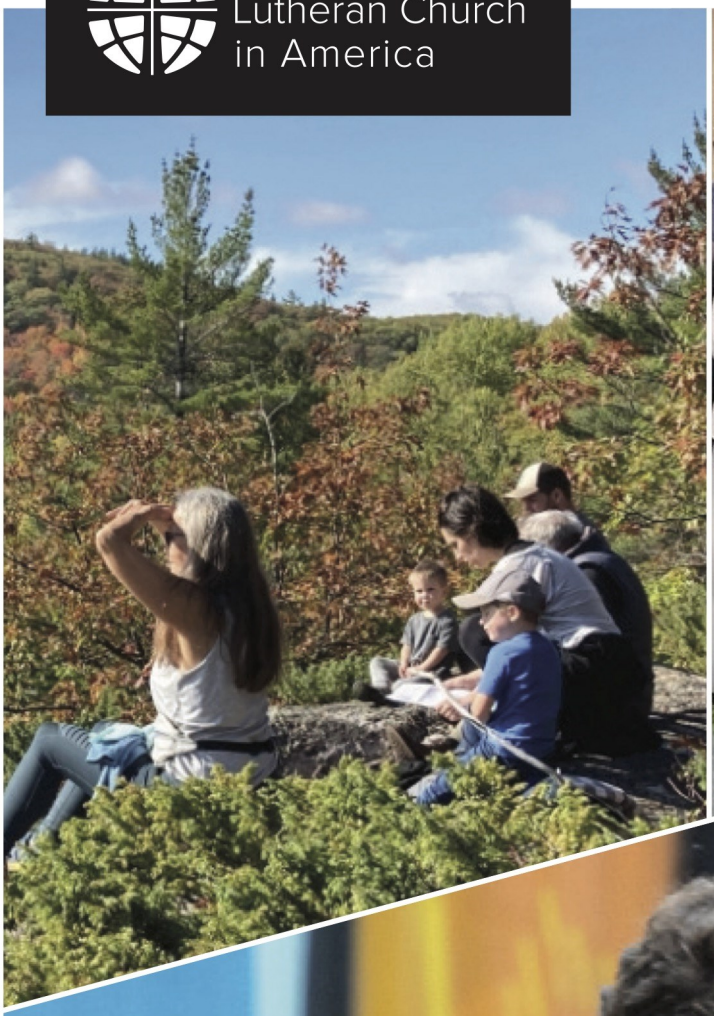
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear friends in Christ,

All around us, we see signs of God's love and goodness. A person who has stepped away from church for many years steps back into a congregation, feeling the call of the Holy Spirit. Young adults feeling isolated in a digital-first world start gathering in person in a small group, enjoying the warmth of a hug and a new friend asking about their week. A mother plants a garden, and it yields fruits and vegetables, giving her nutritious food for her kids and extra produce to sell at the local market. Everywhere we look, we see signs of Christ's love. In Psalm 93, we read: "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore" (4-5).

God's love is a majestic thing, and it moves us to share it in word and deed. The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, across our country and around the world.

I am so grateful for you, dear church. Your generosity to each of these three expressions of the church – your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization – has bolstered the church's ability to share the message of God's love to people who are longing for it. Through your financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices, you've helped carry this message of God's majestic love. Thank you, dear church. As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to stand steadfast in God's promises, sure of God's love and goodness.

> "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore."
>
> —Psalm 93:4-5

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

Trinity Lutheran Church

A Stephen Ministry Church

2700 Fulton Street East, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

616-949-2510, www.tlcgr.org

"For all the saints who from their labors rest,
all who by faith before the world confessed.
Your name, O Jesus be forever blessed. Alleluia, Alleluia!"

The ministry of this congregation reflected in these reports is dedicated to those Trinity members listed below who entered the church triumphant in 2024.

Robert (Bob) Denfield Crossman
June 10, 1930 – February 29, 2024

Robert Fletcher Vander Veen
February 20, 1932 – March 24, 2024

John Ernest Leese
February 20, 1932 – April 10, 2024

Eleanor M. Cunningham
April 1, 1926 – May 7, 2024

Beverly Block
March 25, 1941 – May 31, 2024

David J. Benkert
February 27, 1933 – June 20, 2024

David Alfred Young
June 13, 1941 – June 25, 2024

Donald Smith
September 13, 1945 – July 1, 2024

Jesse Platt
May 5, 1977 - August 7, 2024

Rev. Robert J. Sielaff
April 1, 1947 – September 7, 2024

Mary Joan Johnson
September 29, 1941 – October 5, 2024

Kenneth Block
November 4, 1940 – October 22, 2024

Diane Flatt
April 4, 1962—November 6, 2024

Our Mission: Trinity Lutheran Church is a dynamic family called by God to nurture each other in our daily journeys of faith and to joyfully increase our response to all people in need, sharing God's gifts of love and grace.

AGENDA
2024 Annual Meeting
Trinity Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Sunday, January 19, 2025

Call to Order, Steve Heacock, Congregation President

Opening Devotions and Opening Liturgy, Pastor Jon Niketh, Senior Pastor

Approval of Agenda

Secretary's Report and Approval of the January 21, 2024, Annual Meeting Minutes (pages 5-7), Governance Secretary Jamie Kuntzman

Nominating Committee Report, Vice President Bill Bush
- **Ballot for Council** (pages 8-9)
- **Ballot for 2025 Synod Assembly Delegates** (pages 10-11)
- **Ballot for 2025 Nominating Committee** (page 12)
- **Election of Council, Delegates and Committee Members**

Review of Reports
- Pastors (pages 13-17)
- President (page 18)
- Committee Reports (listed alphabetically by committee name, pages 19-39)

Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the 2024 Budget (pages 40-42), Brad Kessel, Congregation Treasurer

New Business
- **Property Update** (page 34)
- **Resolution to use reserve funds for building repair and maintenance**

Announcements, Lord's Prayer and Benediction, Pastors Niketh, Dan Schewe and Kari Fast

Adjournment

Trinity Lutheran Church

Annual Congregation Meeting

January 21, 2024

The 2023 Annual Meeting of Trinity Lutheran Church was called to order by Congregation Council President, Karen Unruh, at 12:55 p.m. Pastor Dennis Smith led the congregation members in prayer.
Pastor Dennis is currently serving as Trinity's Contracted Consulting Pastor. He will be at Trinity two or three Sundays a month, and plans to hold a Bible study class on Mondays.

Motion to Approve the Agenda
With no additions to the agenda from the floor, the agenda was approved as written.

Recognition of Trinity Staff Members
Trinity staff members stood and introduced themselves.
Thank you for the additional work you have so graciously taken on!

Approval of the January 15, 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes
There being no corrections from the floor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Appointment of Tellers
The designated tellers, David Marquardt and Brad Kessel, confirmed there were 99 voting members in attendance, enough for a quorum.

Nominating Committee Report
The Nominating Committee members met and recommend the following candidates for Council; their profiles may be found on pages 8-9 in the Annual Report.

Ballot for Council Members

- Bill Bush – Second three-year term
- John Derbin – First three-year term
- Sarah Huckstep – Second three-year term
- Erick Kind – First three-year term
- Julie McLeod – First three-year term
- Dakota Morin – Youth Representative, second one-year term
- Kelly Wittry – First three-year term

With no other nominations from the floor, Carrie Wygmans made a motion to close the nominations for Council members and accept the nominees as listed. Jim Coates seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ballot for 2024 Synod Assembly Delegates
This year's synod assembly will be held via Zoom.
Nominees are: Jim and Sue Coates and Dale and Gale Volkerding; their profiles may be found on page 10 in the Annual Report.

With no additional nominations from the floor, a motion was made by Melissa Haneline to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for the Synod Assembly Delegates, Gloria Von Der Heide seconded and the motion was approved.

Two youth representatives will be selected by the Youth & Family Committee.

Nominating Committee for 2024 Council Candidates
Nominees are: John Fox, Fred Ulreich, Karen Unruh, and Lauren Wright; their profiles are on pages 11-12 in the Annual Report

No other nominations were received from the floor. Kate Bredwell submitted a motion to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for the Nominating Committee members. Jamie Kuntzman seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Review of Reports
Pastor's and Committee reports are found in the Annual Packet. Attendees are asked to take time review them and raise any questions they might have.

Pastors' Reports (pages 13-15)

Council President's Report (page 16)

Committee Reports (pages 17-35)
The Pastors' reports, President's report and Committee Reports as written were accepted into the record.

Treasurer's 2023 Report and Presentation of the 2024 Budget
Chris Engle, Congregation Treasurer, presented an overview of the past fiscal year along with the proposed 2024 budget, pages 36-39 in the Annual Report.

2023 Review (Trinity's fiscal year is February 1 – January 31)
There are three key areas; Operating Budget, Designated and Memorial Funds, and Endowment Funds.

- The Endowment Funds are doing very well; 4% is withdrawn and distributed.
- There are about 40 designated funds.
- Trinity's cash position includes $906,686 in designated and memorial Funds, and $415,214 in operating and capital reserves.
- There are approximately three years left on Trinity's mortgage, down from seven years.
- With an open position this year, the Youth Ministry Coordinator, payroll is lower than budgeted. The staff is a very efficient staff and manage their time well.
- The budget is developed to provide for a full staff.
- The mild weather resulted in good utility costs.
- Technology upgrades and livestreaming caused the office and administration to be over budget.
- Additional giving by parishioners goes directly to the line item, i.e. $14,000 to Kid's Coalition Against Hunger.
- Is Christophe's Children part of the budget?
    - It does have a designated fund, but they are outside of the church. The money comes in and then goes directly out.

Budget 2024
In early December, the Council met to approve a proposed budget to present to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting.

- There are significant increases to Office and Administration to allow for technology upgrades.
- Benevolence is up. A formula is used in tithing to the Synod and a portion to local benevolence.
- There were no questions from the floor.

John Fox made a motion to accept the 2024 Budget as presented; Carrie Wygmans seconded. The 2024 Budget was approved.

Unfinished Business - None

New Business

Approval of Restated Articles of Incorporation
Copies of Trinity's constitution and bylaws are available.

- Trinity's constitution was first filed in 1898 with the State of Michigan. Trinity was incorporated and officially recognized as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- It has been six years since the constitution was reviewed. Council members John Fox and Steve Heacock took on this challenging task.
- The most important change is to bring in state laws that protect volunteers in non-profit organizations.

A motion to approve the Restated Articles of Incorporation was made by Steve Heacock; George Bauer seconded. The motion passed.

Announcements:
Pastor Dan

- Next Sunday, following the 9:15 a.m. service, meal packing will take place for Kid's Coalition Against Hunger (KCAH). The goal is 40,000 meals. A video of the food packing event will be submitted to the Synod for the opportunity to be shown at the 2024 Synod Assembly.
- Summer camp registration for grades 1-12 is open.
- The Youth Mission Trip will be to Lincoln, Illinois.

Council members will meet briefly after the Annual Meeting to elect council officers.

Pastor Kari led attendees in the Lord's Prayer and Benediction

The meeting was adjourned at 1:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

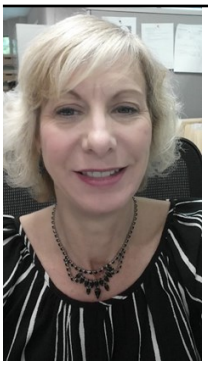
Jan Jacobson, Recording Secretary

Chris Becker

Chris Becker has a BA in International Relations from Michigan State University and then graduated from the Valparaiso School of Law in 1995. Chris was hired directly out of law school into the Kent County Prosecutors Office where he has been employed for 29 years. He served as Chief Assistant Prosecutor from 2011-2016 and was elected Kent County Prosecutor in November of 2016. He has handled over 180 felony jury trials in his career with prosecutor's office. Chris currently serves on Michigan's Mental Health Diversion Counsel and is President Elect for the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. He is a member of Board of Director's Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County, Grand Rapids Boys and Girls Club, Mary Free Bed YMCA, and Families Against Narcotics. He is the co-chair of the Domestic Violence Action Network Response Team, and a member of the Kent County Stop Elder Abuse Task Force. A Trinity member since 1999 when he was married to his wife Jeanne in the church that same year. They have three kids, Kelsey, William, and Allyson. Chris served as a Sunday School teacher for all three, he is a past member of the Children's Committee, and currently serves as a lector and usher at the 10:45 a.m. service.

