

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

**Lord of Life Lutheran Church**



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP  
ELIZABETH EATON



**LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**2023-24 Annual Report**  
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Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Vision:**

**That all have life through the love of Christ**

**Mission:**

**We seek and welcome all to connect, celebrate, and serve in God's love.**

**Core Values:**

**Welcoming All** – At Lord of Life, “all” means “all.” Regardless of age, race, origin, or sexual orientation: You are welcome here. All people are created in the image of God and have received talents, interests, and strengths that glorify God.

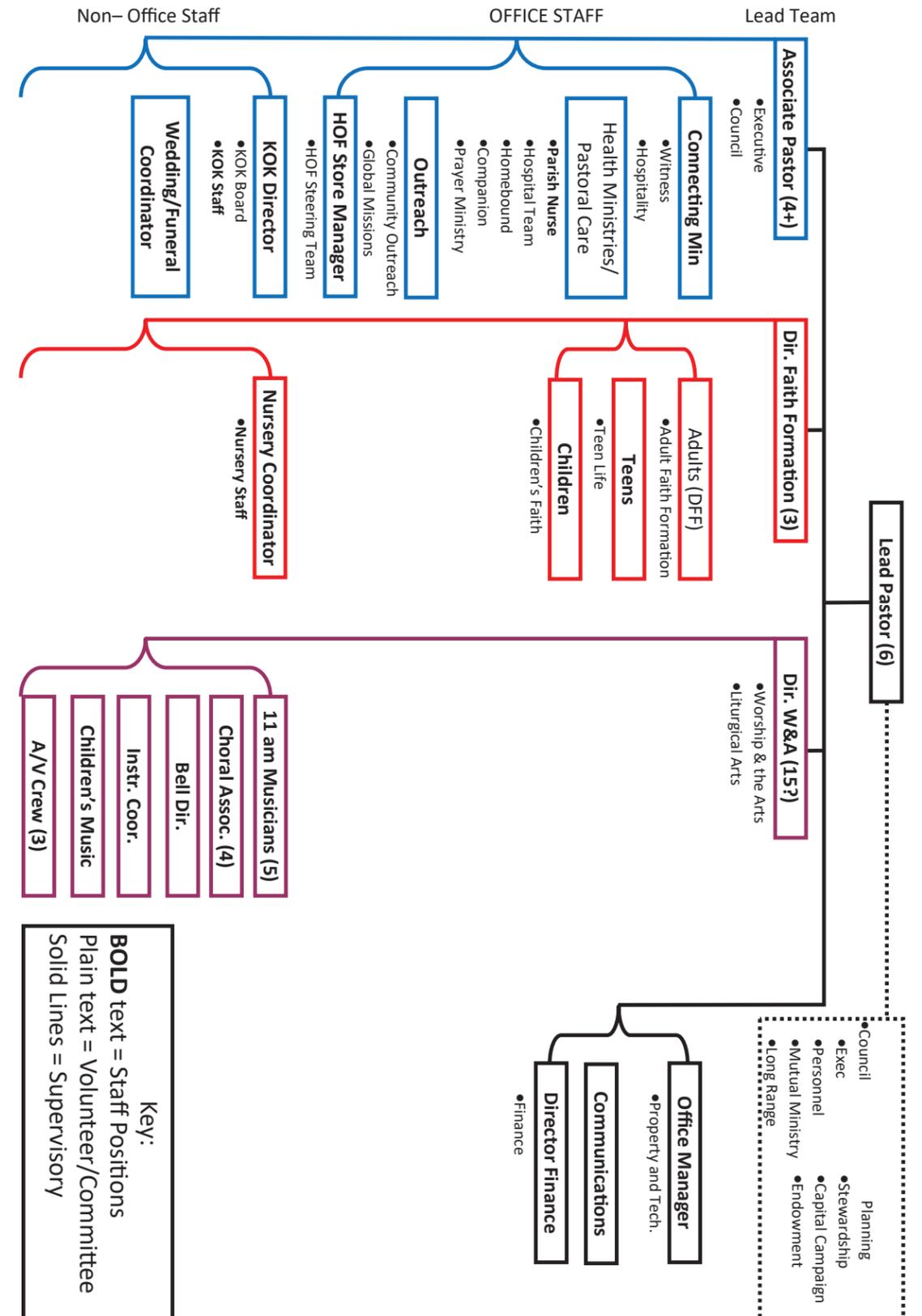
**Finding Connection** – In Christ, we are one Body. We strive to foster meaningful relationships both with God and with a diverse body of believers.

**Experiencing Grace** – In the tradition of Martin Luther we recognize that we can only be saved by the gift of God that we do not deserve but that is lovingly given to us. Our community understands that receiving God’s grace frees us to live out of love for God’s world.

**Serving God’s World** – We are called by the Holy Spirit to use the gifts, talents, and resources in our own lives and in our community of faith to serve the world in which we live. We seek to do this work locally and globally by building partnerships and cultivating relationships with those we serve.

**Celebrating Life** – A life in Christ is a life of abundance, joy, and forgiveness. We celebrate this life as Christ celebrated when he walked among us. The spirit of celebration is evident in our worship, in our fellowship, in our witness, and in our serving.

**Lord of Life Staffing Model**



**Key:**  
**BOLD text = Staff Positions**  
 Plain text = Volunteer/Committee  
 Solid Lines = Supervisory

## MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS - FIVE YEARS AT A GLANCE

| Members                | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Baptized               | 1,541 | 1,535 | 1,448 | 1,304 | 1,308 |
| Confirmed              | 1,246 | 1,250 | 1,190 | 1,041 | 937   |
| Non-Confirmed Children | 295   | 296   | 258   | 263   | 371   |

## MEMBERSHIP - 2023

|  | Baptized | Confirmed |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Membership – end of 2022                     | 1,308    | 937       |
| <b>Members Received During 2023</b>          |          |           |
| By Baptism: Children (15 yrs. & younger)     | 15       | 0         |
| By Baptism: Adults (16 yrs. & older)         | 0        | 0         |
| Reinstated                                   | 0        | 0         |
| By Affirmed Faith                            | 0        | 0         |
| By Transfer                                  | 39       | 28        |
| <b>Total Members Received in 2023</b>        | 54       | 28        |
| Youth Confirmed                              |          | 7         |
|  | 1,362    | 972       |
| <b>Members Removed</b>                       |          |           |
| By Death                                     | 10       | 10        |
| By Transfer                                  | 22       | 22        |
| For Other Reasons and Statistical Adjustment | 0        | 0         |
|  | 32       | 32        |
| <b>Membership – end of 2023</b>              | 1,330    | 940       |

## Additional Information

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Confirmed Adults                     | 940 |
| Baptized Children                    | 390 |
| Number of Households                 | 548 |
| Average In-Person Worship Attendance | 248 |
| Average Online Worship Attendance    | 293 |

## Lord of Life 2023 Statistical Summary

### PASTORAL ACTS

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Baptisms 14       | Funerals 9      |
| Weddings 2        | Confirmations 9 |
| First Communion 0 |                 |

### WORSHIP

|                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Sunday Services 103      | Mid-Week Services 14   |
| Easter Services 2        | Communion Services 122 |
| Christmas Eve Services 4 |                        |

### BAPTISMS (14)

|                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Jillian Claire Johnson 2/19/2023  | Talin Alexander Herz 6/25/2023   |
| Evan Douglas Motes 2/26/2023      | Walker Timothy DeHaven 7/2/2023  |
| James Duke Nazaroff 3/26/2023     | Carson Michael LeBouef 7/30/2023 |
| Josephine Marie Towe 4/23/2023    | Cooper James Reinhardt 8/20/2023 |
| Russell Michael Terrell 5/28/2023 | Avery Joy Dawson 11/12/2023      |
| Maya Jasmine Cortelyou 6/18/2023  | Jackson Scott Potter 12/17/2023  |
| Kyla Liana Cortelyou 6/18/2023    |                                  |
| Lily Jane Cortelyou 6/18/2023     |                                  |

### CONFIRMATIONS (7)

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| David Maximilian Bastidas | Jackson David Toedter     |
| Julian “Jay” Robert Herz  | Madison Annabelle Toedter |
| Leah Marie Lafont         | Liam Henry Tuttle         |
| Aila Olivea McLauchlan    |                           |

### DEATHS & FUNERALS (9)

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Ron Christ   | Bob Kaylor      |
| WC Duncan    | Dottie Meszaros |
| John Fackler | Donny Page      |
| Mary Gaskin  | Bill Zwernemann |
| Sue Ibarra   |                 |



# Lead Pastor

One of the greatest joys I have as the Lead Pastor here at Lord of Life is to be able to sit with people – both in our congregation and beyond our walls – to hear the stories of how God is at work in their lives. For me, these conversations are always reminders that God is far more expansive and encompassing than I can imagine. The ways that you all are experiencing God routinely challenge me to think through my own biases and preferences. This helps ensure that I am never seeking a faith that makes me “comfortable” but rather a faith that follows Jesus into the uncomfortable realities presented by being a congregation that “seeks and welcomes all to connect, celebrate, and serve in God’s love.”

Through the Easter season, we have again been hearing stories of the early Church and how they were led into uncomfortable and faithful places. The believers started selling everything they owned and living in community together (Acts 4:32-35). Peter preached before religious leaders before whom he denied Jesus a few weeks earlier (Acts 4:5-12). Philip baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Peter watched as Gentiles received the gift of the Spirit (Acts 10). Story after story shares how the disciples followed Jesus into new territory that challenged what they understood as faith and revealed new truths about God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, and joy. Like these stories of the early Church, we too have an opportunity to experience God’s work pushing boundaries in new, exciting, and uncomfortable ways. It is my conversations with all of you that often reveal these truths to me. I would like to share a few examples.

