services will both be at 7:00 p.m. Easter Sunday services will be at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. with an Easter Breakfast in between.
- Pastor reported that a prayer vigil had been held the previous Saturday with CCE&J. The group also went before the school board to support teachers and asked that Waynesboro not cave in to making history simpler rather than realistic, especially in terms of African American studies.
- The Hiker Hostel for this year is up in the air as we have received information from the City of Waynesboro's building inspector making lots of demands in order for us to host it.
- A request to repeat the mission trip to Nicaragua in 2024 has been received from the Radeckes. At this time, they are not asking for fiscal support, but asking Grace to support the trip and run funds through the Grace treasury, etc. as was done for the 2023 trip. Council approved this request.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights April 25, 2023***

- Council will present the Property Report from April 2023 to the congregation on May 21, 2023 for them to vote on approval of the requested expenditures utilizing the services of Austin and Sons, Baber Enterprises and Security Team LLC, for items 1-5 as listed in the report. Funding will come from FO5 and F47 accounts in addition to borrowing funds from other accounts to be determined by the Finance Committee and further discussion will be held regarding repayment of those funds at a later date. Total expenditures recommended are \$75,250.
- Ron Almarode, Treasurer, addressed the payment plan for the Property Committee's recommendations. We do not budget for these types of projects; they are special funds expenditures. On page 3 of the Treasurer's Report, you will see two funds for this type of expenditure: FO5 is the Building Fund and currently has \$2,000 in it and F47 which is the Capital Project fund and currently has \$17,000 in it. These two funds will not cover the projects but is the starting point for payment. In the past, for the organ and parking lot projects, we lent ourselves the money by making a resolution and paid ourselves back as the money came in. In both of these cases, we held a Capital Project Campaign asking the congregation to contribute and they responded beyond expectations. As we may have a good amount of money coming in later this year, there may be no reason to look at conducting a Capital Project campaign for these projects. Perhaps we should go ahead with these projects, lend ourselves the money and trust that these funds come in. On page 4, you will see funds at DuPont Community Credit Union in the amount of \$81,000. These funds are there because they don't move very much and gain interest, this is the fund we borrow from. The treasurer has a degree of confidence in going forward with these projects trusting that the funds will come in. If Council feels we really need to talk with the congregation and do a Capital Campaign, that is okay as well. However, there is concern about "going to the well" too many times
- Ron Almarode recommended to Council that a Building Fund Committee needs to be created to develop guidelines for the use of the funds that Grace hopes to receive from the Elliott estate in the amount of \$250,000.
- Ron reported that we finished March with an \$8,500 deficit. Looking back to 2022, we finished March with a \$10,000 deficit and finished the year with a healthy surplus. So, he feels there is no reason for concern at this time.
- Linda Meyer contacted Irma Graf and received and posted the present status of the Hiker Ministry in Grace Notes. It is currently on hold due to the City's guidelines.
- Stephen Van Stee reported that this past Sunday we had our first Sunday School class for K-5 and had three (3) youth and two (2) adults attend.
- Karen Walck reported that next Sunday will be the "Blessing of the Quilts". Over 50 quilts will be blessed to be sent to Lutheran World Relief.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights May 16, 2023***

- The Strategic Planning Committee continues working on improving communications, especially through the web-page. Their goal is to engage as many members as possible and to keep people updated with the latest information using any means we can.
- Grace's Refugee Family Resettlement celebrated their first anniversary with a nice gathering and taking the kids to the park and for ice cream. This family continues to thrive.
- Hiker Ministry 2023 – This has been resolved with a “R5 Temporary Residency Permit” and a stairway built to the window.
- Approval of Grace Mission Endowment Fund proposals and distribution this year is \$28,418.
  - ♦ Blue Ridge Area Food Bank – recommendation is \$500 from the Alleviating Hunger Fund
  - ♦ Legal Aid Justice Center - recommendation is \$500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Medical Assistance to Haiti - recommendation is \$2,500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Project Esperanza recommendation is \$2,000 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Augusta Health - recommendation is \$1,500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Raising Resources for Readers - recommendation is \$1,500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Embrace - recommendation is \$500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Addressing Critical Needs - recommendation is \$432 from the Social Ministry Fund and \$3,568 from the Grace Fund for a total of \$4,000
  - ♦ Rise Against Hunger - recommendation is \$1,035 from the Alleviating Hunger Fund, \$1,040 from the Grace Fund, \$548 from the Disaster Fund for a total of \$2,623
  - ♦ Boys and Girls Club – recommendation is \$500 from the Social Ministry Fund
  - ♦ Society of Saint Andrew – recommendation is \$500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ LifeWorks – recommendation is \$500 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Madee Project – Renewable Grant for \$3,000 approved by Council three (3) years ago – recommendation is \$3,000 from the Grace Fund
  - ♦ Hiker Hostel – not funding because there are funds available through the Grace budget
- Grace will participate in the Waynesboro Ecumenical “Assistance Fund” for people in crisis. This program will address the increased needs in our area due to the Covid era supports for people in need ceasing. The result will be many people left in crisis. Grace will become a charter congregation of this 501c(3) that will be created to allow Waynesboro churches to donate to a

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights June 20, 2023***

- Pastor Pingel reported that Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton was elected as the first African-American Female Bishop of the Virginia Synod with a three vote difference. She begins in September.
- Grace will be participating in the Rise Against Hunger Event on Saturday, September 9, 2023, at Kate Collins Middle School.
- 98 hikers attended the Hiker Ministry this year.
- The Council elected Robin Crowder as President and Allison Fink as Vice-President for 2023-24.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights July 18, 2023***

- Grace has had two (2) baptisms in less than a month and a half.
- David Schwiesow has agreed to take on the task of updating Grace's Constitution.
- A Building Fund Committee has been established to create the Building and Maintenance Guidelines for usage of the Elliott Estate Funds.
- Stephen Van Stee will be conducting Acolyte and Crucifer training.
- At the recommendation of the Covid Committee, Council voted to remove the tape from the pews.
- An additional Mission Endowment Fund grant request that was left off from the May meeting from the Radeckes for \$1,500 for CICRIN school in Nicaragua for supplies was approved by the Council and the \$1,500 will be taken out of the Grace Fund to fund this request.
- The Church Phone System has been replaced with analog phones. Using analog phones will greatly reduce the cost.
- Membership of Jackson Chaffin was approved by the Council.



### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights August 15, 2023***

- Ron Almarode gave a Treasurer's Update and an update on the church finances. He reported that July was a good month with a \$6,800 surplus for the month cutting our deficit in half.
- The Assistant Treasurer position has been vacated and Ron has taken over those responsibilities.
- Elliott Estate Update – Ron Almarode reported that the money was received, funds were transferred out and \$250,000 is in Grace's account. The Building and Maintenance Fund Committee would like to set up a separate fund with a separate policy and procedures.
- Grace will participate in a Waynesboro Ecumenical "Assistance Fund" for people in crisis.
- The old Church phone system has been discontinued and we have two (2) new phones for the offices, which allow us to handle the two incoming lines.
- Stephen Van Stee reported that the curriculum has been ordered for Sunday School and is set to proceed with Sunday School on September 10.
- Pastor reported that we have three (3) confirmands starting on September 10: Libby Caister will be in her third year, Esme Hilker and Reva Franklin will be in their first year. Kiera Mahoney will be confirmed on Reformation Sunday this fall.
- Pastor also reported that we will be having three (3) youth (Libby Caister, Cabell Caister and Kiera Mahoney) going to the ELCA National Youth Gathering, which is meeting for the first time in six (6) years in 2024 in New Orleans.
- Robin Crowder reported that the church is preparing to start this year's Stewardship Campaign. Everything will be redone again so we are in need of pictures of church activities, pictures of the church, things that we can send them in order to create a brochure. We will develop, before the budget process, three (3) themes that are important to the church. This year, we are looking at continuing with our Ministry of Excellence, Communication, and Mission Outreach. We will be looking for another 10% increase this year.
- Donna Yobs reported that the idea would be for Grace to have an opportunity to go into members' homes and help check out safety issues. Stephen Van Stee recommended that we include general safety inspections of homes, i.e. smoke alarms, etc.



### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights September 19, 2023***

- 240 people and 19 congregations gathered together for the Rise Against Hunger Event and put together 30,000 meals.
- Bishop Brown from Christ Tabernacle and the Church of God in Christ and Pastor have talked and are planning a November Sunday before Thanksgiving joint service. This will be an opportunity for fellowship and worship together.
- Ron Almarode reported about a \$7,000 deficit.
- The Strategic Planning Committee is recommending that Council adopt the five (5) priorities and with a three (3) to five (5) year commitment from the Council.
  - ♦ Full Church Engagement
  - ♦ Good News Sharing
  - ♦ Senior Services
  - ♦ Growth in Outreach
  - ♦ Worship Opportunities
- Two (2) headsets have been received and will be used by the Eucharistic Ministers for homebound members who are hard of hearing.
- Linda Meyer reported that October 21 will be the Bishop's Installation Reception at Grace.
- Jerry Kite reported again what a wonderful event Rise Against Hunger was. They raised \$269 more than needed so they gave Kate Collins Middle School \$250 for the use of their facility.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights October 17, 2023***

- Ron Almarode gave an update stating that we are almost three-quarters through the year and are almost \$9,000 in the hole.
- The youth will be having a yard sale Saturday, November 4, to raise funds for the 2024 ELCA National Youth Gathering.
- Linda Meyer reported that the Christian Coalition for Equity and Justice is meeting first and third Thursdays each month, and the Prayer Vigils are held the third Saturday of the month.
- An announcement has been put in the bulletin and newsletter announcing a second wave of grants from the Mission Endowment Fund.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights November 28, 2023***

- There will be shared joint Advent services on Wednesdays with the other Lutheran Churches.
- Pastor Pingel was asked by Bishop Milton of the Virginia Synod to serve as the Dean of the Southern Valley Conference for 2024 and he accepted. President Crowder congratulated the Pastor.
- Ron Almarode reported that in October, we were \$3,200 to the good reducing our deficit for the year down to \$5,500.
- Ron Almarode presented the Building and Maintenance Fund Policy and Building and Maintenance Fund Procedures document. Council voted to adopt both.
- Robin Crowder reported the campaign is up and running with a good response. He reported that 109 pledge cards were sent out to congregation members. As of today, 36 pledge cards have been returned, including one new pledge, which means we have received approximately 33% of the cards back.
- Grace will be hosting the WARM Cold Weather Shelter in December.

### ***Congregation Council Meeting Highlights December 19, 2023***

- President Crowder reported that YTD, we have under-spent, but giving has also been below expectations leaving us approximately \$10,000 currently in the red for 2023.
- Per Council's vote, the Treasurer dipped into the reserves and paid off the mortgage on the Columbarium.
- Robin Crowder reported that we have made up about \$6,000 of the \$12,000 additional funds needed from individual gifts. The Finance Committee will meet in February to develop recommendations to meet the deficit.
- Sylvia Almarode, after 13 years, has decided to step down from leading the Fellowship Committee. She has done an amazing job.





## Pastor's Annual Report

Grace's Annual Report gives voice to Who We Are, and What We Do. I invite you to take a bit of your time to look into these many reports which are provided for your information.

At first look, the Reports can provide Information about What We Do, or what we have done in the calendar year 2023. Grace is an active congregation, active in many things. I want to share a snapshot near the end of the year, when Grace was preparing to host the WARM Cold Weather Shelter in our Fellowship Hall. Near the end of the Worship service the Sunday prior to beginning our hosting, members and friends of Grace in worship were asked to stand and come forward. Fully 2/3 to 3/4 of those in worship came forward! It was a remarkable and moving sight. Here's another, very different example: every week, a quiet group of folks take Grace's altar flowers to Summit Square, where they are used in Sunday afternoon worship at Vespers, turned into birthday or "get well" bouquets for residents, or provide a bit of color in the entry area.

We are an active congregation in our Community, blessed to be a blessing. Seriously, take a look at the reports within this Annual Report. There's a lot happening in and through Grace.

What I hope for 2024 is to continue to get better at giving witness to WHY we do what we do. It is our Evangelism, or witness to the Gospel. In many ways we practice what St. Francis of Assisi has been credited as saying: "Preach the gospel, always. If necessary, use words." Lutheran Christians are often shy at "using words." At the same time, it is ironic that our Lutheran Christian tradition focuses as much or perhaps more than any other tradition in the *importance* of the Word in our lives. Jesus, the Word, who came among us full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The Word of God found in the gospel, which provides the Good News that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us as a demonstration of God's love (Romans 5:8); that nothing can separate us from that love (Romans 8:39); that we are God's handiwork, and the good that we do is because God both saves us, and makes us - creates us - to join God in what God is doing in the world. (Ephesians 2:8-10, the Message).