Nicholas Derbin—Youth Representative

Nick is a junior at Forest Hills Central, and has been a member of Trinity his entire life. He can often be found helping in Sunday school, or hanging out in the youth room with his friends. He also loves going to Stony Lake and Charge with his friends every year. He recently had the amazing opportunity to go to New Orleans for the ELCA National Youth Gathering. He is also excited to attend this year's mission trip. He enjoys taking time to help in the kitchen before big events, and sitting in and listening to the Youth and Family Committee. When he is not at church, Nick spends his time playing piano and violin, doing Boy Scouts (he will be earning his Eagle Scout in early February), participating in service projects for NHS, and practicing Tae Kwon Do. He also enjoys tutoring for his ASL class, and volunteering at Paws With a Cause. Nick is dedicated to helping Trinity grow and flourish, and he has been looking forward to getting the opportunity to be the youth representative on Council ever since the position was added. Since he will be too old to hold this position next year, he hopes you will give him the opportunity to better serve Trinity by voting for him.



Susan Knoll

Susan is seeking a second term on Trinity's Church Council and she is also a Stephen Minister and a member of the Helping Hands Committee. Susan has lived on Grand Rapids west-side for pretty much her whole life. She is a graduate of Grand Rapids Christian High School, Calvin College, and the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. She and her husband, Terry, were married by Pastor Cobb at Trinity on May 29, 1987. They have 3 adult sons, Taylor, Jordan, and Aaron, all of whom were baptized and confirmed at Trinity. Susan did not attend law school immediately after her graduation from Calvin; for about 20 years, she worked as a medical administrative assistant in the MetroHealth Hospital system before she had the opportunity to attend graduate school. After graduation from law school, she worked as a general practice civil litigator at the law firm of Schenk Boncher & Rypma for just over a decade. For the last 5 years, Susan has operated her own small law firm specializing in Social Security Disability cases, but she also takes some select civil cases. Many of you know Terry as the electric guitar player at the Rejoice worship service. He also owns his own small business installing custom laminate countertops in residential homes and commercial businesses. Susan's hobbies are reading, writing, crafting, and walking with her dog, Squid.

David Marquardt

David and Rebecca Marquardt have been members of Trinity for seven years. They have two boys, Bergen (17), and Theo (15). David has the privilege of serving as the Director for the City of Grand Rapids Parks Department since 2015. The Marquardt family is originally from Madison, Wisconsin and most recently from Denver, Colorado where they lived for nearly seven years. David and his family generally attend the 10:45 a.m. Traditional service at Trinity and David and the boys volunteer as ushers. He has been affiliated with the ELCA his entire life. David and Rebecca are a part of Trinity's forest and land management stewardship committee.

Chris Norton

Chris and his wife, Laura, joined Trinity Lutheran shortly after moving to Grand Rapids from Pittsburgh in April 2021. Thanks to the church's website and YouTube channel, they found a new church before they found a house! Both were active members of their ELCA church in Pittsburgh, where Chris served on Council for several years and Laura served as a Stephen Minister. Chris retired in June from his role as VP of Sales for Rizing, LLC, and Laura, until recently, served as Outreach and Discipleship Coordinator at Trinity. They have three grown children, two living here in Grand Rapids and one in Denver. They have one grandson and two granddaughters close by and enjoy spoiling them. They are loving West Michigan and exploring everything the area has to offer.

Amy Stephan

Amy has been a Lutheran all her life (that's what happens when your father is a Lutheran pastor!). Raised in the small northern Michigan town of Fairview, she landed in Grand Rapids after graduating from Wittenberg University in 1988 and started her teaching career. Amy earned her master's in educational psychology from Michigan State. After 33 years of teaching and coaching she retired from public education in 2021 and is figuring out what she wants to do next!

Trinity has been her home congregation for about 30 years. She taught Sunday School, chaired the Children's Ministry Committee, lead middle school and high school mentoring groups, chaperoned mission trips, organized the annual rummage sale, volunteered when help was needed, helped with IHN, and co-chaired the call committee for Pastor Jon Niketh. Currently she chairs the Youth and Family Committee and works part time with the amazing Children's Ministry Team.

Amy met and married her husband, Steve, at Trinity. Steve is an owner/operator of Culver's in the Grand Rapids area. They have three children: Keely (guardian angel), Charlotte (19, Sophomore at Bowling Green State), and Isaac (17, Junior at Forest Hills Central).

David and Linda Thinger

Linda was born and raised in Grand Rapids. She graduated from Grand Valley State University with a BS in communications. She worked for seven years at a community television center in Wyoming, Michigan. She directed, edited, and produced programs. She also taught volunteers how to operate audio/video equipment. She eventually realized the long hours in media was getting to be a bit much and decided she could use a "nine-to-five" job. She changed careers and began working in health insurance for over 20 years. Now retired, Linda enjoys gardening.

David was raised in Paris, France before moving to San Francisco. He graduated from Sonoma Valley High School in 1978. He received his BA in graphic design at Cal State Long Beach in 1983. He worked in computer graphics in Los Angeles, Denver, and Philadelphia. In 1991 he moved to Grand Rapids where he met Linda and they married in 2002.

Together, David and Linda enjoy traveling to places such as France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, California, Colorado, and New York. They've hiked in the Rockies, Alps, Dolomites, and Sierras. They started investing in rental houses and soon formed their company D&L Homes LLC which has been flipping houses for years.

David and Linda officially joined Trinity in May 2024. David is part of the Trinity Arts Committee and still loves to create and show his paintings. They both sing in the choir, participate in Trinity's social activities, and enjoy exercising. David is currently singing in the Edelweiss German Choir.

Dale and Gale Volkerding

Dale and Gale married in 1979, and moved to Grand Rapids where they have continuously resided since 1980. They joined Trinity Lutheran in 1981. They have three adult daughters, Emily (Robleske), Anne (Sechrist), and Holly; all three baptized, attended Sunday school, and confirmed at Trinity.

Gale grew up on a farm in the Chicago suburb of New Lenox, IL; Dale in Washington, D.C. They both attended and earned undergraduate degrees from Valparaiso University (Indiana); each then completed a master's degree, Gale in social work at Western Michigan University, and Dale in tax at GVSU.

They both fulfilled many of their professional aspirations in the Grand Rapids area, Gale doing 40 years of clinical social work counseling at Pine Rest Christian Hospital, and Dale 30 years as the financial, treasury, audit, and tax manager for the ETNA Distributors Group.

Both now (mostly) in retirement, Gale maintains a certification in Spiritual Direction from the Dominican Center at Marywood in Grand Rapids and continues with a small spiritual direction practice. They like to read, do Bible studies, church educational forums, help in volunteer activities, and sing and worship in the Trinity choir. Gale is on the Trinity Health Ministries Committee, and Dale is a Stephen Minister.

Their recreational activities include travel, hiking, biking, exercise, table puzzles and games, Dale joining with his brother, cousins, and friends for fishing trips, and sharing family time with their daughters, grandchildren, siblings, cousins, and their loved ones.

Nicholas Derbin—Youth Representative

Nick is a junior at Forest Hills Central, and has been a member of Trinity his entire life. He can often be found helping in Sunday school, or hanging out in the youth room with his friends. He also loves going to Stony Lake and Charge with his friends every year. He recently had the amazing opportunity to go to New Orleans for the ELCA National Youth Gathering. He is also excited to attend this year's mission trip. He enjoys taking time to help in the kitchen before big events, and sitting in and listening to the Youth and Family Committee. When he is not at church, Nick spends his time playing piano and violin, doing Boy Scouts (he will be earning his Eagle Scout in early February), participating in service projects for NHS, and practicing Tae Kwon Do. He also enjoys tutoring for his ASL class, and volunteering at Paws With a Cause. Nick is dedicated to helping Trinity grow and flourish, and he has been looking forward to getting the opportunity to be the youth representative on Council ever since the position was added. Since he will be too old to hold this position next year, he hopes you will give him the opportunity to better serve Trinity by voting for him.

Breslin Waite - Youth Representative

Breslin is currently 17 years old and a junior attending Forest Hills Eastern High School where he plays football and baseball. He has been a member of Trinity his whole life, and regularly attends the 9:15 a.m. Rejoice service. Breslin has been to camp many times and this past year he went on the mission trip to Lincoln, Illinois and to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

Chris Engle

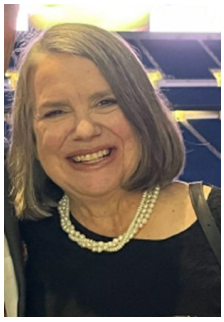
Chris and his wife, Kim, have been members of Trinity since 2000. They have three adult children and will welcome their second and third grandchildren to the family in 2025.

Chris has previously served two terms on the Congregational Council including five years as Treasurer. He has served on the Youth and Family committee in the past and currently serves on the Finance and Endowment committees. Chris has some great memories traveling with Trinity high school students on 15 youth mission trips.

Chris is a partner with Growtrust Partners, LLC, a wealth management firm located in Grand Rapids.

Kris Fox

Kris has been a member of Trinity since 2001. She plays an active role in the church community, leading the Friday Women's Bible Study and assisting with the children's choir. Kris has served on various committees, including the call committee for the senior pastor and as chair of the music director/organist search committee. She sings in the Trinity Choir and plays in the Resound Bell Choir. In addition to her musical and spiritual leadership, Kris serves on the Hospitality and Arts Committees. Outside of church, she enjoys traveling and volunteers at Kids' Food Basket and tutors elementary school students. She has been married to John for 36 years with three children who grew up at Trinity.



Marcia Schaner

Marcia and her husband, Chas, have been members at Trinity since 2013. During this time she has sung in the choir, been involved with the youth including two mission trips, attended the Friday Morning Bible Study and currently rings in the Resound Bell Choir.

Marcia is a retired music teacher. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Michigan State University and her Masters of Music degree from Western Michigan University. During her career she taught students in high school band, middle school band, and elementary music. She has taught at the American School of Mexico City, New Braunfels, Texas, several Christian schools in Grand Rapids and finished her career at Caledonia Community schools.

Chas and Marcia have two adult children and one grandson. Gardening, golf, and Parkinson's support activities are Marcia's main activities.

Maddie Scurfield

Before leaving the corporate world to take on her favorite role ("Mom"), Maddie exercised her love for writing and for people in the communications and HR fields. She started her career in public affairs for Dow, pivoting to internal programs management for Robert Half in California. Maddie and husband Nate then moved back to Michigan, and after a stint as Marketing Director for Keller Williams, God showed her it was time to devote herself to family. He has blessed them with two beautiful girls who radiate proof of His presence, goodness, and sovereignty (and sense of humor, too).

Maddie moved to the Grand Rapids area in 2018 and officially joined Trinity in 2021, where it has been her humble privilege to serve on the call committee for Pastor Niketh, the Children's Ministry Committee, and as a Preschool Sunday School teacher. Her free time is spent freelancing in graphic design, reading, exploring the outdoors with her family and two dogs, and traveling.

Dear people of Trinity,

It's genuinely hard to believe that Brianne and I have been in Grand Rapids for only three months! Already this city – but more importantly, this congregation – has begun to feel like home. The days have been filled to the brim in the best possible way, each bringing new relationships, new ideas, and new opportunities for ministry. We have felt warmly welcomed by everyone at Trinity and are eager to put down roots in this community. It will take me some time to learn the names of over 1,500 people, but your nametags and our brand-new photo directory have been a big help!

While three months hardly qualifies for an "annual" report, I want to share with you highlights and reflections on our time thus far.

- It is an honor to serve as head of staff for such an incredibly faithful, dedicated group of ministry leaders! I have thoroughly enjoyed having **one-to-one meetings** with our staff members to get to know them as individuals, learn more about their roles and sense of call to Trinity, and hear their hopes and ideas about future endeavors. I am especially blessed to serve alongside two wise, compassionate colleagues in the ministry of word and sacrament in Pastors Dan and Kari. Our shared commitment, as well as our different perspectives and passions, complement each other nicely and make for wonderful team.

- I have assumed **primary preaching and presiding** responsibilities in worship, following a similar rotation with our associate pastors that the congregation has become accustomed to. While our schedule is sometimes referred to as the "Sunday morning sprint," it is actually energizing to preside at three liturgies – each with their own personality – where the assembly is engaged and the room is close to full!