This year we had two of the largest new member classes we have had since I came to Lord of Life in 2017. As a practice, we start the class by allowing everyone to share a bit about their story and how they came to worship at Lord of Life. In our January class, as we went around the room, each family made a particular point of saying that they found Lord of Life because we were a place where we took God’s welcome for all people seriously. There were heart breaking stories shared of churches where the focus was on what God was against rather than what God was for, or where week after week certain people were put “outside” of God’s grace. At Lord of Life, they all shared, they saw God’s embrace of all people being lived out in tangible and practical ways. I share this story with you for two reasons. First, to demonstrate that the intentional practice of living out of value to Welcome All is noticed in the community and is making a difference. Second, to remind us that God’s Spirit is still calling us into the world to welcome others into an experience of God’s mercy for them.

More recently, I have been sitting down with our newly elected Council members. These 5 individuals have all brought their own Spirit led insights and gifts to our process and I am incredibly grateful for our time. In our conversations, I noticed a theme of hope for our future that I find encouraging and challenging. Their hope is not a blind – ignorant to the challenges we face. All of them have sat in the conversations around finances and space and the other realities that lie ahead, and yet each also spoke of the ways they see God moving in this place. The new life they see springing up on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. The joy of the kids’ choir and bells and the children coming up for Children’s Messages. The hope of intentional conversations around welcome, inclusion, and Lord of Life’s future. While affirming much of the work that we are already doing, these conversations also remind me that there is still a distance to travel and there is still work to be done.

Our Growing Faithfully team has been in a year long process of being stretched by God and one another. When it comes to fundraising, it is easy for me to get into a more corporate mindset that says, “We need X dollars and need to ask So-and-so for a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.” It becomes about measures of money and people, rather than about faith. That is why I am so deeply grateful for the work of all our Growing Faithfully teams and especially our Strategic Leadership Team and Fundraising Team that continued to push me to think differently. Out of our conversations grew the “X, Y, Z’s” that you have heard so much about. I can promise you, I am not always

comfortable with the “X, Y, Z’s” because I don’t always know how to point to our successes. But I can also say with confidence that I am glad they have encouraged me to see God at work in a new way through this process. The campaign we are living into is faith and Christ-centered thanks to their work and wisdom.

One last example, this spring our Reconciling in Christ Core Team began hosting small group gatherings with some of our Sunday Morning adult groups and other Bible Studies. These conversations were intended to answer questions about Reconciling in Christ and the process that Lord of Life is navigating. Though I certainly came into these conversations with information to share and a desire to clarify misinformation that may be floating in the air, again these conversations have challenged me to see God moving in new and often less comfortable places. In several of these groups, I heard your stories of inclusion and hopes for Lord of Life’s future. I heard your concerns about limiting who we are reaching out to and a desire to connect to God’s children of many different backgrounds and experiences. I heard your joys in knowing that you were part of a Church that was safe for you to invite your friends or relatives who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. I didn’t know what to expect from these conversations, but in each of them I felt the Spirit moving through our building and all of you in new and exciting ways.

As you can see, like the early Church, God is always calling us into new and often uncharted territory so that we can join in God’s redeeming work for the world. In the pages that follow, you will see story after story of how we have been joining in that work at Lord of Life. You will see a report from our new Director of Faith Formation, Patrick Nazaroff, as he works with our Adult Faith Formation team as well as bringing vision and leadership for our children and youth. You will hear about the continued energy in worship life and our music programs. You will read about outreach ministries, Sunday School classes, Vacation Bible School, New Member classes, and so much more. My hope is that these stories are a reminder for you of the incredible things God is doing in our midst.

You will also read about the work of our Growing Faithfully Campaign and, at our annual meeting on May 19, you will hear from our Reconciling in Christ Core Team. These reports, while filled with joy and hope, may prove to be areas where God is calling you and Lord of Life into territory that is less comfortable. Both groups have dedicated hours of their time to listening for the guidance of the Spirit and pursuing our Mission and Vision. I am deeply grateful for all of their work. It is my hope that in hearing their reports, you will join me in thanking them for their efforts and stand with us as we lean into God’s calling for our community.

Lord of Life, it has been another year filled with joy and grace, sorrow and hope. We have buried loved ones, welcomed new children of God through baptism, and learned in faith together. We have launched a campaign to provide much needed attention to our building and our presence to the community. We have continued to welcome new guests and visitors as they experienced our community that boldly pursues a vision for a world where “all have life through the love of Christ.” We have worshiped, we have grown, we have served, we have explored new territory, we have listened to the Spirit, and we have done it all together.

I am so grateful to serve as your Lead Pastor. You, Lord of Life, are a gift of God’s grace to The Woodlands, to Montgomery County, to our partners locally and globally, and to me. Thank you for always finding ways to push me to see in God in new places. And thank you for trusting me in the moments when I point to where I see God leading us. This ministry is possible because of you, and so on behalf of myself, the staff, and your council, thank you for being with us on this journey. And we can’t wait to see where God is calling us next!

God loves each of you, and I do too.  
*Pastor David Bauser*

# Associate Pastor

On Pentecost Sunday, fifty days after the miraculous resurrection of Christ, we witness the mysterious arrival of the Holy Spirit in rushing wind and tongues of fire. The beautiful complexity of Pentecost — and of Christianity today — is that each of us embodies this Spirit-sparked faith in unique ways, based on the Holy Spirit’s movement through our gifts and abilities. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we bear witness to God’s love in the ministries of this congregation. Each of those ministries, like the many voices present at Pentecost, has its own special perspective on the vision we share: that all have life through the love of Christ.

In our Connecting Ministries, we bear witness to Christ’s love through building faith-based relationships with each other. Our Music, Meals, and More ministry on Wednesday evenings continues to thrive and grow. There have been numerous weeks when more tables have been assembled and more chairs have been set out so that our community members can eat and grow in relationship with each other. We are profoundly blessed by our Hospitality Committee, who has dedicated countless hours to this important weekly ministry. In our last three New Member classes, we have welcomed 27 households into the congregation along with sponsors to accompany them on their faith journey. In the next year, we look forward to growing our Witness Committee and congregational presence in the community, as well as expanding our volunteer base and support system for Hospitality ministries including Music, Meals, and More. I am also excited to be planning and leading a retreat at Lutherhill LaGrange from September 27-29 for all women at Lord of Life. Please save the date and look for more details over the summer.

In our Outreach Ministries, we bear witness to Christ’s love through generosity and service to our local and global community members. Together, the Community Outreach and Global Missions Teams distributed \$35,000 to 19 organizations in our local and global communities through the Gebert Endowment Fund. Last year, the Community Outreach Team hosted two successful Meet & Eat events — where volunteers prepared and shared lunch with homebound seniors. We supported the new ministry of Abundant Harvest Kitchen and, between Lenten collections and Gebert funds, we provided over \$3,500 to reduce the lunch debt of students at McCullough Junior High School across the street. In the fall, the Global Missions Team hosted a Lutherans Around the World themed session of Fifth Sunday Funday, followed by the strongly attended “International Night” at Music, Meals, and More. We have also partnered with Y-Knot Missions in Haiti and look forward to growing our relationship with them in the coming year. In August, I will be traveling to Peru with congregation member Mark Fincher, along with 28 others from the TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod, the LaCrosse Synod (in Wisconsin), and the British Columbia Synod (in Canada). We look forward to this formative trip with intentional in-person time to rebuild our relationship with our long-time global partner congregation, Filadelfia Church.

In the Hands of Faith Fair Trade Store, we bear witness to Christ’s love through supporting artisans and farmers around the world. Last year, the store hours were adjusted to better align with the schedules of KOK families and Wednesday evening programming. HOF also developed a new website and a series of educational videos about Fair Trade ministry. These intentional changes, in addition to a well-attended Holiday Market event, have resulted in an incredibly successful year for Hands of Faith. The increase in sales allowed the Store to increase its purchases by about 20% compared to last year, which

allows us to increase our direct support of artisans around the world. HOF also hosted a number of off-site events at local churches and communities. For the second year in a row, Hands of Faith will donate 20% of total sales made during the 2024 Synod Assembly to the Gulf Coast Synod. In the next year, the HOF Steering Team plans to focus its efforts on hosting onsite events for local groups and organizations.

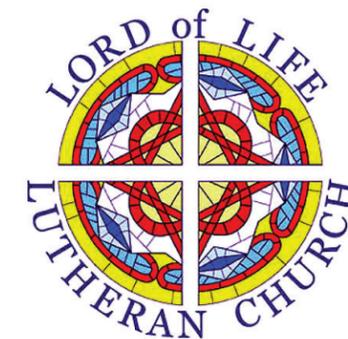
At Kids of the Kingdom Preschool, we bear witness to Christ’s love through nurturing faith to the youngest members of our community. The incredibly gifted 23 staff members at KOK exude the grace, love, and patience of God as they teach, lead, and guide their students in learning and growth. In chapel times, the children hear special messages from Lord of Life staff about God’s love for them and learn a new Bible verse each month; they reverently sing “Jesus Loves Me” and joyfully shout “We love Jesus!” in the KOK Theme Song. Through food, clothing, and financial donations, the KOK community shares God’s love with Interfaith of the Woodlands, God’s Global Barnyard, Montgomery Animal Shelter, and other ministry partners. The KOK Board also approved the donation of over \$67,000 from General Savings to the Growing Faithfully campaign. Thanks be to God for their partnership and support.

In our Health Ministries, we bear witness to Christ’s love through caring for the most vulnerable in our congregation. Our GriefShare program continues to be well-attended, both in person and on Zoom, and those weekly spaces, hosted by Beth Hall, provide solace and community for those who are grieving in our congregation and around the country. The Health Ministries Committee formed in early 2024, and this energetic group of leaders is actively visioning for how the health ministries of our congregation can expand and grow in the next year. We look forward to hosting another vaccine clinic, a blood drive, additional Lunch & Learn events, as well as introducing a card ministry and developing our meal delivery program for our homebound members.

