

2023 Annual Report

Annual Meeting: January 28, 2024

American Evangelical Lutheran Church 401 Flynn Drive Milbank, South Dakota 57252



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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.

Elzaluon la Eaten

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

66 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. 99—John 15:5



Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Triune God!

On behalf of your close to 200 partners across the South Dakota Synod I come to you to say thank you. Thank you for your generosity! Your benevolence to the ministry of the South Dakota Synod doesn't just keep the lights on and pays salaries, but mainly supports ministry on the ground. Please take a look at the "2023 South Dakota Synod Ministry Celebrations" insert included in this annual report. You will notice that YOU showed up in many and various spaces. Sometimes your presence was felt close to home through a grant you may have received or a synod staff that came to visit. At other times your presence impacted ministry in other parts of the world, such as our companion partners in the Lutheran churches in Nicaragua and



Cameroon. *Thank you* also for your generosity above and beyond your benevolence. Our partners in Cameroon appreciated the synod's \$52,000 gift to support putting roofs on churches. The generosity of the congregations in the synod never ceases to amaze me, and I give thanks for your continued generosity as we journey together in Christ!

While many places celebrated an abundant year of ministry, I also want to acknowledge that for other ministry sites 2023 has not been as hoped for. Our mission statement commits us to "Journeying Together in Christ" and is based on Luke 24:13-34. Two disciples are on the road post resurrection and ponder in disbelief all the things that have happened before their eyes. They were overwhelmed and didn't know what to make of it all. I have heard from many ministry sites a similar account about 2023. "Bishop, things in 2023 were not as we had expected and hoped for. What do we do now?" In Luke's story Jesus, unrecognized by them, joins them and walks alongside to listen and remind them of the promises in scripture. But it isn't until they sit down at the table, and Jesus breaks bread that their eyes are opened. They recognize who he is and that the 'holy heartburn' they had experienced along the way was a sign that their love for Jesus and the way he calls them to live has changed them forever.

How about your community of faith? Where do you hear the promises of scripture assure you that God's got a plan for you and your ministry? Where are you called to follow the 'holy heartburn' God's Spirit ignites in you as you are fed at the table of love? I pray that your annual meeting will be an experience where you can voice what you had wished for as well as lament the unmaterialized hopes. And at the same time, you can hear where God promises new life and renewed faith in your very own midst.

Your South Dakota Synod staff and partners across the church are committed to accompany you in your ministry ventures, whether it means to take small courageous steps or giant leaps of faith. We are here to journey with you in Christ. Therefore, it is with great joy and delight that I am announcing to you that we, the South Dakota Synod, are a recipient of a \$1,137,384 grant Endowment Inc. through its Thriving Congregations Initiative. Details about the grant can be accessed through the synod's website www.sdsynod.org as well as through the synod office. The STAR (Small Town and Rural) Table also offers two types of grants, which are only possible

through the generosity of the people and congregations of the SD Synod when we gather for rural ministry fundraisers. Again, details about the grant opportunities, and how you can apply for a grant are found on the synod's website www.sdsynod.org.

Last but not least, I would like to invite you to the 2024 Synod Assembly on May 31st and June 1st at Our Savior's in Sioux Falls, SD. We will gather under the theme of "(Re)Connect." It will be a celebration of the partnerships we share across the synod and the wider ELCA. Stay tuned for more information about the business coming before the assembly and the fun opportunities. I hope to be able to welcome you to the assembly in person, be in conversation with you and hear about ministry in your world and how you might best be accompanied as well as accompany your fellow members of the SD Synod and the ELCA.

Journeying with you in Christ,

C. Haguaier
Rev. Constanze Hagmaier

Bishop of the South Dakota Synod, ELCA

2023 MINISTRY CELEBRATION



Our Synod's vision of Journeying Together in Christ has continued to focus our work. We invite you to take a few moments to review the list below which celebrates some of the ministry we shared together in 2023. **Journeying together in Christ as the South Dakota Synod, in 2023 we:**

- Applied for and received a grant of **\$1,137,384** from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving Congregations Initiative for new initiatives that are not included the Synod's Mission Plan. Please reach out to Synod Staff for **more information**!
- Completed explorations for two new potential church plants, with plans to start a worshiping community in **Box Elder** and **Shepherd's Table in Sioux Falls**.
- Walked with the **40** people in various stages of **Candidacy** and have **4** new entrance interviews scheduled in 2024!
- Received 3 new first call candidates.
- Completed 23 Ministry Site Studies and extended 28 calls!
- Ensured that nearly every congregation has a called pastor, interim pastor, Synod Authorized Minister, or lay leader to care for God's people (thank you to all of you who are helping out with area congregations and filling in!).
- Distributed **\$77,137** to date through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program.
- Granted **\$123,000** in scholarship funds to seminary students, **\$11,400** in internship site assistance, and **\$82,990** to Luther and Wartburg Seminaries, for a total of **\$217,390** in support of seminary education.
- Created a **pilot rural J-term** program with Wartburg Theological Seminary, which will begin in January 2024.
- Received **\$113,635** in grants from ELCA Christian Community & Leadership.
- Held a **Synod Assembly**, where we gathered again as a community to conduct the business of the synod.
- Hosted Spring and Fall Theological Conferences, where we continued to support the continuing education of our Rostered Ministers either online or in-person.
- Supported the congregations and ministries of the synod through **visits** by synod staff, both **digital** and in-person.
- Hosted a "Lay Leader Night" to support congregational lay leaders and supported rostered leaders with regular inperson and virtual meetings, such as monthly rostered minister virtual check-ins, Synodically Authorized Minister,
 Senior Pastor, and Interim Pastor check-ins, and a First Call and Senior Pastor Retreat.
- Pr. Alan Blankenfeld, Synod **Rural Ministry Liaison** continued to journey with our rural ministry sites. In the past year, Pr. Alan has worked directly with **34 communities and congregations in transition**.
- Continued the work of the Rural Ministry Table, which is currently working on **Small Town and Rural (STAR) grants**, grants funded by the generous donations to rural ministry in the Synod.
- Partnered with **Bergen Lutheran** to hold a **Threshing Bee** which resulted in gifts of **\$51,324** to support rural ministry in South Dakota.