**Continued**

## Pastor's Annual Report Continued

A number of years ago, I served a congregation where one of its leaders described a proposal to use the Congregation's Parish Building to serve meals to the homeless. I'm convinced that he had the best intentions in mind when he said, "when you come down to it, it's the right thing to do." And yet, at the same time, that's not our primary reason for What We Do. Instead, it's a part of our calling as followers of Christ *to be salt and light in this world!* Whether taking part in Grace's ministries or whether we are active in our Community in other ways, what I am *giving witness to* [Evangelism!] is that Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church gives witness to Jesus in all that we say and do. That's Jesus' Great Commission for us. To go, therefore, and make disciples, baptize, and teach. (Matthew 28:19-20). We do that by naming the Name in what we say and do.

The mainline Church has become shy in Naming the Name. It could be because we are gun-shy of other Christian traditions which have used the name of Jesus as a blunt instrument to threaten or warn others of God's condemnation, and provide conditions for God's love and grace. And yet that's not who we are, nor is it the work of the Gospel! Grace has the word Evangelical in its name. Some have suggested leaving that name behind, because in our day and age "Evangelical" has developed its own reputation. Yet that word is a much greater value than the narrow definition provided today, which is associated with ideology, political leanings, and even race. **The gospel transforms rather than divides us. And that's what we're called to do!** In What We Do, and What We Say: take part in God's transformation of the world through Jesus Christ.

I'm thankful for our "What-We-Do" Evangelism in the Community in 2023. One more story from that year: we have met many times with Christ Tabernacle in advocating for Equity and Justice. One blessing of that work is their *witness* to Jesus in all that they say and do. Their prayers are full of "The Name of Jesus." At a Christ Tabernacle Christmas concert, after a beautiful solo piece, the Minister who hosted the concert gave thanks for the singer *briefly*, then showered thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus for giving gifts and talents to all of us, and letting us use what God has given us for both praise, witness and service to the world in the Name of Jesus. That's my prayer for Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in 2024; to give voice in the name of Jesus through What We Do, and by saying Who We Are: *A Community of Saints Sharing in the Word and Work of Jesus.*

In Jesus' Name,  
Pastor Paul



# NEWS

*From Our Parish*

## 2023 Parish Register Report

<b>Members Received by Adult Baptism</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Members Received by Child or Infant Baptism</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Members Received by Affirmation of Faith</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Associate Member</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Members Received by Transfer</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Members Who Transferred to Other Congregations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Members Released to Other Congregations or at Their Request or Removed Through Inactivity</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Members Who Died in 2023</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Confirmations</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Marriages</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Average Attendance:</b>	
• <b>Worship</b>	<b>76</b>
• <b>Worship Virtual</b>	<b>18*</b>
*ELCA standard virtual attendance has a multiplier of 1.5	
• <b>Sunday Church School</b>	<b>6</b>

*(Those who are confirmed and have communed and contributed of record in this or the preceding calendar year)*





## Music Director's Report

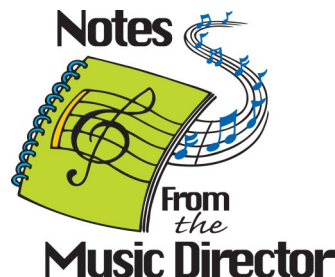
The first half of 2023 continued to be very strong for the music ministry at Grace. We were blessed to have a number of new members with us in addition to our faithful longer-term members. Beginning in the fall; however, we have experienced a decline in participation in both worship choir and handbell choir. These types of cyclical ebbs and flows are not unique to our congregation - we've just been fortunate to avoid them for the better part of the last two decades. The music ministry supported special worship plans for Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints Sunday, Christ the King Sunday, Advent and Christmas.

Our Handbell Choir continued their regular rehearsals throughout the first half of 2023 and provided music for us during the Easter season. Thanks to Sam Moyer and all the Handbell Choir members for your commitment of time and talent. While the handbell choir is not currently active due to low numbers of members, we are hopeful to find willing folks to allow them to resume enhancing our worship. I continue to give thanks for Caroline Biggers, Amber Bokelman, Mike Trauscht, Hannah Pingel, and Susan Myers for their gifts of special music. We have been fortunate to have continuity for a substitute organist in the delightful person and capable musician of Maxine McKinney. We were also blessed by the presence of guest musician Andrew Fauber at both Easter services.

The Worship Choir graciously "adopted" Wenonah Elementary School families this fall by providing Christmas gifts for four children at the Title 1 school. Additionally, the worship choir continues to support Raising Resources for Readers (3Rs), making donations for several years as a Christmas gift to me (thank you)! Grace continues to be a blessing to Susan and me; I pray we all may continue to sing/play together safely while gathered as a congregation in the coming year and our musical ensembles return to more robust numbers in the coming months!

**Any interest in joining us in choir or handbells? Contact Sam Moyer or Mike Myers - we'd love to have you and we do have a good time together!**

Mike Myers  
Music Director





## Council President's Report

Dear Friends and Members of Grace,

This Annual Report will allow you an opportunity to look back at the many ways Christ has served this community through you and Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We have reached inside our walls and outside of our walls to share in God's grace. We prayerfully explore and listen deeply to what God has asked us to do. We continue to discover who we are and rejoice in the Holy Spirit, knowing our congregation has proven to be generous, loving, and caring.

In spite of RSV, Covid, new respiratory ailments, and an increase in flu, this year seems better. Pastor Paul and Mike Myers have provided leadership to our worship service and continued to bring a rich and joyful message Sunday after Sunday. The choir is beginning to bloom again and some new members have joined. Our hope and blessings seem to be enhanced by our mission and love for one another, while our ability to be agile and receptive has proven to open our doors to new and exciting opportunities.

We continue to appreciate the importance of technology and Owen Keefer's weekly talents of sharing our Sunday worship with those who are homebound or not able to return to church. He also shares his gifts with the congregation for Annual Meetings, funerals, and other celebrations. Owens dedication and unassuming nature should not be underestimated. We have learned we can participate in the life of Grace from home, the beach, or during illness, through the commitment and gifts of Owen Keefer.

Nancy Dowdy and her fleet of volunteers have ensured the important administrative work of the church is done with little fanfare. Her bookkeeping expertise, office organization, and creative insights continue to provide our members with the weekly organization needed. Nancy, along with the expertise of Carolyn Hite, have ensured the office is open and ready for business and assists our members when needed.

The expertise of Fred Biggers, Rew Walck, and Ron Myers have served as a powerful Maintenance Team. They have stepped up and provide great leadership to the unending needs of an aging building. A new roof, several engineering projects, increase in hot water availability, and an eye for detail has brought new life to our facilities. We are thankful for their dedication.

Gwyn and Jerry Kite, along with a strong cohort of volunteers from Grace continue to lead our Outreach Mission work. Their ability to provide leadership to multiple projects makes a difference for our community and members of our church. Whether building a ramp, packing meals for children at William Perry and Wenonah Elementary, working with our local homeless populations, serving breakfast and lunch in our community, providing 30,000 meals for Rise Against Hunger, Gwyn and Jerry's leadership, along with the grace of God, continues to identify opportunities for our church members to share God's love throughout the community and the world.

This year's Stewardship Campaign was met with some difficult decisions. But because of your love for Grace, the whole church, our community, and your

commitment to sharing, the Good News will continue. This year's theme "Embracing Grace - Generous, Loving, and Caring 2.0" certainly represented the members and friends of Grace. While not fully meeting our budget projections, we are able to support our staff, caring for our building, and ensure our outreach. While we were able to have a single campaign and provide benevolence to the larger church, we did have to reduce the amount to several of our budget items. It has been necessary to have a "Faith" deficit in our budget for the upcoming year of almost \$5,000. Special thanks to Ron Almarode and the Finance Committee, along with the invaluable counsel of Pastor Paul for their leadership in this year's campaign.

Our Mission Endowment Fund Committee, under the leadership of David Schwiesow, has provided funding to multiple groups throughout our community. A new and exciting Maintenance Fund has become available through a generous gift from the Elliot family.

Bob Barrette, along with several members of Grace, have worked hard to develop a new and dynamic Strategic Plan for our church. "What has God called Grace to do?" Bob and his team engaged our members, asked difficult questions, and prayerfully explored our mission and direction for the future. Our Church Council will now work with the congregation to plan and meet the objectives and goals of this work. We are hopeful the Holy Spirit will help each of us identify how to make this Strategic Plan work.

We continue to work with our partners at Christ Tabernacle Church of God to create conversation and understanding with diverse groups. The Christian Coalition for Equity and Justice continues to meet on a regular basis for book study, prayer vigils, and pulpit sharing. We celebrated with Christ Tabernacle as they moved into their new space on Delphine Avenue and how they will better serve our community.

Another year engagement with the Congolese family has been exciting and rich with opportunity to share God's love. Many of our members share their gifts of time, resources, transportation, tutoring and so much more with our refugee family's transition into a new and different world. Grace, along with Westminster Presbyterian Church, have embraced this family as they adjust to a new and exciting life.

Our church building continues to be a hub for our community by providing space for the Valley Music Academy, the Newcomers Club of Waynesboro, a local Bridge Club, Saturday morning and Wednesday Yoga classes, the Grace Quilters, the Hiker Hostel, the WARM shelter and many others.

The Pastor continues to offer "New Member" classes to those interested in joining Grace, providing several Bible Study groups throughout the year, and Catechism to our teens.

Our hope is Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church can show and provide you with many opportunities to serve in the Word and Work of Jesus Christ. You, along with so many, certainly represent the Body of Christ at Grace. There are way too many unsung heroes that show up day in and day out to do the work of the church. A few that come to mind are Donna Gum who works tirelessly to ensure Assisting Ministers are in place each week and serves as the Chairman of Music and Worship. Carolyn Hite, who willingly shares her gifts in the office when Nancy is on vacation or just needs another hand. Pat

***Continued***

Brady provides leadership in organizing individuals to count the weekly offering and get it to the bank. We are fortunate to have Susan Myers take on the organization of this year's WARM Cold Weather Shelter at Grace.

We celebrated Sylvia Almarode's twelve years of overseeing receptions, celebrations, special events, and dinners. Her work was certainly a gift from God and her eye for detail and ability to meet every expectation was exceeded. Thank you Sylvia and your team of volunteers. We look forward to the new leadership of Karen Walck, Caroline Biggers and Jill Pingel will organize, cook, decorate, and provide leadership to receptions, special events, and funerals. Expect to hear from them as these events build community in our congregation.

Bob Barrette's work with the Back Pack program ensures reliable delivery and pickup of food to so many families in our community. Jean Morgan silently steps up to any task needing support throughout the church. You can see Jean's gentle touch in everything she does.

Special thanks to Eric Hilker for his leadership on our Wednesday Community dinners for those needing a meal and some conversation. Eric and a host of volunteers come together to provide a meal for those facing Food Insecurity. A large focus is creating relationships with those in our community needing help. Grace + Conversation = Community.

We cannot forget those that deliver communion to those confined to their homes, in rehabilitation services, or hospitalized. We have so many individuals that work with Christian Education, provide Bible/book studies, the Back Pack Program, Disciples Kitchen, WARM, Music and Worship, pick up cardboard, decorating the church when needed, provide inside and outside maintenance, individuals sharing their talent of instrumental music and incredible solos, ushers, Catechism instructors and mentors, along with members that call individuals and reach out to those in need. I know there are many others, but these are a great representation of our congregation, knowing there are so many others. Yes, Grace represents the Body of Christ and each of you makes a difference. Thank you.

I would also like to lift up those individuals currently on your Church Council: Allison Fink (Vice President), Jerry Kite, Jack Eckstrom, Jean Morgan, Susan Myers, Linda Myers, Karen Walck, Donna Yobbs, Cabell Caister (Youth Member) and Stephen Van Stee. These individuals work hard for you! They are reflective, thoughtful, and prayerful in their decision making. Their leadership and commitment to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church and its mission are always at the forefront of every decision they make. Please take time out of your busy schedules and thank these individuals.

Your continued support of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church is so important as we move into 2024. Each of you brings new life to this congregation and allows our reach to be great and meaningful. It is through God's gentle touch and embrace, that you make a difference for each other inside and outside of the church. Our church family and God's good news is stronger because of you.

Please take the time to read and review this Annual Report and make plans to attend the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 25th.