It has been a blessing and a joy to experience firsthand how the Holy Spirit is moving — like blazing fire — through this congregation and to journey with our ministry teams in their unique embodiments of our vision that all have life through the love of Christ. The spirit of the risen Christ is, indeed, alive and present in our midst. It is alive and present in each of you. Thank you for your faithful witness to the gospel and for your courage to share God’s love everywhere you go.

With hope that all have life through the love of Christ,

*Pastor Cassandra Nagle*





# Congregational Council President

Over our last fiscal year, June 2023 through May 2024, Lord of Life’s elected Council faithfully fulfilled its responsibility to oversee our church’s functions and look to the future to further our vision “that all have life through the love of Christ.”

“Listen, God is Calling” was the theme of the 2024 Synod Assembly, held for the second consecutive year at Lord of Life on May 17 and 18. The importance of such listening also guided your Council in its work over the past year.

In 2023, Council had the opportunity to listen to individual staff members at each monthly meeting to learn how best to support our dedicated staffing team. Council approved filling the new position of Director of Faith Formation, completing for the first time Lord of Life’s Leadership Team, consisting of Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Worship and the Arts and Director of Faith Formation. Additionally, Council approved the upgrading of the Parish Nurse position from volunteer to part-time.

Also in 2023, Council formed two committees to research and make recommendations for our future. Following a vote by the congregation, Council formed a team to research what it would mean for Lord of Life to become a Reconciling In Christ congregation. This team is continuing to listen to congregation input, meeting with people one-on-one and through group discussions, and provides updates on their progress.

Following congregation approval of the Growing Faithfully development campaign, Council created a Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to oversee the effort. The SLT worked with an outside consultant to embark on a strategic listening process to form and implement Growing Faithfully. Teams led in-person activities, virtual surveys and partner-hosted meetings for all members to provide valuable input around our core values. Insights from this process formed the foundation for teams to work on upgrades related to Facilities Maintenance, Facilities Improvements and Brand Identity.

In February, 2024, the Fundraising Team officially kicked off the Growing Faithfully campaign. As of this writing, campaign donations or pledges are over \$1.15 million, 82 percent of the campaign’s goal. Our congregation is listening to the call for us to grow faithfully together!

In January 2024, newly installed, existing and outgoing Council members joined staff and committee chairs for a strategic retreat. This gathering provided an opportunity to listen and share ideas for moving forward together. Based on input from the retreat, Council later voted to establish two new ad hoc committees: one to enhance volunteerism and a second to upgrade online streaming. Council members also now wear nametags to become more visible, which expands the opportunity to receive input from fellow members.

Additional Council accomplishments:

- Council worked with the Financial Secretary and Treasurer to create a new fiscal dashboard for the church, simplifying monthly fiscal reporting and focusing Council on key financial indicators.
- Based on recommendations from the Finance Committee, Council approved a new property insurance policy, with a new company, for our building.
- Council supported the development of the 2024-25 operating budget for consideration at the congregation meeting on May 19.
- A Council sub-committee worked for over a year on revisions and updates to our By-Laws, a core document guiding how our church operates.
- Council also voted to approve needed facility upgrades to air conditioning units and water leak repairs.
- Based on recommendations from the Outreach Committee, Council had the pleasure of approving the distribution of \$36,000 from the Gebert Mission in Outreach Fund to various non-profit organizations, both local and abroad, to continue to make a difference in the lives of others.

On behalf of your Council, and in keeping with the theme of listening, I close with deep gratitude and appreciation to our pastors, staff, volunteers and congregation. When called upon, you have listened and responded generously of your time, talents and resources.

Our congregation is truly growing faithfully together.

With continued prayers for God’s guidance,

*Ed Spaulding*

Congregation Council President

## Council Members – 2023

Linda Nicolosi, President  
 Ed Spaulding, Vice President  
 Ethan Reinhardt  
 Jim Card  
 Evan Earnest  
 Shellie Herman  
 Karoline Strauss  
 Steve Bark  
 Chopin Kiang  
 Maria Krein  
 Deb Spiess

Erik Herz, Secretary  
 Joe Cox, Financial Secretary  
 Victoria Constance, Treasurer

## Council Members - 2024

Ed Spaulding, President  
 Deb Spiess, Vice President  
 Joe Agrella  
 Shellie Herman  
 Karoline Strauss  
 Steve Bark  
 Chopin Kiang  
 Maria Krein  
 Kerry Carpenter  
 Casey Page  
 Kurt Roberts  
 Kirk Fields

Erik Herz, Secretary  
 Joe Cox, Financial Secretary  
 DeLynne Ano, Treasurer

# Pastor's Discretionary Fund

In the 1980s, Lord of Life started a Pig Roast intending to raise money for a congregation member who incurred significant medical expenses. The community came together to roast a pig and raise money to assist this need. Over 35 years later, this has led to our annual Pig Roast fundraiser to support the Pastor's Discretionary Fund (PDF).

The PDF is administered by both pastors with the intent of providing emergency assistance to members of our congregation and our wider community. Across our area there are families that are just one or two emergencies away from serious financial challenges. When the unimaginable happens (job loss, medical expenses, divorce, car accident, death of a loved one), the PDF allows Lord of Life to reach out as the hands and feet of Jesus to offer a path of hope and a future. The assistance offered is typically \$200-300 for rent, utilities, or other expenses. These needs are assessed through a brief application where the person requesting assistance explains their situation and we learn who else they are partnering with to meet their need. Pastor Cassandra then reviews the applications with Rick Janacek twice a week in order to assess needs and prioritize our responses. Our small gift often comes alongside Interfaith of the Woodlands, Society of Samaritans, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and others to close the gap between this crisis and the individual's next paycheck. We also offer gift cards to assist with groceries or gas in immediate crises.

Typically, we do not see these neighbors more than once. This means that Lord of Life is helping fill the gap that keeps families in their homes with food in their pantries, and their lights and water running. Then, with the crisis in their rear-view mirror, these neighbors are able to go on without needing additional assistance.

In recent years, requests for assistance have gone up significantly. When Pastor David began working with the PDF in 2017, he was seeing 3-5 requests a month in the busiest months. Now, we are routinely seeing 15-20 requests each month. We have set boundaries on where, how much, and how often we provide assistance, and we are still continuing to see needs rise. In 2022, we gave out approximately \$53,000 in assistance. In 2023, that number became nearly \$74,000. In the first quarter of 2024, we provided over \$20,000 to 52 community members.

The PDF is not funded through our standard operating budget. Instead, it is funded entirely by designated gifts that come from members of Lord of Life. Our annual Pig Roast is the primary fundraiser each year. This year, thanks to your generosity, we were able to raise over \$30,000 in one night for the PDF. Thank you! Some members of our congregation choose to give to the PDF regularly throughout the year. These gifts help sustain our ability to provide assistance all year long. Thank you! Still others among you have reached out to one of the pastor's directly to offer funds should there ever be a need that falls outside of the PDF. Whenever we have called on you, you have responded with abundant generosity. Thank you! If you would like to explore supporting the PDF in any of these ways, please reach out to one of the pastors and we will be happy to get you connected to the right place.

As your pastors, we want to say thank you for your generous support of this life-giving ministry. We are able to provide tangible assistance that allows our community to experience the love of Christ in ways that worship and Bible Study alone never can. Thank you for helping us to support our community and shine the light of Christ beyond our walls.

With gratitude and hope,

*Pastor David Bauser*  
*Pastor Cassandra Nagle*



# Worship and the Arts

*Sing a new song to the Lord, who has done marvelous things.  
Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.  
Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of song.  
Let the rivers clap their hands, and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord.  
Psalm 98 (selected verses)*

This text is from the appointed Psalm for this coming Sunday as I write this, May 12, the 6th Sunday of Easter. It captures the joy of worship ministry and is a command to do and to learn new things. This past year we have sung, rung, clapped, and even had harp music in worship and in concert ... because God has, indeed, done marvelous things! We have represented this Psalm very well! Everything we do here at Lord of Life is made possible by the many hands and hearts and voices that faithfully contribute their time and talents to the life of our worshipping community. Below are some highlights of the ways we have been blessed this past year.

Thanks to the ongoing support of our Hospitality team, our Wednesday night programming of Music, Meals, and More has enabled families to come together for meals and for our kids to participate in music. We were overjoyed to welcome Katelynn Watson to our staff as Children's Music Coordinator in August, and she has such a gift for working with our kids choirs. Michelle Barron continues to volunteer as leader of the bell choir for older kids. We hope to expand all of these offerings in the fall, and it has been amazing to see our kids develop a love for music!

Our handbell ministry received a large, designated gift this past October for which we are extremely grateful. We look forward to the ways this gift will enable our all of our bell choirs to update a good bit of rather old equipment, refresh their rehearsal space, and be a source of extra funds for many years to come. Sarah Schlacks, the long-time director of Bells of Life, is a faithful leader of this ministry.

Over the past year we saw growth and new participation by instrumentalists of all ages in the various groups for special services and concerts. Our Big Band led a first-ever outdoor parking lot concert last October, and we hope to replicate that event in the next program year at a city park, perhaps. Our Instrumental Coordinator Jerney Kelsey is a gifted teacher and leader of these ensembles.

Our adult choir has grown this past year and also provides short-term singing opportunities for people from time to time. I am extremely thankful for the 4 choral associates (staff singers) that provide a great vocal foundation so that all of our volunteers can feel strongly supported as vocal worship leaders.

In addition to the outdoor concert mentioned above, the other events in the Concert Series this past year have been enthusiastically received and well-supported by free-will offerings. In addition to our annual Christmas concert, we had another organ & silent movie night, a jazz trio concert by candlelight, and a concert with four harpists. Hundreds of people have watched these online.

We hosted the 25th annual Faiths Together service here in November, led by our handbell choir and an adult choir made up of singers from many faith communities around The Woodlands. To date, this has been viewed online well over 1,000 times.