Thank you for all the ways you have supported the ministry of the South Dakota Synod this past year! God has called us to be the body of Christ together, and this is an active and healthy body. We look forward to continuing our journey with you in 2024 and beyond!

Annual Meeting Agenda January 28, 2024

- Call to Order
- Litany and Opening Prayer (From ELCA Churchwide Office) On Screen
- Pastor's Report
- Secretary's Report
 - Minutes from January 29, 2023 Annual Meeting
- President's Report
- Nominations and Election
- Election of Nominating Committee

C13.02. A *Nominating Committee* of six voting members of this congregation, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for consecutive re-election.

(Copied from ALC By-Laws)

- Committee Reports
 - **♦ Stewardship and Finance Committee Report**
 - **♦ Worship, Evangelism and Outreach Committee Report**
 - **♦ Property and Management Committee Report**
 - **♦ Youth and Education Committee Report**
 - **♦ ALC Preschool Report**
 - ♦ Other Reports
 - **♦ WELCA**
 - **♦ Thrivent Choice Board**
 - **♦ Parish Nurse Report**
- Treasurers Report
- Adoption of 2024 Budget
- Other New Business
- Adjournment /Blessing

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"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4

The summer of 2023 marked my 5-year anniversary of serving as your pastor. I know those COVID years really messed with our timing of things, but it is hard to believe we have been walking and working side by side for over 5 years! The simple, short verse above sums up my thoughts as I reflect back on the life and ministry of our congregation in 2023. I am filled with joy, with thanksgiving, and hope, all of which leads me to "Rejoice in the Lord!"

Joy – A few joy-filled highlights from this year:

- You will see in this Annual Report, our average worship attendance rose from 155 per Sunday in 2022 to 182 in 2023! It is so great to see families and people of all ages worshipping on a regular basis. Our membership also continues to grow as each of you share your joy of the Lord and of our congregation and invite others to come and see!
- I love seeing relationships being built and nurtured through our congregation. It is a joy to witness people connect and care for each other at church as well as outside of a church activity. To see people being brought together by our shared love of God is a beautiful thing. I see it every Sunday and throughout the week at school activities and around the community.
- The congregation continued some old traditions and found new ways to share God's love in the community and in the world. What a joy to see how our faith leads us to serve others. We continue making quilts, school kits, and prayer shawls. We continue collecting food for the Food Pantry and hosting Blood Drives. The pastors from St. Dysmas and Church on the Street were with us to share about their ministries and we later sent representatives from our congregation to worship at both places. Both trips proved to be very meaningful for those involved. We also collected coats and winter gear for Church on the Street during Christmas. Watch for more opportunities in 2024.

Thanksgiving – There is always much to be thankful for and this report is a good time to remember some of those things.

- Staff Thank you to Amy Bass, Brittany Bray, and Gary Christianson who all ended their time of employment with us this past year. Their faithfulness and work over the years has been greatly appreciated. I am especially thankful that we were able to fill all three of those positions throughout the year we are excited to have Rachel Kiley, Mya Johanson, and Peggy Mueller on staff. Every year, I grow in my appreciation for Gail and Carol and the work they do in the office. There are many details and projects that just get done because of the quality of work they do. I am thankful for Sierra's leadership in the Preschool. It has been fun to watch her grow in her second year on Staff. Thanksgivings also abound for Diana Dirksen and the work she does as our Parish Nurse in connecting and caring for our shut-ins and providing programming for not only our members, but members of the whole community.
- Volunteers There are too many to name individually, but I am continually amazed as I see people step up
 to serve in various ways using their individual gifts and talents. We couldn't be the church we are without
 you!
- Generosity We were blessed with great generosity from you throughout this past year and ended the year
 again financially solid. Thank you for your gifts that provide for the work we do in our church, our community, and our world.

Hope – This report also helps us look to the future and to what is to come. I have nothing but hope for our congregation. Hope that we will continue to be a place where All Are Welcome. Hope that we will continue to grow as a community of faith caring for one another. Hope that we will continue to challenge all of our members to grow in their faith, in their love and in their service. Hope that we will continue to be a blessing to others because of what God has done for us. Hope that God will continue to guide, strengthen, and bless us as His church in this place!

In Christ's love, Pastor Justin

PASTORAL ACTS 2023

Baptism:

Bishop Barragan January 22
Ledger Barragan January 22
Gianna Pauli April 30
Collyns Mielitz August 20
Sarah Steinlicht October 8
Nils Mears November 26
Matthew Kohn December 3

Marriage:

Michael Miller and Crystal Folk January 21

Tanner Berg and Ria Teske June 3 (Deacon Melissa Gall)

Jared Berg and Macy Wollschlager August 19 (Deacon Melissa Gall)

Funeral:

Shirley Thorson April 7
Ron Boe April 8
Jody Welberg May 10

Gail Strobl May 11 (Pastor David Tonn)

Eunice Seffrood November 20

Confirmation – October 29, 2023:

Thomas Bass Macyn Dunnihoo Reese Schuneman
Braxten Boerger Liam Heller Tayla Trapp
Jeryn Bormann Brander Hicks Harley Zemlicka

Parker Cordingley Macy Mueller

First Communion – April 6, 2023:

Brock Anderson Aspen Kiley Audrey Schmeichel
Oliver Folk Hailee Lester Paisley Steffensen
Brynlee Frerichs Jacobie Lester Hayden Storm
Wylder Hawley Hudson Mueller Drake Wellnitz

CHURCH STATISTICS AND ATTENDANCE

	2019	2020	<u>2021</u>	2022	<u>2023</u>
Baptized Members	953	909	934	939	956
Average Weekly Attendance	182	xxx*	128*	155	182*
% Attending Worship	19%	xxx*	14%*	17%	19%
Average Lenten Attendance	106	xxx*	51	103	95*
Christmas Eve	443	xxx*	424	438	494

- 2020 in-person attendance not recorded due to COVID pandemic. No in-person church for 3 ½ months. Limited attendance remaining part of year.
- 2021 attendance still affected by COVID pandemic. Attendance returned to near pre-pandemic levels in Fall of 2021 (192 average attendance from Rally Day through the end of the year.)
- 2023 Average Worship attendance does NOT include Christmas Eve (even though it was on a Sunday this year). If we include that morning attendance from Christmas Eve (274), the average attendance would increase to 184.
- 2023 Ash Wednesday Service cancelled due to Blizzard.

