



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

I am so grateful for you, dear church. Your generosity to each of these three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has bolstered the church’s ability to share the message of God’s love to people who are longing for it. Through your

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“More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.”

—Psalm 93:4-5

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financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices, you’ve helped carry this message of God’s majestic love. Thank you, dear church. As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to stand steadfast in God’s promises, sure of God’s love and goodness.



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



# **LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

## **2024-25 Annual Report**

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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.

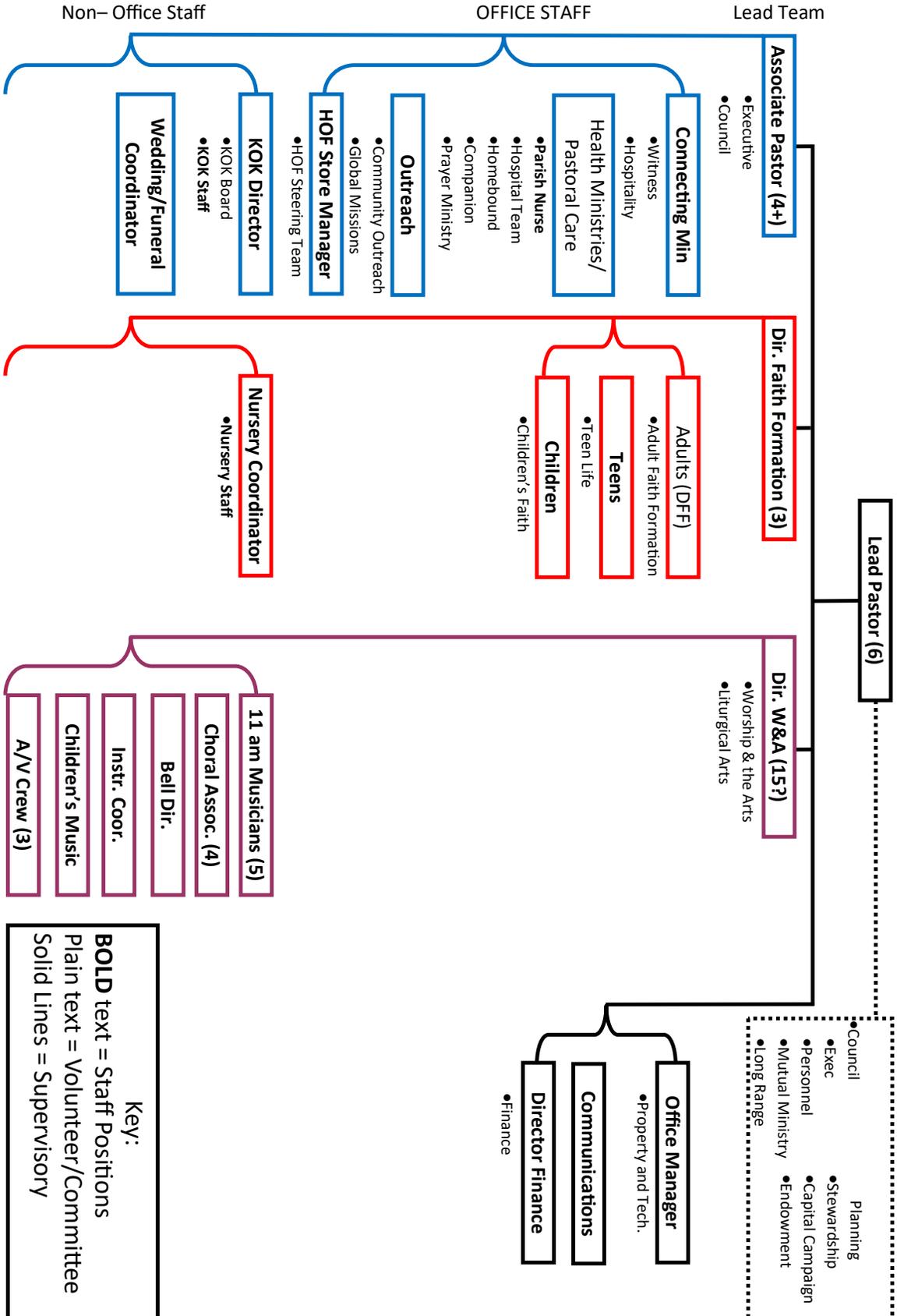
**Finding Connection** – In Christ, we are one Body. We strive to foster meaningful relationships both with God and with a diverse body of believers.