- I led a six-session **adult forum** on the parables of Jesus on Wednesday mornings. Participation was excellent both in terms of turnout and in engaging conversation. This month I am beginning a series on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together,* a timely spiritual classic that explores the nature of Christian community. This congregation is blessed with people who are eager to engage deeply with scripture, theology, and current issues, so the possibilities for future topics are endless.

- I spoke at the Men's Breakfast and will be coordinating speakers and Bible studies for this going forward. I have tried to be present at a variety of **congregational activities** to begin forming relationships – everything from game nights to youth events to our concert series. I think there is so much potential for outreach with our outstanding music and arts ministry!

- In terms of **pastoral care,** I share our visitation ministry with hospitalized and homebound members with Pastors Dan and Kari and Faith Community Nurse Kristin Bradley. I am eager to spend time with our Stephen Ministers and "Trinity in Touch" homebound visitors, who extend the care and worship of this congregation to so many people. I officiated at one funeral and am working with two couples for marriage preparation. I will also have primary responsibility for baptism and communion preparation with our children and families.

- I had the joy of working with our **New Member** team to prepare for the VIP Dinner, and taught an "Intro to Lutheranism" for those coming to us from other traditions. This year Trinity welcomed 29 new members – of which I am proud to be one!

- In the **community** I represented Trinity at the annual gala of one of our outreach partners, and assisted in planning for the annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service. I have made connections with the clergy at Westminster Presbyterian and Temple Emanuel with the hopes of reinvigorating our Standing Together partnership beyond the prayers we offer each Sunday.

- I attended **meetings** of most of our committees, and plan on visiting each committee and task force over the next couple of months. I look forward to being part of the process of reinvigorating committees that need a restart or more clarity in focus. I prepared our annual Consecration Sunday letter and quarterly stewardship thank-you letter, as well as a letter to accompany the care packages to our college students, and a devotion for our Advent Devotional.

- In the midst of a winter storm, we gathered to celebrate my **Installation** as your Senior Pastor on December 4! It was a beautiful night of music, prayer, and exchanging promises to serve God faithfully. I am grateful to everyone who worked to make this night so meaningful, as well as welcoming for my family and guests.

- As I've shared with you before, Trinity is following the opposite trend of most mainline Christian churches: we are growing, healthy, focused on ministry and outreach (rather than simply "staying open"), and financially sound. After three months, it's even more clear to me why:

  While our large size sometimes requires us to think like a business, our heart is the gospel of Jesus, and his "greatest commandment" to love one another. **There is an underlying spirit of goodness, kindness, and generosity that characterizes this place.** It is noticed by our visitors, who quickly become family. It inspires us to do our best, because we are invested in one another and the mission we share. It sets us up for a bright future of service, bridge-building, and spiritual connection in our community.

- One of my highest priorities going forward will be finding new ways to **share the story of Trinity** with our neighbors. With all that is happening in the world, it is more critical than ever that there be an open, loving Christian presence where all people feel truly welcomed. I want to explore new avenues of inviting others into what we have here, especially those who may currently feel like they don't belong in a spiritual community, or who have been hurt by one in the past. An unconditional welcome to all is a hallmark of Trinity's ministry, and more needed than ever in our divided world.

It is worth noting, with gratitude, that this pastoral transition has been exceptionally smooth. A great deal of appreciation is owed to our incredible staff, who all shared additional responsibilities this past year, ensuring that none of Trinity's vital ministries lost momentum. But an equal measure of appreciation is due to our Congregation Council, and in particular to the Executive Committee, whose exemplary leadership during this season of change has provided for stability, continuity, and continued growth.

In all this I am blessed to serve you as your senior pastor, and I look forward to the gospel work that will continue to unfold.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Jon Niketh
Senior Pastor

Report of the Associate Pastor to the Congregation
Trinity Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
January 2024

[1]Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2]I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3]I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:1- 3

I find Genesis 12:1-3 to be a cornerstone of our faith. Here the divine calls Abram to follow and promises to bless him, and bless all people through him. The blessing he receives is not just for him and his own benefit, he is blessed to be a blessing to others. We get to live out this divine direction in our own lives. We are blessed in so many ways, more than we can understand, and this blessing is not just for us, but for us to share. The work is never easy, but amazingly fruitful and fulfilling. I am elated to continue to strive with each and everyone one of you as we seek to follow this path of life. Like Abram we are blessed to be a blessing, and we get to share that each and every day.

This past year our shared ministries have blessed so many in a great number of ways.

Last June, a group of seven students and three adults traveled to Lincoln, Illinois, on our annual Mission Trip. There we participated in the mission of God by rebuilding homes and lives while experiencing faith in community. It was an amazing impactful week as we reflected on how God is influencing us.

Last July, a group of 11 students and five adults traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana, to participate in the ELCA Youth Gathering along with around 18,000 young people from all over the country! It was an amazing week full of great food, great conversations, and powerful worship. At this event we were able to experience the depth and breath of the ELCA while learning what God has created us to be.

Last July, we also had 38 youth attend camp at Stony Lake Bible Camp. While at camp these young people grew in faith and community while experiencing nature. Of these 38, nine high schoolers engaged in the Bridge Builders intensive week. This week is focused on leadership development and anti-racism training. So many of these young people are excited to go back to camp this summer.

Last November, we had an awesome *Charge* conference in Traverse City. Twenty-four students and four adults traveled to the Great Wolf Lodge for an amazing weekend of community and faithful conversations.

Our Confirmation classes continue to be a meaningful faith formation experience for our middle schoolers. We spent this fall seeking to see how the Lord's Prayer can mold us and understanding the context of the Gospels. In the winter and spring of next year we will continue studying the rest of the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) and the Apostles Creed. We continue to record class sessions for those who have a conflict or health issue.

Our high school group continues to meet weekly on Sunday nights for youth group. The group has been delving into different teachings of Jesus and seeing how they guide their lives. The group also serves in our community once a month, with Home Repair Services on a construction site, by cooking meals for our local partner ministries, or other opportunities in our community. This time has been a great benefit to these young people as a safe space to dig deeper into the issues and callings they experience in their lives.

Our high schoolers also meet the first Sunday of the month to delve into the scriptures with me. It is joyful gathering as we dig deeper into the faith we share.

This past December, we decorated and delivered Christmas cookies to 27 homes. We had over 40 individuals help in some form. It was wonderful to watch our community care for itself.

Next summer, our high schoolers are heading to Ashby, Minnesota on our annual service trip.

Next summer, we also head to camp at Stony Lake from July 20 – 25. Registration is currently open. It is already looking like we will have a large group again.

Last year, I was honored to serve as our Synod's Champion for the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. In this role I worked with congregations across our synod encouraging them to participate in the Gathering and get connected to each other. To assist with this, I helped create a synod fund to help congregations cover the cost of the Gathering, making it more accessible to many.

I continue to serve our synod by helping lead our youth and young adult table. This group seeks to create, distribute, and lead ministry events for young people in our synod. This has led to me working on many exciting things for our mission partners.

In the past year much work has been done on caring for natural resources on our property. We continue to work on helping regenerate our forests. Many new trees were planted and projects started to help facilitate this. There is much work left to do, but every piece of progress we can make makes a large difference. We also continue to have Eagle Scout candidates working on projects on our property.

In the past year during our pastoral transition, I was honored to work with our staff and leadership teams to continue the good work God has called us to. There were many additional hats I got to wear as we continued through the year. I am extremely grateful for Pastor Jon and our growing partnership in ministry.

I continue to be thankful for the many technical skills from my former careers. They help me in communicating with contractors and volunteers on many projects, and allow me to help take care of many issues that crop up from time to time. I find this helps me model ways we can all use our gifts to follow in the path God has set for us.

Through these and many other experiences we continually find ways to follow together the path of life God has called us to. It is my joy and honor to serve as one of your pastors. I look forward to the ministry God continues to lead us into. We are blessed, we are a blessing, and God is with us no matter what.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Dan Schewe
Associate Pastor

Dear Trinity Family and Friends,

The people, the ministries, the generosity, and place of welcome at Trinity continues to delight and amaze me. What a privilege, honor, and blessing it has been to serve with you for almost three years as one of your pastors.

The first nine months of 2024 were filled with many transitions, everyone pitching in where needs arose, and the year ended with much joy over Pastor Jon's arrival in October. Again, thank you Holy Spirit and the magnificent Call Committee! Thank you, Pastor Jon, for saying yes!

For me, the first nine months of the year — without a senior pastor — were filled with many opportunities for preaching and worship leadership; this connected deeply with my call to ministry, filling my pastoral cup. It was a joy to be deeply involved with worship leadership often on Sundays, the five Wednesdays of Lent, memorial services, a service at Porter Hills, and one wedding! All very dear and special moments to be the people of God together.

Another ministry area that was a delight, in the absence of a senior pastor, was a deep engagement with the New Member Ministry. This included some of my favorite things, welcoming new people and those who have been around for a while into the joys of membership. It was wonderful communicating with these amazing groups of new members through letters, Spiritual Gifts Assessment gatherings, many conversations before and after worship, the VIP Night, etc. Each spring and fall as we welcome new members I'm always staggered by the loveliness of their presence, their skills and talents, their spiritual gifts, and the ways they bless each other, and all of Trinity, and send blessings far beyond our walls.

The last three months of 2024 have been filled with relief and excitement as Pastor Jon arrived. Relief to have so quickly found an amazing fit for Trinity and excitement over Pastor Jon's gifts for preaching and worship leadership, his deep care for the people of Trinity, his heart for justice, his leadership style that includes curiosity and connection with our various ministries, and his joy and collaborative spirit.

In 2025, I look forward to returning and continuing in my three areas of ministry focus at Trinity Lutheran: worship leadership, pastoral visitation, and pastoral care conversations.

I will also be continuing to lead small groups, such as GriefShare and Surviving the Holidays and will be visiting and bringing Holy Communion to those unable to attend worship, s well as staying attentive to the pastoral and other needs of Trinity. I will have dear, deep, fun, and at times hard conversations with those who are struggling, blah, sad, anxious, joyous, or contemplative.

[9]Let love be genuine... [10]love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor... [12]Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. [13]Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers... [15]Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Romans 12

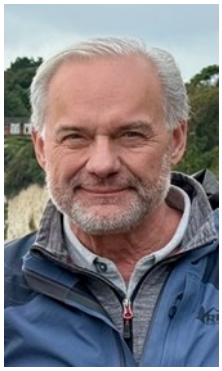
Who knows what new Spirit nudgings will come for the new year? God knows. The only thing that feels clear is a call to hold a **W**id**OW**'s **Tea** on Monday, January 13 (this is an updated date; more information to come in our eBlasts.)

On a personal, almost professional note, 2024 also saw the completion of a two/three-year program at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation where I completed their program in becoming a Spiritual Director, entitled *Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program*.

The biggest joy came to our family on Friday, October 11, when we welcomed our first grandchild, Matthew Daniel — an indescribable joy! Our daughter, husband, baby, and our son all live in Grand Rapids. And this year marked our younger daughter's completion of her PhD and she is now teaching at her alma mater, Hope College, which is only 45 minutes away. All our children and our grandchild close — another indescribable joy!

God's Deepest Blessings,

Pastor Kari Fast
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care



Trinity Lutheran Church is a respite for me and for many. On Sunday morning, we are met by the smiling hellos of many friends, old and new. On these cold, icy and gray winter days, our church friends provide words of support and encouragement and exude a warmth that feels like the heat of an old cabin's stone fireplace. Pastor Jon opens service with "welcome home," and refers to us as "beloved," and we feel at home and loved. The words and music of the service wash over us and through us. We experience, week after week, the richness of shared worship and the joy of praising God. Doubt and worry go away, at least for the hour we are sitting there together, replaced by the peace which surpasses all understanding. Our church is a special place.

Like our country, Trinity Lutheran Church is governed by a Constitution adopted by a vote of its people. In it, the congregation gives significant, but limited, authority to the elected Council. Council includes the pastors and 14 to 18 other members of the congregation. It has general oversight of the life and activities of the congregation "and in particular its worship life, to the end that everything be done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

In 2024, the members of Council were Chris Becker, Bill Bush (Vice President), Dan Butler, John Derbin, Pr. Kari Fast, Michelle Feutz, Steve Heacock (President), Sarah Huckstep, Brad Kessel (Treasurer), Erick Kind, Susan Knoll, Jamie Kuntzman (Governance Secretary), David Marquardt, Julie McLeod, Dakota Morin, Michelle Morin, Pr. Jon Niketh, Jacquie Murray, Chris Norton, Pastor Dan Schewe, and Kelly Wittry. Jan Jacobson kindly served as our recording secretary. Pastor Dennis Smith, our Contracted Consulting Pastor, also served with Council and Executive Committee until Pastor Jon joined us.