Those are just a few of wonderful things that happen around here, and the program year isn't quite done yet! We will once again host Synod Assembly in two weeks, and that doesn't happen without an army of volunteers. I'll soon be starting a series called "Art in the Narthex" to highlight and celebrate artists and photographers from within our congregation. I look forward to working with the Growing Faithfully campaign in the coming months and years as we vision how our space can be more welcoming. I anticipate the interest in making sure our online presence and worship streaming are reaching and blessing people as affectively and beautifully as possible.

With a heart full of gratitude,  
*Daniel J. Fenn*  
Director of Worship and the Arts

## Director of Faith Formation

I have been in this role since October, and I am excited about the Faith Formation opportunities we have at Lord of Life and I look forward to what we have coming up over the next year. Although this has been a transitional year, I am greatly appreciative to all involved in Adult Education and Nicole Forester and Mia Vu for their efforts in Children's Faith Formation and Youth Faith Formation.

This past year we were able to continue our four amazing Sunday morning Bible Studies, while adding one more: our youngish adult study. Thank you to our leaders who helped make these Bible Studies happen every week and serve our congregation through their efforts, specifically: Karoline Strauss for Women of the Word, Joe Cox for The Breakfast club, Chuck and Barb Kindsvatter for the Library book study, and Jeff Zetto and Don Kluth for the Green Room Bible Study.

We also offered several mid-week options for our adults to connect with Jesus through intentional study. These groups met faithfully though out the year and offered members of our congregation, community, and beyond a welcoming place to learn about faith. We offered Chocolate and Jesus led by Tammy Fincher, the Pastor's Bible Study led by Pastor David and Pastor Cassandra, Ladies Bible Study led by Barb Kindsvatter and Jeannie Lawson, and Men's Breakfast led by our Pastors and Joe Cox.

Part of my role is to also celebrate and support our Teen Life Ministry and our Children's Ministry. I wanted to highlight two major events for these programs. Our Teen Life Ministry had their biggest fundraiser ever with their trivia night! Their efforts and the congregational support is giant win for their upcoming mission trip to Alaska, maybe our most ambitious summer trip ever. Our Children's ministry also broke records with this year's Trunk or Treat with over 400 children coming through our parking lot for candy and fun. This event does a great job of putting our name in the community and connects Lord of Life to our surrounding neighborhoods.

Thank you to all other volunteers and participants in making our Adult Faith Formation studies happen each week! And a huge thank you to our Adult Faith Formation Committee: Becky Havill, Rich Krietz, Roxy Waguespack, and Erin Duffy.

I see a tremendous foundation of faith formation here at Lord of life and I am excited to see how it will grow in the in the next year.

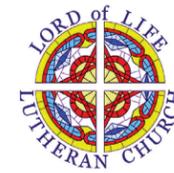
Thank you,

*Patrick Nazaroff*

Director of Faith Formation



## Faith Formation ~ Teen Life Ministry



23-24 has been a fantastic year for us in teen life ministry. We spent a large portion of the year in transition, but thanks to our staff, volunteers, and our youth ministry assistant, Mia Vu, we were able to put together a great program for our youth. We had some amazing experiences and faith development and I look forward to what the coming year has in store for us.

### Confirmation aged youth:

Our Confirmation program has shifted to Sunday Mornings where we have grown in excitement and teaching as we expand upon the confirmation program. Our youth are involved in monthly service projects, excellent small groups. This month, we confirmed 7 youth. We also took 14 youth and spent three days this summer serving the woodlands through a variety of different service organizations on our mini mission trip. Our 2023 mini mission trip was planned and led by Emie St. Laurant, one of our youth alumni and summer intern. It was awesome to see the youth of Lord of Life in action on the trip.

### Senior High Youth:

Our weekly gathering on Sunday nights have remained a place of love and excitement for our youth where we play games, get to know each other better and have Bible Study. We have also done other fun events over the last year like, photo scavenger hunt at the renaissance festival, murder mystery parties, pool parties, and Bubble Soccer. Our youth have been more involved in leading youth group and children's Sunday school as we develop Christian leaders. We were able to take 26 of our High School youth to Chicago last summer for a fantastic experience learning about God and serving the city. We are excited to take 33 youth up to Anchorage in a few weeks!

### From our Young People:

*"This program truly helped me not only grow in my relationship with God and with my peers but helped me get to know myself better." - A*

*"Youth Group helps me feel connected to others in ways I hardly ever feel in real life." - L*

Along with getting to know the youth of Lord of Life, I have also gotten to work alongside some amazing volunteers, mentors, and a fabulous youth board.

**Youth Program mentors:** John Tucker, Dan Turner, Kirk Fields, Katie Phillips, Dixie Babinoe, Brandy Buck Jenny McKenna, Shari Guttormson, Macy Cherry, and Mia Vu.

**Youth Committee Members:** Becky Rominger, Crystal Tucker, Kevin McKenna and Michael McCarter.

And all the others who have served our Youth in so many ways, as well as the church staff who have helped love and guide them.

I am honored to have served the Youth of Lord of Life in a new role this past year, and I look forward to seeing what happens in 2024-25 to further glorify God in this place with these youth.

God's Peace,  
*Patrick Nazaroff*  
Director of Faith Formation

# Faith Formation ~ Children's Ministry

It is with joy that I write the 2023-2024 Children's Faith Formation Team report. As I gathered the pieces of the past year, I was reminded of the laughter, learning and love shared in our program to provide children and families opportunities to grow in faith. This is just a snapshot of how our ministries impacted their lives:

**Club 56:** Led by new teachers, this has been a year of growth for Club 56. Our team worked to tailor the class structure to the interests of the children. Club 56 students thrived and consistently attended to explore biblical truths and build on their foundation of the Bible. They beautifully prepared and led both worship services on November 12, 2023, and helped with an Advent and Lenten service. They enjoyed monthly Service Sundays such as helping to pack supplies for Lutheran World Relief school kits and seafarer boxes, assembled Buddy Backpacks, homeless care kits and spring break activity bags for Glenn Loch.

**Sunday School:** Sunday School followed the new Dig-In curriculum which allows us to build individualized lessons for each age group. Lessons are designed to help kids develop a genuine, growing relationship with God through interactive storytelling, games, and hands-on activities. PK-4th graders participated in worship with a play at 4pm on Christmas Eve and by leading a Spontaneous Melodrama during Lent. Sunday School classes participated in small service projects, such as coloring Meals-on-Wheels lunch bags.

**Footsteps in Faith:** Our Footsteps in Faith classes are designed for families to grow in faith and renew their commitment to faith education. A lock-in was added combining the 5th and 6th grade classes and will alternate between The 10 Commandments and Communion. This year's lock-in focused on The Ten Commandments and included activities from rock climbing to feet washing and a service project supporting Isaiah 117 House. In all, 6 successful Footsteps in Faith classes were held for Kindergarteners through 6th graders.

**Family Easter Vigil Dinner Church:** Family Easter Vigil Dinner Church continued this year following the annual Easter Egg Hunt and included interactive and meaningful ways for each family to participate in the service. In total, 70 people attended the egg hunt and an amazing 105 people attended the family friendly vigil service.

**Vacation Bible School and Lutherhill Day Camp:** Camps are a great way to open our space and build relationships with the community as many of the children who attend are not from our church. In 2023 both camps grew in attendance. A VBS crew and additional Lutherhill counselors were added to accommodate waitlists. We were able to share Christ's love with over 230 children and 70+ volunteers through camps in 2023.

**And much more!** We continue serving families through a variety of events: We hosted 2 Parents Night Outs, serving a total of 85 children; welcomed 8 families to our annual Lutherhill Family Camp weekend; provided at home faith opportunities for families through Advent bags and Lenten calendars and we teamed up with the Youth Group to host Trunk or Treat, which had an attendance of over 400!

**Children's Ministry could not happen without volunteers!** A special thank you to our Sunday School and Club 56 teachers for shaping the faith lives of our children: Martin Converse, Jocelyn Earnest-Heckler, Ken Harvey, Leah Lafont, Cassidy McKenna, Aila McLaughlan, Amanda Tucker, Marianne Richenberger and Charlie Schramm.

**A final thank you to our Children's Faith Formation Team for their dedication and commitment to our Lord of Life families:** Tara Devoley, Kathy Gaskamp, Stephanie Reinhardt, Marianne Richenberger, and Brenda Stockham.

We look forward to continuing God's work in the lives of our children and families next year.

*Nicole Forester*

Director of Children's Faith Formation



## Kids of the Kingdom Preschool An outreach ministry of Lord of Life Lutheran Church

### Mission Statement:

*Kids of the Kingdom Preschool in partnership with Lord of Life will serve the families of KOK in the same manner*

*Christ has loved and served all people. As scripture tells us:*

*"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." - Proverbs 22:6*

Our mission statement is the basis for everything we do at Kids of the Kingdom. We accomplish this by providing a safe environment where children can learn through their play. They have many opportunities throughout their day to grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively. Chapel is held each week, led by designated Lord of Life staff members. We also offer music, science, and motor movement enrichment classes each week. We do several school wide activities that include Fall Festival, Spring Fling, Road Rally, Dr. Seuss week, Petting Zoo, Snow days and a Train Ride.

Kids of the Kingdom is governed by a preschool board made up of Lord of Life church members and Kids of the Kingdom parents. Board members for the 2023 – 2024 school year are: Pastor Cassandra, Nicole Forester, Ally Kelly, Casey Rall, Jill Applegate, Rebecca Hughes, Amber Barhorst, Jennifer Adam, Karoline Strauss, Michelle Kink and me. Currently for the 2023– 2024 school year we have 109 students enrolled in classes ranging in age from 18 months through 5 years of age. We have a total of 23 staff members.

Kids of the Kingdom provides scholarships to children in our community who might not otherwise have an opportunity to attend preschool. Currently we have 11 families using various degrees of scholarship. Kids of the Kingdom is providing \$18,000.00 in scholarships from the budget, \$2,500.00 from the director discretionary fund, \$2,678.00 from our camp fundraiser, and \$10,010.00 from previous year general savings. Lord of Life also contributed \$2,884.00 to the scholarship fund. The total amount of scholarship being distributed is \$36,072.00.