Broadcast Worship Report:

• The Broadcasts of our Worship Services has become an important ministry. Allowing those to join us in worship who cannot be with us in person because of a variety of reasons – mobility concerns, illness, travelling, weather, etc. For 2023, we averaged around 75 (1-minute) views on each Sunday morning Facebook broadcast of the Worship Service. This is the best analytic Facebook gives us. There are anywhere from 5-10 Comments or Likes each Sunday morning. We receive no analytics from the Radio Station, so do not know how many are worshipping with us in that way.

Transfers Out

- John Forman
- Kelly Gnat
- Andy Johnson
- Brenda Handel-Johnson

Member Deaths (Funerals at ALC)

Listed on previous page

Member Deaths (Funerals not held at ALC)

- Jeff Schmidt (Living Word Lutheran Church, April 15)
- Lois Buhler (Butler Lutheran Church, July 7)
- Robert Crist (Mundwiler Funeral Home, January 11, 2024)

New Members Received

- Jacob and Emma Anderson
- Stephanie Gruba
- Eunice Hallet
- Lee Huffman
- John and Kathy Konstant
- Lillian Jastrzebeski
- Kendra Junso

- Laverna Moldenhauer
- Crissy Pauli
- Harlan and Charlotte Plagge
- Ally Schubert
- Mike, Amanda, and Jordan Thronson
- Mary Toftness
- Bill, Kammi, Sophie, Logan Wietman

American Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes Annual Meeting – January 29, 2023

1. Call to Order

- a. President Josh Schmeichel called the meeting to order.
- b. Attendance Report: 70 voting members present in person

2. Litany and Opening Prayer

3. Pastor's Report

a. Pastor gave a brief highlight of the last year. The big event for 2022 was the 75th anniversary. Also navigating through the preschool teacher transition. Pastor celebrated the pastoral acts listed in the report. We appreciate and celebrate the volunteers in our church and would love to continue working to have people feel empowered to use their time and talents accordingly. Pastor briefly touched on the census report. Worship attendance is still not quite where we would like it to be. A large challenge is to families to attend year round. 17% of members attending on average year-round. Looking forward to 2023 and planning ahead. Blessed with many young families but also a responsibility of our church going forward. Thank you to the church staff and outgoing council members.

4. Secretary's Report

a. A motion was made by Jeanne Kreuger to approve the minutes from the January 30, 2022 Annual Meeting. Motion was seconded by Peg Dohrer. Motion passed

5. President's Report

a. Josh gave a review of the year and highlights. 75th Anniversary celebration was great. The Council has been and will continue to establish new committees and empowering others to serve the church.

6. Nominations and Elections

- a. A call of the floor for nominations for church council was made: no additional nominations were mentioned.
 - Motion made by Dave Bergan to nominate Sara Anderson, Brett Storm, Jacob Knoll, and Sara VanMeter to a 3 year term on council as well as Holly Hilbrands to fill the remaining 2 year term on council. Seconded by Jeanne Kreuger. Motion passed
- b. A call was made for the next nominating committee.
 - i. Motion made by Holly Hilbrands for Josh Schmeichel, Jessica Zemlicka, Amber Scriver, Mark Mueller, Lavonne Fraasch, and Rich Kreuger to form the nominating committee. Seconded by Carol Kirchberg. Motion passed

7. Committee Reports

a. Brief overview of each report was given by President Josh: Stewardship & Finance, Worship, Evangelism and Outreach, Property and Management, Youth and Education, WELCA, Thrivent Board, Parish Nurse Report

8. Treasurer's Report/Adoption of 2023 Budget

- a. Josh gave a summary of the budget and opened the floor to questions.
- A motion was made by Doug Fraasch to accept the 2023 budget as written. Seconded by Lynn Hardy.
 Motion passed

9. Adjournment/Blessing

- a. Pastor gave blessing
- b. A motion to adjourn was made by Mark Granquist and seconded by Wally Hamman. Motion passed

Respectfully Submitted by:

Heather Zinter, Council Secretary

COUNCIL PRESIDENT REPORT

Greetings American Lutheran Church Congregation,

As I look back, it was 3 years ago I received a text asking to join the American Lutheran Church Council. I was taken aback for a moment, as just a number and no name was present on the contact information. Thinking surely nobody would joke about this matter, I really had no hesitation other than if it would interfere with my profession. I took it upon myself to contribute my small wealth of knowledge of religion and use this to better myself and hopefully help out the church in a way I had never dreamt of.

It took me a little while to warm up to speaking and giving my opinion, but I soon realized nobody is there to criticize, only to look for input to solutions. Looking at everyone around the table on meeting nights, I believe the committees have been getting more efficient and energized as the years went on. It really helps that the nominating committee strives to put the right people in the right committee. So remember, if you are asked to be on council, you were called upon for the sake that you would be a great fit for that committee.

Since day one working with the others on the property committee I felt at home. We took the problems that faced the building and grounds of the church and "tried" to make the best informed decisions we could. No different than in my every day profession. Fast forward a year now and I'm asked to be vice president and then president. Like before, really no hesitations other than speaking in front of the whole congregation. It didn't seem like anything I really could say no to. By the way, I still don't like standing up in front of everybody!