In Christ,  
Robin Crowder, Congregation Council President

## ***Congregation Engagement Round Table Reports***

### **Christian Education/Youth**

#### **ELCA National Youth Gathering**

In July 2023, youth of Grace began planning for a faith formation experience. In conjunction with Youth of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Staunton, three Grace youth, Cabell Caister (17), Libby Caister (14), and Kiera Mahoney (15), and adult advisor Jessi Blosser decided to attend the National ELCA Gathering in New Orleans July 15 to 20, 2024. The Gathering will be comprised of 30,000 youth across the country coming together to celebrate, learn, be uplifted and serve. To learn more about the gathering, follow this link for an informational video: <https://youtu.be/epc6mWLvBbA?si=XT6PeHk2oTz9nlYf>.

To experience The Gathering, youth hope to raise \$6,000 to cover the expenses of three youth and one adult advisor. To do this, they hosted a series of fundraisers in the fall and winter of 2023 and are planning for more in 2024. On November 4th, they hosted a yard sale in Grace's Fellowship Hall. On December 3rd, they sold "Stock Certificates" for the trip, and December 17 they offered Christmas Wrapping in exchange for donations to the trip. So far, the youth have raised over \$2,300 dollars toward their \$6,000 goal. In 2024, Grace youth will continue to sell stock opportunities, and you won't want to miss a chance to invest - I hear the returns are unparalleled. :-)) - the Youth also plan to host a Spaghetti Dinner, and more.

Thank you for your support of Grace Youth as they connect with the world around them and experience a faith journey with youth across the country.

*A picture of some of the  
Yard Sale Volunteers on  
November 4, 2023*





## Waynesboro Ecumenical Youth Group

Grace Youth participated in semi-monthly faith enrichment and service projects throughout 2023. January they hosted a soup drive in for Foster Love Ministries, and in May, they planted cherry trees at Ridgeview Park in Waynesboro. Then, in September they helped with the Rise Against Hunger Food Packing Event, and in November they helped with a fall clean-up project in the Serenity Garden of Waynesboro .

It's a joy to watch the youth work hard together and find common ground amongst our varied churches.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peggy Caister  
Grace Youth Ministry

*Grace Youth Kiera Mahoney waits for her work assignment at Rise Against Hunger.*



## Youth Sunday School 2023

Sunday school for the youth in grades 2-4 has been meeting regularly since the Spring right after worship on Sundays. Led by two teachers, attendance is usually 3 to 5 students. We have been using content provided by Spark House and we follow the lectionary.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen Van Stee  
Jane Blosser

## Confirmation

Year 2022-2023, Grace's Confirmands – Kiera Mahoney and Libby Caister – studied Luther's Small Catechism, with detailed study of The Ten Commandments, The Apostle's Creed, The Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism (which contains a study of Confession), Holy Communion, and Luther's Daily Prayers. Kiera and Libby were both engaged learners, with a lot of good questions, a great dose of humor and great insights as well. It was a joy to see these sisters in Christ grow in faith and move toward affirming their Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection.

On Reformation Sunday, Kiera Mahoney affirmed her Baptism and was Confirmed at Grace, with a great reception following Worship.

September of 2023 saw a new class of three Confirmands: Esme Hilker, Libby Caister, and Reva Sloane Franklin: Esme and Reva in their first year, Libby completing her third and final year. We are studying the Old Testament this year; the great stories of Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel and Leah, Joseph and the Israelites escape from Egypt, the entry into the Promised Land, the search for a king and David's rise and fall, Exile, the Prophets, and the promise of a Messiah. In addition our Prayer Book, the Psalms, sources of Wisdom, like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. The Old Testament was Jesus' "bible," and it is important to remember that the New Testament (and Jesus!) is chock full of quotes from the Old Testament that guide its pages, and point to the God who is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, even to sending his Son Jesus into the world to reconcile this world to God's self.

Esme, Libby, and Reva continue the wonderful tradition at Grace of engaged, intelligent and insightful learners. Esme and Reva are first-year Confirmands. Libby is in her third and final year. We look forward to her Confirmation on Reformation Sunday, 2024.

Finally, many thanks to Fred Biggers for substituting on many occasions with grace and enthusiasm to help our Confirmands grow in their faith!

Respectfully submitted,  
Paul H. Pingel  
Pastor



## Communications

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church has been a beacon of Hope for our Community for over 150+ years. People are coming and going, meeting and working, studying and sharing. It is essential to be able to communicate to our congregation and community about our church. It is essential to share the good news and communicate the many opportunities available for our members and our community.

This year members were asked to complete a Communication Survey to determine the needs of the congregation. It is important to find out what works, what doesn't work, and how we can improve. In the fall we began working with an individual to update our website, better utilize our church calendar, and begin articulating what we need to share.

Our YouTube Sunday services, which began with the Pandemic, continue to be a powerful resource to reach out to our members unable to come to church on a Sunday morning. We also are reaching beyond our walls to others in our community wanting to hear the Good News. Special thanks to Owen Keefer for continuing to develop this rich and exciting ministry.

Whether the bulletin, YouTube, news letter, phone blasts, or improving our website. Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church is committed to improving our communication capabilities in the new year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Eckstrom  
Robin Crowder



## Support Fellowship

The Support and Fellowship Committee stayed busy this year. We took meals to several home bound people in our congregation. We also had several funerals for our departed members.

We had one Confirmation student to celebrate this year: Kiera Mahoney! We celebrated after her confirmation service with a reception and gifts with the congregation and her family.

In March, we continued our Soup Suppers before the Lenten services. It was nice to see people from other churches who attended.

Our committee also helped with the Southern Valley Pastor's Conference and a workshop for Synod lay preachers and Ministers.

This year our Committee was in charge of the Easter Breakfast before worship. We had great attendance and a multitude of good food!

A very interesting and fun presentation was given on Nicaragua. We provided snacks afterward.

The Support and Fellowship Committee continued to reach out to various groups in our congregation so that they could present information and snacks for the "First Sunday Fellowships."

**Continued**

One very large reception we had was the dinner we hosted for our friends at Christ Tabernacle. This was a wonderful way to continue our friendship, and the food was spectacular!

Another large reception that we hosted was for the installation of Bishop Milton. It was a joy to see her and her staff as well as many others who came to celebrate this important event on our front lawn at Grace.

This year, 2024, will see a change in our Committee. We will divide our duties into sub-groups and have members in charge of certain events, rather than one person in charge of all of them. We are excited for new ideas, new energy, and input from you!

Respectfully submitted,  
Sylvia Almarode, Caroline Biggers, Karen Walck, Dottie Sheaffer

### **Worship and Music Report**

Grace's worship returned to more normalcy in 2023 with COVID guidelines set forth by the COVID Committee. The Worship and Music Committee is part of the Round Table meetings under Community Engagement but meets separately as well to work out worship details.

Grace began Lent with Ash Wednesday Services in the morning at Grace and then a joint service with First Baptist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church at Grace that night. The Adult Choirs from Grace and First Baptist combined to sing an anthem, "Create in Me a Clean Heart" under the direction of Adam Phillips, choir director of First Baptist and accompanied by their organist, Frank Kennerly. Mike Myers played for the service. The Waynesboro Lutheran Churches combined to have weekly Lenten Services on Wednesday nights with the theme "The Apocrapha-The Story of You". Palm Sunday Service began on the front lawn of Grace with an Ecumenical Procession of the Palms with these churches: Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, First Baptist, Main Street United Methodist Church, Second Presbyterian, and St. John's Episcopal Church. After the service concluded, the assembled began singing "All Glory Laud and Honor" before returning to their respective churches.

Holy Week began with Maundy Thursday Services held in the morning and at night which concluded with the Stripping of the Altar. The Good Friday Service included Tenebrae highlighting the Seven Last Words of Jesus while on the cross and concluded with the Bidding Prayer and Adoration of the Cross. Holy Week ended with the Easter Vigil Service including Procession of Light, reading of the Old Testament Lessons, and Holy Communion.

Easter Sunday Services were held at 8:30 and 11:00 featuring festival music provided by the Adult Choir and a trumpeter.

*God's Work, Our Hands* Sunday was celebrated using special ELCA worship materials on September 23, 2023. A new worship setting was introduced and used this Fall from the All Creation Sings hymnal. Donna Gum assisted with Holy Communion preparation for Bishop Milton's installation on October 21, 2023. Pastor Pingel, Jean Morgan, and Owen Keefer set-up for overflow at Grace for the installation but overflow was not needed.

**Continued**

A Joint Service with Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ was held on November 19. Each churches choirs performed their own music. Bishop C.D. Brown preached for the service. Members of the CCE&J led parts of the service.

Beginning with Advent I, we began using ELW 3. In addition to Sunday services in Advent, midweek services were held at one of the Waynesboro area Lutheran Churches.

Many thanks to all who cut greenery at the Binns' property and set up the outdoor Advent Wreath. Thanks to Jean Morgan and Linda Meyer for getting the Advent wreath out of storage; to Jerry Kite and Fred Biggers for putting up the Advent wreath; and to Jean Morgan for adorning the wreath with greenery. Owen and Brad Keefer hung the Bethlehem Star in the sanctuary.

Thanks to all who helped in any way to decorate for Christmas and then to de-decorate the church after Epiphany.

Grace welcomed Pastors Karen Van Stee and Mark Radecke who supplied the pulpit and performed other pastoral duties as needed while Pastor Pingel was on vacation.

### **Special Notes**

Members are now encouraged to sign up to give flowers each Sunday and let the church Administrative Secretary know. You may take them after the service or allow the flowers to be taken to Summit Square for their Sunday afternoon chapel service. Thanks to Marge Cloutier and Sarah Beth Kite for taking on this task.

The Handbell Choir needs 4-6 Handbell Ringers to adequately provide music that we have enjoyed over the years. If you have interest, please contact Sam Moyer, 540-471-1059 or [jsmoyer@comcast.net](mailto:jsmoyer@comcast.net) for more information.

Pastor Pingel conducted an informative class on Baptism, its history of fonts and practices. He would like a larger font to use more water. Class members are researching possible designs.

Thanks to the Ushers and / or the Assisting Ministers for serving as Crucifers and Acolytes.

Many thanks to these Worship & Music people who help to enhance our worship experience for services. As you can see, it takes many hands, feet, and voices to enhance our worship services. Their reports follow this report.

- Adult Choir—Mike Myers
- Altar Guild—Jean Morgan
- Assisting Ministers—Donna Gum
- Collects money and orders for Christmas and Easter Flowers —Nancy Dowdy
- Easter Lilies and Christmas Poinsettias--Jane Stein
- Eucharistic Ministers—Pastor Pingel
- Sound / Video System—Owen Keefer
- Ushers—Jack Eckstrom

Soli Deo Gloria!  
Donna Gum



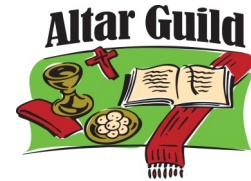


## **Altar Guild**

Altar Guild would like to thank Pastor Pingel, our church secretary, Nancy Dowdy, and many of our church members for their help and guidance throughout the year. And a big thank you to the dedicated group of volunteers who, in many different ways, take part in the preparation and care of the altar.

If you would like to consider joining the altar guild please contact Jean Morgan at home, 540-943-1929, or through email, [jc321morgan@ntelos.net](mailto:jc321morgan@ntelos.net). Or call the church office and leave a message with Nancy that you would like to be contacted.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jean Morgan, Altar Guild Coordinator



## **Assisting Ministers and Communion Assistants**

The liturgy of the Church is the vehicle through which the tone of worship is established and the practice of worship is implemented. The assisting ministers are one of the integral leaders in the service as they give of their time and talent to read the lessons, prepare and pray the prayers of the church, and assist with the Holy Communion distribution, by giving the bread.

Members also read the lessons for the Maundy Thursday, Easter Vigil, and Christmas Eve Family Service.

They are also requested to read and or serve as Communion Assistants upon the family's request at Funerals / Memorial Services. Many thanks to all of you for a job well done in 2023.

Assisting Ministers and Readers: Ron Almarode, Kathy Bump, Cathy and Robin Crowder, Allison Fink, Tripp Franklin, Donna Gum, Erik Hilker, Marsha Howard, Gail Johnson, Brian Lundstrom, Linda Meyer, Susan Myers, Gloria Nelson, Tami Radecke, Andrew Sell, Mike Trauscht, Stephen Van Stee, and Lew Yobs.