Trinity's Council is an engaged, competent, caring group of people who provided exemplary service in an unusual year. My deep-felt appreciation goes to each one of them for their leadership and contributions to Council and our congregation.

Serving on Council in the absence of a senior pastor was challenging. It meant more hands-on administration of the church, dealing with the angst and gaps created by Pastor Bob's retirement, and naming a call committee and doing whatever else was necessary to find and call a new pastor. We had productive Council meetings, with widely ranging discussions, and we were timely in making the many decisions we needed to make. Members of Council prepared well, divided responsibilities, worked together, prayed together and shared personal stories. While taxing, it was also both exhilarating and rewarding.

Council's biggest accomplishment of 2024 was obviously managing the absence of a senior pastor and recommending to the congregation the call to Pastor Jon. While Pastor Dennis served Trinity capably as Contracted Consulting Pastor, his role did not assume the Senior Pastor's responsibilities regarding the staff and administration of the church. Pastor Dan with help from Pastor Kari and the whole Executive Committee stepped forward to lead. They all did so with great skill and diligence.

Council celebrated when Pastor Jon accepted the call and continues to be excited about what Pastor Jon brings to our congregation. He and his wife, Brianne Jurs, have clearly made Trinity and Grand Rapids their home. We thank God (and the call committee!) for their presence. The future looks very bright!

In addition to the important work of calling a Senior Pastor, Council also dealt with changes in staff, redefinition of committee objectives, road drainage, leaking roofs and other issues. Many details of these and other projects are provided in the committee reports within this Annual Report.

It was a very busy year and Council persevered through the work necessary to succeed. Keeping in mind that our lay leaders are volunteers, I am reminded of a quote by Elizabeth Andrew, who said, "volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

Thank you for your support of and confidence in our church Council.

Warm regards,

Steve Heacock

Trinity's 2024 YTD Benevolent giving is $374,884, ($126,557 of which was budgeted). In total the Synod has received $108,992 and local agencies have received $26,481 (based on a percentage spread approved by the Outreach Committee) of budgeted benevolence. As you can see, Trinity members have financially supported many causes this year over and above what was budgeted. Please keep in mind, that since our fiscal year does not end until January 31, the complete 2024 benevolence report will be published in the March 2025 edition of *The Messenger*.

ORGANIZATION BENEVOLENCE	
GIFT RECIPIENT	**AMOUNT**
Access	$3,664
American Youth Soccer Organization	$1,500
Baxter Community Center	$1,364
Christophe's Children	$55,253
Degage Ministries	$2,472
ELCA Disaster Response	$58,985
ELCA World Hunger	$16,880
ELCA Youth Gathering Fund	$7,347
Exalta Health	$2,560
Family Promise (IHN)	$13,127
Habitat for Humanity	$2,010
Heartside Gleaning	$5,900
Home Repair Services	$7,264
ICCF	$1,364
In the Image	$1,364
Living Water Ministries	$45,144
MI Interfaith Power and Light	$819
Mission India- Neerekshe	$13,000
MomsBloom	$819
TLC Outreach Collections	$3,563
New City Neighbors	$1,364
North/West Lower MI Synod	$100,661
Pastor Discretionary	$14,938
Safe Haven	$1,364
Samaritas	$700
Samaritas Resettlement MI	$2,472
SECOM	$1,649
The Green Apple (The Pantry)	$7,334
TOTAL	**$374,883**

Trinity's Children's Ministry lays the foundation for a lifelong journey with Jesus Christ. Children discover that God is active in their lives, form loving connections with a family of believers, and share God's blessings with our community and the world.

The purpose of the Children's Ministry Committee is to provide oversight, guidance, critique, and support for all programming related to children ages birth through 5th grade. The committee's goal is to help ensure there is balance between the three primary types of children's ministry programming: Christian education/faith formation; fun, fellowship events; and service to a wider human community. The Children' Ministry Committee has 5 or 6 meetings scheduled throughout the year. Trinity members interested in joining the committee can reach out to Director of Family Ministry Rachele Battreall for more information at rachele.battreall@tlcgr.org.

Members who served on the committee in 2024 include: Peni Aldrich, Doree Burnside, Sarah Frecka, Ted Frecka, Cyndi Harrison, Anne Meeuwsen, Brittney Mencarelli, Amanda Schneider, Maddie Scurfield, Annie Slabaugh, and Heather Worsfold. Sarah Frecka and Cyndi Harrison serve as committee co-chairs. Anne Meeuwsen serves as secretary. Sarah Huckstep is council liaison.

The committee works in partnership with the following part-time staff: Director of Family Ministry Rachele Battreall; VBS Director Doree Burnside; Family Activities Coordinator James Morin; Sunday School Coordinators Sheri Mason and Amy Stephan; and Nursery Coordinator Awilda Diaz.

Although some staffing transitions were anticipated for spring 2024, all staff have committed to remain in their current positions through spring of 2025. The Children's Ministry is actively seeking members interested in leadership roles in this vibrant ministry!

Key Events in 2024

Sunday School is offered for children ages 3 years through 5th grade. For the first time, weekly Sunday School was held during the months of June, July, and August! At "Summer Journey Together" kids met in a large group format and Bible lessons centered on a theme of hiking and the outdoors. Attendance for summer Sunday school averaged 15 children/ week with 53 different kids attending throughout the 12 weeks.

Sunday School's theme for the 2024/25 school year is Building Faith! It was inspired by Hebrews 3:4 *"For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."* Each week, children have a lesson based on the week's lectionary reading. Stories of faith are explored by engaging kids' senses and natural creativity, and laying a solid Christian foundation...brick by brick!

Preschool through third grade class begins after Children's Time around 9:30 a.m. Kids meet leaders in the Commons for songs, offering, and prayer. Children are then divided by age for small group lessons using a Lutheran, lectionary-based curriculum called *Spark*. Children return to worship in time for communion.

The fourth and fifth graders use a Lutheran curriculum called *Connect.* Bibles, videos, and activities are designed just for tweens, blending solid theology with quirky humor. *Connect*'s Bible-centered approach explores major themes in the narrative arc of the Bible—from Creation to Revelations. For the 2024/2025 school year the Old Testament is the study focus. Class for 4th and 5th graders begins in the Lounge at 9:15 a.m. Children return to worship in time for communion.

There are currently 98 children registered for Sunday school. This includes both children who were registered for this year as well as any registered in previous years who are still of Sunday school age. For Fall of 2024, 73 kids have attended at least one Sunday (74%) and 46 (63%) of those 73 have attended 50% or more of the time. Our lowest attendance week was 22 children and highest (not including the Christmas program) was 39, averaging out to 34/week.

Nursery Ministry: The Nursery Ministry at Trinity is for families with children ages birth through 3 years old. New babies are welcomed to Trinity with a gift of a baby Bible. The church Nursery is fully staffed each Sunday morning for all 3 worship services beginning at 8 a.m. (Expanded hours began in October 2024.) The Nursery provides a safe, loving environment for our youngest members.

Young and Sleepless: This is our fellowship group for families who have at least one child preschool aged or younger. A fall-themed *Pancakes & Playtime* was held on October 26. Families with young children enjoyed breakfast, Bible stories, and activities. More events are planned for the future.

Kids Coalition Against Hunger Meal Packing (January 28, 2024) Trinity members raised over $14,000 to pack 40,000 meals! These simple and nutritious meals are distributed locally and globally.

Stay & Play: New for 2024! These fun events are conveniently held on Sunday morning following the Rejoice service. From 10:30 a.m.-noon kids are invited to join in games, crafts, and more. Parents are welcome to join, or enjoy time away. Stay & Play themes for 2024 included: Super Snow Games (February 11); Playtime Extravaganza (April 21); Pop Into Summer (May 19); God's Work, Our Hands (Sept 8); and Advent Adventure (Nov 10).

Annual Easter Egg Hunt (March 31): Youth helped to fill and "hide" hundreds of candy and toy-filled eggs.

Vacation Bible School (June 24-27): At SCUBA VBS, kids took a deep dive into an amazing undersea adventure where they experienced the ever-flowing never-ending love of God. Sixty-seven kids from Trinity and the community gathered for four mornings of Bible activities, games, songs, and fun! (Actually, it was 3 mornings due to a power outage at Trinity.) This year we welcomed a wonderful new VBS Director: Doree Burnside!

Blessing of Backpacks for Kindergarteners (August 25): This was very well attended by kids of all ages. Each child received a backpack charm and special blessing in worship.

Blessing of Preschoolers (September 8): This recognition in worship was a meaningful way for families to mark the first day of Sunday School and the milestone of attending preschool!

Children's Christmas Program (December 15): Preschoolers and elementary aged children presented the story of Jesus' birth on the Third Sunday of Advent at the 10:45 a.m. service. Children dressed as sheep, cows, pigs, horses, and donkeys. 4th and 5th graders were narrators and had the roles of Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, the innkeeper, shepherds, and angels. This year's program included poetic narration, comedy, traditional Christmas songs and hymns, and two songs sung by the Children's Vocal Ensemble. The program was followed by a festive Christmas cookie reception. A job well done - children, staff, and volunteers!

Kids Helping Kids-Sunday School and VBS offering: The following initiatives were generously supported in 2024: Kids Coalition Against Hunger; Diaper Drive for Family Promise; Clean Water for kids in rural Honduras; and Christmas Angel Tree gifts for MomsBloom.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Children's Ministry Committee

Chris Becker, Council member and Committee Chair
Committee members: Pastor Jon, Kris Baker, Mark Baker, John Derbin, John Hall, David Marquardt, Chris Norton, Kristin Bradley, Peter McKinney, Jill McKinney, Carol Hendricks, Jamie Kuntzman, and James Morin.

The Church Security Committee is one of the newer groups in the church, only having been working for the last year and a half. While it may be new, we have accomplished quite a bit in our time together. Our first step was asking the Grand Rapids Police Department to come in and conduct a safety evaluation of the entire church; they did a site visit, took a tour of the inside of the church, and then examined the outside, and came up with a report on based on what they saw and our conversation with them. Out of that visit we have already added a number of security cameras to the facility in areas they identified as lacking coverage. We already had some good things in place; there were no trees or shrubs blocking views to the main entrance, and we were in the process of adding more lighting to the parking lot, which were things identified as being important for a secure facility.

Our major project over the last year was a comprehensive training for ushers, IHN volunteers, and staff of important safety features in the building, as well as procedures to follow in an emergency. Our committee met every month to prepare the training, then on two different days in August gave the presentation at the church along with a tour to reinforce what was said. The training involved what to do in a weather emergency, if there is a fire, or some sort of medical event at church. During the tour the proper places for shelter were shown, where the AED devices could be found, as well as the medical emergency kits through the church. We even were able to show a video of how the fire door works that separates the Sanctuary from the Courtyard downstairs. As part of this training, you may have noticed numbers placed over each door in the facility. This was done to make it easier for first responders when they arrive, so those inside can direct them to the proper door where the emergency may be, and they can see the correct number from the outside in order to respond faster. There are many doors in our facility; just getting to the church isn't enough- they need to know exactly where to respond.

In addition to the usher training, we also held a CPR training in September which also taught those who attended how to use an AED. We are looking to do another CPR training in the spring. Also, on March 1, 2025, we will be having a 1/2 day deescalation training course open to 20 members. We have contracted with Gentle Response, a local company who will come in and not only talk about deescalation techniques but conduct simulations to allow those who attend to practice using those techniques.

Our committee is open to anyone, so please feel free to attend if you are interested in participating! We meet on the second Monday of every other month, starting January 13, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. just before the church Council meeting.