This year I had the opportunity to attend the annual synod meeting with Pastor Justin. They spoke on some policy changes, reports from all the conferences, and similar issues that face our congregation. We also had the privilege of listening to native music and partaking in the deeding of a Lutheran church in Rapid City to the Woyatan people. It was promised to them years ago and they felt honored that the Synod followed through with their promise.

I also went on the St. Dysmas prison visit in Sioux Falls. We had a service with about 40-50 inmates and had numerous conversations with several inmates after the service. I had been looking forward to making this trip for a couple years. Let me tell you, when you step into the prison after the guards give you your "beeper", reality hits you very quickly when the door slams shut and locks behind you. I started looking at the Church members that made the trip and judging them to see if I could run faster than them in a hundred yard dash.... All in all, the inmates were very grateful for us taking time out of our day to share in their message and listen to their music.

This year we hired a full time Youth and Ed Director. We had help from the Mutual Ministry Committee to set up the job description and help with the vision for the future on what this position could do for the children of the church. We roughly have 135 kids participating in Sunday school. With that number it definitely takes someone that can commit a lot of hours to guide them on the path that American Lutheran Church sees fit.

Also, our Janitor Gary Christenson resigned. We hired a replacement janitor with the main focus on cleaning and are relying on our newly formed property subcommittee to take on the tasks of maintenance around the church.

I can safely say that hiring new people and retaining people is a daunting task. It is hard to find qualified candidates. The council has had some serious conversations on pay and pay increases to attract new candidates and retain the current employees. This year we will be offering a benefit for employees, a retirement plan. This was by far one of the simplest/inexpensive benefits that we could start with. It was a hard decision, but we felt with the surrounding job market we needed to start something to keep our wonderful staff here at American Lutheran Church.

In closing, I remind you of our vision statement "Christ Welcomes All at American Lutheran Church". It takes all of us to steer this ship along this voyage. What an amazing voyage it has been and I can't wait to see where we go in the near future.

Ryan Gruba, Church Council President

FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

The basic objectives of this committee are to initiate programs for the development of good stewardship attitudes in members of the congregation – utilizing time, talents and treasures. We are also entrusted to ensure the financial stability of our congregation, of which Emily Mueller has been instrumental. As Treasurer she has switched to an online payroll system, overseen the daily financial operations of the church, and led the preparation of the annual budget. We thank Emily for all her volunteered time!

In 2023, we implemented a Gifting Program and related Policies. The Gifting Program is a list of options in which a gift can be designated to Church Funds and Programs, Church Capital Improvements, and Mission Outreach Programs. We will have brochures with these options distributed throughout the church. We are also working on setting up an Endowment Fund for those who would like to give a legacy gift that will make a lasting difference. The Gifting Policies created will assist the Donor and the Church complete any necessary reviews and steps.

The ALC Investment Committee also reviewed our current investments. Due to unplanned use, a portion of the Dedicated Funds were transferred to Certificates of Deposit due to their high rates. Those CDs have created additional income upon maturing to fund church activities.

Congregation members continue to give regularly, and usage of the online giving has increased. Regular giving provides the cash flow needed to keep American Lutheran operating efficiently. Budgeted benevolence for 2023 was sent to the SD ELCA Synod, Lutheran Outdoors, SD Lutheran Campus Ministry, St. Dysmas, and the local ICAP office. Our support of Lutheran Social Services is provided through use of our facility.

For members who have Thrivent insurance or investments, we encourage you to continue directing your Thrivent Choice Dollars to either American Lutheran Church or the ALC Preschool. The Thrivent Card Action Teams continue to provide monies for special needs and projects. Thank you to all who apply for cards and direct choice dollars to ALC!

Also, you can set up your 2024 offering payments through your bank or the Church App! If you need help with any Thrivent programs or church offering payments, please stop into the church office. Regular giving helps American Lutheran Church continue to do our work and mission. Thank you for your continuing support!

Submitted by Finance and Stewardship Committee Members: Dave Bergan, Sara Anderson, and Jacob Knoll

WORSHIP & EVANGELISM COMMITTEE REPORT

The worship and evangelism committee had a busy and successful year thanks to many of you sharing your time and talents.

A few special events included a day trip to the cities for a Twins game, Golf Scramble, Battle of the Bowl, visits to St. Dysmas prison, and a presence at Church on the Street in Sioux Falls.

We also had many events that got families moving and integrated the vast generations of our congregation including kickball, roller skating, painting/craft events, bike riding, basketball, and game nights.

By popular request, we brought back the potluck and had great success and participation. We hosted two this past year and are considering making this a quarterly event.

Based on parishioner feedback, we made adjustments to the way worship helper roles are assigned, now having last names assigned by month (inspired by Love in Action) and empty spaces filled in by our committee to encourage involvement from all.

Finally, we accomplished our 2023 committee goal by sending out postcards intended to inform members of upcoming events and welcome them to worship with us.

We are looking forward to updating our church directory in April and another successful 2024.

Thank you for all of your support in making American Lutheran Church a wonderful place to worship.

Submitted by Worship and Evangelism Committee: Sara VanMeter, Laurie Strege, Amanda Grabow

YOUTH & EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Sunday School

- The winter/spring curriculum was called "Plate it" focusing on Jesus's parables, acts, and miracles.
- Each Sunday, the youth have three sections to Sunday School: music, movie (video clip relevant to daily curriculum) and classroom time.
- The kids sang and played bells during the Palm Sunday Service.
- To celebrate the end of the year in May, the youth put together over 150 May Day baskets and dropped them off at various long term care facilities in the area.
- On August 20th, students had their backpacks blessed and were sent home with special tags reminding them of their ALC faith family.
- A new year of Sunday School started on September 17th with 136 registered youth ages preschool through 8th grade.
- We have 19 teacher volunteers and 5 teacher assistants.
- 18 third grade students and 7 three-year-olds received Bibles in September for Bible Sunday.
- This fall the curriculum focused on the Bible, studying the Old Testament. Many grades have enjoyed scavenger hunts in their classrooms, where they have used their Bible skills to solve puzzles or questions.
- 100 youth participated in the Christmas Program "He Makes All Things Beautiful" on December 17, 2023.