Communion Assistants in Addition to Assisting Ministers: Thea Franklin, Quinn Franklin, Jim Nelson, Stephen Van Stee and Karen Walck.

Readers in the Easter Vigil Readings: Ron Almarode, Libby and Cabell Caister, and Susan Myers.

During 2023, families read lessons and placed the Holy Family in the Creche for the Christmas Eve Services. They were: Blosser and Mahoney; Caister; Franklin Hilker; Rankin

Adults and children are invited to assist in the worship life of Grace Church. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, please contact Donna Gum.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Gum



## **Covid Committee**

Grace's COVID Team continued to monitor the COVID status in 2023. With the decision by WHO (World Health Organization) to remove the pandemic tag from the worldwide COVID status, Grace continued to provide information to the Congregation in order for members to make informed decisions about attendance, masking, social distancing, etc. Grace has been able to return to many social/fellowship activities.

We're grateful to Ron Almarode, Robin Crowder, Jack Eckstrom, Gail Johnson, Owen Keefer, Jerry Kite, Linda Meyer, and Mike Myers for their service through the COVID Committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ron Almarode

## **Offering Stewards**

The Offering Stewards collect the offering at the end of the service. The offering is placed into the safe, until the Church Secretary collects it on the first day of the work week. The offering is tabulated and recorded and put back into the safe. The assigned Stewards, for that week, meet at the Church on the agreed upon day, to ensure that the offering has been tabulated correctly. The Stewards make sure the checks are correctly filled out, ensuring that the checks are signed, the date is correct, and the amount is correct at both places on the check. Checks that have errors are returned the Church Secretary, until the errors are corrected by the Church member. A deposit slip is then filled out and the offering is taken to the bank and deposited, by the assigned Stewards. The bank receipt is taken back to the Church and given to the Treasurer. At certain times in the Church year, Christmas and Lent/Easter, additional offerings are collected. The procedures remain the same.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Brady

## **Ushers**

At this time we currently have seven (7) teams of two people.

Each team serves once every seven weeks.

We were fortunate to add two (2) young ladies this year to two (2) of our teams. We are working toward having them gain confidence in our processes that we may be able to let them serve on there own without extra over site.

We serve at special services and the ushers volunteer at their convenience.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Eckstrom



## Adult Sunday School

Adult Sunday school has been meeting this past year at 8:30 a.m., and is taught by Pastor Karen Van Stee. We studied the gospel of Matthew and have moved on to Mark, using the Book of Faith curriculum from the ELCA. We have averaged three (3) to four (4) in class, and would love to have more!

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Karen Van Stee

Worship & SCS Attendance (Average per Month) 2023														
2023	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Christmas Eve	167
10:00 Service	78	71	77	81	81	76	75	76	69	68	77	83	Christmas Eve Virtual	18
Virtual*	18	21	14	14	14	20	17	18	18	20	20	17	Easter	170
SCS	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	Easter Virtual	13

\*ELCA standard virtual attendance has a multiplier of 1.5

## Community Engagement Round Table Reports

### Evangelism and Hospitality

A necessary part of sustaining and growing the ministry of Grace, focuses on engaging our congregation with Evangelism and Hospitality. It is important to listen to our Congregation and Community about their needs. People give in order to transform lives, make a difference, and provide others with hope.

Evangelism means “bringer of good news”. The truth is, all of us are responsible for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Our mission statement says “we are servants sharing in the Word and Work of Jesus”.

This past year, through the leadership of Eric Hilker, Grace began a Wednesday night dinner for those needing a meal in our community. Church members and friends contributed to the Wednesday night dinners and were encouraged to develop relationships with those in need. Many of our members engaged in this powerful outreach and embraced some of our most disenfranchised members of our community.

We must move beyond just giving and sharing, but begin to develop meaningful relationships with each other and those in our community. We have continued to share our reach inside and outside of Grace sharing in the good news.

**Continued**

As you ask “What am I called to do?”, please consider adding your leadership to the Evangelism and Hospitality Committee. Do not hesitate to contact the Pastor, if you would be interested in becoming more involved with Evangelism at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Crowder



### **All God's Children**

This group has been active since November, 2019 when we began discussion of our first book, *White Fragility*. In 2023, the group met twice monthly in person and via Zoom to discuss racial equity, justice, truth telling and transformation through books, videos and current events.

We started the year discussing two works by Clint Smith, a black American writer, poet, and scholar. The first was an article from *The Atlantic* entitled: “Monuments to the Unthinkable – America still can’t figure out how to memorialize the sins of our history. What can we learn from Germany”. The second was his award-winning book, *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*.

We then considered *Jesus and the Disinherited* written by the Black minister, theologian and civil rights lead, Howard Thurman, in 1949. Famously known as the text that Martin Luther King Jr. sought inspiration from in the days leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott, the book helped shape the civil rights movement and changed our nation’s history forever.

The group also read Tony Morrison’s only short story, *Recitatif*. The story concerns two girls, one Black and the other White. However, the author never reveals which one is Black and which one is White. The story stimulated much discussion.

Next we considered *Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black Cargo”* by Zora Neale Hurston. In 1927 and 1931, Zora Neale Hurston went to Plateau, Alabama, to interview 86-year-old Cudjo Lewis. Based on those interviews, Zora Neal Hurston illuminated the tragedy of slavery and of one life forever defined by it.

We concluded the year’s readings with *US: The Resurrection of American Terror* by Kenneth W Wheeler a Black ELCA pastor who took us through his seven-decade-long journey that lays bare the terror of being Black in America. The book offers a deeply vulnerable and piercing portrait of the human toll of white supremacy and points to the Cross as a place of hope and reconciliation.

In addition to these readings we discussed Bryan Stevenson’s Scoper Lecture presentation at UVA in March. We also watched together the Richmond Forum session *The Absolute Condemnation of No One* featuring Dr. Cornell West and Thomas Chatterton Williams.

***Continued***

In April, the group sponsored Lily Pingel's presentation of her Roanoke College Senior Thesis: *A look at the Virginia Synod of the ELCA: One of the Whitest Christian Denominations in the United States*.

Finally, All God's Children worked with the Christian Coalition for Equity and Justice (CCE&J) and the congregations of Grace and Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ to raise money to support Project Esperanza. Contributions totaled \$7,475, enough to sponsor twelve students for a year. The mission of Project Esperanza is to form a global community focused on creating positive change and a sustainable future for Haitian refugee and immigrant youths in the Dominican Republic through education and empowerment.

We are always ready to welcome new members to join us on the second and fourth Mondays of every month at 7:00 pm in the Church Conference Room or via Zoom.

Lisa Barmore  
Lisa Gray  
Pastor Paul Pingel  
Donna Yobs

Rick and Kathy Bump  
Linda Meyer  
Charlie and Betty Karol Wilson

### **Christian Coalition for Equity & Justice (CCE&J)**

Grace-Christ Tabernacle Discussion, Fellowship, Advocacy and Service Group

2023 marked the fourth year for CCE&J as members from Grace and Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ resumed meeting in person (with a Zoom option) led by Bishop C.D. Brown and Pastor Pingel. We continued our journey of "falling in love" with each other and building on the goal of becoming a resource and example for our community. Activities for 2023 included:

#### **Fellowship & Spiritual Engagement**

- Our monthly Prayer Vigil to pray for racial justice continued on the third Saturday of every month at 11:00 a.m. in Constitution Park (even months) and North Park (odd months).
- The shameful intersection of racism and anti-Semitism represented by the defacement of the mural at the Waynesboro YMCA inspired us to call for a community response. We held our January Prayer Vigil in front of the restored mural at the YMCA on Saturday, January 21. On this Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, over 150 members of the community who had an interest in seeking God's help to guide us to racial, religious, and ethnic reconciliation, equity and justice joined us as we peacefully prayed together.
- In December, the Prayer Vigil was held at Constitution Park and was followed by a wonderful lunch and gift exchange at Grace.
- Our first dinner for eight was held in February at the Putnam's home. A wonderful time was had by all as we shared personal stories and reminiscences and enjoyed wonderful food.
- We noted the end of Black History Month by recalling several examples of under-publicized Black contributions to American history.

**Continued**

- Maurice Gallimore, the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Encircle (formerly Lutheran Family Services of Virginia) attended a meeting in March as a guest of Pastor Pingel. Maurice shared a thoughtful summary of his assessment of current DEI issues and of his vision for future progress in these areas.
- The Palm Sunday processional united multiple Waynesboro churches, including Grace and Christ Tabernacle.
- On November 19<sup>th</sup> we shared a memorable and inspiring combined Thanksgiving service and potluck lunch at Grace. The event was well attended by members of both congregations who socialized together after the service.
- Throughout the year, members shared challenges and frustrations they encountered in the real world and in working situations. These were often powerful confirmations of the persistence of racism in our communities.

#### Community Service

- CCE&J worked with All God's Children and the congregations of Grace and Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ to raise money to support Project Esperanza. Contributions totaled \$7,475, enough to sponsor twelve students for a year. The mission of Project Esperanza is to form a global community focused on creating positive change and a sustainable future for Haitian refugee and immigrant youths in the Dominican Republic through education and empowerment.
- We agreed to offer to provide work crews for service to Renewing Homes of Greater Augusta. Group members helped install a temporary wheelchair ramp at a home in Stuarts Draft in September.
- Grace and Christ Tabernacle CCE&J members worked side by side in the Rise Against Hunger event in September at Kate Collins Middle School.
- We agreed to support HERO (Housing Emergency Relief Organization) of Waynesboro. HERO's mission is to provide emergency financial assistance to residents who are facing eviction or utility cutoff.
- We committed to provide sack lunches at the WARM Shelter at the Augusta Expo Center in early 2024.

#### Community Engagement

- The group has sent representatives to both the Waynesboro School Board and City Council meetings to help keep the group informed and to be a visible presence in the community.

*Continued*





- In March, CCE&J presented an oral and written statement during the Waynesboro School Board meeting in response to recent political attacks on the history curriculum in Virginia. Presented by Taunya MacDonald and Linda Myer and supported by many other Black and white CCE&J members who stood in solidarity, we stated that “CCE&J is proud to stand in support of teachers, administrators, board members, parents and, most of all, students, who expect and deserve comprehensive truth and accuracy in history education.” The message was well received as evidenced by post-meeting comments from a School Board staff member, teachers from the Waynesboro Education Association, the Assistant Superintendent, and a School Board member. The transcript of the presentation was published as a letter to the editor in the News Virginian on March 30.
- We celebrated together the successful transfer of the Basic Church property to the Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ. Bishop Brown summarized the challenges and disappointments of the ordeal leading to the transfer, but also noted the opportunity to extend Christ Tabernacle’s outreach to those in need in the neighborhoods around the church.
- Bishop delivered a prayer at the Staunton NAACP meeting in May. His prayer expressed thanksgiving and supplication for the ability to survive the evils of white supremacy and racism.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rick Bump



### **Faith in Action/Stewardship**

#### ***Embracing Grace - Generous, Loving, and Caring 2023* Year End Update**

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church continues to be a beacon of hope in our community. Your generous time, talent, and financial gifts allow us to reach inside and outside the church to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The 2023 Budget was developed based on the 2022 Stewardship Campaign. The 2022 theme, “***Embracing Grace - Generous, Loving, and Caring***” was a great success and we were able to move forward with the recommended budget from the Finance Committee for 2023.

In November and December of 2023, usually very good months for gifts to the church, proved not to be the case this year. For the first time in 10+ years the November and December financial gifts did not meet the expectations. The loss of income created a \$20,000 loss to the budget. The Church Council voted to reach into the Master Reserve Account to meet the 2023 budget. This was a major disbursement from our reserves.

As each of us reflects on the past year, please consider a one time gift towards the 2023 budget to rebuild the Master Reserve Account. The impact of your additional gifts will help us ensure a strong financial balance as we move into 2024.

The needs for our congregation and community are many, but with God’s mission at the forefront we can continue to “Embrace Grace - through our generosity, deep love for Christ, and a caring heart for those in need”.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Robin Crowder  
2023 Annual Report

## Mission Endowment Fund

### Committee Membership

The members of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee are David Schwiesow, Chair; Jerry Kite, Recording Secretary; and Glen Gray. Pastor Pingel and the President of Congregation Council also are ex officio members of the Committee. The Committee wishes to acknowledge, with its thanks, the service of Bob Barrette, who served on the Committee for several years during and prior to 2023. Any member of the Congregation who would like to volunteer to join the Committee is encouraged to speak to David or any other member of the Committee.

