

CROSS

Cross Lutheran Church

2023 Annual Meeting

January 28, 2024

Table of Contents:

Opening Liturgy.....	3
ELCA Bishop’s Report.....	4
Synod’s Report.....	5
Pastor’s Report.....	8
Board of Lay Ministry Report.....	13
Community Outreach Report.....	14
Faith Formation Report.....	16
Properties Report.....	17
Stewardship Report.....	18
Stewardship: Financial Report.....	23
United Sisters Report.....	24
Pastoral Acts of 2023.....	25

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Son of God, Eternal Savior

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

And also with you.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Amen.

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

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

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

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

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

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

arr. Julius Röntgen

Text and music are in the public domain. May be reproduced without restriction.

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

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

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



*You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.
Psalm 65:11 (ELW)*

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

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

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

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

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

During 2023 there were 28 persons in the candidacy process, preparing to serve the wider church as pastors or deacons. Currently, 22 persons are serving their first call in the Saint Paul Area Synod. They also participate in a structured program of First Call Theological Education (FCTE). Both candidacy work and FCTE are led by Deacon Krista Lind. This past year two candidates received calls in other synods. As you might imagine, this work is important for the church today and for the church in the coming years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

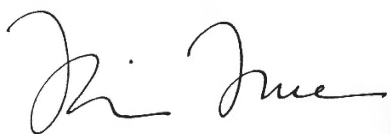
A grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. allowed additional opportunities for pastors to be well equipped for today's challenges. Synod pastors of color and the synod program staff participated in a facilitated retreat in Sedona, Ariz., in February. In addition, this past year 19 pastors, deacons, mentors,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

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

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

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

Yours in God's service,



Bishop Patricia Lull



105 University Avenue West, St. Paul MN 55103
651-224-4313 | www.spas-elca.org



2022 Pastoral Report

Friends in Christ,

For nearly seventeen years I have been engaged in the daily practice of studying things religious. I formally began my seminary journey in 2007 as one of a dozen or so students engaged in the very first cohort of Luther Seminary's fledgling "distributive learning" Master of Divinity program. Each of us were paired with a partner pastor in a home church setting — someone who provided opportunities for active ministry (preaching, teaching, pastoral care, etc.), insight, and support.

That first cohort was composed entirely of people, like myself, who had spent significant time in a career other than pastoral ministry. I had spent nearly two decades in advertising and graphic design (most of those years as an independent freelancer). One was a fast food franchiser, owning and running several Chick-fil-A stores. There were teachers, church youth directors, youth camp directors, and even an executive assistant to a college president. All of us were actively engaged in one vocation while being formed for the vocation of ordained ministry. None of us were in a financial, social, or family position to pack up our lives (and families) and move to St. Paul to be full-time campus-based learners.

At the same time, theological education in the United States was approaching a crossroads. Fewer young adults directly out of undergrad were applying to seminary. What's more, those who did were carrying with them significant college debt, making the prospect all the more daunting. At the same time, there was a rising number of older adults, like myself, already established in other careers who felt the call to ordained ministry. Luther was one of a rising number of seminaries around the country (and the first in the ELCA) that decided see what God was up to with all these older potential students. And so Cohort One, which we jokingly referred to as *Lab Rats for Luther*, was born.

As you can imagine, flexibility was a must.

Our academic studies were primarily *asynchronous*, meaning we didn't gather at a set day or time for lectures or conversation. Instead, we were given reading or other study assignments and asked to respond, in written form, by a particular deadline. What's more, we were asked to provide a substantive response to each of the other people in our assigned study groups. This way, each student could work around their own schedule, as long as the deadline was met. This format worked very well for me, because I had spent my entire writing career managing and meeting deadlines. I was comfortable working in a less scheduled way. Still am, to tell the truth.

Luther also realized, though, that pastoral formation was not only an academic exercise or a solo endeavor. Relationships were crucial. That's why each of us had a "partner pastor" and why we were required to gather twice a year for a two week intensive learning experience on campus. And so, we'd come from Colorado and Missouri, Texas and Virginia, California and North Carolina and the Iron Range, where we'd all stay in the same dorm and attend classes together, ate meals together, spent our off-time (which was limited, to say the least) lounging around a corner of Stub Hall which we nicknamed 'the Veranda.'

I was part of that cohort for one year. In 2008 we decided to move the whole household to Sandgren Hall on the seminary campus. I became a traditional on-campus seminary student, albeit a very untraditional one.