A great deal has been accomplished in communications at Trinity over the last year, with much gratitude to Trinity's Communications Coordinator Carrie Lamb. Carrie is responsible for the monthly production of *The Messenger* that provides the opportunity to share Trinity member involvement in many aspects of worship, projects, initiatives, and volunteer events. Additionally, Carrie has the responsibility of managing Trinity's social media pages – Facebook and Instagram – and overall web page development and content. Communications staff has also successfully revised the *Life at Trinity* handbook and has refreshed logos and publications over the course of the last year. All of this work is overseen and coordinated through the Communications Committee. This committee is comprised of Trinity members that include Pastor Dan Schewe, Carrie Lamb, Kris Baker, Peter McKinney, David Fox, Bill DeWitt, David Marquardt, and Skip Franklin. Moving forward, the Communications Committee is focusing attention on several of the following initiatives:

- Creating an official mission statement that will align with the mission and vision of Trinity Lutheran Church and lead to more effective and informative communications.
- Giving a congregational survey, which will be short and easy to complete online. The purpose of this survey is to assess how our church is doing in the area of communication and, through feedback from members and friends, to seek areas in which we can improve/be more efficient.
- Adding QR codes to our YouTube channel and/or livestreamed worship so people watching from home can scan and link to the current bulletin and/or Weekly Connection.
- Providing people volunteering and representing Trinity in the community with the opportunity to purchase t-shirts to wear that have our church logo etc. on them. We are currently working to have an option for volunteers to order these t-shirts. This work is ongoing.
- General items: continuing to strive to make communication easy for Trinity members and friends (including things like livestreamed worship, scheduling/calendar, etc.). We plan to discuss ways in which to pare down items and pathways of communication, dependent on survey results.

The Communications Committee is continually grateful for feedback and input. Trinity members are welcome to share suggestions or ideas with committee liaison David Marquardt or Communications Coordinator Carrie Lamb.

It is a joy and delight working among the staff and congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church. Trinity is blessed with strong and vital worship services. The musical leadership of bands, handbells, vocal choirs and ensembles, and instrumentalists create a tapestry of praise to God each Sunday.

The song of the congregation is a joy to plan and lead. A large portion of my work is the creation and musical support of weekly worship. This liturgical planning gives shape and rhythm to my work. It includes supporting the many volunteers who share their time and talent in a variety of musical expressions.

The Celebration of Music Concert Series continues to draw excellent audiences as it presents monthly concerts. We enjoyed performances with an attendance of 170 – 200 at most events. This is an amazing outreach to the congregation and the surrounding community.

Music Ministry Responsibilities for my work at Trinity include:

- Worship planning for congregational singing through hymnody and liturgy in collaboration with the pastoral staff
- Worship music leadership of all sanctuary services as organist and pianist including mid-week Advent and Lent services
- Scheduling and rehearsing with cantors, instrumentalists, brass ensembles and vocal soloists
- Meeting with church staff and music support staff
- Accompanist for the Trinity Choir
- Director of the Resound Bell Choir
- Director of the Celebration of Music Concert Series monthly events
- Oversee the care of maintenance of church instruments including the sanctuary pipe organ; grand piano and handbells and chimes.
- Train and equip guest pianists to serve as music leaders when I am on vacation or study leave

I am grateful for the work of Mr. Sid Hoeksema as Trinity Choir Director and Dr. Deb DeWitt, Rejoice Worship Coordinator and Keyboardist. Their leadership is deeply appreciated as they support the Music Ministry of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Darlene Kuperus
Director of Music & Organist

"A Forever Gift" - Trinity Endowment Fund Update

The Endowment Fund Committee is pleased to report solid returns this past year for both endowment funds—the Mission Endowment Fund and the building Endowment Fund. Based on the positive results and in accordance with our investment policy, Trinity was able to make significant distributions this past year. Below is a summary of the change in each account over the last year.

Fund	12/31/23 Value	12/31/24 Value	Increase
Mission	$ 812,707	$ 879,432	$ 66,725
Building	$ 688,705	$ 748,320	$ 59,615

The purpose of the Mission Endowment Fund is to provide for mission work that is beyond the duly adopted operating budget for the congregation. The purpose of the Building Endowment Fund is to provide for the care and maintenance of the church facilities and grounds that is beyond the duly adopted operating budget.

In the 4th quarter of 2024, the committee made a distribution recommendation to Council that was approved. The Mission Endowment distributed **$29,500** and the Building Endowment **$23,300**. Over the last ten years, the Mission Endowment has distributed over $200,000 while the Building Endowment has distributed close to $90,000. We thank you for generously supporting this ministry.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Endowment Committee each of whom brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and vision to help this ministry grow at Trinity. The Committee consists of John Derbin, Todd Brandstadt, Chris Engle, and Brad Kessel. Please reach out to me or any of the other committee members if you have questions on how to contribute to one of the endowments or would like to join the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Mason
Endowment Committee Chair

EVENTS

Advent Suppers – Potluck suppers were offered on the three Wednesdays leading up to Christmas. Thank you to everyone who brought food to share. Thank you to my behind-the-scenes helpers in the kitchen who set up and cleaned up.

All-Congregation Potluck at Annual Meeting – Each year on the third Sunday in January we gather together as a church to share a meal and to take care of church business. Again, thank you to everyone who brought food to share and thank you to my helpers in the kitchen who set up and cleaned up.

Christmas Eve Supper for Pastors & Musicians – Each year our pastors and guest musicians lead our congregational services from 2:30 to 10:30 pm. To care for our leadership team we put together a supper for them between the 5 and 7 p.m. services so that they, and their immediate families, can share a meal on Christmas Eve. Thank you so very much to my team of volunteers who came together to cook, serve, and clean up for this very special occasion: Kathy Bush, Bob Carwell, Sue Coates, Elizabeth Derbin, Kris Fox, Leah Guis, Emily Keller, Lisa Mead, Mary Minich-Carwell, Kathy Noble, Elaine Rongey, Linda Taffs, Chris Straw, and Linda and Terry Zabel.

Easter Breakfast – Easter breakfast is offered from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Easter morning each year. This is a service project put together by Fellowship & Hospitality and Youth & Family. This is a "give back" to the congregation from the youth group to say thank you for all the support they are given each year for their various events. The meal is free and a free-will offering is taken to cover food costs with any surplus going toward future youth events. Our youth and their families do a great deal of the food prep, serving, and clean up. This event has become a favorite tradition here at Trinity. Thank you to everyone who signed up on the SignUpGenius to donate food and funds to make this event such a beautiful and scrumptious event.

Fall Parish Potluck – Each year, after we all return from our summer travels, we gather together to share a meal following the 10:45 a.m. service to reconnect, say a last goodbye to summer, and to take a breath just before all of our fall schedules go crazy. Thank you to everyone who attended, brought food to share, helped set up and clean up.

Funerals – Thank you so much to all my funeral volunteers. These events are unexpected and call for volunteers without much notice. This ministry flies beneath the radar but is so very important. Our volunteers serve so that grieving families do not need to worry about the details of a luncheon, but can instead focus on their guests and spend time with their friends and family remembering their loved ones. Thank you for this gift you give to our grieving parishioners who have lost a loved one. You have never let us down and have always served with such faithfulness, kindness, and fellowship. You are a blessing to this congregation.

Game Nights & Potluck Suppers – This year we gathered for shared meals and fellowship during six game nights. We enjoyed playing euchre, trivia, pictionary-with-a-twist, and even added Bunco to our repertoire. These nights are free, although we do ask for a $5 donation to cover the cost of our prizes if you are able to do so. We share a meal and have a great time playing games. If there is enough interest, we are considering adding a monthly game night to the Trinity calendar. Watch for information in the eBlasts.

JOYful Days – JOYful Days is a mini series with catered lunches that take place on five consecutive Wednesdays in the spring and fall. We start with coffee and donuts before the Pastor's Forum. We then transition to a catered lunch which is followed by a speaker. Thank you to Steve Stephan for catering each of our meals in 2024 and thank you to Steve and our volunteers who set up, served, and cleaned up. You are all very appreciated.

KCAH Brunch – Kids Coalition Against Hunger is sponsored by our Children's Ministry. In collaboration with this event Fellowship & Hospitality provides an extended Sunday fellowship in the Youth Room before or after parishioners help pack meals during this all-congregation, inter-generational event.

Lenten Soup Suppers – During the five Wednesdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter we gather in the Courtyard for a shared meal of delicious soups. Tess makes 3 to 4 soups as Trinity's offering and parishioners sign up to bring soup to share. Each Wednesday we have anywhere from 12 to 16 different kinds of soup and bread. Start off with a small sampler cup to find your favorite then enjoy a bowl of soup. After supper parishioners gather in the Sanctuary for our mid -week service. Thank you so much to everyone who provides soup and/or bread for our meal. And thank you to those who help set up, serve, and clean up!

Schwallier's Corn Maze & Bonfire – This event has become a favorite for our congregation and is a multi-generational event. We rent out the entire facility and take a wagon ride to the back 40 where adventurous souls roam the awesome corn maze, the kids play on the play equipment and bounce pillow, and the rest of us enjoy the company of friends and family. Then we all gather around bonfires to roast hotdogs and s'mores and enjoy a beautiful fall night in Michigan. Unfortunately, this year we were rained out and could not reschedule but we look forward to next year.

Scandinavian Smörgåsbord – This year we once again had over 125 parishioners and their guests attend our annual Smörgåsbord. Kris Shannon and her kitchen team (Karen Unruh, Joyce Schlanderer, Lexy Shannon, Tom Shannon, Lisa Mead, John Fox, and Gene Gunderson) did a wonderful job on the food. Tess and her team (Pam and Gene Gunderson and Debra Freeberg) did a beautiful job on the dining area set up and decorations. A special thank you to: Jesca Westra who was our St. Lucia; Debra Freeberg who was St. Lucia's helper and gave the supper blessing in Swedish; Kris and John Fox who sang St. Lucia and led Christmas Carols; and to Darlene Kuperus who accompanied our vocalists on the piano and played during our Carol Sing-a-Long. Thank you to everyone who made Scandinavian dishes to share. We couldn't do this event without you. Thank you for your delicious contributions. And thank you to everyone who helped reset the room after the event so that we were ready for church services the next morning! You are all awesome.

Summer Celebration – We had a wonderful traditional Lutheran potluck to kick off summer. There was a lot of food and a lot of fellowship. This is always a wonderful event. Thank you to all who brought food to share, helped set up and clean up.

Sunday Fellowship Hour – Sunday Fellowship Hour is offered after each of our three services each Sunday throughout the year. We offer coffee, ice water, cookies and pastries, fruit, etc. A special thank you to Lisa Wiseman who has become a weekly Sunday Fellowship volunteer. We are happy to add more people to our rotation on Sundays. If you are interested in making and serving coffee and plating some nibbles for everyone and then getting to greet everyone on Sunday morning, please drop Tess a note. We'd love to have you!

RECEPTIONS – The following receptions were held this year to honor members of our congregation:

- Confirmation
- Funerals
- Graduation
- New Member
- Pastor Jon Niketh's Installation
- Veterans Appreciation

SPECIAL EVENTS – The following special events were held this year:

- Brunch for staff calendaring meeting
- Choir luncheon
- Christmas lunch for staff
- Hotdogs with our goat herder at our outdoor worship space
- Service projects with youth to make meals for UFM and Lutheran College Ministry

OTHER

Decorating the Church for the Christmas Season – As the Christmas Season approaches we decorate our building a little bit each week from hanging the door wreaths, putting out the Advent Wreaths, putting garland on the altar, balcony, and stairs, hanging the red balls in the overlook windows, setting up the nativity scenes in the Narthex and Courtyard, placing poinsettias around the Sanctuary and on the organ, setting up Christmas trees (we have 6 now!), and finally hanging the greens and bows on the pews for Christmas Eve. It is a beautiful season of getting ready for one of our most holy nights, Christmas Eve and the birth of Christ. A huge thank you to this year's decorating team which consisted of: Keith Flatt, Kristi Flatt, Grace Gohl, Alaina Lundgren, Katarina Lundgren, Tim Lundgren, Will McDonald, Jesca Westra, Joel Westra, and Julie Westra. Thank you all for making this years' Christmas celebration so festive.

Kitchen Updates – We have had a few updates to the kitchen this year thanks to an anonymous donor of time, talents, and funds!!

- New shelf in the kitchen above the coffee station. We now have a dedicated space for our crockpots!!
- The back hall was renovated to create two kitchen storage closets and a dedicated coat closet. This space was desperately needed so that everything can have a place and our back hall no longer looks a fright.

Licensure – Our kitchen is state licensed. We are inspected on an annual basis and have surprise inspections throughout the year. We have passed all of our inspections as noted on our current license that is posted behind the Hospitality Counter in the Courtyard. In addition to the kitchen being licensed the church must maintain a ServSafe Manager on site. The person who holds this certification is Tess Lundgren. Tess also holds certifications for Allergens; Alcohol; and is a Beverage Specialist.