### Investment Performance

The assets in the Mission Endowment Fund are invested (i) in Certificates of Deposit (CDs) through the Mission Investment Fund of ELCA and (ii), with respect to all other funds, in equities and interest-bearing instruments selected by Alpha Omega Investment Advisors (“Alpha Omega”). Alpha Omega are professional investment advisors that were selected by the Committee and approved by Congregation Council in 2018. The specifics of the investments and the market values of these investments as of December 31, 2023 are:

- Through the Mission Investment Fund of ELCA, one CD is held, having a value of \$146,711. The maturity date is May 7, 2025. The interest rate is adjustable, and currently is 4.048%.
- The Alpha Omega investments had a year-end value of \$512,170. The investments consisted of equities (\$366,296), bonds (\$90,312) and cash and cash equivalents (\$55,562). At year-end 2022, the total value of the Mission Endowment Fund that was managed by Alpha Omega was \$491,321. The market value increase during 2023 was \$30,725. Interest and dividend income was \$18,615. In addition, there were \$29,086 in actual and accrued grant distributions.
- At year end, the Mission Endowment Fund also received a contribution of \$5,000, for which it expresses its appreciation.
- At year end, there also were four grants that were approved by Congregation Council on December 21, 2023. The funds for these grants, totaling \$7,463, will be distributed in 2024.
- The total value of all Fund investments at December 31, 2023, after adjusting for the \$5,000 contribution and the \$7,463 in undisbursed grants, was \$656,418, as compared to a total value as of January 1, 2023 of \$625,654.
- Total grants that were distributed from the Fund or committed for distribution in 2023 were \$29,086.

With respect to the performance of investments that were managed by Alpha Omega, these investments showed a positive return for 2023 (interest, dividends and market performance) of \$49,340, or 10.04%. The Committee continues to have confidence in Alpha Omega and its investment approach.

*Continued*





#### Available Funds for Grants in 2024

Each year, the Committee recommends, for Congregation Council's approval, that the funds available for distribution in the current year (i.e., 2024) will be a percentage of the fair market value of the Fund (including realized and unrealized income and gains) as of the prior year end (i.e., December 31, 2023). In the past, the percentage available for distribution generally has been in the 4-5% range. At its meeting held January 16, 2024, Congregation Council approved the Committee's recommendation that the making a contribution to the Fund, regardless of size. Contributions may be made currently or through a bequest in your will. If you would like to get more information about how you can make a difference, please speak to David or any other member of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Schwiesow

### Outreach Mission

In the Outreach Mission programs of Grace we continue to support a variety of programs with emphasis on supporting needs in our community and the world. We are thankful for the dedication of our members who have helped support the Outreach Programs this year.

#### Area Food Pantry

Thanks to those who have donated peanut butter, mac 'n cheese, personal hygiene items, dried rice, beans and other items at Grace which we have delivered to Main Street UMC and Calvary UMC food pantries during 2023. We will continue to have our donation box inside the office door for food collection in 2024.

#### Back to School Supplies

For the 2023-24 school year, over 25 Homework Toolboxes were donated to the Salvation Army for kindergarten and first grade students in Waynesboro and Augusta County. These boxes are given to students to ensure that they have the supplies at home that they need to complete assignments. Grace has participated in this program for more than four (4) years.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Warren

#### Backpacks

Grace continues to support the Waynesboro Public School Back Program with food being packed weekly during the school year. Grace members have developed two packing teams and we have partnered with St. John's Catholic Church with each church packing every other week to support Waynesboro School's program to provide food over the weekend for children in need. This year we are packing for William Perry Elementary School, Berkley Glenn and Wenonah Elementary School children. We are packing approximately 178 bags a week for the three schools.



## Community Pot Lucks

The Community Meal began weekly gatherings on September 13th, 2023 and concluded for the season on December 13th, 2023 (I believe). The idea for a community meal came from a book group where members of Grace read and discussed Christine Pohl's work, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. The meal intended to fulfill two primary functions: to provide a meal for folks in need on Wednesdays (when there is currently no other meal offered in Waynesboro), and to welcome folks from the community into relationships of hospitality. Eating together is one of those practices with important potential for both strengthening our own community and welcoming those from outside, so rather than a soup kitchen model (where 'we' serve 'them'), we opted for a pot luck model, where all are invited to join and eat together, whether able to bring a dish to share or not.

The Community Meals developed over the course of the three months we were running. In the first weeks, there were many people from the book group and several others from Grace who came, brought food, ate with guests, and helped to clean up. We had around 40 people total in the early weeks (I never remembered to count, not even once), and about half were from Grace and half from the broader community. People found out about the meal primarily from flyers at Disciples Kitchen and The Prayer Room (Frankie's place), and from Kirk Hyden who helped get the word out. My sense was that guests really appreciated being invited in to join a meal, rather than simply being served. Many guests began bringing food and helping with set-up and clean-up. The number of Grace members declined over the course of the three months, and by the end we were left with only a few consistent Grace members (many thanks for their work!). The number of guests dropped after WARM opened, our last gathering had 20-25 people.

The model of the Community Meals seems to me to be working very well. The way that folks (many that receive meals regularly at area soup kitchens) took on the task of bringing food for the meals was an encouraging sign that a community had formed, where they felt less like guests and more like members. I also believe that relationships between Grace members were strengthened, and folks from Grace welcomed in people who are often left outside of communities (even when being fed).

Folks from the community were sad to hear we would be putting the meals on hiatus until spring. There were a few reasons to take a break: the reduction of guests once WARM began; the reduction in Grace members meant fewer members were more regularly carrying the load; the Advent and Lent seasons meant Wednesday evening activities at Grace and other area Lutheran churches. My hope is to begin the meals again when WARM concludes the cold weather shelter season. The challenge I foresee will be to retain a consistent group of Grace members willing to engage with the meals throughout the summer, without relying too heavily on a few devoted members.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Eric Hilker



### **Community Support**

Community Support Fellowship is a quarterly fellowship where we invite local organizations to present their mission and volunteer opportunities to the congregation. This is a great opportunity for members to learn more about their community and ways to help. Our first fellowship was in January 2024 and we are looking for more recommendations from Grace members.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Donna Yobs & Karen Walck



### **Crop Walk**

The 2023 Waynesboro/East Augusta CROP Walk was held on September 24 at Ridgeview Park. The Grace Team walkers included Jerry & Gwen Kite, Sarah Beth Kite and Karen Walck. Pastor Pingel and Linda Meyer were at the start to cheer us on. Our team goal was \$1000 and we exceeded our goal by collecting \$1133. One quarter of the monies collected stays here to support the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, VPAS Meals on Wheels and Disciples Kitchen. Out of 15 area groups participating, Grace raised the fifth highest amount of money. Overall, all participants raised \$14,090.00. This was lower than last year, but will still have a vital impact on food insecurity in our area. It will also help Church World Service provide services all over the world.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Walck

### **Disciples Kitchen**

We continue to support the Disciples Kitchen program by providing carry out meal for Thursday lunches at Second Presbyterian Church. We also serve a Saturday breakfast for Disciples Kitchen at Christ Tabernacle Church of God. We are providing the meals for both programs about every eight weeks during the year.

### **Flannel Squares**

In early fall, Grace Lutheran Church members were asked to cut prewashed, 9 x 9 inch, flannel squares. These squares would be sent to Uganda and assembled into Period Poverty Kits for young women in Uganda and throughout Africa. *See the article on pages 47 and 48.*

Grace members answered the call, and in November, 350 flannel squares were shipped to Uganda.

This project was made possible through the efforts of Shenandoah County native, Patricia Walker. Patricia is a volunteer education and community developer with Outreach Uganda. Since 2019, she has been focused on education, women's issues, farming practices, micro-loans for women's businesses and setting up goat co-op farms for single mothers.

Thanks to Grace quilters and all members who contributed to this worthy cause.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gloria Nelson

## Addressing Period Poverty in Ghana



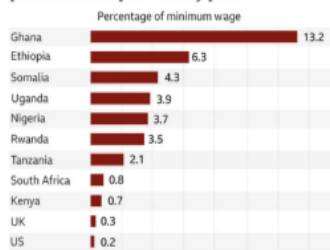
**Who is affected?** *Period poverty* affects at least 20% of girls and women in Ghana, especially in the rural areas.

**What is it?** As a worldwide problem, *period poverty* is defined as the lack of access to safe and hygienic menstrual products, sanitary services or facilities (clean toilets, water, and privacy), waste management, and basic education.

The use of unsafe products, i.e. newspapers, rags, cement bags, dried cow dung, sawdust, cardboard, chicken feathers, dried plant leaves, or limited disposable products, leads to embarrassing situations as well as bacterial infections, UTI, and reproductive issues. Shame about ignorance of menstruation and hygienic products, uneducated traditions, and stigma keep women from seeking necessary help.

**Why is it a problem?** *Period poverty* often prevents females from reaching their full potential because they miss out on opportunities for education and growth. Young girls who do not receive an education are more likely to experience early pregnancy, malnourishment, domestic violence, and pregnancy complications.

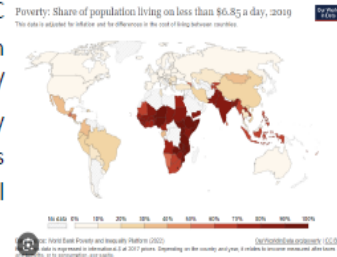
Share of minimum wage it takes to buy two packets of cheaper sanitary pads



\*2 packets of pads containing 7-12 pads as at July 2023.  
Source: BBC Africa visual journalism research

*Meeting the hygiene needs of impoverished adolescent girls is a fundamental issue of human rights, dignity, and public health.*

**Addressing the Period Poverty issue in Ghana:** The purchase of many of the least expensive sanitary pads are way beyond the reach of many girls and women. The five countries with the least affordable access to menstrual pads are in Africa with Ghana selling the most expensive products relative to monthly income. According to a BBC report in August 2023, a woman in Ghana earning a minimum wage of \$26/month would have to spend \$3 to buy



two packs of sanitary towels (8 pads each). It often comes down to pads versus food with the latter winning on behalf of the family. In rural locations, often disposable products are not an option.

*Menstruation is physically and mentally challenging for all females under the best of circumstances, so why should women have to beg, starve, sell themselves for sex, etc. just to manage a natural biological process?*

### Solutions:

1. Abolish all taxes on menstruation products.
2. Raise awareness of the *period poverty* issues and its impact on society.
3. Normalize discussions of menstruation care, encourage females to talk about issues, and seek help while increasing education, reducing stigmas, and taboos around the subject for everyone.
4. Help initiate efforts to produce affordable, accessible, reusable, and sustainable sanitary products







friendly, and sustainable solution for menstruating females managing a normal biological process.

**Viable Solution:** The production, distribution, and use of a reusable sanitary pad kit can provide a safe, hygienic, comfortable, environmentally



**What:** Each kit includes: (2) washable shields to hold the pad and prevent leaking; (8) absorbent and washable pads; (2) panties; (1) plastic quart bag for soiled pads; (1) gallon bag for washing the pads if necessary; soap; and, instructions for use and care. If cared for properly, the kit should last 3+ years.

**How:** The productions of these kits will be done via small female-businesses set up to serve the needs of the girls reaching puberty as well as providing a product for purchase by older females.

**Where:** The pilot program will be located in the village of Boate, located 2 hours north of Accra, at the primary school (founded in 2010 by Barbara and Jojo Entsua, residents of Florida, a family physician and engineer by profession), to be managed by a teacher, Esther Yeboah, and initially involving 4 women, one being a seamstress.

**Needed:** To facilitate this start-up effort, funds are needed for the following items:

**Equipment and Furniture:** (3) non-electric, hand-cranked refurbished sewing machines, locally sourced and easy to maintain; (2) pressing irons; (5) worktables; (6) chairs

**Building Prep:** Cement blocks / concrete to enclose an available open-air space.

**Kit Products:** Cotton material for shields and bags, absorbent material for pads, waterproofing material, underwear, soap, plastic bags, ribbon

**Other sewing supplies:** ironing cloth, snap tool and snaps, scissors, sewing pins and clips, machine needles.

**Estimated total:** ~\$3,000\*

\*A Rotary Club is being approached to provide a stipend for the women during the initial pilot program period.



**Vision:** Once this pilot project is implemented and deemed successful, this model will be repeated in various regions with the funding sourced from community members in the business, medical, and political fields, making it a "Ghanaians addressing a Ghanaian problem" in a sustainable manner while creating jobs.