Confirmation

- 11 freshmen were confirmed on October 29, 2023.
- An adult is anonymously matched with each of the ALC youths when they are confirmed. That adult commits to praying for their youth until they graduate from high school. Karen Davis leads this Pray-ers for Youth program.
- The 2023-2024 Confirmation Class includes 18, 7th and 8th graders.
- Each of the 8th grade students also works with an adult mentor from our congregation.
- The confirmation youth did several outreach/service activities during the year, including Souper Bowl of Caring Food Drive, helping with the Grant County Christian Service Council Food Giveaway, helping pack the quilts and school kits for shipping to Lutheran World Relief and attended and helped with the Church on the Streets ministry in Sioux Falls.

High School Youth Group

- The High School Youth Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Each evening includes supper, activities, and devotions. There have been 10-15 youth attending.
- 7 youth and 2 adults are registered for the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans for July 2024.
- The youth group has helped with Treat Street. They have enjoyed time at The Pumpkin Patch, ice skating and had a party before Christmas.

Junior High Youth Group

 This year, ALC hosted an all-night city-wide lock-in, in conjunction with Central Church for both middle and high school youth. We started the evening at Central Church with speakers, Craig & Molly Sandborn. The high school youth started at ALC and ended at Central the middle school was opposite. Approximately 40 middle schoolers and 12 high schoolers attended.

Summer Activities

- Pastor Justin put together Take Out Church Boxes this summer as an opportunity for members and families to stay connected to the church while traveling over the summer.
- We had two **Campfire worships** opportunities this summer on the last Wednesday of each month. Approximately 40-50 attended worship and fellowship afterwards. It was a great opportunity for those gone on the weekends to still be able to worship.
- Vacation Bible School was held June 14-15. Amy Bass coordinated a VBS program that had approximately 70 youth in attendance. The theme, "Pets Unleashed," helped the kids understand that we should care for each other the way that Jesus cares for us.
- We had 8 youth attend a Lutheran Outdoors Bible Camp this past summer. The church offers financial support to any youth that would like to attend.

Adult Education

- Women's Bible Study meets on Wednesday mornings in the Library.
- Men's Breakfast Group meets on Thursday mornings.
- Page Turners Book Club is a group led by Janelle Kelly. There is an afternoon Book Club and an Evening Book Club that each meet once a month. Janelle provides books to the group from the state library. The group consists of members from Parkview Methodist and American Lutheran Church.
- Movie Nights are an opportunity for fun and fellowship. They happen about once a month

Year Ahead for Education at ALC

Amy Bass, former Education Coordinator, resigned from her position at the end of the school year. Despite her departure, she generously offered to assist in ensuring a smooth transition into the new school year. The council, in collaboration with the mutual ministry committee, seized this opportunity to explore the creation of a full-time position. Subsequently, Rachel Kiley was appointed as the new Education Director this fall. We would like to extend a warm welcome to Rachel in her new role.

With Rachel stepping into the role of Education Director, her responsibilities will extend beyond Sunday School. She will now play a key role in supporting Pastor with Confirmation and Youth Groups. We believe Rachel's expertise and dedication will contribute significantly to the growth and development of the youth ministries within the church. Her expanded focus reflects a commitment to enhancing the overall educational and youth-oriented aspects of our church community.

Rachel is eager to bring fresh ideas to the table and is actively seeking sub-committees to help implement her plans. She has already began looking for new curriculum for the fall, has big Rally Day ideas and has already successfully secured a grant for a new program in 2024 called Toddler Time with careTakers (TTT). Please reach out to Rachel with any additional ideas, concerns or if you would be willing to help with some youth activities. Together we can help our Youth grow in God's love. As Proverbs states, "Train children in the way they should go; when they grow old, they won't depart from it."

Submitted by Youth & Education Committee members: Heather Zinter, Jessica Schuchard, Holly Hilbrands American Lutheran Youth and Education Director: Rachel Kiley

PROPERTY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT -

Projects in 2023

- Installed new water filling station
- Fixed broken sprinkler line on north side of church
- Removed a few evergreen landscape bushes
- Replaced steeple lights
- Renovated a donated storage shed
- Replaced AED
- Carpets were shampooed in sanctuary, narthex and fellowship hall
- Installed a permanent fire ring on the eastside of fellowship hall. (Completed by Braydon Bauer as his Eagle Scout Project)
- Replaced 2 furnaces in the fellowship hall utility room and fixed one that supplies music room (completed on January 9, 2024)

Projects for 2024

- Repaint fellowship hall and kitchen
- Replace lights in fellowship hall with LED
- Redo the landscape directly around church

Submitted by Property and Management Committee members: Ryan Gruba, Dan Bohn, Brett Storm

AMERICAN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL REPORT

The ALC Preschool classroom continues to be filled with much laughter, energy, and learning with some amazing kids who enter our doors daily. During the 2022-2023 school year, 28 students were enrolled (15 students in the 4's Class & 13 students in the 3's Class).

At the end of April, we went on a field trip down Main Street. We stopped at the Valley Queen Cheese Store and got to learn about dairy cows and how cheese is made. We also got to taste some of the cheese Valley Queen makes. We then stopped at the Music Park, and the children got the chance to play with the musical toys there. After that, we went to Whimsy on Main where we were read a story. We next went to The Bank to get cookies for our snack and then walked to the library. At the library, we got to enjoy another story before it was time to head back to school to go home.

In early May, we went on a field trip to Hartford Beach. We went on a nature hike on the Aspen Trail and did a scavenger hunt for things we saw along our hike. We made pinecone bird feeders to take home. We enjoyed a snack of s'mores made around a campfire. After that, we had a picnic for lunch, and then played on the playground until it was time to head back to school.