As I write this year's annual report to the congregation, I am reminded that each of us and all of us — individuals, households, families, and our entire community of faith — are always in a process of being formed and reformed by the God who is the ground of our being. It is not simply a matter of 'learning' about our faith, but also how we 'practice' the fruits of faith among each other and, more importantly, to the world around us. Some of the practices which formed us — individually and collectively — are still powerful and relevant to our present ministry together. Some are not. Some of the knowledge and teachings that formed us — individually and collectively — in the past remain meaningful and true. Others might need to be re-examined. Living out our faith is not about completing confirmation or bible school or a series of classes or seminars and then, that's it — we've learned everything we need to know for life. No, I believe that the Spirit calls us into a life of listening, learning, discerning, and contemplating how we are called to respond to both the challenges and opportunities of faith. Faith is not something we learn; it is something we live.

But still we move along. And still God in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is forming and reforming us for the challenges and opportunities that are emerging in front of us.

So instead of focusing on metrics such as attendance and budget (which are, in my estimation, fine and steady, and covered well elsewhere in the Courier), I would like to focus on those areas where I saw the Holy Spirit most active in our continued formation and reformation as disciples of Christ.

In 2023, the Holy Spirit expanded our connections to community, the wider church, and to the needs of others. The most visible sign was in how our confirmation students, their families, and supporters were gifted with relationships and shared formative experiences with youth and adults from other ELCA congregations in our Synod. Two particular highlights come to mind: our shared service and learning trip to Memphis with four other congregations this summer, and our shared confirmation class with Pastor Karsten and our now good friends at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. Our three confirmands — Amelia, Henry, and Kirby — are a true delight to walk alongside. We are all looking forward to continued confirmation formation this spring with Our Redeemer and our trip to the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans this summer, where we will travel with a combined cohort of St. Paul confirmands from Pilgrim, Gloria Dei, Immanuel, Christ on Capitol Hill, and Saint Paul Reformation to join 25,000 other young Lutherans for what will be an unforgettable and highly formative adventure. I want to thank everyone who has supported our confirmands with prayers, treats, supportive words, and funds. Although we are well on our way towards paying for the New Orleans trip, more will be needed and appreciated. Stay tuned for details in the coming months. I want to thank the Board of Faith Formation for sharing their gifts of imagination and seeing the possibilities of what we can do together, and I would like to thank Katie Brynildson and Sharon Crist, especially, for walking with the students and me as guides and teachers.

Our collaborative connections have grown in other ways, as well. We were joined during Advent by Reverend Mike Peterson, interim pastor at Lakeview Lutheran, who helped co-lead Wednesday prayer. We will be exploring other opportunities with Lakeview and other congregations as the coming year unfolds. We are continuing to explore ways to share fellowship and ministry with our partner congregations: Promesa de Dios, Ebenezer Elim, and Adventista del Septimo Dia. At the same time, we are trying to identify barriers to ministry together — from building use to equipment storage to more clarity over the various roles we have together. I anticipate that we will see some significant progress in the coming year.

Of course, our ministries to the families of John Glenn Middle School — Community Market and Launching Pad — continue to be lasting and cherished, and extremely needed. Sylvia Graham has done an excellent job of reporting on the details of this and other ministries to community and neighbor, so I urge you to read her report. I will add that there has seemed to be increased vitality and engagement with those we serve over the years. From September through December, the market served almost double the amount of people it served from January to May. And thanks to Sylvia's care and concern, we were able to do so while maintaining quality and without overstretching our budget. But no discussion of John Glenn would be complete without word of thanks and appreciation for the 18-20 people who gather faithfully each month to set up and clean up, and hand out both food and welcome to the families who join us each month. You are a treasure to this community, and a blessing to those whom we serve.

Speaking of budgets, our Board of Stewardship, with congregational approval last Summer, have invested a significant amount of our mission-related funds into the ELCA Foundation's Ministry Growth Fund. Given the inconsistencies of the stock market over the past year, I am encouraged that early earnings on the fund have been better than I expected, and with a rosier outlook for the coming year (at least as reported this week). I think that this will be a gift that keeps on giving.

Of course, our Board of Stewardship is tasked with much more than money and investments. They are also leading us through outreach and by the ways in which our time and talents and offerings are used to participate in God's work in the world. Thank you all for your passion and energy.

I am encouraged with the way that our worship life together is growing. Yes, we still have some growing pains. But we also have growth. This summer and early Fall, on Wednesday nights, a good group of good folks gathered around a campfire on Wednesday evenings (whether it was too hot for a fire or not) to play guitars, sing hymns and old spiritual songs, to eat (of course), and to worship God in full view of neighbors and passers-by. It was the kind of fellowship and proclamation that, I hope, the Holy Spirit used to deepen our faith and formation as children of God. I am looking forward to renewing this practice as the evenings grow warmer.