**Project Team Energy:** This project is being managed by an amazing development and implementation team made up of men and women from the business, legal, educational, social, marketing, and medical professions. The vision of this team is to help every girl reach puberty in a healthy manner, having the ability to confidently reach her potential and not be limited by menstruation but empowered by it. The team sees this is not a women-only issue but as a societal problem that deserves immediate attention and solutions.



Donations can be made via check (Tricia Walker 71 Pearl St. Wellsboro, PA 16901)  
Venmo (Patricia-Walker-238) • PayPal ([pwcasto@gmail.com](mailto:pwcasto@gmail.com)) • Zelle and CashApp (443-975-1738)  
Questions: [triciawalker1956@gmail.com](mailto:triciawalker1956@gmail.com) • WhatsApp and text: 443-975-1738

## **Grace Walkers**

A walking group meets on Thursday mornings at 8:30 to walk the Greenway weather permitting. Due to some of the Greenway being closed, we have been meeting in the parking lot near Constitution Park.

## **HERO – Housing Emergency Relief Organization (Formerly Good Neighbor)**



In early 2023, Grace and a group of local church leaders began to have conversations about the increasing number of financial requests we were receiving for rent and utilities. This increase, combined with the decrease of affordable housing, led this group to begin dreaming about a non-profit that could not only provide financial assistance to individuals, but also connect them with other resources and organizations for more long-term support. This effort is designed to supplement the SACRA (organization that meets this need within Staunton and Augusta County but does NOT include Waynesboro).

In November 2023, the Housing Emergency Relief Organization (HERO) of Waynesboro was launched (with the help of Community Foundation of Central Blue Ridge as our 501c sponsor). Churches, organizations, and individuals are able to donate at [herowaynesboro.org](http://herowaynesboro.org), knowing that their donations will provide emergency relief to those at risk of eviction or utility cut-off. We currently have a 5-member board from:

- First Baptist Church
- Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
- St John the Evangelist Catholic church
- St John's Episcopal Church
- Westminster Presbyterian Church

We have several volunteers to aid in the intake process and assess the ways we can support the individuals with their immediate needs. We currently Have funds from the founding churches & a \$15k matching grant from the community foundation.

Our mission is to support those in Waynesboro who are facing housing insecurity, regardless of race, religion, or identity. We believe that all people have the right to affordable housing. Our goal is to work to prevent individuals from becoming homeless because of eviction or utility cut-off through financial assistance from churches, organizations, and individuals. Our Website became live in early January 2024.

During 2024 we plan to help families in the Waynesboro area both via financial assistance and in partnering to ensure the community is able to network to appropriate resources via case management partnerships. Our current limit is \$300/family assistance with the ability to help twice a year. Our current model of support is via web forms, phone calls and a personal meeting if needed. All payments are paid directly to the landlord or utility provider.

Donna Yobs  
Susan Meyers

Pastor Paul Pingel

## Hiker Hostel

We almost weren't able to open in 2023, due to too much diligent attention from the City of Waynesboro! Safety requirements necessitated the construction of a "Stairway to Heaven" by Grace's building crew (plus Pastor and probably others).

And yet we wound up with 98 hikers in the 20 days we were open. And the shelter and fellowship were appreciated by those who partook, hikers and volunteers alike.

In 2024 the plan is to open on Monday, May 27 and remain open thru Saturday, June 22, excluding Saturday and Sunday nights. Irma (and hopefully Woody) will again return to do their part and hiker alumnae and church volunteers will again pitch in.

Happy Trails! We know those hikers who will wind up with us are already making their preparations...

Respectfully submitted,  
Irma Graf





## **Local Ministry and Giving Tree**

Local Ministry members Sarah Beth Kite, Sharon Lynch, Peggy Caister and Jane Stein.

This year for the Giving Tree, the Salvation Army gave us fifteen (15) children. We provided at least five (5) gifts per child for Christmas, including six (6) bikes.

We also have received several requests from the Salvation Army to help pay bills for clients.

Thanks to all!

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane Stein



The Grace choir once again sponsored Christmas for two families at Wenonah Elementary School. The choir continued outreach with a generous donation to Raising Resources for Readers (3Rs).



## **Nicaraguan CICRIN Mission Trip**

In the congregation's first mission trip to Nicaragua (February 10-17, 2023), six Grace members were joined by five other individuals to serve alongside hosts and partners at CICRIN, a pre-K through 12 school and refuge for abused, abandoned, and at-risk children and youth on Ometepe Island in Lake Nicaragua. In addition to enjoying fellowship with the kids and staff at CICRIN, the team worked hard on several projects: tiling stalls and painting interior and exterior walls of a decrepit boys' and girls' bath house; providing funds to install doors, wash basins, and stall fixtures; painting and doing repairs on several other buildings that had deferred maintenance needs due to fewer mission teams visiting during the pandemic; providing dental hygiene education to the 111 students in the CICRIN School.

The team also had the opportunity to worship, learn, and explore Ometepe as well as several other sites. Thank you to all GELC members who provided prayer and financial support. A return visit is planned for February 2024.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Radecke



## **Quilts Lutheran World Relief**

The Grace quilting team made quilts for Lutheran World Relief January to May and September to December.

## Refugee Resettlement Program Report of the Joint Grace-Westminster Presbyterian

*“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”  
(Hebrews 13:1-2)*

**Winter.** Phiston began to look at entering college, and toured BRCC and met with a counselor there. The team concentrated on continuing financial education in areas of bill paying, online banking, and buying groceries using WIC benefits. Working with the homeowners, several safety modifications to the home were made, including adding a peep hole to the front door, installing a railing on the front steps, and installing a better mailbox.

**Spring.** Chukizo and Isaac joined a local soccer team, and while Isaac is still learning strategies, Chukizo excelled on his team. Team members created a schedule for transporting the boys to games and practices. The family applied for and are awaiting their green cards – another important step in maintaining their status here in the U.S. Jules and Phiston were increased to full-time status at Virginia Panel, giving them full health and retirement benefits and a small raise. This entailed team members providing more education on insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits. The end of April signified the 1-year anniversary of the family entering the United States, and the team celebrated with them, presenting a digital photo album of many pictures over the first year so they could celebrate the changes, hard work, new relationships, and the fun. Masoka continues to work on learning English through the Building Bridges women’s zoom class. She hopes to be able to seek employment once Happy can be included in day care and the adults’ schedules can be adjusted to accommodate three of them working.

**Summer.** Phiston attended his first college course – an introductory course on attending college. He then enrolled in fall classes at BRCC. The team again developed a transportation plan for getting him to and from classes once they started. The children took a break from classes for the summer, as did Masoka break from English for a while during the summer. All seemed to thrive as they enjoyed the summer activities.

**Fall.** After much study and practice, both Jules and Phiston obtained their driver’s licenses last fall! They were very excited about this big step. Jules received a donation from a generous person of the used Toyota Highlander that the team had been using to transport the family. Phiston had saved much of his earnings and purchased a used Honda Accord. These events have increased the family’s independence so very much! For the spring semester Phiston will be able to drive himself to and from school, and Jules is able to drive the family shopping, visiting friends and family in Harrisonburg, and all sorts of other outings. This Christmas the family was more familiar with American traditions, and while they still do not do gifts in the ways that most Americans do, the parents did enjoy going shopping to find new clothes and a few gifts for the children. The Welcome Team contributed gifts of basic car tools (scrapers, tire pumps, etc.) for both cars as a Christmas gift.



After completing two ESL for college level students and a basic computer course, Phiston met with a college counselor who talked with him about the educational tracks at BRCC. He decided he wants to pursue a 4-year degree, so he will be taking classes that will transfer to a four-year school. He will be taking another 3 courses in the spring semester. The younger children are doing well in school and are receiving tutoring from team members once a week to help them build skills they may have missed previously or that are giving them difficulty.

The whole family has encountered so many changes and challenges over the 20 months they've been here, and they've faced them with determination and joy and so much flexibility!

Please continue to keep them all in prayer as they begin another year in this country and continue to grow and learn.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Meyer



### **Renewing Homes Augusta Projects**

Grace worked on over 10 projects with Renewing Homes of Greater Augusta this year for home repair projects for families of home owners in need. Our projects this year included building or repairing wheelchair ramps, building a deck and roof repairs to a home plus other repairs.

### **Rise Against Hunger Food Packing Event**



Grace coordinated the Rise Against Hunger food packing event that was held at Kate Collins Middle School in Waynesboro on September 9 from 10 am to 12 noon. We are using the \$2,623 grant from the Mission Endowment Fund and total funding from all sources totaled \$12,269.06 from the 19 participating churches and Grace. We had approximately 240 people participate in the event and over 30,000 meals were packed. Special thanks to Robin Crowder for working with the school system for the usage of Kate Collins and Pastor Paul for working with the participating churches. Grace had 28 members involved in the event including setting up the space, packing and cleanup.

### **Safety Help Team**

Safety Help Team is a new group in 2024 to help Grace members review the safety of their homes. The goal is to confirm safe homes for all. We are looking for both Grace members interested in a review and those wishing to help.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Yobs & Jerry Kite



## **WARM Ministry**

Grace continues to support the Waynesboro Area Refuge Ministry (WARM) which provides shelter for the area's homeless adults through the Cold Weather Shelter (CWS) and Ruth WARM House for women and children. Grace continues to sponsor a room at the WARM Ruth House.

In 2023, we hosted the CWS twice! The week of Jan 23 - 30, and the week of Dec 5 to 12 in our Fellowship Hall. In Dec, we had almost 90 volunteers put in over 430 hours to host 17 - 20 guests for dinner, showers and overnight. We also provided both breakfast and sack lunches. Volunteers included members/friends of Grace, Waynesboro Kiwanis, Zion Lutheran and St John's Episcopal churches.

We hosted the cold weather homeless shelter December 5 to 12 at Grace and averaged 25 guests eating each evening during our week. We also provided both breakfast and lunches several weeks plus snacks and additional supplies while WARM was holding their motel shelter during the first half of 2022.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Myers



## **World Hunger and Disaster Relief**

### **KIVA**



Kiva is a 501c non-profit organization headquartered in San Francisco, California, that allow people to lend money via the Internet to low-income entrepreneurs and students in 78 countries. Kiva's mission is "to expand financial access to help underserved communities thrive."

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Lucas

## ***Support Round Table Reports***

### **Building and Maintenance Fund**



GELC was gifted \$250,000 from the estate of Morris and Ty Elliott in August of 2023. The contribution was designated for building and maintenance use. The Building and Maintenance Fund Committee was established by Church Council to develop a policy and procedure for the fund and to provide ongoing oversight. Members of the Building and Maintenance Fund Committee are:

- Ron Almarode
- Jack Eckstrom
- Allison Fink
- Pastor Pingel
- Rew Walck

***Continued***

The Policy and Procedure were presented to Council and approved in November. The Committee proposed and Council approved the transfer of \$100,000 to the existing Capital Project Fund to fund the \$75,000 of improvements that were approved by the Congregation (roof replacement, security system upgrade, exterior painting, and bracing the entrance awning) and to provide funds for anticipated repairs/improvements for the future. The remaining \$150,000 was invested and is monitored by the Committee and Council.

## **Church Property Report**

Here is a list of Property Committee tasks and church property issues during 2023.

- January- Had Ronnie Ritchie Services roto root the main sewer line behind the church during the Warm Shelter in early January.
- March - Church property work day. Two loads of mulch were spread and shrubs trimmed. Water fountain in Fellowship Hall was repaired by Ron Myers.
- April - Changed all side aisle light bulbs with new LED bulbs.
  - ◊ Roto rooted main drain line - front lawn of church from window wells to drain line all of the way to 13th street drain exit.
- June Thru August - Contracted with Austin & Sons to scrape, prime, and paint entire front, 2nd story of sanctuary, office/columbarium and 13th Street entrance areas of church exterior.
- August - Contracted with Baber Enterprises to install new GAF Premium Shingles to entire sanctuary roof (front and backside). Shingles have a 40-year warranty. The new roof eliminated all roof leakage problems.
  - ◊ Sanctuary Entrance awning stabilized by welding in supports (Staunton Machine Works) and adding bracing spacers on church/awning locations. Ron Myers coordinated this work.
- October - Full property grounds workday.
- November - Contracted Ronnie Ritchie Services to install an additional commercial gas hot water heater in series with our existing gas hot water heater and to install a cold water mixing valve to adjust hot water temperature to 120 to deliver more hot water for the Warm Shelter/Hiker Hostel showers.
- December- Dominion Power dropped a phase (we have 3 phase power at Grace) during the Warm Shelter week. Problems showed up with loss of heat for VMA/ Sunday School rooms along with elevator problems. Contacted Eddie Etter who helped us find the problem which was a dropped neutral connection on the main Dominion Power transformer on 13th Street. Dominion Power was contacted and repairs conducted that evening.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fred Biggers  
Ron Myers  
Rew Walck





## **Columbarium and Memorial Garden Report**

A Columbarium is a way to bring Christian Burial back to the Church!