The end of the school year brought with it the resignation of our classroom assistant, Brittany Bray. We are thankful for her years of service she dedicated to our preschool. Although her resignation closed one door, God's grace helped the Preschool Board members promptly start the search for our next classroom assistant. We were fortunate to find our new classroom assistant, Mya Johanson. After years of dedicated volunteering, Rebecca Welberg found a new opportunity this fall. We miss her presence in the classroom and thank her for the time she gave to ALC Preschool.

As the 2023-2024 school year started, we eagerly entered the classroom with 24 energetic students (13 students in the 4's Class & 11 in the 3's Class). An open house was held in early August so the returning and incoming students and their parents could see the classroom and meet the new classroom assistant. We were fortunate enough to have two High School Cadets, Hailey Zinter and Isabella Vogel, from the Milbank High School come to the classroom to help in any capacity asked.

In mid-November, preparations were made for "Preschool Sunday" in which we took the time to showcase our preschool program. The preschool students shared their gifts of music with the congregation at the beginning of the church service. Then we joined for a meal that included soup and breadsticks along with many desserts provided from the preschool families. A silent auction was held as well with items donated by members of the church. The tables were decorated with student-made centerpieces and placemats along with pictures and artwork of the students in the halls. The preschool room was also open for anyone to take a look.

As Christmas approached, the 4's Class was able to take a trip to St. Williams to sing for the residents. They also brought Christmas cards they had made to give to the residents.

During the school year, students were kept busy learning each week about a variety of focus areas including letters, numbers, colors, and shapes. Each week a new Bible verse is memorized. Pastor Justin joins the classroom on Mondays to read a Bible story and converse with the children.

We continue to use the "Alive Studios Classrooms Alive" curriculum that integrates math and literacy components with the use of technology, our rug, and the journals to provide an enhanced learning opportunity for the children.

We are ever so thankful for the continued generosity and support given from the church and community members, Thrivent members, and through the designation of Thrivent Choice Dollars and/or allowing us to utilize one's \$250 Action Team Grant card for events, classroom projects, supplies, snacks, etc.

In addition, monetary gift donations, attending/supporting our fundraisers, memorials or donations towards preschool financial scholarships, and other means have all played an active role in helping provide funds and support needed for the preschool. Our fundraisers this past year included a pizza fundraiser and our soup fundraiser. We are very fortunate to all those who help in small and big ways to make the preschool a success!

Our Preschool Board meets monthly to have ongoing conversations of how we will help our program continue to grow now and in the future. We discuss enrollment, financial scholarship needs, fundraising efforts, and the overall needs of our preschool. Our thanks to out-going preschool board members Jody Bear and Trista Mikkelson for their years of service on the board.

Submitted by:

Teacher- Sierra Daugaard | Classroom Assistant- Mya Johanson Preschool Board Members- Kaitlin Knoll, Haley Harms, Sara Koepke, Rhonda Zinter, Nicole Rinehart

THRIVENT CHOICE BOARD REPORT

Thank you to all Thrivent Members who choose to direct their Choice Dollars to American Lutheran Church.

Over the last 13 years Thrivent Choice Dollars have directed \$121,469 to the American Lutheran Church to help benefit special projects within the church.

Over the last 9 years Thrivent Choice Dollars have directed \$74,633 to the American Lutheran Preschool.

As a reminder, if you haven't directed your 2023 Choice Dollars yet, they need to be done by the end of March. If you have questions about asking for supplementing funds, please contact the Church Office.

Submitted by Thrivent Board Members:

Wally and Diane Hamman, Neil Pauli, Jeff Loutsch, Kathy Mathiason, and June Hunt

THRIVENT CHOICE FUND BALANCE on 1/1/23	\$ 6,785.50
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Deposits from Thrivent Choice Donors to ALC \$4,442
Deposits from Thrivent Choice Donors to Preschool \$6,174

TOTAL RECEIPTS \$ 10,616.00

Transfers to specific areas per donor request

Preschool \$ 6,174.00

Backpack Blessing Sunday \$ 136.00

Piece Corps Quilters \$ 173.00

Thrivent Choice Distributions

per Council/Committee instructions

Christmas Tree \$ 2,500.00 Twins Bus Trip \$ 1,250.00

TOTAL DISTRIBUTIONS \$ 10,233.00

THRIVENT CHOICE FUND BALANCE on 12/31/23 \$ 7, 168.50

Grant Funds paid to Organization are to be used exclusively to carry out the religious, charitable or educational purposes of Organization, and not to influence law, policy, church doctrine or church practice. Organization is prohibited from using any Choice Dollars Grant Funds to (1) satisfy, offset or reduce any part of the pledge, liability or other obligation of any person or entity; or (2) make any payment to or provide any other economic benefit to any person in exchange for or in connection with the direction of Choice Dollars to Organization or to other entity.

In addition to Thrivent Choice Dollars, each person with Thrivent Financial Insurance/Products is given the opportunity to receive two \$250 Thrivent Action Team Debit cards every year. We thank the Thrivent Financial members from our congregation who supplied cards (totaling \$8,500) that were used throughout the year for projects and events here at American Lutheran. The following list includes some of the groups and projects that benefitted.

Pancake Breakfast VBS Youth Bracelet Fundraiser
Lent/Meal Supplies Twins Trip Fellowship Hall Decorations

Baptism Supplies Preschool Shirts Christian Books
Skate Event Piece Corps Quilting Supplies Church on the Street

Palm Sunday Breakfast Baking Angels Supplies Note-A-Bells

Parish Nurse Seasonal Decorations Sun Shine Boxes -College Students

Graduation Sunday 3rd Grade Bibles Sunday School

New Member Confirmation Sunday

If you are a Thrivent Financial member and would be willing to use a card for American Lutheran Church or Preschool, please contact the Church Office. Carol Kirchberg coordinates this ministry and will connect you with a requested need or idea.