It continues to be my honor to serve the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church as your Fellowship & Hospitality Coordinator. I would like to send a special thank you to everyone who has stepped up to help volunteer this year as I entered my first year of Culinary Arts education. I am one year into the program at GRCC and will have my Culinary Arts Degree with a special Certification in Bakery & Pastry Arts and a Certification in Personal Chef. I have one-and-a-half years left in the program and I enjoy learning new skills to serve the people of Trinity.

My door is always open and I am happy to hear any ideas parishioners may have to get people together in fellowship. If any member of our congregation feels called to serve our parish family through their gift of hospitality, please send a text or email to Tess Lundgren. I'd love to hear from you and work with you.

Respectfully submitted,

Tess Lundgren
Fellowship & Hospitality Coordinator
616.889.9503 ph/text
Tess.Lundgren@tlcgr.org

The Finance Committee is made up of the current treasurer and at least two other members of the congregation. Currently, we have five total members with the senior pastor and the finance administrator serving is an advisory role. If you are interested in participating in the Finance Committee, please feel free to contact me.

The purpose of the Finance Committee is to oversee the financial affairs of the congregation. This includes budgeting, financial reporting, cash management, and the development and implementation of financial policies and procedures.

The Finance Committee is pleased to report that Trinity Lutheran Church has maintained a strong overall financial position in 2024. As of the date of this writing, we are projected to have a budget surplus for the fiscal year that ends 1/31/2025. Both strong congregational giving and control of expenses are contributing to this outcome. We continue to have strong cash reserves and have reduced our mortgage debt by more than the scheduled principal payments. Refer to the Treasurer's Report for additional detail.

The Finance Committee reviewed and adopted a new charter this year to clarify the scope of activities and governance. In addition, we asked the staff and committees to use a "zero based budget" approach to developing the 2025-2026 budget. Everyone did a great job in providing good detail and rationale to the committee for development of the budget.

Thank you to those that serve on the committee. A special thank you to George Bauer for his many, many years serving as chair of the committee. While he stepped down as chair this year, we are thrilled that he continues to serve as a member.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Engle, Chair

The Green Team has had a very busy year of work on the church property. Work has included continued removal of invasive tree and shrub species, planting of new native trees, shrubs and container plants, mulching of new trees and planting beds, and trail maintenance. This work has occurred thanks to dozens of volunteers committing evenings in the summer months, weekends in the spring and fall, and occasional drop-in times for watering. Some of the key things that have occurred and will continue include:

- Planting of over two dozen new native tree species that include oak trees and maple trees.
- Watering newly planted trees on a rotating schedule of volunteers, especially on some of the hottest days over the summer.
- Planting of new native plants along the creek bed on the east side of the church property.
- Removal of many invasive buckthorn trees that have been choking out healthy growth of native trees and shrubs.
- Chipping up removed tree and shrub woody material.

The Green Team is a mighty group of volunteers passionate about our global planet and more local ecology. The heavy lift of work would not be possible without this group's passion and commitment and Trinity will have a healthy, more vibrant ecosystem as a result.

The mission of Health Ministries at Trinity is to share God's gifts of love and grace to promote spiritual, physical and emotional well being.

Faith Community Nurse
Our part-time Faith Community Nurse (FCN), Kristin Bradley, functions as the director of Health Ministries at Trinity. She oversees the Health Ministries Committee and is a part of the Spiritual Growth and Helping Hands Committees. She continues to organize and participate in visitation and prayer ministry, along with our pastors, and she is the staff liaison and referral coordinator for Stephen Ministry. Kristin also assists with the New Members Program, the Christmas Poinsettia/cookie projects, *Trinity in Touch,* and the Nametag initiative.

In addition, she maintains our First Aid/AED supplies, schedules CPR training, coordinates the Immunization Sunday Clinic, facilitates the Care & Share caregiver support group and is our quarterly blood drive coordinator. She worked with Kris Baker and Jeanne Becker to host a thank you dinner for our sacristans, bread bakers and *Trinity in Touch* visitors in January. During 2024, Kristin actively supported the Safety & Security Task Force and helped to develop emergency response training for ushers, staff, and leadership.

Kristin provides health care resources and connections within our community and she is a part of the area-wide Faith Community Nurse organization and the national ELCA Faith Community Nurse organization. From January - March she mentored senior nursing students from Davenport University who held a Blood Pressure clinic, created an educational video on hypertension and created safety videos for our building.

An additional community collaboration was made with Senior Neighbors and we hosted six "Tech Tuesday at Trinity" gatherings in fall that were well received.

The Health Ministries Committee

- Our committee met six times in 2024. Our meetings are open to all Trinity members and you don't have to be a healthcare professional to join!
- Our **Food for Thought** dinner and speaker events in January and October were well attended. We learned about intuitive eating from a local dietician and learned about chronic pain from a Mary Free Bed nurse practitioner.
- **Self-Guided Labyrinth** continues. Kristin sets up the labyrinths in the Commons and provides general guidance and resources for anyone who wants to explore this meditative movement practice. Watch for invitations in the eBlasts.
- **Care & Share** is our caregiver support group which is facilitated by Kristin. They met most months in 2024.
- Four **Blood Drives** were held at Trinity facilitated by Versiti Blood. In 2024 we collected 76 units of whole blood and 24 double reds**.** Volunteers provide baked goods and oversee the 'canteen' during the drives. Overall participation is down, and creative ways to encourage more donors is being sought. Sincere thanks to our dedicated donors, enthusiastic volunteers, and to Culvers for the "Give a pint, Get a pint" program!
- The **Fitness Program** has been consistent this year and classes are offered Monday - Thursday at 9:30 a.m. in the Commons. Trinity member Debra Freeberg offers her time and talent to hold Care Fitness and Flexibility classes and we contract with Gerald Browning to teach Tai Chi. Donations help cover his fee and the remainder comes from designated Health Ministry funds. Gerald taught a self-defense class for us in August and members aged 12—80 enjoyed learning more about personal protection.
- The **Flu Shot Clinic** provided 86 influenza vaccines to our members through the Spectrum Health Visiting Nurses.
- **CPR Training** was held in fall and was facilitated by our Red Cross instructor, James Morin. Eight people were certified and several others sat in on the training to gather info.
- Mary Schira reinvigorated our **New Baby Ministry** and connected with eight families in 2024.
- **GriefShare** and **Surviving the Holidays** continue to be offered by Pastor Kari as part of her pastoral care role.
- In 2024, we secured two Thrivent Actions grants. Both to offset the cost of the meals for the Food for Thought events. This allowed us to offer the dinners at no charge, essentially providing an additional $500 to our budget.

We look forward to providing more opportunities for supporting our minds, bodies, and spirits in the New Year!

Respectfully submitted,

Your Trinity Health Ministries Committee
Tricia Deiner (Chairperson), Michelle Morin (Council Liaison), Kristin Bradley (Faith Community Nurse), Corina Dulecki, Maddy Krueger, Kristen Lamprich, Debbie Lown, Kate Schaefer, Mary Schira, Rebecca Ulrich, Gale Volkerding, Kay Zeaman, and Cindy Zientarski.

"Continued thanks to the Trinity Quilters for the prayer quilts, to the Trinity Card Makers for all the handmade greeting cards, and to the Trinity crafters for the pocket hearts and prayer squares. Being able to share these handmade, tangible 'touches' with others is a privilege and blessing."

~ Kristin

The mission of the Helping Hands Ministry is to lead Trinity's efforts to care well for and connect our congregation's members through programs and the coordination of volunteers.

The Congregational Resource Coordinator, Jeanne Becker, with the support of the Helping Hands Committee, works to maintain caring for our congregation with meals for those in times of need, connecting with the homebound, and looking for other needs within our congregation. The committee members are: Pastor Kari Fast (staff support), Kristin Bradley (staff support), Susan Knoll (Council Liaison), Sandra Sudak (Secretary), Mark Hagbom, Lynn Hagenbush, Emily Keller, Lisa Keller, Gayl Kessel, Sally Mahoney, Bob Pfau, Rebecca Ulrich, and Linda Zabel.

Meals: In addition to providing meal trains for nine families in times of medical issues, new babies, and loss, the Helping Hands Ministry started the Freezer Meal Program. This ministry started in January when Jeanne created freezer meals from food left over from a church event. In June, the ministry officially began after receiving a Thrivent grant to buy the materials it needed to comply with the Health Department guidelines and purchase necessary food items. Since January, seven different recipes have been made which provided 57 meals and touched 21+ families who received meals in times of need. Through food and monetary donations, this ministry will be self-funded. The Helping Hands Committee members have been an integral part of the success of this ministry.

Poinsettia/Quilt Delivery: Eleven faithful volunteers delivered 60+ poinsettia's to homebound members and those who have lost loved ones. The Trinity Lutheran quilters provided beautiful quilts to 17 of the poinsettia recipients. In addition, the TLC quilters gave nine baptismal quilts and 10 prayer quilts to church members.

Poinsettias and Easter Flowers: Jeanne coordinates ordering flowers for members in honor or in memory of a loved one which then are used to help create a beautiful worship setting during Christmas and Easter.

Medicare/Medicaid Consultation: Trinity member Jo Murphy donated her time and expertise to seven Trinity members to assist them with enrolling in 2025 Medicare/Medicaid.

New Members: In May, Trinity welcomed 7 new members and in November, 22 new members. Jeanne connects the new members with a Trinity mentor to serve as a short-term, connecting presence. She also uses the *Time and Talent* form that each new member completes to connect them with volunteer opportunities that interest.

Trinity in Touch: We have volunteers providing communion and companionship to five homebound members.

NEW CONNECTIONS in 2024:

2131FUN: Last spring a Trinity member offered to start a group for 21-31year-olds to gather once a month for fun activities. The group has been growing in numbers and forming great relationships. The Congregational Resource Coordinator acts as a liaison between the group and the church.

New Trinity Directory: Upon Pastor Jon's arrival, Jeanne launched the new Trinity directory, *Instant Church Directory*. This is an in-house directory program that she will maintain. The directory is available online as well as in print form. It will be printed yearly in an effort to keep it current.

Respectfully submitted,

Helping Hands Committee

God calls us to address our neighbor's most urgent and unmet needs. The Outreach Committee works to support selected local and global ministries and encourages congregation members to reach out to their neighbors with God's love and compassion through financial contributions, in-kind donations and volunteering.

This dedicated committee consists of: Cheryl Love (chairperson), Kathy Bush (staff), Dan Butler (Council Liaison), Kathy Noble, Judy and Dan Otten, Sandy Rothfuss, Diane Ardolino, Martha Carter, Jan Curry, Bruce Schlanderer, Tess Lundgren (staff), Carrie Wygmans, and Cindy Zientarski (Discipleship and Outreach Coordinator).

One important yearly task was the distribution of $29,500 from Trinity's Mission Endowment Fund to organizations that Trinity supports through budgeted financial donations or volunteerism. Among the criteria used in this decision were: being made aware of future needs, the ongoing successful work in the community and beyond, and having Trinity members serving in some capacity in that organization The following are those recipients of this year's Endowment Fund, and each received twenty percent or $5,900 each:

ELCA World Hunger in honor of their 50th Anniversary
Heartside Gleaning for continuing support of their Fresh Food Fair
Home Repair Services for veterans in need of repairs not covered by regular funding sources
The Green Apple Pantry for continued funding for neighbors in need of food assistance
Family Promise for their Giving Tuesday "Promise of Home" matching campaign

This report from **Kathy Bush, IHN Coordinator** is as follows: during 2024 Trinity had three different weeks of housing homeless families. We had five families at church each of those weeks. That included a lot of little children running around Trinity and it also took around 75 volunteers to make our IHN weeks work. Trinity has been housing IHN homeless families four times a year over the past 27 years. We have seen 100's of homeless families walk through our doors. But now due to a difficult decision made by Family Promise of West Michigan families will no longer be housed in churches. Family Promise has purchased Wyoming Park UMC for rooms and opened additional rooms at the Pathway Homes program with Mel Trotte Ministries which made more rooms for families until they find permanent housing. My hope and prayer for 2025 is to continue to support the homeless families through IHN by bringing hot meals for the families and spending time with the parents and their children-but it will be under the roof at Wyoming Park Family Shelter at 2224 Porter Street, SW in Wyoming, Michigan-not at Trinity as before. I do want to THANK the congregation of Trinity for all the years of faithfulness to this ministry.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Quilters created and shipped 118 quilts (a record) for International and Domestic relief this year. They also made 143 drawstring bags and filled them with personal care products donated by the congregation which were distributed to Congress Elementary School and AYA Youth Collective (14-to-24-year olds facing homelessness or instability). Being caring and compassionate women they made 24 individual personal bags that contained eight each washable pads for the girls of Christophe's Children in Kalehe, DRC as well as purchasing 60 top sheets for the children's beds.