During our weekly chapel times we concentrate on not only making sure each child knows Jesus loves them but also how they can serve God's world and share His love with others. Throughout the year we have special chapel times where donations are collected, prayed over, and given to those in need. We had a fantastic fall celebrating Thanksgiving with a canned food and coin drive. We collected 350 lbs. of canned food to donate to Interfaith Food Pantry and \$662.50 in coins for God's Global Barnyard. At Christmas time we held a diaper and wipe drive to support young mothers and babies through the Young Lives Organization. As we studied a unit on winter and snow, we also collected gently used and new coats for adults and children with a One Warm Coat Drive. February was a month full of pets, farm, and rodeo animals. Our service project this month was pet food donations for our local Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

Daily in classrooms children get to explore, wonder, question, create and play while engaging in age appropriate learning activities. KOK utilizes a theme/literature based curriculum that is reinforced in various learning centers. These centers include art, blocks, manipulatives, dramatic play, reading, writing, math and science.

This preschool is blessed with the most dedicated, amazing teachers. I give thanks each day to work with these women of faith who share the love of God with every child who enters our doors.

Kids of the Kingdom staff members are very grateful for this opportunity to work with Lord of Life through this outreach ministry and are dedicated to serving the young people in our community.

Sincerely,

*Michelle McGuire*

Director

# Health Ministries

Over the past year, Health Ministries has expanded its efforts in multiple directions. The ministry is committed to promoting the physical health, emotional and mental well-being, and spiritual growth of the congregation through various programs and one-on-one visits.

In June 2023, the Faith Community Nurse (Parish Nurse) position was upgraded from a volunteer role to a 10-hour-per-week paid staff position. In my role as the Faith Community Nurse, I provide individualized care to church members during Sunday services and other church events. Telephone calls and home visits are made to members and their families for various reasons, including hospital or rehab discharge, homebound care, end-of-life support, and health education. I inform the pastoral staff of the identified members during these touchpoints. Additionally, Beth Hall provides counseling and support to members as they navigate life's challenges.

In February 2024, the newly formed Health Ministry Committee held its inaugural meeting. This committee includes lay members of the congregation with expertise in medical care, mental health, and health administration. Health Ministries Committee offers a range of programs, including several ongoing initiatives:

- Lunch and Learn events were held throughout the year. Topics covered in 2023-2024 included Estate and Will Planning; Medicare and Insurance Choices; Healthy Eating; and Legacy Giving. Future programs will focus on Funeral Planning, Labyrinths, Senior Living Choices, Healthy Meal Preparation, and a program from Hands of Faith.
- Grief Share, a support group facilitated by Beth Hall, meets regularly in person and via Zoom. Recently, Beth Hall has identified leaders who can cover when she is out.

Other in-reach and outreach opportunities include:

- A Balance and Exercise Class twice a week.
- Healing Hearts, a social gathering for those who have lost a spouse.
- Collection of medical equipment and supplies for members and the wider community.
- Countless meals for homebound, seniors and others in the congregation. Thank you to the Hospitality Committee and the ministry of Music, Meals, and More!
- In the fall of 2023, Lord of Life teamed up with Kroger to sponsor a vaccine clinic in which over 40 vaccines were administered. September 15 has been set for the vaccine clinic this fall.

Looking ahead, the Health Ministries Committee is developing new programs for 2024-2025, including a Blood Drive in the fall, support for caregivers and those experiencing memory loss, care packages for those receiving chemo and radiation, and Stop the Bleed/CPR/First Aid training.

Wishing you all good health and many blessings,  
*Brenda Stockham, RN*  
 Faith Community Nurse



# Community Outreach & Global Missions Teams



*If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.*  
 - James 2:14-17 (NRSV)

The Community Outreach and Global Missions Teams work separately to serve God's world. The Community Outreach Team focuses on Lord of Life's community in The Woodlands and surrounding areas of Montgomery County, while the Global Missions Team looks beyond our immediate area. These teams work primarily in three ways:

## 1. Donation of Money

Through the Gebert Mission Endowment Fund and budgeted giving, we were able to directly fund these organizations:

Through special collections, we were able to donate:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>\$5,000</b> to the <b>Montgomery County Food Bank</b>   | <b>\$1,400</b> to <b>McCullough</b> for lunch debt reduction                    |
| <b>\$8,000</b> to <b>Y-Knot Missions</b> for medical equipment, soccer programs, and a commercial chicken coop | <b>\$1,000</b> to <b>Interfaith Clinic</b> for a new dental chair               |
| <b>\$7,500</b> to <b>Isaiah 117 House</b> for the construction of the house                                    | <b>\$1,000</b> to <b>LWR School Kits and shipping</b>                           |
| <b>\$3,425</b> to <b>Nourishment for the Needy</b> for a new commercial freezer and general operations         | <b>\$925</b> to <b>MC Food Bank's senior program</b>                            |
| <b>\$3,000</b> to <b>Henry's Home Horse and Human Sanctuary</b> for a fencing project                          | <b>\$550</b> to <b>Kiva Loans (6)</b>   |
| <b>\$3,000</b> to <b>Hope's Path</b> for updates for transitional living home                                  | <b>\$500</b> to <b>God's Global Barnyard through the LOL Children's program</b> |
| <b>\$2,500</b> to <b>Andrea Kopataki</b> , a Hungarian Missionary  | <b>\$500</b> to <b>Kids of the Kingdom</b> for scholarships                     |
| <b>\$2,000</b> to <b>Krause House</b> for their work with unaccompanied refugee minors                         | <b>\$500</b> to <b>Homeless Ministry</b> for Salvation Army supplies            |
| <b>\$1,550</b> to <b>YES to Youth</b> , MC Youth Services for updates to living center                         | <b>\$250</b> for <b>Glen Loch Teacher Support</b>                               |
|  | <b>\$250</b> to the <b>Cort Martin Scholarship Fund</b>                         |
|  | <b>\$150</b> to the <b>Holly Creek Cookout</b>                                  |
| <b>\$2,250</b> to <b>McCullough Junior High School</b> for lunch debt reduction                                |   |
| <b>\$1,147.51</b> to <b>The Abundant Harvest Kitchen</b>   |   |
| <b>\$1,000</b> to <b>Compassion United</b>   |   |

*Highlights*

- Our new partner in Haiti, Y-Knot Missions, shared wonderful photos and stories about how our donations helped improve the lives of those living in the rural areas of northern Haiti. We look forward to the congregation getting to know this mission and developing a partnership.
- We were able to help cover the lunch debt of McCullough Junior High’s neediest students from the 22-23 school year from Gebert, and with this year’s Lenten collection, we almost doubled our support for the 23-24 school year. We hope to be able to continue to help feed our hungry neighbors.

**2. Donation of Goods**

It would hardly be a Sunday at Lord of Life if you didn’t see a bag of food or the big, white box out for collections! Throughout the year, we collected and created items to share with various ministries in our community and beyond:

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>500+ buddy bags</b><br>for food insecure children in Conroe ISD                | <b>48 Angel Reach dinner kits</b><br>for youth aging out of foster care                  | <b>111 Christmas boxes</b><br>for seafarers at the Port of Houston                 | <b>1,083 Hug-a-Bears &amp; Hug-a-Pups</b>                                 |
| <b>30 Spring Break Boxes</b><br>for Glen Loch Elementary School families          | <b>Diapers, clothing, and safety equipment</b><br>for the CPS Rainbow Room               | <b>About 400 un-opened toys</b><br>for Interfaith Christmas gifts                  | <b>157 Hug-a-Pillows</b><br>(post-surgery cough pillows)                  |
| <b>20 treat baskets</b><br>for Glen Loch Elementary School teachers               | <b>Countless monthly food donations</b><br>for the Montgomery County Food Bank           | <b>Christmas Gifts</b><br>for 43 seniors   | <b>Household items &amp; furniture</b><br>to 4 Ukrainian refugee families |
| <b>360 sack lunches &amp; personal care kits</b><br>for the Salvation Army        | <b>Countless monthly food donations</b><br>for the Interfaith of The Woodlands Food Bank | <b>Christmas Gifts</b><br>for 17 foster children                                   | <b>150 Lutheran World Relief School Kits</b>                              |
| <b>1,088 personal items &amp; clothing</b><br>for Conroe ISD nurses to distribute | <b>4 bags of glasses &amp; cases</b><br>for the Lion’s Club                              | <b>Countless assorted jewelry pieces</b><br>for Brighter Lipstick, Bigger Earrings | <b>85 Lutheran World Relief Quilts</b>                                    |

*Highlights*

- This massive list of items represents connections among the people in our congregation. Whether you are meeting monthly to create a quilt, packing boxes and bags in the Fellowship Hall on a Sunday, or hauling furniture to a refugee’s new home, laughter and friendship come with serving together.

- As the opening of the Isaiah 117 House approaches, we are looking forward to the opportunities with this partnership. Last year, we provided diapers, wipes, clothing, and safety equipment to the Rainbow Room of the Department of Family and Protective Services office in Conroe. This year, we will be Bin Buddies with Isaiah 117 House to help fill their Giving Room with clothes, shoes, and toys!
- A fourth Ukrainian family moved to The Woodlands to rent a house after living in an apartment in Houston for ten months. They have 5 children and needed a washer and dryer. A church member purchased a modest one for them and had lunch with them after attending a service together.

**3. Donation of Time**

Lord of Life provides opportunities to serve in person, directly meeting those we serve.