WELCA (Women of the ELCA) REPORT -

Peace Circle Bible Study is held every first Tuesday of the month at 11:00. We use Gather Magazine for our lesson.

The September Prairie Coteau gathering was held at NeSoDak Bible Camp. We attended the meetings related to missions, quilt information & school bags.

78 School Bag Kits, 26 Personal Care Kits, and 85 Quilts were boxed up and delivered to Watertown, where they were combined with boxes from other churches in the Prairie Coteau Conference. A truck then delivered everything to the Lutheran World Relief Warehouse in Minneapolis.

Thank you for your donations of items for the school supplies and personal care kits. A reminder: We take gently used towels for the care kits, if you are cleaning out closets.

Money was raised from the Mission Bake Sale. Thank you to all the bakers who worked to contribute to our sale. And thank you to everyone who supported us by making purchases.

Submitted by: Kathy Mathiason

2023 WELCA Treasurer's Report

Balance in Account 12/31/22 \$4,552.77

Income:			Expenditures:	
Card Nook		621.00	Baking pans for kitchen	89.25
Circle Offering	g	860.00	WELCA Offering	282.00
Quilts (memo	rials/donations)	855.45	Quilt Supplies	875.12
Bake Sale		1,680.00	Water Station	1,089.76
Runners Club		357.00	Runners Club	357.00
Gift		<u>500.00</u>	Treasurers Abounding	319.84
		\$4,873.45	Prairie Coteau Conf. missions	175.00
			Prairie Coteau Conf. expenses	25.00
			St. Dysmas	200.00
			Grant Co. Food Pantry	200.00
Balance by Fu	und:		Orphan Grain Train	200.00
Card Nook	885.06		NeSoDak	200.00
Quilts	905.39		Parish Nurse	200.00
Undesignated	3,122.80		Prairie Coteau Shipping	300.00
Runners Club	00.00			\$4,512.97
	\$4,913.25			

Balance in Account 12/31/23 \$4,913.25

Submitted by Darlene Olson WELCA Treasurer

Commit to the Lord all that you do and your plan will be successful. Proverbs 16:3

2023 celebrated 20 years of Parish Nursing in the fall with recognition at both churches. I also gave an update to each church in the fall.

I continued with visits made by phone, at church, in their home, Nursing Home or Hospital **(200)** and cards sent for birthdays (age over 75), thinking of you after surgery or other illness, baptism, new members, confirmation, graduation and sympathy(**188**). Blood pressures are taken monthly at each congregation **(121)**. 9 of these were new people.

We held 6 events in 2023:

- 1. Walking program "Longest walking trip in the World" with **62** participants and **14, 315** miles logged. We had an awards get together in April to celebrate this success with **19** in attendance.
- 2. In February, for Valentines Day, I sent out/or visited a total of **56** with some crocheted valentines hearts and cards. These went to the shut ins and many that live alone.
- 3. In July, we hosted a noon picnic meal at American Lutheran church. We had a wonderful turnout of **42** and hope to do this again next summer.
- 4. In October, we brought in a speaker on Human Trafficking from Call to Freedom in Sioux Falls. We partnered with the Ministerial Association and had pastors invite their congregations. About **80** attended this. Donations were taken and some churches sent their own donation so that over \$1300 was given. American Lutheran gift was the advertisements in the newspaper. There is interest in a follow-up for training, if community groups are interested.
- 5. We had a Christmas party December 7 and had **35** in attendance. Attendees brought items like chap stick and small travel lotions for our shut in's Christmas bags. Considering we held this on Pearl Harbor day, we asked Bob Frink to do a military presentation, complete with Taps. Pastor Justin gave devotions and we sang carols.
- 6. The Blue Christmas Service was held at Parkview. We had an attendance of about **24** and had a shared fellow-ship afterwards which many stayed for.

Monthly Grant County newspaper articles are written along with monthly newsletter articles. At Parkview, I am involved in making children/lap quilts, as we were gifted many completed tops and material from a parishioner. I also spoke at a Parish Nurse Education event in Sioux Falls this past fall.

Financials:

We receive \$2400 yearly from American Lutheran and \$1,000 from Parkview based on memberships. We have also received a couple of gifts/memorials, \$200 from ELCA Women and \$1,000 from an individual at Parkview. These gifts help keep us running, along with the fact that my hourly wage has not increased in 20 years. \$3,980 salary was paid. No mileage is paid.

I also was gifted access to two Thrivent cards to help with some items for gifting to elderly and also for recognition of our walkers.

Parish Nursing is God's work. The ministry belongs to the people and is consecrated by God.

Thank you for your support over this past year. May we be blessed with many more years.

Parish Nurse Health Board Members: Kathy Mathiason, and Patti Frazee. Kim Goetschius, Jackie Smith, Submitted by:

Diana Dirksen, Parish Nurse

PIECE CORPS QUILTERS

The Piece Corps Quilters meet at 9:00 AM on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month. You do not need to be a quilter to help out. There are opportunities to help for everyone. If you are interested in learning more about the group, let the church office know or stop by on the 2nd or 4th Tuesday of the month. The quilters meet in the fellowship hall.

The Piece Corp Quilters made a total of 135 quilts in 2023.

The quilts were distributed as follows:

15 baby quits: Given to each child baptized at American Lutheran

11 senior quilts: Given to American Lutheran high school graduates

03 charity quilts: Given to area groups doing fundraising

20 guilts: Given to Sleep in Heavenly Beds

01 quilt: Given to Pastor Justin

85 quilts: Given to Lutheran World Relief

During 2023, it cost \$33.50 to make each quilt at American Lutheran. The Piece Corps Quilters always welcome gifts of time, fabric or monetary offerings.

Submitted by Marilyn Hodenfield, Renee' Neuharth, Rhonda Zinter Piece Corps Quilting Members

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY -

Our ALC Prayer Shawl Ministry is one way to reach out in Christian love to those in need of special blessings.