Food Pantry donations that are collected in the grocery carts year around are delivered to SECOM weekly and totaled 2,561.85 pounds this year of food and hygiene products.

Outreach Collections
January-February collected 225 cleaning items, 76 linens, 40 buckets/laundry baskets, 15 pots/pans which went to Family Promise, Exodus, Salvation Army Safe Haven and Samaritas. Kids Coalition collected $14,000 and packed 40,000 meals in February.
March-April personal hygiene products were collected and distributed to Safe Haven, AYA, Samaritas, Exodus, Baxter Community Center, and Family Promise. In April $2500 was donated so we could purchase 2,000 pounds (A TON) of hams to donate to SECOM and The Green Apple Pantry.
May-June new underwear for all ages and diapers of all sizes were collected and distributed. The Sunday School collected diapers for Family Promise as well.
June-July saw a total monetary donation of $2,497 for bus tickets given to Samaraitas, Degage and Family Promise to help their clients get to work and appointments. An added collection this year was for AYSO EPIC soccer program that totaled $1500.
July-August was the annual drive for school supplies for Congress Elementary School. Forty-two pounds of snacks, 1906 pencils, 994 Crayola markers, 67 boxes of tissues, 167 glue sticks, 116 ounces hand sanitizer, 22 backpacks as well as pens, highlighters, scissors, and notebooks were delivered to help start the school year.
September-October collection was for outerwear. We gathered 127 women's, men's, and children's coats as well as 47 hats, 60 pairs of gloves and 69 blankets and quilts which were delivered to Family Promise, Baxter Community Center, Samaritas, AYA, Exodus and In the Image. The $400 monetary donation was used to purchase extra warm gloves and hats.
November-December started off with the congregation and Sunday School children picking Angel ornaments off the Christmas trees around the church. These "Angels" had the names and gift wishes for children and teens from Samaritas (25), ICCF (20), Wedgwood (30), and MomsBloom (15 names divided into 45 single gifts from the Sunday School); as well as Degage which received 90 pairs of women's pajamas; and the Family Promise Christmas Store that received over 40 gifts of household items (microwaves, vacuum cleaners, toasters, towels and more) and personal care products. The second drive was a challenge for our congregation to collect 900 boxes of Jiffy corn muffin mix for the Christmas food basket distribution at Baxter Community Center. AND the challenge was met and DOUBLED to 1,873 boxes! One more appeal for December of which we became aware was a current need by Samaritas for winter boots-all sizes new or gently used.

Highlights of Other Outreach Activities

On June 22 a group of Trinity volunteers helped at a **Habitat for Humanity** build in Grand Rapids despite the prediction of high heat and storms. Cloud cover kept the temperature down and the rain came at the end of the day, so it turned out to be a very productive build. In August Pastor Dan and some of our high schoolers helped build a wheelchair ramp with **Home Repair Services**.

September 8 was our annual **God's Work Our Hands Sunday**. We packed 118 snack bags for Habitat for Humanity volunteers and wrote 70 thank-you notes to their Carpenter's Club volunteer group, and the Stay and Play children packed care bags for Family Promise. **The Mayors' Grand River Cleanup** was held on Saturday, September 7th and over 30 volunteers participated in picking up trash along the river and around Fish Ladder Park.

Every two years Trinity hosts an **Outreach Ministry Fair** and this year it was held on Sunday, October 6. The Courtyard was filled with about 18 organizations (who regularly receive our benevolence dollars and/or volunteer time) and they shared how they serve those in need in our community. Also, in October our congregation donated furniture to Samaritas New American Resettlement.

Our faithful **In The Image** volunteers spend time twice a month (first Monday and third Thursday) for two hours helping to sort and display items for clients who come to shop in the store.

Trinity continues its **Mission in India** partnership to provide encouragement, prayers, and financial assistance for Neerekshe (which means "hope"). Greater challenges persist since Shadrach's passing in December 2023, but Gladys remains steadfast in their ministry to children and staff who live onsite or in nearby villages. Gladys expresses great appreciation for Trinity's support which enables her to continue sharing the love of Christ with so many and providing daily Bible study, food, education, medical care, and shelter.

Support for **Christophe's Children** in Kalehe, Democratic Republic of Congo continues and the joyful pictures that Christophe Muganza and Michael Sytsma share are heartwarming. It has been three-and-a-half years and they now have a secure home that houses 51 children and three adult caregivers. Your generous support helped to recently purchase flashlights, toothbrushes, books, computers, Lifestraw water bottles, musical instruments, and Bibles. Even the local hospital received medical supplies. They want to express so much gratefulness in transforming the lives of vulnerable children.

In August, some members of the Outreach Committee met with Kyle Kooyers, Director of Operations-Kaufman Interfaith Institute, to discuss Trinity's involvement with our three "Standing Together" member congregations and then also attended a Multi-Faith Leader luncheon to learn about future programming.

Gratitude to all for contributions of in-kind and financial appeals this year

God has gifted this community of believers with so much love and caring for our families in our church, our local neighbors in the Grand Rapids area as well as our national and global neighbors in need. As Outreach Coordinator I am sometimes overwhelmed with the generosity and response to expressed needs. I especially want to thank the members of the Outreach Committee for their support, organization skills, ideas, their time helping to deliver collections of all sorts and their prayers and guidance.

On behalf of myself and the Outreach Committee, respectfully submitted by,

Cindy Zientarski, Discipleship and Outreach Coordinator

Rick Radke, Committee Chair

Committee Members: David Mester, Tess Lundgren, Tim Lundgren, John Fox, Bob Heine, Dale Barkema, Mike Guis, Phil Wittry, Rebecca Marquardt, and Lisa Mead

The Property Committee, our sexton, Grace Gohl, and those responsible for general maintenance were very busy in 2024. Grace and David Mester, along with various outside contractors, dealt with routine maintenance issues throughout the year. Unfortunately, we were faced with a major leak in February which caused extensive damage to the Sanctuary. This occurred despite the facts that the south wall of the Sanctuary had been waterproofed and had passed a November inspection by our roofing contractor. The leak occurred because of damages to the gutter system which were caused by a failure of our heat trace system and a poorly insulated attic space. Fortunately, the damages were covered by insurance. The insurance carrier, which after a period of negotiations, agreed to pay for the entire loss less a $5,000 deductible.

John-Grace Restoration was retained to remediate and repair the damages. A large portion of the loss related to the parquet floor in the Sanctuary. The insurance company agreed to pay for replacement of the entire floor, however the Property Committee determined, in consultation with the Executive Committee and others that we would postpone replacement of the floor until the summer of 2025 when we propose to have the Sanctuary painted. This project will involve extensive crack and plaster damage repair and three coats of paint. The project is likely to take approximately eight weeks so it was determined that it would be best to begin the project during the last week of June 2025 to avoid weddings and other conflicts.

In the meantime, the Property Committee recommended replacement of the Sanctuary roof and the insulation of the attic area above the Sanctuary ceiling so as to minimize the possibility of ice damming which has been a problem for several years. The roofing insulation contractors worked in tandem to complete the work this past fall. The contractors completed their work expeditiously and in a professional manner. There were a few minor problems that occurred along the way but they were rectified.

As part of the project, Buist Electric and Pleune Mechanical were retained to re-wire the two large exhaust fans which are located at the east end of the attic area and to add controls to automatically operate the fans. This should further help to minimize the recurrence of leaks due to the ice dams.

Other work this year included the replacement of part of the sidewalks adjacent to the entrance on the south side of the church by the kitchen. Erhardt Construction was responsible for the work and did a nice job.

The Subcommittee was busy throughout the year with various projects which included the removal of invasive species, planting new trees, and the installation of new landscaping by the stain glass along the south side of the Sanctuary.

The drain commission undertook a project adjacent to the property near the southeast entrance. The drain commission had asked Trinity to grant an easement allowing it to install an open drain on Trinity property. The Property Committee ultimately rejected the proposal after consulting with the Grounds Committee and the pastor because the installation of the new open drain would have led to the removal of several trees and would have otherwise damaged the pristine nature of the area. The drain commission ultimately utilized the existing easement to install an underground drain with minimal impact to the area.

The Property Committee will oversee the renovation work this summer if the congregation approves of the projects and will take up other matters as they arise. Please let us know if you become aware of any issues or if you have any suggestions for modifications or repairs which will improve our beautiful church and grounds.

Our mission is to support the congregation in growing their understanding of God's Word by encouraging lifelong Christian learning and providing opportunities for members to deepen their personal faith.

We have not had a regular Spiritual Growth Committee meeting in place since prior to our pandemic separation as staff support has been evolving. Pastor Bob convened annual Zoom meetings in 2021, 2022, and 2023 to touch base with involved leaders. Our Family Ministries Coordinator, Rachelle Battreall, stepped down from being the staff liaison this spring and since then, other staff members and volunteers have been filling in the gaps. Here are the Adult Education and Faith Formation events that occurred in 2024:

- The **Men's Breakfasts** have been supported by Steve Stephan and Pastor Dan, with Pastor Jon assuming some facilitation now that he is here. This quarterly breakfast, devotion, and speaker event is enjoyed by men of all ages.
- **Women's Bible Studies** are offered on both Tuesday and Friday mornings from September to June. Karen Unruh and Kris Fox have been dedicated leaders. These groups delved into studies related to hope and fear, Christian disciplines and The Lord's Prayer. Both groups have grown this year!
- **Grace Groups** were coordinated by Rachele Battreall and Kristin Bradley. The Grace Groups met on a variety of days and times and either in person or via Zoom. Pastor Frank Rothfuss prepared a leader's guide for this year's devotional and compiled thoughtful discussion questions for each week. Trinity members served as small group facilitators using the booklet *Gathered into One* published by Augsburg Fortress. A focus on our commonality in Christ during this season of senior pastoral transition and political divisiveness was welcomed. Over 80 people participated.
- Pastor Frank and Trinity member Albert Asfour facilitated the Sumud **Adult Forum** this spring on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. Albert even provided a full Palestinian meal for participants to enjoy as we kicked off this series that was enjoyed by many! Twenty to 40 people participated each week. Pastor Dennis offered **adult education classes** on what it means to be an ELCA Lutheran, and *Hot Topics for Cool Lutherans*. In September, Pastor Dan led a Bible study focused on the different lenses of the Gospel writers, and this fall Pastor Jon hosted adult forums on the parables of Jesus.
- **Book Clubs** continue meeting monthly from September through May. The multi-gender, intergenerational Tuesday book club meets the second Tuesday evening of the month at Trinity, in homes or via Zoom. The Friday morning women's book club meets in members' homes the second Friday of the month. Both groups are growing and open to new members.
- Our fall **Women's Retreat** was made possible by volunteer efforts from Cindy Zientarski and Carrie Wygmans. Gale Volkerding, Kim Brock, Debra Freeberg, Karen Unruh, Kris Fox, and Pastor Kari all played a major part in making this year's overnight retreat with the women of St. Lukes a huge success. Sixty women from both congregations took part!
- Communications Coordinator Carrie Lamb took responsibility for the **Advent Devotional**. She is supported by volunteer Kim Brock who received, organized, and edited the devotionals. This annual publication written by the people of Trinity for the people of Trinity is always very well received.
- The Trinity **electronic/email prayer chain** continues to be led by Steve Cairns who does a beautiful job expressing written prayers requests and sharing them with the members who have chosen to intercede on each other's behalf.
- Our **library** hasn't been tended to much lately. A library committee was taking shape in 2023, but has not been active this year. There is hope to rejuvenate this in 2025!

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin Bradley, Faith Community Nurse

Julie McLeod, Council Liaison

The mission of Trinity's Stephen Ministry is to equip inspired members of Trinity to put God's love into action by giving people a safe place to be heard in a time of need, and to make it natural for people to seek and accept the loving hand of a Stephen Minister.

In 2024, we put God's love into action by walking alongside 16 individuals during times of need. We are thankful that this one to one, confidential, Christ-centered ministry remains a vital part of the care we provide at Trinity.