Although we are presently in the middle of a short interlude following the departure of Ruthann Ritchie as our choir director, I give thanks for the gift of music and voice which our larger-than-expected Cross Choir provided. Your dedication to the music, and to our worship life together, is a gift that grows larger by the month.

Together, the Spirit called us last year into some new and reimagined worship practices which, I believe, are helping to nurture faith in our community, and outside our community, in significant ways. I am thankful for the way our annual Christmas Pageant has matured into a living sermon on the Sunday before Christmas Eve. I am grateful that Wednesday evening Holden Evening Prayer has become an increasingly important time to gather during both Advent and Lent. I am touched by the turnout for Blue Christmas worship on the longest night of the year, when not only Cross members, but friends and families and total strangers gathered to acknowledge the hurt and sadness that so often permeates the holidays. I am thankful for our Board of Lay Ministry and their gifts of leadership and discernment around worship and membership, and their growing openness to embrace the urgings of the Holy Spirit, who is at the center of our worship life together.

I am also thankful, and delighted, that the installation of our new state-of-the-art sound system was completed before Christmas Eve worship. I am impressed by how clear and crisp our sound is, and we haven't even touched the surface of the things it can do. But, as with any new technology, it takes time and study and familiarity. I am hoping that by the Three Days of Easter, that we will be able to use it even more fully. I am also hopeful that our partner congregations, especially those who

contributed financially, will be able to find joy in its use. I want to thank, especially, those who so graciously donated funds for this and all the other recent additions which have enriched the worship life of our congregation. None of this would have been possible without the support and partnership of our Board of Properties, who so ably and faithfully shepherd the ongoing legacy of our building and grounds, facilities and equipment.

At last year's annual meeting we adopted a new constitution which significantly reordered and redistributed the duties and responsibilities of our various boards. Although it has not been without some fits and starts, I am thankful and encouraged by our board members' willingness to live into this updated guidance structure. You will see some of the fruits of the work our boards have done together reflected in this year's Courier, and no doubt you will see it happen in the coming years. I can see the Spirit's guidance at work in our various boards and committees, and am enthused about the number of new people who are stepping into leadership roles at Cross. The way we make decisions together has a significant impact on the way we live into God's call for us as people and a congregation. It is part of our ongoing formation and reformation as a gathered people of God, and I look forward to discerning with you how we are called to live together into the future.

One of our ministries that doesn't get enough attention is our collaboration with The Shores of Lake Phalen. When I took over the ministry there a little over two years ago, there was doubt whether it would be sustainable into the future. I think the Holy Spirit had other plans. Not only do we have an active weekly worship gathering each Tuesday (which ranges from 16 to 30 people each week), worship has grown to include several family members of the residents, as well as worship on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Christmas Eve — all well attended and deeply appreciated. At present, three members of Cross are residents at Shores, and we receive regular contributions from them and others who are not official members. Our relationship with the staff and leadership is solid, and I have been asked, with regularity, to meet and pray with residents who are nearing death or needing pastoral care or a listening ear. As importantly, I have been able to assist several non-member families, for funerals and burials — a gift of ministry that Cross makes possible to folks who often do not know where to turn in times of death. Finally, I have gotten to know Father Peter Ly, pastor at Presentation Catholic Church, who leads Catholic worship at Shores, and whom I meet with occasionally to discuss how we might serve our shared neighborhood more faithfully together.

United Sisters has provided much-needed care and support and a loving hand to our community for decades. This year has been no different, and I am gladdened and amazed by their ability to adapt to emerging realities of the world. Whenever there is a funeral, or a celebration, or a reason to gather around the table of God's bounty, they are there. Thank you all.

Our Parish Planning Council has worked hard this year to adapt to many challenges and opportunities which have arisen during the year. I thank you all for your honesty and passion, your questions and concerns, and your willingness to work together to discern how God might be calling us into the future God prefers for us as a congregation. It is not easy work, this. It often calls for all of us to set aside tightly held positions (me included) and consider how we are gifted and called to lead on behalf of God's mission for the broader congregation. We have work to do... we should always have work to do, but I trust in the Holy Spirit's ability to break through our misgivings and fears and bring us all, together, into the hope of God's bright future. I especially want to thank our Executive Director Katie Erickson and Assistant Executive Director Paul Erickson for the extra time and effort and honesty you have brought to the table, and in our periodic Saturday morning meetings. You are all a blessing.

Finally, I want to give thanks for our staff. Finding rhythm during the ongoing disruption and transition going on all around us hasn't been easy. I thank you for your patience and the for gifts you bring to your work on behalf of the mission of this congregation.