The members of the Prayer Shawl Group crochet or knit shawls on their own time. Instructions and all of the yarn is provided.

30 prayer shawls were made and distributed to members and friends of the congregation in 2023.

Submitted by Janelle Kelly, Prayer Shawl Ministry Coordinator

LUTHERANS OUTDOORS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

CONGREGATIONAL REPORT

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Thank you, to all of the individuals and congregations that supported the ministry of Lutherans Outdoors(LO) with financial gifts. Also, thank you to all of the individuals who attended summer camps, retreats, and travel experiences. LO cannot be the ministry that welcomes all to explore and experience Christ's love in community and creation without you!

REIMAGINING LUTHERANS OUTDOORS

The Board of Lutherans Outdoors emphasis in 2023 was the **REIMAGINING of** Lutherans Outdoors. Eight Task Forces have met, and continue to meet, diving into eight audits of the ministry. These eight areas are Philosophy, Finance, Financial Development, Marketing, Governance, Facility, Program, and Staffing. Results so far include the development of new Core Values where we promise to **EXPLORE FAITH**, **WELCOME ALL. BUILD LEADERS**, and **CARE FOR ALL CREATION**.

There are nearly 100 recommendations that have resulted from these eight audits. The recommendations will provide guidance for the Strategic process LO will develop for the next several years. The final results of the **REIMAGINING** will be presented to the Board of Directors at their January meeting, with a presentation to the voting members at the LO 2023 Annual Meeting in June 2024.

STAFF UPDATES

During 2023, Lutherans Outdoors said goodbye to Teri Gayer, who served many roles with LO during the past 30-plus years, most recently as the Director of Klein Ranch. During the celebration of 50 years of ministry at Klein Ranch last July, Teri was recognized for her ministry.

In May, LO said hello to Skylar Schwab, who assumed the Program Director position at Outlaw Ranch. Klaire Hudson resigned earlier in the spring from this position after serving in this role. Skylar jumped right into a busy summer and we are very excited she has joined the LO family!

SUMMER 2023 | SUMMER 2024

Our summer camper attendance increased by 15% as a whole in 2023. Outlaw Ranch saw a 22% increase boosted by nearly 100 more Family Campers. Klein Ranch saw a 19% increase. NeSoDak saw a 4% decrease in campers. The total camper number was nearly 1,350.

Our Adult Travel Experiences had over 60 participants to our two destinations: Holden Village and Branson. In 2024, Experiences will be to Minneapolis for a theatre event in April, to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in September, to the Smokie Mountains and Dollywood in October, and a return to Branson in November.

The new Horse Corral at Outlaw Ranch was completed in 2023. This great addition provides a wonderful place to care for the horses and a safe place for campers to begin their horse care education and rides each week.

Join Lutherans Outdoors for Summer 2024 "Created To Be!" Register at losd.org. "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well" Psalm 139:14

In the Hills. On the Prairie. At the Water.



Church on the Street

Annual Report 2023 ChurchontheStreetsf.org

Church on the Street continues to show up with the good news of Jesus, especially where folks are experiencing homelessness and poverty. You'll find us on the streets, visiting folks in shelters, cars, hospitals, laundry mats, and jails. This year, our offices moved to 515 N. Main. Ave inside the Multi-Cultural Center and are accessible through the Minnehaha County building, so more people are stopping by since they're already in the building for other things. Skylar Allen, Director of Organization, oversees record growth in food requests, with 242 families accessing the pantry during the year's first quarter and 885 families in the fourth quarter.

Also, this year, we and several of our partners worked with Sioux Falls Thrive to get the Eat Well Sioux Falls Mobile Market into food deserts in our town. Luke Senst is the Market Manager in addition to being our Director of Media Ministries. The mobile market is one example of how partnerships and collaborations are how we help share God's love in tangible ways.

Finally, it is a blessing to be Church together, sharing the best and worst of life and leaning on the promises of our Savior. Harriet Monson, Director of Laundry with Love, said it best: "One of the best moments for me this year was when the young single mom who moved into a place with a washer and dryer (so she doesn't need our services anymore) but she came back to visit."

Thank you for all the ways you are part of Church on the Street through your prayers, financial donations, in-kind donations, visits, and sharing our story. You are a blessing!

It's great to be Church together!

Rev. Chris Matson, Pastor & Mission Developer 515 N Main Ave Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104 Chris@churchonthestreetsf.org 605-215-1143

DEDICATED ACCOUNTS OF AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

American Lutheran Church maintains dedicated accounts that are outside of the annual budget of the church. These accounts reflect funds that are earmarked or restricted for a specific purpose.

Often, the funds have come from gifts or from special activities that have raised funds for a specific purpose. Dedicated accounts do not close out their balances at the end of a fiscal year like income and expense accounts, but retain their balances over fiscal years.

Dedicated accounts are not bank accounts and do not necessarily tie directly to a specific bank account; they simply track funds that can only be used for specific purposes. The council oversees the establishment of these accounts and the funding and withdrawal of monies from the account.

We are pleased to present the status of these accounts.

TOTAL	\$328,538.79
CD at First Bank & Trust	<u>250,000.00</u> **
Lefse and Klub	1,661.00
Milbank Ministerial Association	1,962.63
Bible Camp	1,942.43
Youth Grades 6-12	5,002.51
Thrivent Choice Dollars	7,168.50
Property and Building Improvements	15,493.33
Preschool Scholarships	2,175.96
Preschool Capital	-217.18
Music	2,101.14
Memorial	13,586.85
College Scholarships	3,972.92
Youth Trip	17,685.82
Manna Praise Band	6,020.88

**Breakout of CD Dollars:

Parsonage Sale: \$ 161,677.57

Preschool Capital Funds: \$ 60,000.00

Property/Building Improvement: \$ 28,322.43

TOTAL \$ 250,000.00