One of our Stephen Ministers facilitates the *Journeying Through Grief* ministry. This set of 4 booklets is sent at intervals throughout the first year after the loss of a loved one and has brought comfort and hope to those experiencing grief. There are 12-15 booklets sent out each month within our community.

Additional outreach from Stephen MInisters includes offering an evening prayer time for IHN guests during their stay, regularly reaching out to the members lifted up in our prayer ministry, and providing assistance in worship for Stephen Ministry Sunday.

Currently, we have five trained Stephen Leaders shaping the continuing education and peer support of our team of 15 active Stephen Ministers. In our continuing education we have reviewed topics related to feelings, confidentiality, prayer, gender expression, aging spiritually, listening, gratitude, and praying the Psalms.

We began a new training class in September and, in February 2025, we will be commissioning our 12th class of Stephen Ministers! It's such a joy to watch this ministry continue to thrive!

We are grateful for designated funds available for Stephen Ministry leadership training. One of our current Stephen Ministers is attending leader training in January and we look forward to her commissioning in February and welcoming her to our leadership team.

Stephen Ministry is available to adults in our congregation and community who are experiencing a crisis, difficult circumstances or everyday stress. Connect with any of our pastors, our Faith Community Nurse, or a Stephen Leader to learn more.

We appreciate all who have established, grown, and supported this ministry. Our vision is that our church be a place where a ministry of skilled caregivers, sharing Christ's love, assures that no one is alone in a time of need.

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

Submitted by:

Kristin Bradley*, Faith Community Nurse and Stephen Ministry Referral Coordinator

Beth Vanderwall*, Stephen Ministry Program Director

Trinity's Active Stephen Ministers:
Kris Baker, Kim Brock, Sue Coates, Emily Keller, Krista Knight, Susan Knoll, Patti Mutch, Pastor Karen Niemeyer, Norm Palm*, Kris Racek*, Sheila Talsma*, Dale Volkerding, and Terry Zabel

**Current Stephen Leaders*

The Worship and Music Committee met five times in 2024 with the continued goal of supporting the Pastoral and Music Staff in their work of leading the congregation in the worship of God. This year specifically the committee focused on creating a charter document clarifying the purpose and the responsibilities and duties of the committee. Additional topics of discussion included:

- Welcoming Pastor Jon Niketh to the congregation, including the installation service
- Saying farewell to Pastor Dennis
- Considerations of worship needs during various Sanctuary renovations
- Previewing the 2024-2025 Celebration of *Music Concert Series*
- Planning for and evaluating summertime worship, including outdoor worship
- Planning for and evaluating Holy Week services, Advent Midweek Vespers, Children's Christmas program, and Christmas Eve services
- Possibilities of incorporating Rejoice service space into Holy Week and other special events
- Other considerations brought to the committee's attention including technology needs, continued ways to make all guests feel welcome during worship, and needs for changes/replacements to items used in music or worship

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Feutz

Council Liaison to the Worship & Music Committee

Committee Members: Amy Stephan (chairperson), Tess Lundgren, Michelle Morin, Elizabeth Derbin, Dakota Morin (Youth Rep.), Amy Fox, Kara Day, Amanda Schneider, Karen Unruh, Chris Becker (Council liaison)

Joni Korb has stepped down from the committee. A huge thank you to her for many years of service!

Welcome to Kristin Lamprich who was hired in July as our new Youth Ministries Coordinator.

Thank you to the congregation for your continued volunteering, praying and gracious financial support for the youth and their activities.

2024 In Review

Service Opportunities – Both high school and middle school youth had opportunities to serve both within our church walls and in our community. Some of the highlights were:

- **VBS Volunteers** – Many of our middle/high schoolers volunteered in a variety of ways: snack helpers, station assistants, photography, tech board, and small group leaders.
- **Setup/Serve/Cleanup at Events** – Annual Meeting, Easter Breakfast, Rummage Sale, Food Packing
- **Urban Family Ministries –** Meals prepped at church and delivered for their weekly meals
- **Kids Coalition Against Hunger –** Helped other members of the church pack over 40,000 meals
- **Trinity Nature Trail –** Spreading mulch, maintaining trails and benches
- **Christmas Cookie Decorating/Delivering –** 20+ middle/high school youth and parents gathered at church to decorate Christmas cookies and then set off delivering them to 25 congregational members.
- **College Care Packages –** Jill McKinney led the effort this fall to send boxes of goodies to our college students. Boxes were packed by our MS and HS youth and included food items, Starbucks gift cards, and letters from Pastor Jon.
- **Easter Breakfast –** setup, decorating, food preparation, serving food and cleanup were all parts of this service to our congregation.

Mission Trip (June): Seven youth and three adults traveled to Lincoln, IL and teamed up with 13 other churches to build ramps, paint homes and dig deeper into their faith.

ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans (July): 11 kids and five adults joined 30,000 other high school youth for Bible Study, serving, inspirational speakers, faith building, fellowship, and worship.

Stony Lake Camp and Bridge Builders (Living Water Ministries) (July): 29 Elementary/middle and high school youth spent a week at Stony Lake complete with ropes courses, waterfront time, campfires, Bible studies and many more faith building activities. Nine high schoolers spent a separate week at camp for Bridge Builders and dove deeply into the history of racism and how to be the change in our current world.

CHARGE! (November): 24 youth and four adults traveled to Traverse City for this weekend long event lead by Living Waters Ministries staff at Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City for an "indoor" camp experience that included music, small groups, Bible study and fun.

MS Youth
Confirmation: Confirmation classes took place on Sunday afternoons lead by Pastor Dan, and many adult small group leaders. On May 5, twelve eighth graders were confirmed as our newest church members.

Youth Group Events: Middle Schoolers met the hour prior just prior to Confirmation class for a combination of service and fun.

HS Youth
Youth Council Member – Dakota Morin was our Church Council youth representative.

Sunday Morning Bible Study – First Sunday of the month gathering with Pastor Dan (includes donuts and juice!), averaging 6-10 youth in attendance.

High School Youth Group – Gathered on Sunday evenings from 6:30 -8 p.m.

Graduation Sunday – Trinity celebrated graduates with special bulletin inserts and honored them at a spring service.

Fund Raisers for Mission Trips –Wreath Sales, Easter Breakfast and the Annual Rummage Sale helped fund our Mission Trip. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped us pull it off and for your generous financial support.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Stephan, Chairperson of Youth & Family Ministry Committee

BE A LEADER.
BE A LEADER.
BE A LEADER.

NIKE

ROYAL STREET
Art, Antiques, & Dining
PEDESTRIAN MALL

CREATED TO BE

Update on Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Operating Results and Current Financial Condition

- Projected total revenues for the current fiscal year 2024/2025, 11 months actual and one month estimated, are $1,410,000. Projected total expenses for this same period are $1,165,000, a favorable variance to budget of $49,000. The favorable variance is primarily related to payroll being under budget by $76,000 because of vacant staff positions partially offset by an unfavorable $32,000 variance for property related expenses.
- As of December 31, 2024, our checking and cash equivalents total $1,532,000, an increase of $277,000 over December 31, 2023. Of this amount we have $878,000 of funds available comprised of the general fund checking of $226,000 above our $120,000 targeted minimum requirement, and $292,000 in operating reserves and $324,000 in capital reserves.
- Combined mission and building endowment funds increased $124,000 from December 31, 2023, and total $1,621,000 as of December 31, 2024.
- Our loan to the ELCA for the church renovation in 2018 has been paid down to $921,000 as of December 31, 2024, from $1,040,000 on December 31, 2023.

Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025/2026

- The committees and departments submitted their budgets for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Next, the Finance Committee met in November to review these materials, make changes, and recommend to the full Council in December a final budget. Council reviewed the budget in December and is now recommending to the congregation for their approval the operating budget for fiscal year February 1, 2025, to January 31, 2026.
- A zero-based approach was utilized this year with each department and/or committee budgeting their areas respective expenses. While many of the category line items are similar to the prior year budgeted amounts, the exercise of starting from zero and assessing actuals needs for the coming year was deemed beneficial.
- An insurance claim was submitted and paid by our insurance company to cover water related damages in the sanctuary that occurred in early 2024. In addressing the damaged areas, the Property Committee and Executive Committee jointly concluded it also made sense to address several other related building and fixture issues concurrent with the water related repairs. These repairs included roof replacement, internal renovations of painting, flooring replacement and pew repositioning, as well as needed repairs to the entry ways. The costs of these repairs are estimated to approximate $300,000. During the current fiscal year, we have been billed for and paid $74,000 in repairs out of the Capital Reserve fund. The remaining costs are not included in the 2025/2026 annual operating budget. It is believed these costs should be paid for out of our Capital Reserve fund. Because of the large dollar amount (in excess of 10% of our annual operating budget), and in accordance with our bylaws, we seek approval from the Congregation at this year's Annual Meeting for the disbursement from the Capital Reserve to cover the remaining costs associated with these repairs.

Trinity Lutheran Church
Proposed Budget For
February 1, 2025 to January 31, 2026

	Proposed Budget for Feb 1, 2025 to Jan 31, 2026	Projected Current Year Feb 1, 2024 to Jan 31, 2025 (11 months actual +1 month estimated)	Budget for Feb 1, 2024 to Jan 31, 2025
Revenues	**$ 1,309,283**	$ 1,350,418	$ 1,284,762
Interest Income	**36,300**	59,873	-
Total Revenues	**$ 1,345,583**	$ 1,410,291	$ 1,284,762
Benevolence	**$ 152,300**	$ 144,300	$ 144,300
Christian Education	**11,050**	7,351	9,925
Music	**13,460**	13,549	13,460
Worship	**3,400**	4,213	5,000
Youth and Family	**11,273**	10,490	7,075
Fellowship	**17,800**	15,762	15,825
Property	**65,539**	89,688	57,325
Utilities	**65,185**	60,400	67,745
Technology/Leases	**71,026**	61,160	57,354
Office and Admin	**62,418**	59,466	54,070
Payroll	**734,274**	634,497	710,550
Stephen Ministry	**2,000**	2,101	2,400
Reserves	**18,000**	18,000	18,000
Health Ministries	**1,900**	1,394	1,850
Outreach	**1,550**	1,499	2,150
Helping Hands	**1,800**	625	825
Spirtual Growth	**1,500**	1,369	2,150
Financing Costs	**63,349**	38,954	44,250
Total Expenses	**$ 1,297,824**	$ 1,164,818	$ 1,214,254
Loan Principal	**$ 47,759**	$ 68,384	$ 69,366
Total Cash Outlays	**$ 1,345,583**	$ 1,233,202	$ 1,283,620
Revenue less cash outlays	$ -	$ 177,089	$ 1,142

Trinity Lutheran Church
Simplified Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	As of 12/31/24	As of 12/31/23	Change
Total Cash and Investments			
Checking and Cash Equivalents	$ 1,532,310	$ 1,254,700	$ 277,611
Mission Endowment Fund	875,728	810,561	65,167
Building Endowment Fund	745,519	686,741	58,778
Total Cash and Investments	**$ 3,153,558**	**$ 2,752,002**	**$ 401,556**
Total Designated Funds			
Total Memorial Funds	**$ 20,575**	**$ 19,855**	$ 720
Total Youth Accounts	$ 48,361	**$ 44,542**	**$ 3,819**
Reserves			
Operating Reserve	$ 292,592	$ 129,172	$ 163,420
Capital Reserve	324,052	286,592	37,460
All Others	35,276	37,595	(2,319)
Total Reserves	**$ 651,920**	**$ 453,359**	**$ 198,561**
Prepaids	**$ 145,391**	**$ 88,794**	**$ 56,597**
Pastor's Discretionary	**$ 39,806**	**$ 46,007**	**$ (6,201)**
Department Funds	**$ 143,949**	**$ 147,031**	**$ (3,082)**
Benevolence Designated Funds	**$ 116,695**	**$ 109,275**	**$ 7,420**
Continuing Education	**$ 2,602**	**$ 3,505**	**$ (903)**
Total Designated Funds	**$ 1,148,724**	**$ 892,513**	**$ 256,211**
Long Term Debt - Mortgage			
Long Term Debt - Mortgage	**$ 921,293**	**$ 1,040,020**	**$ (118,728)**

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks.

God, we praise you and give you thanks.
You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.
We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.
We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.
We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.
We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.
We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift
and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,
that the world may know you and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586–1649; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878
Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598–1662

Let us pray.
Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice. Read stories and learn more at **LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA**.

Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America