To Carol Hastings, thank you for your steady and dependable handling of our finances, and for your unofficial role as 'curator of Cross's institutional knowledge.'

To Jamie Gudknecht, thank you for your ability to sort and sift and make hard decisions about what to keep, what to save, and what to enter into the digital record for long-term storage. We have needed to clean house for some years now, and you are the person to do it.

To Katie Tomek, our administrative assistant. Thank you for navigating the changes and challenges that our office faces week to week. It is not easy coming into a system, or a denomination, with deeply embedded rituals and practices different from your own. Thank you for enduring through the frustrations of wifi and ethernet, YouTube algorithms and Facebook minutia with optimism, calm, and a desire to explore and experiment, knowing that someday, someday, some of this stuff is going to finally work the way it's supposed to.

And, finally, I want to thank Ruthann Ritchie, who served as organist and music director for 16 months before leaving at the end of the year. I am thankful that you have found a way to use your gifts of music and empathy as a music therapist in a healthcare setting. I am hopeful that your new part-time church musician role, with fewer demands and challenges that we gave you, will be a blessing now and into the future. Thank you for the great work you did with our choir. You make our hearts sing with joy.

In closing, I would invite you all to consider how God might be forming us, as a community of faith responding to God's never ending call to justice and hope and love. I pray that together we will be able, in the coming year, to follow the Spirit's lead into the amazing future God is forming us for.

Pax,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott R. S." followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Pastor Scott

January 25, 2024

Board of Lay Ministry Report



The Board of Lay Ministry has had a busy year. Our biggest challenge this past year was staffing all the worships with our limited staff. Luckily we have very dedicated board members and others outside the board that are always ready to help. As I have said often, you never really leave the board when your time is up. The board also supplies the cantors for the Psalm every Sunday. Thank you to Allison Hawley, Duane Gudknecht, Katie Erickson, Dan Erickson and Peter Brown for your willingness to sing for this special portion of the service.

A little about our board: We are responsible for worship and membership. Our meetings typically begin with a prayer and a reflection from the Bible. We then discuss the worship and make suggestions. We also visit the prayer list and update it as needed. We are then updated on member visits and other church happenings by the Pastor. If there is no new business, we end in prayer. We look forward to welcoming new members to our Board as we say good-bye to Sherry Batterman. We were very blessed to have Sherry serving the congregation and providing leadership as well.

The board did not need to focus on staffing issues this past year. These duties were transferred to the Executive Team at our last Congregational Meeting.

The board did spend quite a bit of time updating the membership roles this last year. This involved sending out letters and following up with inactive members to confirm their membership. This also led to the updating of new Cross Phone Directory.

The board continues to discuss Covid and being safe, as well as keeping others safe.

The board is always open to suggestions and ideas to make your worship more meaningful. We would love to hear from you.

Blessings,

Jamie Gudknecht, Director
Board of Lay Ministry



Community Outreach Report

JOHN GLENN MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY

This ministry is meant as a support for the staff and students at our neighborhood school.

The Community Market:

From January 2023 through May 2023

- Households served: 309
- Total persons: 1,373
- Total kids: 893
- Total adults: 773
- Total pounds of food distributed: 20,000 pounds (1/2 of this amount in fresh and frozen)
- Total Cross volunteers=15 to 18 each month.
- JG student volunteers=10 to 15 each month.
- JG teachers & staff=3-4 each month.

There were no summer markets this school year.

2023-2024 School year began on August 30 with the first Community Market held at the open House.

From August 2023 through December of 2023.

- Households served: 520
- Total persons: 2,689
- Total kids: 1,423
- Total adults: 1,320
- Total pounds of food distributed: 22,031 pounds (1/2 of this amount in fresh and frozen)
- Total Cross Lutheran volunteers=15 to 18 each month
- JG student volunteers=10-15 each month
- JG teachers & staff= 3-4 each month

The participation from families at the start of the new school year has averaged over one hundred but has been consistently 80-85 for regular participation. The open house is always a considerable number which drops off as the months continue. We are, however, seeing more participation and many large families with numbers ranging from 7 to 10 family members.

The Jet Launching Pad:

Each month Cross Lutheran members provide items to help stock the store. For the 2023-2024 school year, members have provided school supplies, backpacks, feminine hygiene products, tissue, socks, sweatpants, and gift cards for Target & Cub Foods.

Holiday Gifts to Families:

Six John Glenn families were helped this Christmas Season. Each member in the family was given a \$25.00 gift card for Target as well as a large gift bag of items including water bottles, blankets/throws, hats, gloves, hygiene products, candy canes, a popcorn tin, a tin of mixed nuts as well as a large fruit basket and a tin of homemade cookies and candies. Each family also received a \$100 food certificate for Cub Foods.