The completed east wall of the Columbarium contains space for 144 niches with stone facings. The uncompleted west wall has space for 164 niches, the niches will be added in the future. Each niche has space for two brass urns, which the church stocks and furnishes without cost to you. The price for a niche is \$2,250 including two (2) brass urns, no charge for opening and closing the niche, and for engraving of the face stone with names and dates. There are 40 niches sold. There are a total of 25 sets of ashes entered into the Columbarium.

The memorial brick patio area has 43 bricks with names, most of these are for members and family members, who are buried elsewhere. An engraved brick has space for two names and cost \$300.

The Columbarium committee consist of three members. Ron Almarode's term ends 12/31/28, Bradley Keefer's term ends 12/31/24, and Jerry Kite's term ends 12/31/26. The Pastor is a permanent member of the committee.

If you have any questions concerning the Columbarium and brick patio area, contact any of the above members. Bradley Keefer has been doing the record keeping , the opening and closing of the niches, getting the stone faces engraved with names and dates.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bradley Keefer



## **Finance**

### **Finance Committee**

GELC is in sound financial health entering 2024. The Finance Committee works closely with the Stewardship Committee and Church Council to develop a spending plan for the congregation's approval.

Receipts were below budget and expenses were at budget resulting in a deficit of \$23,206 in 2023. November and December were historically poor resulting in \$17,000 of the deficit for the year.

Although the end results in 2023 were below expectations, there has been careful stewardship of Grace's finances over the years that allow us to "weather" a down year. The Finance Committee and Church Council will be working closely together to monitor the financial status of Grace early in 2024 in order to hopefully avoid another deficit spending year.

Members of the Finance Committee are:

Ron Almarode  
Chuck Goodrich  
Pastor Pingel

Robin Crowder  
Jerry Kite  
Vivian Proctor

Many thanks to all who volunteer to monitor the financial affairs of Grace.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ron Almarode

## **Financial Secretary**

This year we had a total of 102 giving units (down 5 from 2022).

- 47 units were giving of Record
- 55 units Pledged (down 8 from 2022)
- 82% of the pledged units met or exceeded the pledged amount

Year End Statements were sent out in early January.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Chuck Goodrich

## **Thanksgiving and Memorial Fund (As of November 2023)**

### **Given in Memory of:**

Marie Brown  
Robert "Bobby" Hull  
Flossie Myers  
James "Jimmy" Owens  
David Proctor's Father  
Pete Rufe

Sarah & Jerry Gum  
Ellen Moyer  
Margaret Neely  
Fielder Pitzer Jr.  
Nancy Fitzgerald Quick  
Richard "Dick" Tomey

### **Given in Memory & in Honor of:**

Charles and Peggy Marks

### **Given in Honor of:**

Jerry and Gwen Kite  
Ron and Sandy Knicely

### **The Memorial Gifts Were Given by:**

Charlotte and Ken Barden, Rebecca and Larry Batton, Cheryl Byrd, Shirley Cobb, Virginia Coyner, Kim and Keith Curtis, Danner Family, Joe and Susan Davis, Lydia Dolan, Jean Farley, Humes and Barbara Franklin, Donna Gum, Linda Johnson, Thomas Kluttz, Bill Lucas, Karen Dunn Mayry, John and Jane McGehee, Linda Meyer, Jean Morgan, Janet Parmer, Sharon Parmer, Betty Jean Pitzer, Becky Price, David and Vivian Proctor, Martha Jo Robinson, Linda Tomey, Gordon and Donna Via





## Treasurer

### GELC Annual Treasurer's Report 2023

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#### Summary of Activities Suntrust Bank

	2023 Actual	2023 Budget	+ or - Diff	2024 Budget
Bal. Beginning Suntrust Balance	\$66,819.51			
A. <u>Receipts Deposited</u>				
R100 Pledge + Giving of Record	\$303,494.35	\$325,275	-\$21,781	\$305,744
R400 Other Offering	\$832.13	\$500	\$332	\$850
R600 Facilities Usage	\$6,220.00	\$4,800	\$1,420	\$6,750
R1000 Niche Sales	\$0.00	\$2,500	-\$2,500	\$9,000
R1200 Additional Revenue	\$600.00	\$600	\$0	\$0
Faith	\$0.00	\$102	-\$102	\$12,732
<b>R998 Total Budget Receipts Deposit</b>	<b>\$311,146.48</b>	<b>\$333,777</b>	<b>-\$22,631</b>	<b>\$335,076</b>
<b>S998 Total Special Receipts Deposit</b>	<b>\$335,610.80</b>			
<b>T998 Total Receipts Deposit</b>	<b>\$646,757.28</b>			
B. <u>Disbursed</u>				
D100 Budgeted Benevolence	\$26,113.13	\$27,143	-\$1,030	\$29,002
D200 Ministry Programs	\$6,031.51	\$13,610	-\$7,578	\$9,910
D300 Property	\$49,563.07	\$45,553	\$4,010	\$37,800
D400 Administration	\$21,805.98	\$17,290	\$4,516	\$22,775
D500 Staff	\$77,221.74	\$76,567	\$655	\$77,151
D600 Pastor	\$152,616.64	\$152,614	\$2	\$157,438
D650 Special Pastoral Accounts	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
D700 Payroll Tax Liability Adjustment	\$0.00	\$0	\$0	
<b>D999 Total Budget Disbursed</b>	<b>\$334,352.07</b>	<b>\$333,777</b>	<b>\$575</b>	<b>\$335,076</b>
<b>S999 Total Special Disbursed</b>	<b>\$297,629.83</b>			
<b>T999 Total Disbursed</b>	<b>\$631,981.90</b>			
<i>Voided checks</i>	<i>\$0.10</i>			
<b>B2 Ending Suntrust Balance</b>	<b>\$81,594.99</b>			
			<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>-\$23,206</b>

#### Summary Of Benevolence Giving 2023

Total Budgeted Benevolence	\$26,113.13	Renewing Homes	\$50.00
World Hunger	\$4,060.00	Youth Projects	\$2,122.63
ELCA Disaster Response	\$1,778.04	Tapestry Committee	\$25.00
WARM	\$389.75	Funeral Expenses	\$330.00
Friends Fund	\$572.24	HERO Fund	\$1,268.00
CROP Walk	\$200.00		
Project Esperanza	\$2,900.00	MEF Bequests	\$28,128.00
Thrivent Projects	\$364.99		
Refugee Resettlement	\$1,000.00	<b>Total Benevolence Giving</b>	<b>\$69,301.78</b>

# GELC Annual Treasurer's Report 2023

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Budget Disbursements		2023 Actual	2023 Budget	Diff YTD	2024 Budget
101	Mission Support (ELCA & Synod)	\$21,143.00	\$21,143	\$0	\$21,402
105	Outreach Missions Committee	\$4,970.13	\$6,000	-\$1,030	\$7,600
100	<b>Total Budget Benevolence</b>	<b>\$26,113.13</b>	<b>\$27,143</b>	<b>-\$1,030</b>	<b>\$29,002</b>
201	Worship & Music	\$3,077.57	\$6,310	-\$3,232	\$4,310
202	Christian Education	\$651.54	\$1,000	-\$348	\$1,000
203	Evangelism	\$0.00	\$2,000	-\$2,000	\$1,250
204	Faith in Action/Stewardship	\$1,058.60	\$800	\$259	\$350
206	Youth Ministry	\$114.00	\$2,000	-\$1,886	\$2,000
207	Support Fellowship	\$1,129.80	\$1,500	-\$370	\$1,000
200	<b>Total Ministry Programs</b>	<b>\$6,031.51</b>	<b>\$13,610</b>	<b>-\$7,578</b>	<b>\$9,910</b>
301	Church Property	\$10,737.67	\$10,000	\$738	\$9,000
302	Natural Gas	\$6,170.97	\$5,300	\$871	\$6,000
303	Electricity	\$6,726.50	\$5,475	\$1,252	\$6,350
304	Water/Sewer/Garbage	\$3,852.96	\$2,750	\$1,103	\$3,850
305	All Insurance	\$9,474.97	\$8,578	\$897	\$9,850
308	Lawn Care/Snow Removal	\$2,400.00	\$3,250	-\$850	\$2,750
309	Mortgage Payments	\$10,200.00	\$10,200	\$0	\$0
300	<b>Total Property</b>	<b>\$49,563.07</b>	<b>\$45,553</b>	<b>\$4,010</b>	<b>\$37,800</b>
401	Church Office	\$9,133.58	\$8,000	\$1,134	\$9,000
402	Telephone/Communications	\$4,596.95	\$3,400	\$1,197	\$3,725
403	Postage	\$1,385.00	\$1,000	\$385	\$1,200
406	Delegates Expense	\$2,056.72	\$750	\$1,307	\$250
407	Council Discretion Gift Fund	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
412	Technology	\$2,499.93	\$2,140	\$360	\$2,400
413	Communications	\$1,133.80	\$1,000	\$134	\$5,200
400	<b>Total Administration</b>	<b>\$21,805.98</b>	<b>\$17,290</b>	<b>\$4,516</b>	<b>\$22,775</b>
501	Adm. Secretary's Salary	\$21,595.44	\$21,599	-\$3	\$22,290
503	Custodian's Salary	\$8,841.12	\$8,841	\$1	\$9,124
504	Nursery Caretaker/Protection Policy	\$57.50	\$1,000	-\$943	\$250
505	Audio/Visual Support	\$6,500.00	\$5,200	\$1,300	\$6,400
507	Organist/Choir Dir. Salary	\$31,676.04	\$31,676	\$0	\$30,175
509	Organist & Pulpit Supply	\$2,800.00	\$2,500	\$300	\$3,200
510	Staff Continuing Ed. & Travel	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
520	Employer Tax Liability All Staff	\$4,751.64	\$4,752	\$0	\$4,712
500	<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>\$77,221.74</b>	<b>\$76,567</b>	<b>\$655</b>	<b>\$77,151</b>
601	Pastor Base Salary	\$54,515.04	\$54,515	\$0	\$57,012
602	Pastor Housing Allowance	\$23,499.96	\$23,500	\$0	\$23,500
603	Pastor FICA Allowance	\$14,093.04	\$14,093	\$1	\$14,543
604	ELCA Health Plan+Disability+Pension	\$56,406.72	\$56,407	\$0	\$57,933
607	Continuing Education	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
608	Travel Expense	\$2,275.61	\$2,000	\$276	\$2,350
609	Book Allowance	\$299.76	\$300	\$0	\$300
610	Professional Expense	\$226.51	\$500	-\$273	\$500
613	Pastor Cell Phone Usage	\$300.00	\$300	\$0	\$300
600	<b>Total Pastor</b>	<b>\$152,616.64</b>	<b>\$152,614</b>	<b>\$2</b>	<b>\$157,438</b>
620	Sabbatical Reserve	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
	<b>Total Reserve</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
700	Payroll Tax Liability Adjustment	\$0.00	\$0	\$0	\$0
999	<b>Total Budget Disbursed</b>	<b>\$334,352.07</b>	<b>\$333,777</b>	<b>\$575</b>	<b>\$335,076</b>