- **Compassion United:** We serve around 100 people breakfast or to-go lunches in Lewis Park twice a year.
- **Scouts BSA:** We serve as Scout leaders weekly to the over 175 Scouts in our program.
- **The Woodlands Township:** We clean a mile of pathways quarterly with the Adopt-a-Path program.
- **Community Connections Brunch:** We invite various community partners in to learn more about their programs.
- **Family Promise of Montgomery County:** We host families in danger of homelessness.
- **God’s Work, Our Hands Day:** We provided lunch and fellowship to homebound members of our congregation with such success that we held a second event in March.
- **Quarterly staff service project:** The staff participates in a hands-on service project every fifth Tuesday.

*Highlights*

After having lunch with our homebound seniors, our congregation members had this to share:

- “We just got home from lunch. We had such an amazing visit and I truly enjoyed hearing his history with LOL and the community. She was so kind with our son and gave him puzzles to work on. I hope that every family that signed up today had a visitor. It really filled our cup and God’s presence was felt. Great event!!”
- “The visit went very well. She was pleased with the visit and the lunch we brought. The package you prepared made it very easy for us. The food was quite tasty and just the right amount. She also appreciated that you remembered her birthday. Quite thoughtful. Thank you and the Outreach team for arranging this opportunity. Definitely worth continuing.”
- “Thanks! We had a lovely time and plan to go again next month or even monthly, making and bringing our own food or just stopping by Whole Foods for some meals. They said we can always just drop by to say “hi” and they look forward to meeting my wife. Thanks for planning, food and opportunity and the kids really appreciate it too!”

I am so blessed to support our congregation and our community in this position, and I look forward to serving God’s world with you.

*Jenny McKenna*  
Director of Outreach



## Hands of Faith Fair Trade Ministry

### Members of Hands of Faith Steering Committee

Beth Kuper, Gayle LeBon, Linda Nance, Jenny McKenna, Lynne Ledbetter, Beverly DeJarnett

Hands of Faith (HOF) had a successful year, and we are grateful that we are able to continue increasing the number of purchases we make from our Fair Trade partners, thereby increasing our support for artisans and farmers here in the U.S. and internationally.

In addition to increasing our support of Fair Trade through our purchases, HOF made several donations during the 2023-2024 fiscal year. They include the following: HOF gift certificates for the Luther Hill Gala, the Upbring Gala and a gift basket for the 2024 LOL Pig Roast; purchasing an environmentally friendly cookstove, sending 10 girls to school, providing school supplies for 2 classrooms, sending 2 women to Farmers' Field School, providing 2 village latrines, providing 2 microloans for women, supplying 4 hygiene kits, and purchasing 2 portions of an irrigation project all through ELCA Good Gifts; and several donations to local schools, LOL' youth mission trip, and LOL's baby baskets program. HOF also donated 20% of total sales made during the 2023 Synod Assembly held at LOL to the ELCA Gulf Coast Synod and will donate 20% of total sales made during the 2024 Synod Assembly to the ELCA Gulf Coast Synod.

HOF participated in three offsite events in the Fall of 2023. We had a booth at Del Webb's Artisan Fair as well as a booth at Magnolia's First Baptist Church for their Women's Christmas Event, Project 3:18. HOF also put on a 2-day Holiday Market for Kinsmen Lutheran Church. All were well-attended, and the members of Kinsmen Lutheran Church were especially appreciative of our willingness to set up the Market for them. Kinsmen provides several volunteers for the Market, and HOF was able to educate and spread awareness of the Fair Trade mission with these volunteers who can now share their knowledge with more of the Kinsmen congregation.

As part of HOF's mission to raise awareness about Fair Trade, Beth Kuper and Gayle LeBon gave presentations on the principles of Fair Trade and how HOF supports these principles to the LOL Ladies' Bible Study and a P.E.O. group that meets at LOL. Two members of the HOF Steering Committee attended the Fair Trade Federation conference in Richmond, VA this spring. Attendance at this annual conference continues to be valuable to our Steering Committee as it provides them with an opportunity to learn from other Fair Trade retailers, visit in person with many of our Fair Trade vendors, and hear from speakers in breakout sessions on various topics related to Fair Trade.

HOF is again managed and operated solely by volunteers as of mid-November 2023. The part-time person we hired in 2022 felt that she needed to devote more time to her family, and she resigned after our Holiday Market in November 2023. HOF has chosen not to hire anyone on a permanent basis at this time.

HOF continues to be a member of the Fair Trade Federation, keeping HOF as the only Fair Trade Federation-verified store in the Houston area.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Beverly DeJarnett and Beth Kuper*

Co-chairs of HOF Steering Committee

## Connecting Ministries

I look at Connecting Ministries as relationship building. When we work together on a committee, host an event, have a meal together, or volunteer for ministries at Lord of Life, we are connecting with one another and building relationships with them.

**Witness Committee:** Our Witness Committee continues to seek ways to welcome visitors and to reach out to the community outside our congregation. We continue to let the community know who Lord of Life is and promote events such as VBS, Easter & Christmas services through the Chamber's Business Briefs. There are touch points with visitors through our Greeters on Sunday morning, our visitor information cards and follow-up contacts. During Trunk or Treat, tables were set up at the entrance to the parking lot and cards with information about Sunday services were handed out to attendees. Jim Card will be replacing long time Chair Dane Sever. With Covid disrupting things, he has gladly served as chair through Covid and beyond. I appreciate his willingness to guide this committee.

**New Member Class:** There are three new member classes each year in September, January, and May. The January 2024 class was held on two consecutive Wednesday evenings to accommodate those who may not be able to attend a Saturday class. We will have over twenty-seven households, which include both individuals and families, join Lord of Life this year. Sponsor are paired up with new members to build relationships between those in our church community and those new to Lord of Life and welcome them to Lord of Life.

**Volunteers:** Wednesday meals are being well attended and volunteers have been instrumental in the kitchen clean up after each Wednesday meal and to reset the fellowship hall for activities held the rest of the week in that room. We have volunteers who help at various times in the kitchen prep for the meal as well. I look forward to continuing to build our volunteer base for this ministry as well as the Sunday cart drivers. Due to the increase in attendance at our Wednesday meals this year, most Lenten Soup Suppers consisted of two groups and wonderful soups each week. I would like to thank all those who prepared, set up and cleaned up the kitchen during Lenten Soup Suppers. I would also like to thank Amanda Bauser who provided a delicious vegetarian/gluten friendly soup each week during Lenten Soup Suppers. Sunday morning coffee fellowship volunteers have increased this year and is well supported by volunteers. With the departure of the Trains, Sandy Turnipseed now reaches out to schedule greeters for Sunday mornings.

**Hospitality:** The Committee has continued to support events held at the church and build on the Wednesday Music, Meals, and More ministry. We also support the church's mission statement of Welcoming All through stocking the Welcome Center for all to use it throughout the week and the Donut and Coffee ministry on Sunday mornings. Other ministries and activities we are support are receptions for concerts, new members, and confirmand receptions; Trunk or Treat booth; Lenten Soup Suppers; Volunteer Recognition; Mother's Day & Father's Day Brunches; Easter Vigil Dinner Church; Pig Roast; semi-annual meeting lunches. We provide support and guidance to other ministry groups planning events that use the kitchen facilities for VBS, Day Camp, Youth fundraisers, men's group events, funerals, and weddings. The committee ensures that paper goods, pantry items and supplies/tools are stocked and available for all who use the kitchen and various events.

**Wednesday Music, Meals, and More** are held every Wednesday during the school year and are a central focus for the committee. This ministry provides a hot meal, fellowship time, and a prayer service for all members of Lord of Life. The attendance at these meals has steadily grown to an average of 75 people per week and increased to over 100 attendees during Advent. We are also able to help support the newly formed Health Ministry by packing up any leftover food for families and having meals to take to members who are unable to get out on Wednesday nights. The committee has also been able to utilize Thrivent grants to help offset the cost of the meals. We look forward to continuing this ministry and increasing volunteer support to assist the committee in all the activities we plan, oversee and support.

**Small Groups:** Small groups are continuing to bring members together for fellowship and shared interests as well as support Lord of Life ministries. Cards for Cause collects gift cards to support our Pastors' Discretionary Fund by providing grocery gift cards to those in need. The Stitch & Sew group provides prayer quilts, baptismal blankets, and quilts for baby blessing baskets. We continue to connect with Trinity Episcopal Church through Common Table. Lord of Life hosts both a Christmas and summer social in the Welcome Center, as well as meeting with members from Trinity at various restaurants throughout the year for fellowship. A bunco group was started in April.

**REALM:** The Realm database is being maintained and I am always finding or looking for new ways to improve information and reporting, as well as processes. I continue to advocate use of the Realm App and have seen signs of increased usage and value.

**In closing:** I have spent more time this year being visible and available on Sunday mornings to listen to our members concerns and needs on Sundays, as well as assist those who have questions or need assistance in using Realm. It has also been helpful in reaching first time visitors as well.

God's blessings,  
*Peggy Sloan*  
Connecting Ministries Director

# Property and Technology

As I sat down to write this report, I tried to find the best phrase that can be used to describe the past year. The best phrase I can come up with is this: It has been quite a ride! We ended the last fiscal year on a high note, hosting the Synod Assembly. It was an incredible success, and, in fact, it went so well we host the Synod Assembly again this May. However, that ride to the top of the roller coaster took a precipitous fall in June when a water leak damaged much of the kitchen and surrounding areas. We have since recovered from that mishap, but the year continued to have quite a few interesting twists and turns. Overall, this has been an exciting, busy time in the life of our church, and I cannot wait to continue the work.

Once again, this could not be done without the support of our committee, including our Property and Technology Co-Chairs David Harris and Bill Lutz, respectively, as well as committee members Larry Gaskamp, Bob Arend, Tommy Eubanks, Drew Minarcik, Mike Devoley, and Billy Forester. Their support has helped us get through some big challenges around the building. I would also like to give a special thanks to Gary Williamson, Rob Michel, and Tom Fraser. These three men retired from the committee this past year after putting in years and years of work on the committee. We appreciate the work they have done and if you see one of them, please be sure to thank them for their help keeping this building and its technology up to date.