The Math Carnival:

On March 2, 2023, 18 volunteers provided 54 hours of time to support this annual event. Not only members but friends and families of Cross Lutheran members joined in the fun.

The Red Cross Blood Drive.

This was hosted on Thursday, May 4th. Thirty-two pints of whole blood were collected. Each pint has the potential to save three lives.

OTHER COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Joseph's Coat:

This year we sponsored a Spring clothing drive. Although they continue to have several restrictions, Cross Lutheran members collected ten grocery bags of items. We also delivered two bags of new socks and undergarments. We did not sponsor a Fall drive.

Food Shelf:

We provide several grocery bags of food items for the Merrick Food Shelf each year. Items placed in the grocery cart in the narthex are taken to the food shelf if not used for the Community Market. During March Food Share month, Cross Lutheran members are given the opportunity to make a monetary donation to help Merrick also. This number is \$1,200+ each year.

Feed My Starving Children:

This was a new outreach in 2023. On Saturday, June 24, seventeen members, friends and families participated in this event. Along with other groups meeting that day, we packed fifty-eight boxes of meals which provided 12,528 meals, feeding thirty-four kids for one year. These boxes were sent to Peru. This is an event we hope to continue at least one time per year.

With special thanks to all the volunteers who helped make all the above-mentioned events a tremendous success.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Graham



Faith Formation Report

Members : Dottie Bingham, Katie Brynildson, Sharon Crist, Jeannie Haagensen, Diana Swanson & Pastor Scott Simmons

2023 began with looking at our description in the revised Cross Constitution to guide and direct us. We had no shortage of ideas! Among them we accomplished several. Lead by God, we found ourselves heading in several different directions. Pastor Scott's work with combining Confirmation Classes with Our Redeemer Lutheran Church provided an opportunity to expand programming as well as providing the necessary catechism lessons and a special retreat to a cabin in Brandon, Min., further cementing the relationships between our youth. They are also part of a Synodical group of Lutheran churches in the St. Paul, participating in Deep Dive including activities that included service projects and contemporary issues , as well as a trip to Memphis and seeing the musical production of "Le Miserable" and "A Christmas Carol at the Guthrie. We will be "selling of shares" in February to help pay for the Confirmands to attend a national gathering of ELCA Youth in New Orleans this summer. Our Confirmands have also enjoyed baking bread for use during communion for special Sundays.

We began a Cross Bookclub, which has healthy attendance for the three books that have been chosen to read and making for stimulating discussions at all of them. The books chosen were: "The Woman at the Well", "Katharina and Martin Luther: the Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk," and "The Three Women of Advent."

Pastor Scott continued his Thursday morning bible studies to explore the texts of upcoming Sunday Mornings as well as well as Sunday morning sessions exploring the Books of Job and Revelation.

We also began a series of sing-alongs around a campfire led by Pastor Scott during the summer on alternate Thursday evenings. Making this "Joyful Noise" were a varying number of our members. We found ourselves serenading AA members and the neighbors, one of whom donated firewood for the fires.

A number of our members attended a play in July at The Phipps Center in Hudson, and a number of our members are faithful attendees at the Dubliner Pub when the "Fleshpots of Egypt" play for a community sing-along of a great selection of Christian tunes.

Sunday School continues with our rotation of teaching team members Katie Brynildson, Carolyn Border, LuAnn Lund, and Diana Swanson when Brianna is present, still using the curriculum "Spill the Beans."

Our "intergenerational" Christmas Pageant was held thanks to the work of Marilee Jackson and the willing participation of our members of all ages.



Properties Report

The Board of Church Properties is given the responsibility for the care, maintenance, and improvement of our building and grounds.

2023 was a much quieter year in terms of large properties projects, the normal use and care of the building and property kept the Board of Church Properties busy. The year began with BA Roofing, the roofing company that replaced our roof last fall, completing the gutter work on the building. This completed the roof replacement project. The boiler shut down and start up went smoothly and they continue to perform and run well. The Board would like to extend our thanks to Duane Gudknecht and Scott Patterson for their continued diligence and time spent keeping an eye on the boilers.

Our partnership with our partner congregations continues to offer a lot of positives but has also presented us with some unique challenges. The 7th Day congregation underwent some pastoral transition mid-year. This led to some challenges in communication. Along with the communication challenges, there were still issues with drains in the kitchen, trash left in the sanctuary, and storage related concerns. The Board, along with assistance from Pastor Scott, continue to reach out to our partner congregations on a regular basis. While the challenges in communication have made this difficult at times, we hope that our regular and consistent contact will lead to our partnerships strengthening and our communications improving. The board would also like to extend a very big thank you to Lou Hopkins, our custodian, for all of his hard work cleaning up after each congregation!