## GELC Annual Treasurer's Report 2022

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Detail of Special Funds		Balance	In	Out	Balance
		12/31/2022	YTD	YTD	12/31/23
A01	World Hunger	\$0.00	\$4,060.00	\$4,060.00	\$0.00
A05	ELCA Disaster Response	\$0.00	\$1,778.04	\$1,778.04	\$0.00
A06	Special Appeals	\$24,293.65	\$81,108.83	\$79,315.83	\$26,086.65
A10	Hiker's Hostel Donations	\$691.30	\$356.00	\$600.00	\$447.30
A11	Sunday School	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
A14	Blue Ridge Area Food Bank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
A19	WARM Shelter Fund	\$0.00	\$389.75	\$389.75	\$0.00
A20	MEF Accrual	\$10.41	\$33,128.00	\$28,128.00	\$5,010.41
A22	Synod Covid-19 Grant	\$1.24	\$0.00	\$1.24	\$0.00
A24	Refugee Resettlement Project	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
A25	Nicaragua Mission Trip	\$11,628.57	\$23,185.00	\$30,467.19	\$4,346.38
A26	Pledge Accrual	\$0.00	\$39,200.00	\$39,200.00	\$0.00
A27	HERO Fund	\$0.00	\$6,108.00	\$300.00	\$5,808.00
F01	Gifts to Regular T&M *	\$5,273.61	\$2,961.00	\$0.00	\$8,234.61
F03	Friends Fund	\$2,549.64	\$50.00	\$572.24	\$2,027.40
F04	Endowment Fund	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
F05	Current Building Fund *	\$2,261.84	\$8,448.80	\$3,923.47	\$6,787.17
F16	Master Reserve *	-\$9.46	\$9,222.18	\$5,786.67	\$3,426.05
F30	Columbarium Fund	-\$7.19	\$0.00	\$460.00	-\$467.19
F32	KIVA Project	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$25.00
F36	Youth Projects	\$5,387.82	\$3,459.60	\$2,122.63	\$6,724.79
F37	Thrivent Project	\$461.61	\$58.00	\$364.99	\$154.62
F41	Quilting Group Reserve	\$237.31	\$100.00	\$309.37	\$27.94
F42	Keefer_VMA Scholarship Fund	\$8,373.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,373.00
F44	Parish Nursing Program	\$14.00	\$0.00	\$14.00	\$0.00
F45	Rise Against Hunger	\$0.00	\$12,791.34	\$12,224.25	\$567.09
F47	Capital Project Fund	\$15,667.35	\$104,813.57	\$73,855.19	\$46,625.73
F51	Pastor's Continuing Education *	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
H02	Budget Surplus/Deficit	\$10,364.93	\$0.00	\$10,364.93	\$0.00
H04	Sabbatical Reserve *	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
M01	Flowers	\$1,179.03	\$1,351.38	\$2,392.04	\$138.37
T01	Pending Transfers *	-\$33,850.15	\$2,041.31	\$0.00	-\$31,808.84
Y01	YNBP Church Challenge Special Fun	\$12,166.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$12,166.00
Total Special Funds		\$66,819.51	\$335,610.80	\$297,629.83	\$104,800.48

\* Corresponding account in Credit Union

# GELC Annual Treasurer's Report 2023

December-23

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Detail of Dupont Community Credit Union Accounts					
		Balance	In	YTD Interest	Out
		12/31/2022	YTD	Distribution	YTD
CU01	Thanksgiving & Memorial *	\$22,063.52			
CU02	Building Fund *	\$153.94			
CU08	Master Reserve *	\$16,510.36	\$900.67		
CU18	Organist/Choir Dir. Continuing Ed. Fund	\$8,321.33	\$1,000.00		
CU19	Pastor Continuing Education Fund	\$0.00	\$41.31		
CU20	Sabbatical Reserve Fund *	\$0.00	\$1,000.00		
TR01	Pending Transfer	\$33,850.15			(\$2,041.31)
	<b>Total Credit Union Funds</b>	<b>\$80,899.30</b>	<b>\$2,941.98</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>(\$2,041.31)</b>
					<b>\$81,799.97</b>

Summary of Capital Funds Available				
Acct.		Balance	In	Out
		12/31/2022	YTD	YTD
F05	Current Building Fund	\$2,261.84	\$8,448.80	\$3,923.47
F47	Capital Project Fund	\$15,667.35	\$104,813.57	\$73,855.19
CU02	Building Fund	\$153.94	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Union Checking Account	\$403.22	\$0.00	\$403.22
	<b>Total Funds Available</b>	<b>\$18,486.35</b>	<b>\$113,262.37</b>	<b>\$78,181.88</b>
				<b>\$53,566.84</b>

Summary of Union's Checking Account				
Date			Amount	Balance
12/31/2022	Union's Bank Balance			\$403.22
	Close Account		(\$403.22)	
	Interest Earned		\$0.00	
12/31/2023	Union's Bank Balance			\$0.00

Columbarium Mortgage Loan		
11/16/2009	Original Principal Balance	\$102,993.95
12/31/2023	Current Principal Balance	\$0.00

## Building & Maintenance Fund

Balance 12/31/2022	\$0.00	
Balance 12/31/2023	\$150,463.02	(initial deposit \$150,000)
Difference	\$150,463.02	

\* Corresponding account in SunTrust

Combined Account Balances			
Account	SunTrust	Credit Union	Total
Building Fund	\$6,787.17	\$153.94	\$6,941.11
Master Reserve	\$3,426.05	\$17,411.03	\$20,837.08
Sabbatical Reserve	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Thanksgiving & Memorial	\$8,234.61	\$22,063.52	\$30,298.13
Pending Transfers	-\$31,808.84	\$31,808.84	\$0.00

## GELC Annual Treasurer's Report 2023

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### Balance Sheet As Of 12/31/2023

#### A. Assets

##### 1 Cash & Bank Accounts

DuPont Cr. Union	\$81,799.97
Union Bank & Trust	\$0.00
Sun Trust Bank	\$81,594.99
Edward Jones	\$75.00
- Building & Maintenance I	\$150,463.02
<b>Total Cash &amp; Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$313,932.98</b>

##### 2 Other Assets

Cemetery lots	\$1,500.00	
Building & Contents	\$6,312,419.00	Insurance value
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$6,313,919.00</b>	

##### 3 Investment Accounts

ELCA Mission Certificates	\$10,000.00
<b>Total Investment Accounts</b>	<b>\$10,000.00 *</b>

<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,637,851.98</b>
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#### B. Liabilities And Equity

Columbarium loan - Union	\$0.00
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<b>Total Liability Accounts</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
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Equity	\$6,637,851.98
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<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>	<b>\$6,637,851.98</b>
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*\* See Mission Endowment Fund Report For Endowment Assets*



## Personnel

The Personnel Committee is tasked with proposing policies about Personnel Management, overseeing the implementation of the Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policies and working with the Pastor and volunteers who supervise staff functions. It is most active in the hiring process of staff (not the Pastor).

The cleaning company will be receiving a 3.2% cost of living raise for 2024.

The committee is assured all Sunday school teachers and those providing communion to homebound church members have completed their background checks.

Committee members include Antoinette Eckstrom and Jack Eckstrom

Respectively submitted,  
Antoinette Eckstrom



## Power in the Spirit

Power in the Spirit conducted two programs in 2023. I, with The Rev, Wesley Smith, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church and Edith Blake of St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Portsmouth were excited to tri-chair this committee. We began with planning the Winter on-line event, “Blessed R” based on the Beatitudes securing workshop leaders, planning worship, daily emails, during the three-day event, held January 30-February 1. The Rev. Brenda Smith from New York was the Keynote Speaker on January 30 followed by workshop, including one by Pastor Pingel on the topic of “Blessed Are the Righteous: The Role of Relationships in Racial Equity and Justice” and closing worship each night.

The Summer event, “Seeking and Finding” based on the story of Zaccheus was July 13-15, 2023, at Roanoke College, Salem. The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, retired dean of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary was the keynote speaker, Rev. Stephen Tuell, James A. Kelso Professor emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was the Bible Study leader and musician was Michael Benshish from Chicago but comes to the Virginia Beach area in the summer. This two- and half-day event at Roanoke College was filled with worship with great music, Bible Study, workshops, and most importantly fellowship with Virginia Synod members who gathered for spiritual renewal and rest.

This committee also planned the 2024 Mid-Winter event, “Witness Like the Women” led by Virginia Synod pastors and lay leaders, February 5-7, 2024. Plans are in the making for the Summer event, June 13-15, 2024, at Roanoke College around the Old Testament story of Esther. This is a change from July to June due to the date of the National Youth Gathering.

It is interesting and heart-warming to serve this committee as the Holy Spirit works among us to bring forth these events.

Come and join us this summer. Registration will go out in early Spring.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Gum, Power in the Spirit Chair  
2023 Annual Report





## Strategic Planning

Over the past 2+ years, under the leadership of Bob Barrette, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) developed a Strategic Plan to guide the Congregation in God's work for the next 3-5 years. The committee also included Pastor Pingel, Fred Biggers, Robin Crowder, Karen Walck, Linda Meyer, and Kate Van Bremen.

We cannot begin to thank Bob Barrette for his insights, leadership, and focus while leading the committee and congregation in the creation of this new plan. Please take time to thank Bob for sharing his gifts with our committee and the congregation.

The SPC began by inviting the congregation to participate in discussion and a Card Storming activity to provide input in varying forms identifying the needs of the Congregation, the Community, and the World. Small subcommittees met to develop specific tasks and plans by reviewing the priorities of the congregation.

At the same time, the SPC identified all the current ministries of Grace. The list is ongoing and constantly changing.

Next steps will require Church Council's approval of these Strategic priorities. Council will review how the priorities are implemented, setting timelines, and encouraging members of the congregation to become involved in the leadership and implementation of these priorities.

### Strategic Plan Recommendations

- Develop a campaign to inform, involve, and engage current members in the Life of the Church - ***Full Church Engagement.***
- Revitalize the Evangelism and Community program to promote and increase discipleship at Grace and within the community - ***Good News Sharing.***
- Promote and expand our Senior Ministry to include assessing needs, improving communication, and providing essential services - ***Senior Services.***
- Continue our growth in our Outreach to people in our community and wider world, while increasing support for equity and justice in our community - ***Growth in Outreach.***
- Expand worship and music opportunities that attract and involve our members and visitors to a greater degree - ***Worship Opportunities.***

With each of you, we look forward to starting the implementation of this 5 year Strategic Plan. What has God asked us to do?

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Meyer  
Robin Crowder

## **Technology**

2023 has been a good year on the Technology front.

If you would like an “ad” for a project put on the Nave TV, let me know. I change the ads every Sunday morning. Pictures of activities are great.

If you ever need a DVD or Blu-Ray Disc of a service, please let me know.

I am also looking for an adult backup person to run a simplified version of the sound system just in case I am not available.

I want to thank Zachary, Libby, and Kiera for their video help this year.

Bradley Keefer helped me run data and video cables this year.

The addition of two cameras this year greatly enhanced worship recordings. The Christmas Eve recording was spectacular with these new cameras.

## **Christmas**

Some people have asked how I get close-up video inside the manger. A tiny GoPro camera provides the video straight to the video recorder.

If you have not seen the Christmas Eve service, I recommend watching it. The services are on our YouTube site:

Christmas Eve 5:00 p.m.: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeerRlxtv3k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeerRlxtv3k)

December 31<sup>st</sup>: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=22hF9Co810s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22hF9Co810s)

## **Folding at Home**

On the Folding At Home front ([foldingathome.org](http://foldingathome.org)), two Grace computers continue helping to search for cures to various diseases. As a fun fact, Grace is ranked 1,162 out of thousands of teams in total amount of data analyzed.

Our FaH homepage is: [stats.foldingathome.org/team/266700](http://stats.foldingathome.org/team/266700)  
Current computers running are G\_117 and G\_118.

Respectfully submitted,  
Owen Keefer





Our programs at Valley Music Academy are thriving now that life has returned to an always-interesting normal. We are back to about 90% of the enrollment we had in 2019. We hope to increase that to 100% or more this year with improved marketing and community outreach.

We currently have 135 active students taking lessons in ten different instruments. We are offering group classes in piano and guitar, as well as our growing Saturday Musikgarten classes. We have 10 teachers on-site, including a brand new trombone instructor, Bruce Fox. Bruce replaced Keith Schessl, who moved out of the area.

In May, a board member helped set up a new, larger waiting area for parents, providing a play space for youngsters. In June, volunteers cleaned and painted the percussion room. This project took two days of hard work to refresh a space that sees intense usage.

The past year saw lots of changes behind the scenes at VMA. Executive Director Laura Lake resigned in May. Kelsey Swecker stepped into her role until November. Now Dawn Lemasney is serving as Program Director. Dawn is a familiar face around VMA, having taught here for several years.

We have used the leadership transition to look closely at our recordkeeping and financial procedures. We have a new online scholarship application, making applying for need-based financial aid easier. In 2024 we would like to fully fund our scholarships so we can award more financial support than ever.

As always, our mission is to bring music to everyone in the community. We could not accomplish this without Grace's unwavering support. This congregation's commitment to serving the local community has given us a place to call home for over twenty years. We are proud to partner with GELC, and look forward to continuing the good work.

# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## OPENING LITURGY

### Son of God, Eternal Savior

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

**And also with you.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Amen.**

1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,  
 2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.  
 3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;  
 4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,

Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,  
 Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.  
 hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.  
 Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:

you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead:  
 Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;  
 By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,  
 by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,

fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.  
 we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be.  
 quench our fe - vered thirst of plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.  
 grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

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Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America