Here are just some of the highlights of 2023-24:

**The Great Water Leak of 2023** – As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, we had a massive water leak in June of 2023. This leak started from a cracked valve in our ice machine. The damage was extensive, with water damage in our kitchen, parlor, sanctuary, fellowship hall, hallways and even one classroom. I would like to thank Billy Forester for coming up and helping immediately to soak up the water before the remediation team arrived. I would also like to thank Property Chairperson David Harris and Pastor David for spending their Saturday taping and covering walls and floors so that we could have service that Sunday. Many of you remember the paper floor we had for several months. Luckily, after insurance claims, we were able to repair the damaged walls and install new flooring not just in the damaged areas, but also throughout much of the first floor — all at no additional cost to Lord of Life! Reynolds Renovations managed all the installation and the Property Committee collaborated closely with the crew to make sure that the flooring was installed with minimal interference to daily church activities. We did have to spend one Sunday in the Fellowship Hall, but I believe many of us enjoyed the experience. I am happy to say that the entire project was completed before the start of Advent 2023.

**Air Conditioning Replacement** – As part of the Growing Faithfully campaign, we were able to replace two air conditioning units in 2023: The Fellowship Hall Unit and the second floor Unit. Both units were more than 20 years old and were using outdated refrigerant. After receiving several bids, the Property Committee chose to work with Raymark Air Conditioning on the replacement of these two units. The replacements took place over a two-day period in July, and all went according to plan. However, later in the year we discovered a problem with the evaporator coil in the inside module of the 2nd Floor unit. This was not part of the original scope of the work, but we were able to use savings from the original project to pay for this. While replacing these units, we also contracted with Raymark

to become our new HVAC maintenance company.

**New Security Procedures** – When the 2023 school year began, we instituted new security procedures that have been used throughout the school year. These changes included keeping all doors locked during school hours, having visitors to the church sign in and out at the Welcome Desk and having volunteers at the Welcome Desk during school hours. These new procedures were welcomed by the church community and will continue into the summer during VBS and other camps in the building. Our Technology team is also in the process of installing new panic buttons that will lock all unlocked doors in the event of an emergency. The team is also hoping to increase the number of cameras in the building but will wait on that project until potential school renovations are completed.

**Property Use Agreement** – The committee in 2023 took a close look at the church’s Property Use Agreement, which had not been updated since 2011. After talking with staff and church council, the committee updated the agreement and increase the prices of renting many of the rooms in the building to help offset recent electricity, garbage, and cleaning increases. We also made some modifications to the rules to make those renting the facility a little more accountable for the upkeep of the rooms.

**Recycle Bins and Green Efforts** – The Property Committee this year made a more concerted effort to recycle and reuse around the building. We have placed recycle bins in the Welcome Center and just recently have placed recycling bins in the Conference Room, the Fellowship Hall, and each classroom upstairs. A big thanks to Mike Devoley who has helped us spearhead the efforts to increase our green footprint at Lord of Life. Mike has many great ideas, and the committee would like to form a “Green Team” subcommittee to increase those efforts during the next year.

**Synod Assembly** – The 2023 Synod Assembly was held here at Lord of Life in May of 2023 and was an enormous success. More than 250 delegates were in attendance and Lord of Life really stepped up to the plate and knocked it out of the park. More than 75 volunteers helped the entire event go smoothly. In fact, the event went so well, the Synod asked us to host it again this year. As of this writing, the 2024 Synod Assembly has not been held, but preparations are underway, and we expect it to be another enormous success.

**Future** – During the upcoming fiscal year, the Property Committee expects to be involved in several large projects around the building. The Growing Faithfully Campaign has authorized the committee to replace the flat roof as part of the campaign. We have bids that we are processing through now and hope to have some movement on that in the next few weeks. We also will continue to replace older computers, make both technological and mechanical upgrades around the building and continue the maintenance of our building.

In close, we thank you again for your support. We hope the upcoming year will be a little less wild than the past year, but we will continue efforts to improve the physical, ecological, and technological footprints of Lord of Life.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Rick Janacek*  
Office Manager



## Stewardship Committee

Connections. We all crave them. It is a big reason we choose to come to church. We want to worship, to pray, to be prayed for, to be uplifted, and to give back – and an important part of each of these is connection. Through Lord of Life, we connect with God, with each other, and with the community in which we live. None of this would be possible without connection.

During the past two fall stewardship appeals, many of you have shared with us your stories of how you came to be connected to Lord of Life. Some of these stories were shared with the congregation via Tuesday emails and the Lord of Life webpage. It was wonderful getting to know twelve of our fellow worshipers through those stories! This fall, we hope to be able to share more of your stories. To submit your story, go to the church website (lolonline.org), hover over Donations and Giving, click on Stewardship, and click on Share Your Story at the bottom of the page. Answer a few questions, and a member of the Stewardship Team may contact you to take your photo. You do not have to worry about grammar or spelling. We just want to get to know you and your story!

As in-person participation continues to build in this post-pandemic period, fellowship and ministry opportunities have been resumed or established. We welcome all to check out our weekly schedule and join in!

Lord of Life, you have stepped up with your generosity to share your resources, your time, and your talents as acts of gratitude for all that God has done in our lives – and the stewardship team is very grateful. We truly appreciate each of you and encourage you to keep up the great work supporting and growing Lord of Life so that together we can fulfill our mission of seeking and welcoming all to connect, celebrate, and serve in God's love.

Gratefully submitted,  
*Elizabeth McPherson*  
Stewardship Team



## Growing Faithfully Campaign

What do 19 volunteers, 2 air conditioning units, listening, XYZ's, \$1.15M, 900+ hours, and the congregation at Lord of Life have in common? You're invited to keep reading to find out.

**19 volunteers:** Lord of Life had expressed need of a new website, messaging support and strategy for community engagement. The Growing Faithfully campaign with \$130K in funding was approved by the congregation at the annual meeting in Jan 2023. In April 2023, the Strategic Leadership team began meeting and by August, the following teams, made up of a diverse group of 14 volunteers and 5 staff members, had been formed to carry out the work of the campaign:

1. Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)
2. Co-Design Team
3. Communication/Logistics Team
4. Fundraising Team
5. Facilities Team

**Two Air Conditioning Units:** In July the SLT approved the expenditure of \$91K for the repair of two air conditioning units. This was \$39K underbudget.

**Listening:** Starting in August, the co-design team working with Cambio, a consulting firm authorized for hire by the Council, led Lord of Life in a Strategic Listening Process that would help us align our identity, structure, and operations for the future of the church and Kids of the Kingdom. This would form the foundation for changes related to the objectives below. Information was gathered through congregation activities, survey responses, meetings with the Kids of the Kingdom board, staff, and church staff, as well as Lord of Life documents.

Objectives Outcome Areas:

- Facilities Maintenance
- Facilities Improvements
- Brand Identity Refresh

**XYZ's and \$1.15M:** In October the fundraising team began meeting to define an approach and objectives for the financial aspects of the campaign. Through cottage meetings and videos, you heard about putting *χριστός* (Christ) first. Turning ourselves towards the "Yous" of the world. And sharing our zeal that comes from knowing the love of Christ. Pledge day was March 24, 2024. We currently have \$1,151,622 pledged which is 84.5% of the campaign's financial goal of \$1.4M. This represents participation from approximately 1/3 of our normal giving units. A total of \$438,639 has been received to



date.

**900+ hours:**

The Communications and Logistic team supported all the campaign activities, handling everything from mass mailings, template designs using the new Growing Faithfully logo, procurement of pledge materials, communications through multi-media platforms, to scheduling meetings.

Analysis from the Listening Process was presented by Cambio in February 2024. The Strategic Leadership Team was tasked with reviewing the analysis and providing recommendations to the Council, which was done in April. The Growing Faithfully teams will celebrate their accomplishments to date and hear a summary of the consultant’s analysis of the Strategic Listening Process in May. The time spent carrying out the work in the various teams is estimated to exceed 900 volunteer man hours.

As we move forward with campaign activities, the facilities team will be reviewing estimates for roof repair. They will also begin defining projects and putting together estimates for recommended changes to the sanctuary and educational areas, including the pre-school. These will be based on available funding. Information on this will be shared with the congregation in the coming months. As part of the recommendation to Council, a team will be established to begin work on the brand identity refresh. The fundraising team will continue to support the campaign with periodic updates and prompting the question, “How is God calling you to grow faithfully?”

All the Growing Faithfully teams have worked hard this year, so that Lord of Life, led by the Spirit, can experience Christ, turn our hearts to others, and share God’s love as a congregation. I continue to “Grow Faithfully” working with such spiritually led teams.