The lawn care for 2023 was once again handled by Mark Bjostad. Mark reached out to us in the spring of 2022 with an offer to take care of our lawn as a service project. We would like to thank Mark for offering his time and talents in taking care of our lawn this past summer! Two work days were scheduled this year, one in June and one in October. The spring cleanup day was well attended by a group of dedicated member volunteers. The fall work day ended up being handled by a few dedicated members at a later date after a series of bad weather Saturdays led to a couple of postponements. The board would like to extend its thanks to all of our dedicated member volunteers who help with keeping our building and property in good condition!

The biggest change that occurred this year was the installation of a new sound system. All of the work was completed by Aufderworld Corporation. The removal and installation of the sound system took just under a week to complete in November. The new sound system has allowed us to simplify and improve the sound in the church sanctuary. It has also given us the ability to include assistive listening earphones to those who need them during the worship service. The new sound system will also allow us to work with our partner congregations to eliminate their need for extra audio equipment that is currently being stored in the sanctuary. The Board, along with Pastor Scott, will continue to work with our partner congregations to train them on how to use the new sound system and remove extra sound equipment.

Lastly, the board would like to once again extend our thanks to all of the volunteers who provided their time and talents as stewards of our building and grounds. We would also like to extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to our Capital Improvement Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

The Board of Church Properties



Stewardship Report

The Board of Stewardship thanks all of Cross Lutheran Church's members, leaders, volunteers, friends, and staff for their continued support, faith and encouragement in 2023. This was another strong year for Cross Lutheran. As noted in the 2022 Cross Courier, we have seen more consistent giving throughout the year so that our summer months no longer bring concern about our financial condition. This is due to the faithful giving by our members through the weekly offerings. Many people have their bank automatically send their offerings which also keeps the financial giving consistent throughout the year. We again ended the year with a balanced budget and a small surplus. Thank you for the continued faithful giving from everyone.

Under the direction of the Board of Stewardship, the congregation voted to open an investment fund with the ELCA Endowment Foundation, with an initial investment of \$100,000.00. This fund has been named CLIF - Cross Lutheran Investment Fund. We receive quarterly disbursements. The hope is that this fund will help sustain the outreach endeavors of the congregation.

Our outreach ministry to John Glenn Middle School remains strong and the details can be found under that specific report. We would like to thank the many volunteers to come month in and month out to make the Community Market happen. Also, thank you to those who shop each month for items for the school store, and help meet the needs of the most vulnerable students at John Glenn.

Other events the board held were a Volunteer Recognition Sunday in April, and an afternoon at Feed My Starving Children in June. Thank you to all those who participated in these events.

The board accepted a gift of \$20,000 and worked with the Board of Church Properties to update the sound system in the sanctuary.

Again thank you for all that you do to support the outreach of Cross Lutheran Church.

Yours in Christ,

The Board of Stewardship

Sylvia Graham, Kay Olson, Rita Gaubert, Mary Vatne, Carol Hastings, Tammy Erickson

Summary of Cross Lutheran Church Contributions through 2022 actual and 2023 estimates

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023	2024
Weekly Offerings	\$133,236	\$132,296	\$131,503	\$122,500	\$126,145	\$118,660
53rd Offering	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Plate	\$4,912	\$10,576	\$1,861	\$2,000	\$3,400	\$4,500
Total Weekly Offerings	\$138,148	\$142,872	\$133,364	\$124,500	\$129,545	\$123,160

Weekly Giving	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate
Summary Estimates of Giving	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of Giving Units	138	120	95	65	60
Number of People who pledged	45	39	42	40	35
Total Amount of Pledges	\$125,082	\$113,456	\$119,584	\$112,983	\$110,16 [^]
Actual Contributions to Pledge	\$121,336	\$114,105	\$121,045	\$119,130	N/A
Total Weekly Giving Pledged/Non pledged	\$133,243 [†]	\$132,990 [†]	\$132,075 [†]	\$126,145 [†]	N/A

†- Discrepancy due to difference in recording contributions between Finance and Contribution systems.

The funds below are not part of the Operating Budget. Receipts/Disbursements are handled separately.

Capital Improvement Fund	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of Pledges Received	22	19	24	21	20
Total Amount of Pledges	\$7,872	\$6,456	\$10,332	\$8,400	\$9,240
Actual Contributions to Pledge	\$6,943	\$6,107	\$8,341	\$8,095	N/A
Total Capital Improvement Giving	\$8,903	\$16,297*	\$13,381	\$10,385	N/A

* 2021 Capital Improvement includes all funds donated for special boiler appeal.

**Summary of Cross Lutheran Church
Operating Results/Budget**

TOTAL OPERATING INCOME

	Actual 2020	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Estimate 2023	Actual 2023	Estimate 2024
Weekly Contributions	\$138,184	\$142,872	\$133,374	\$124,500	\$131,158	\$123,160
All Other Income*	\$70,525	\$73,269	\$75,191	\$69,680	\$98,356	\$79,806
Dedicated Funds Released**	\$7,925	\$28,370	\$9,330	\$37,201	\$37,201	\$39,810
Change in CLIF (Unrealized)***	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$2,801	N/A
CLIF Income Distribution***	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1,024	N/A
TOTAL INCOME	\$216,598	\$244,511	\$217,895	\$231,381	\$270,540	\$242,776

OPERATING EXPENSES BY BOARD

	Actual 2020	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Estimate 2023	Actual 2023	Estimate 2024
Lay Ministry	\$76,085	\$127,241	\$146,108	\$163,142	\$2,846	\$4,295
Interim Pastoral Services/ Executive Board in 2023	\$93,578	\$43,234	N/A	N/A	\$159,885	\$168,742
Lay Ministry Total	\$169,663	\$170,475	\$146,108	\$163,142	\$162,731	\$173,037
Church Properties	\$41,830	\$37,408	\$47,568	\$55,204	\$50,762	\$55,979
Education	\$1,234	\$1,822	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Youth	\$2,129	\$758	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Faith Formation	N/A	N/A	\$2,749	\$5,675	\$5,064	\$7,900
Stewardship	\$3,603	\$3,891	\$4,510	\$7,360	\$7,742	\$5,860
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$218,459	\$216,141	\$200,935	\$231,381	\$226,299	\$242,776

INCOME – EXPENSES

OVER (OR SHORT)	(\$1,861)	\$30,157	\$16,959	\$0	\$44,241	\$0
Payroll Protection Loan	\$25,400	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fund Balance 2019 – 2023	\$23,539	\$30,157	\$16,959		\$44,241	
Balanced Budget 2023/2024				\$0		\$0

* Other income consists of Holiday and other offerings such as Lent and Advent; rent from 7th Day Adventist, Promesa de Dios, Ebenezer Elim congregations; undesignated gifts and all other miscellaneous income.

** Dedicated Funds Released allows for the transfer of non-budget funds to the operating budget.

*** Income from the change in investment and the income distribution back into the investment fund is an unrealized gain.

Treasurer's Report

Dedicated Accounts

Savings/Premier/Dedicated Funds	Beginning 1/1/2023	Year to Date Receipts	Year to Date Expenses	Balance 12/31/2023
2021 Undesignated Surplus	\$21,259.31	\$0.00	\$21,259.31	\$0.00
2022 Undesignated Surplus	\$16,959.53	\$0.00	\$15,942.03	\$1,017.50
Accumulated Interest Premier Savings	\$576.78	\$754.70	\$0.00	\$1,331.48
Air Conditioning Memorial	\$7,800.00	\$0.00	\$1,274.00	\$6,526.00
Altar Guild Memorial	\$1,751.79	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,751.79
Associated Pastor Continuing Education	\$225.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$225.00
Capital Improvement Fund	\$16,688.27	\$10,470.00	\$1,964.44	\$25,193.83
CD Money for Handbells	\$23.92	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23.93
Children's Choir	\$118.30	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$118.30
Community Outreach Ministry	\$2,582.28	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$3,082.28
Director of Music Continuing Education	\$70.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$70.00
Disaster Response	\$0.00	\$825.00	\$825.00	\$0.00
Education Memorial	\$1,224.04	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,224.04
Flowers	(\$69.05)	\$673.00	\$580.06	\$23.89
Gifts and Memorials	\$6,014.64	\$1,975.00	\$0.00	\$7,989.64
Parking Lot Rental	\$2,964.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,964.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	\$1,744.90	\$1,300.00	\$720.00	\$2,324.90
Portico Entrance Memorial	\$3,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,500.00
Renter's Security Deposit	\$550.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$550.00
Roof Advance from Insurance	\$33,006.94	\$9,115.57	\$42,122.51	\$0.00
Sound System Memorial	\$20,000.00	\$4,400.00	\$24,094.00	\$306.00
Technology Grant	\$508.14	\$0.00	\$579.94	(\$71.80)
Undesignated Donations	\$475.60	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$475.60
VBS Offerings	\$0.25	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.25
Worship Music Materials Fund	\$31.95	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$31.95
Total Savings/Premier/Dedicated Funds	\$138,186.60	\$30,763.27	\$110,242.87	\$58,707.00