Peace,  
*Susan Gallup*  
Strategic Leadership Chairperson

**Growing Faithfully Teams**

**Co-Design Team (9)**

- 1 Macy Cherry (SLT)
- 2 Dennis Coburn
- 3 Lindy Guttormson
- 4 Jenny McKenna
- 5 Millie Meyers (CHR)
- 6 Patrick Nazaroff
- 7 Pastor Casandra Nagle
- 8 Nicole Puig-Herz
- 9 Deb Spiess (SLT)

**Communications Team (3)**

- 1 Marna Arlien (CHR)
- 2 Rick Janacek (SLT)
- 3 Tim Donoughue (SLT)

**Fundraising Team (5)**

- 1 Becky Havill (SLT)
- 2 Keith McPherson
- 3 Larry Miller
- 4 Rita Van Sickle
- 5 Beth Kuper
- 6 Doug Nelson

**Facilities Team (5)**

- 1 Larry Gaskamp
- 2 Marlene Hoffheiser (SLT)
- 3 Stephen Pfeil (CHR)
- 4 Chuck Spiess
- 5 Robert Strauss

**Strategic Leadership Team (8)**

- 1 Pastor David Bauser
- 2 Macy Cherry
- 3 Tim Donoughue
- 4 Susan Gallup (CHR)
- 5 Becky Havill
- 6 Marlene Hoffheiser
- 7 Rick Janacek
- 8 Deb Spiess

# Financial Secretary

For the Eleven Months from June 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024

**Operating Revenues**

|                                    |                            |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Actuals thru April 30, 2024</b> | <b>\$ 1,235,207</b>        |
| <b>Budget thru April 30, 2024</b>  | <b>\$ <u>1,284,660</u></b> |
| <b>vs Budget (over/under)</b>      | <b>\$ <u>(49,453)</u></b>  |
| <b>vs 2023 (improve/decline)</b>   | <b>\$ <u>129,661</u></b>   |

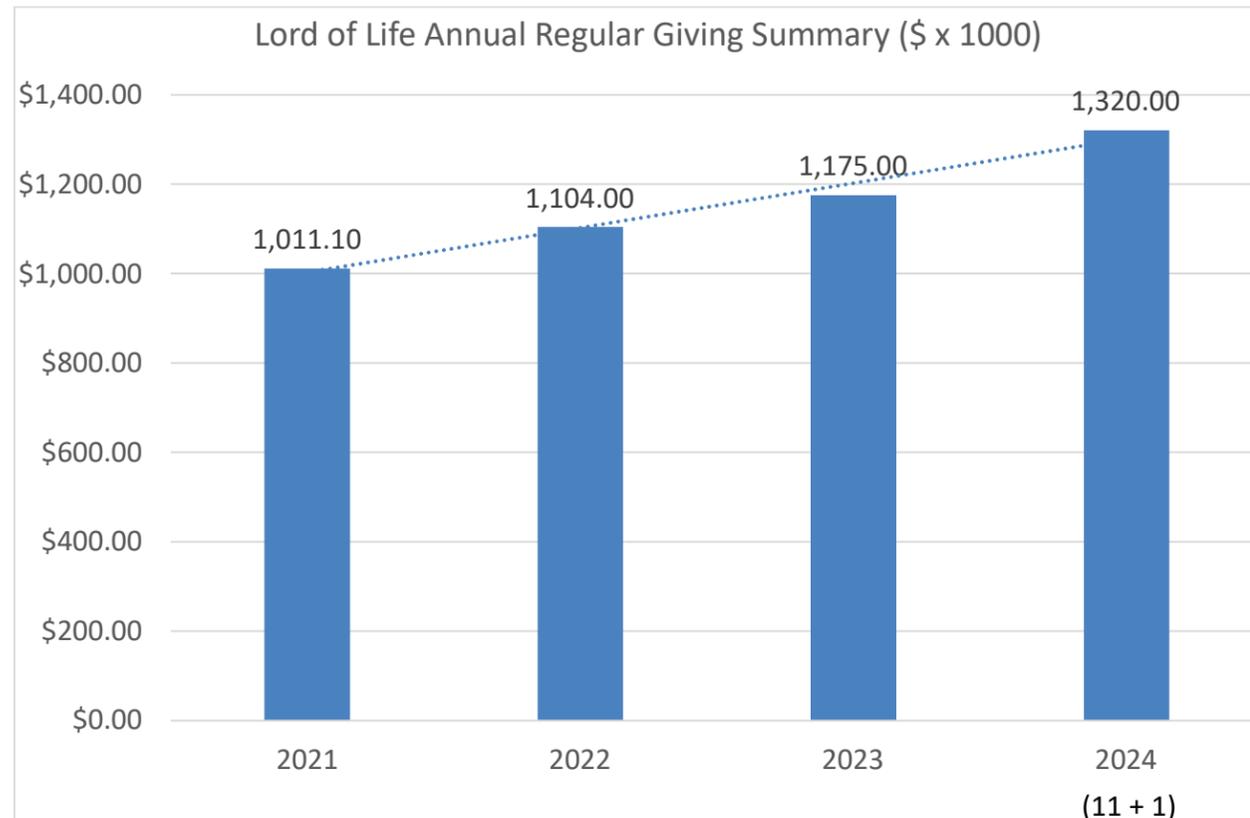
**Operating Revenues (primarily General Fund Offerings)**

The Church’s fiscal year runs from June 1 through May 31, so the amounts reflected in the report cover only eleven months. The final report for the 2024 fiscal year will be available by mid-June, but it now appears regular giving will be ~ \$1,320,000, **(\$85,000)** less than the approved budget of \$ 1,405,118.

Operating revenues (general fund offerings) for 2024 are 11.7% higher through April 30, 2024 as compared to the same period of the previous year. Average donating families per month has remained flat to last year at 180. Likewise, in-person attendance has been stable over the period with an average of 190 attendees per Sunday service.

Below is a graphic that shows total regular giving by fiscal year for the past four years. Also included is a trendline indicates a consistent increase in giving over the period of + 7.6% per year.

# Finance Committee



## Restricted Funds

Not included in the numbers and graphic above are contributions to restricted funds. These are designated by the donor for a specified use. In 2023/24 contributions to these funds through April 30 are \$699,147 (vs \$286,289 in 2022/23 same period). Included in this number is \$440,864 for the Growing Faithfully Campaign. Other Lord of Life's Restricted Funds include The Pastor's Discretionary Fund, multiple Outreach Programs, Food Pantry, Endowment, Social Ministries, Music Programs, the Harvestwood event and Property Contingency. The Pig Roast alone raised \$35,000 this year. That's an incredible testimony to you the Congregation of Lord of Life, given all that is going on at this time.

**Joe Cox**

Financial Secretary

May 5, 2024

We continue to see improvement in Lord of Life finances. While Sunday attendance has been little changed, offerings continue to increase. The generosity of our congregation in sharing God's gifts is the reason. **Thank you!** Lord of Life staff have continued to do a superb job of controlling those expenses they actually influence. We were able to maintain our outreach programs due to strong designated gifts and also to tithe 10% to the Synod. Many thanks to Brian Dawson for keeping us well-informed via the excellent financial reporting system.

## 2023-2024 Fiscal Year Results

**Actual results for the full 12-month period of June 1, 2023, thru May 31, 2024, are projected,** given that final April-May results are not yet available. Total general fund giving in 2023-24 as compared to 2022-23 increased about \$159,000 or about 13%. Actual giving was \$1,337,504 or about \$68,000 below the budget of \$1,405,120 or 5%. Many thanks to our congregation for the increases in donations. We continued to have strong support of the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Also, we have received a number of significant advance gifts to the Capital Campaign. We are forever thankful to the congregation for responding when the needs are great!

| Year     | Expenses  |           |                       | Offerings | Offerings |          |                       |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|
|          | Budget    | Actual    | Variance Fav (Un-fav) |           | Budget    | Actual   | Variance Fav (Un-fav) |
| 2022-23  | 1,182,694 | 1,210,544 | (27,850)              | 1,182,500 | 1,178,348 | (4,152)  |                       |
| 2023-24* | 1,448,135 | 1,400,540 | 47,595                | 1,405,120 | 1,337,054 | (68,066) |                       |

**\*All 2023-24 numbers are projections using 10 months Actual, 2 month Forecasts and will change.**

## 2023-24 versus 2022-23 and % Change

| Contributions      | 2023-24   | 2022-23   | % Change |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Total Contribution | 1,337,054 | 1,178,348 | 13       |
| Designated Gifts*  | 592,116   | 366,546   | 61       |
| Total              | 1,929,054 | 1,544,894 | 25       |

**\*2023-24 includes early gifts of about \$256,000 to Growing Faithfully and \$101,000 transferred from General Fund Reserves to Property Contingency and also is a 10 + 2 forecast**

| Expense by Department | Actual  | Budget  | Over / (Under) Budget |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Outreach Ministries   | 133,705 | 147,300 | (13,595)              |
| Worship & The Arts    | 25,000  | 20,000  | 5,000                 |
| Faith Formation       | 15,000  | 15,000  | 0                     |
| Connecting Ministries | 10,750  | 8,750   | 2,000                 |
| Congregational Life   | 36,500  | 26,500  | 10,000                |
| Office                | 50,700  | 50,700  | 0                     |
| Technology            | 22,000  | 20,000  | 2,000                 |

|                        |           |           |          |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Utilities              | 65,050    | 68,050    | (3,000)  |
| Maintenance            | 84,800    | 84,800    | 0        |
| Overall Property       | 32,500    | 32,500    | 0        |
| Total Support Services | 255,050   | 256,050   | (1,000)  |
| Staff                  | 924,535   | 974,535   | (50,000) |
| Total                  | 1,400,540 | 1,448,135 | (47,595) |

While there were some departments over budget during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the amounts were immaterial to Lord of Life’s overall finances. Both Utilities and Maintenance are outside staff control and represent respectively lower electricity rates due to a significant drop in prices for fuels used to generate electricity. Inflation is still an issue but less than the 2022-23 budget year. The favorable variance in total expenses primarily was due to electricity costs and delaying the hiring of the Teen Faith Formation Director .

On a net basis, full year forecasted regular offerings are projected to be **below** expenses by about \$63,500.

As of May 31, 2024, we estimate the church will have unrestricted cash reserves of approximately **\$517,000**. This also is an estimate that could change once April and May 2024 actuals become available, with full year around June 10, 2024.

**2024-2025 Proposed Budget**

The proposed 2024-25 expense budget is detailed in an insert you will receive at the May 19, 2024 meeting.

- New position of Director of Teen Faith Formation for 12 months
- Staff salary increase
- Increases due to inflation where we know they will occur
- Additional funding to various ministries that are heavily dependent on volunteers

I’d like to thank the members of the Finance Committee this year for their dedication, effort and valuable insights. Thanks to DeLynne Ano, Pastor David Bauser, Craig Bourgeois, Victoria Constance, Joe Cox, Brian Dawson, Mark Fincher, Jef Frick, Darrell Havill, Eric Herz, Michael Riewe, Ethan Reinhardt, Neal Stockham, and Nancy Williamson.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Chuck Hoffheiser*  
 Finance Committee Chair



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