Investment Fund

Mission Investment Fund	\$8,425.57	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,425.57
Accumulated Interest MI Fund	\$6,881.17	\$76.56	\$0.00	\$6,957.73
Cross Lutheran Investment Fund (CLIF)	\$0.00	\$100,000.00	\$0.00	\$100,000.00
Total Investment Funds	\$15,306.74	\$100,076.56	\$0.00	\$115,383.30

Total Dedicated Accounts \$153,493.34 \$130,839.83 \$110,242.87 \$174,090.30

Cross Lutheran Church Fund for Missions

Fund for Missions \$112,483.67 \$18,670.00 \$123,771.81 \$7,381.86

Cross Lutheran Church

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2023

	Year Begin Balance	Balance Last Month	Year to Date Balance	This Month Change	Year to Date Change
Assets					
Cash & Checking Totals:	67,752.66	70,400.34	90,197.82	19,797.48	22,445.16
Savings Totals:	233,710.74	60,832.12	66,088.86	5,256.74	(167,621.88)
Investments Totals:	15,306.74	15,376.78	15,383.30	6.52	76.56
Other Assets Totals:	7,830.86	6,176.24	8,710.03	2,533.79	879.17
Mutual Fund Investments Totals:	0.00	103,824.68	103,824.68	0.00	103,824.68
Total Assets:	324,601.00	256,610.16	284,204.69	27,594.53	(40,396.31)
Liabilities					
Current Liabilities Totals:	1,995.81	1,838.11	1,862.77	24.66	(133.04)
Total Liabilities:	1,995.81	1,838.11	1,862.77	24.66	(133.04)
Net Assets					
Fund Balances Totals:	56,628.18	56,628.18	56,628.18	0.00	0.00
Without Donor Restrictions	184,143.83	120,571.53	123,489.62	2,918.09	(60,654.21)
With Donor Restrictions	81,833.18	55,637.37	57,982.54	2,345.17	(23,850.64)
Dedicated Accounts Totals:	265,977.01	176,208.90	181,472.16	5,263.26	(84,504.85)
Current Period Changes to Net Assets	0.00	21,934.97	44,241.58	22,306.61	44,241.58
Total Net Assets:	322,605.19	254,772.05	282,341.92	27,569.87	(40,263.27)
Total Liabilities & Net Assets:	324,601.00	256,610.16	284,204.69	27,594.53	(40,396.31)



United Sisters Report

The United Sisters of Cross Lutheran Church is dedicated to the advancement of Christian fellowship, Christian growth, and Christian service. ALL female members of Cross are members of this organization. There are some of the ways we serve our members and our community:

- We served soup suppers during lent and had a great turn out. Soup is always a great comfort and the desserts were all delicious. Thank you Diana Border and Sylvia Graham and all of the soup makers.
- In July our large freezer stopped working entirely. Sharon Crist and Sylvia Graham went on the hunt for a new one. They were able to purchase and move all the refrigerators out, get the old one out, and move the new one in. thank you to the Property Committee for paying for it. Thank you to Sharon Crist and Sylvia Graham for all their work.
- We offered and served funeral lunches for Kent Anderson, Marie's son who died unexpectedly; For Jerry Brynildson, who had been a long-time member; and Allen Stack, Kay's son who also died unexpectedly. Our condolences to these families and anyone else who has suffered a loss of a friend or family member.
- Sunday morning treats make everyone happy after our worship service. Thank to Marie Anderson, Sharon Crist and Mary Vatne for keeping supplies on hand. Thanks to all of you who have signed up and served coffee. Thank you!
- This year we changed up our Christmas Brunch. We asked families to bring a potluck item. Many were very worried about not having certain dishes, however, it turned out just lovely. We also asked for a dessert, bread or cookies to share with homebound members. Thank you to all for these donations.

Thank you to all who cooked, baked, set up tables, washed dishes and tablecloths, and in general, helped where and when it was needed. It was greatly appreciated!

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Batterman



Pastoral Acts of 2023

Funerals

Bernice Sessing	February 3
Kent Anderson	May 22
Jerry Brynildon	June 15
Allen Stack	December 18

New Members

Yvonne Mulry

Transfers Out

Michele Courneya

CROSS

Cross Lutheran Church,

1945 Prosperity Road, Maplewood, Minnesota, 55109

www.crosslutheranchurch.org office@crosslutheranchurch.org 651-777-1329

Reverend Scott Simmons, pastor pastorscott@crosslutheranchurch.org 612-859-1134

Katie Tomek, administrative assistant office@crosslutheranchurch.org

Carol Hastings, financial secretary carol@crosslutheranchurch.org

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