**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



## **MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS - FIVE YEARS AT A GLANCE**

<b>Members</b>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Baptized</b>	1,535	1,448	1,304	1,308	1,330
<b>Confirmed</b>	1,246	1,250	1,190	1,041	940
<b>Non-Confirmed Children</b>	296	258	263	371	390

## **MEMBERSHIP - 2024**

	Baptized	Confirmed
<b>Membership – end of 2023</b>	1,330	940
<b>Members Received During 2024</b>		
By Baptism: Children (15 yrs. & younger)	4	0
By Baptism: Adults (16 yrs. & older)	0	0
Reinstated	0	0
By Affirmed Faith	0	0
By Transfer	47	35
<b>Total Members Received in 2024</b>	51	35
Youth Confirmed		7
<i>Statistical Adjustment</i>		<u>209</u>
	1,381	1,191
 <b>Members Removed</b>		
By Death	11	11
By Transfer	16	1
For Other Reasons and Statistical Adjustment	<u>155</u>	<u>155</u>
	182	167
 <b>Membership – end of 2024</b>	1,199	1,024

## **Additional Information**

<b>Confirmed Adults</b>	1,024
<b>Baptized Children</b>	175
<b>Number of Households</b>	602
<b>Average In-Person Worship Attendance</b>	266
<b>Average Online Worship Attendance</b>	117

# Lord of Life

## 2024 Statistical Summary

### PASTORAL ACTS

Baptisms 4	Funerals 10
Weddings 1	Confirmations 10
First Communion 3	

### WORSHIP

Sunday Services 102	Mid-Week Services 14
Easter Services 2	Communion Services 110
Christmas Eve Services 4	

### BAPTISMS (4)

Eleanor Stephens 4/14/2024	Clara Controne 9/22/2024
Ryan Cox 4/28/2024	Felicity Otterstrom 10/27/2024

### CONFIRMATIONS (7)

Sophie Claire Devoley	Jacob Collin Taylor
Pierce Hoffland	Matthew Liam Tucker
Elizabeth Jane Lutz	Ethan Asher Turner
Evelia Seifert	

### DEATHS & FUNERALS (12)

Joe Atkinson	Bobby McGuire
Barbara Becker	Karen Nickell
Sharon DeLong	Ruth Nicolay
Barbara Gebert	Anne Swetich
Lori Lively	Doug Wage
Barbara Maurice	Kristi Wold

# Lead Pastor

As I write this report, I am sitting in the afterglow of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. We have again moved through this season that draws our focus back to God and encourages us to explore the ways God is calling us into the world. We laid down our stones, we were led to the cross, and we saw stones rolled away and the tomb stand empty. The power of this story reminds us that we are set free not for our selves or our own benefit, but for the sake of the world.

This is what I have seen our congregation living out through every ministry, Bible study, meal, worship, and gathering: we are here for the sake of the world! Through the pages that follow you will hear stories of many of our ministries and the ways in which we do our best to embody this reality. Outreach projects that serve our neighbors locally and globally; worship services that have given hundreds of people an opportunity to hear about God's love; new Bible studies; steadfast ministries; all of it done because we know that God calls us out of this building and into the world.

Before we get to those powerful reports, I want to take a few moments to offer a top-level view of the past year at Lord of Life and the ways we have seen God moving.

In August, we had a successful launch of our Worship+ series. I am hopeful that this will continue to be a meaningful way for our community to engage the concept of being connected to the life of the congregation beyond Sunday morning worship. In the wake of that series, we saw meaningful growth in the number of people reaching out to a new Bible study or volunteer opportunity. We are working to find ways to continue that engagement in the future and ensure that we have the right steps in place to either help keep people invested over the long haul or, if what they tried first wasn't the right fit, help them get plugged in to a different opportunity.

Following Worship+ we launched our annual Stewardship Appeal. I was truly floored by your response of generosity and love for God's ministry here at Lord of Life. We had a significant increase in members of our community completing the Commitment Cards and have seen a steady increase in giving throughout the year. As you will hear from the finance team, we are working hard to bring our giving in line with our annual expenses. In preparation for the 2025-26 budget, multiple levels of leadership have been involved in ensuring that we run on a lean budget that 1) continues our strong ministry opportunities, 2) cares for our incredible staff, and 3) maintains the appropriate oversight of the gifts that are shared with our congregation. We also know that the best plans in the world don't mean a thing without people who are willing to support that work. This is why I, the Stewardship Team, the Finance Committee, and the Council are all so incredibly grateful for your continued support of the work we are seeking to accomplish.

Our Growing Faithfully Campaign has had a powerful first year of fundraising. The impact of those dollars is already being felt by the partner ministries that have received a total of \$40,000 in grants from the Tithe portion of the Campaign, and through the HVAC systems and roof work that has been completed. You'll see more impact this summer as we begin construction on the Education Wing of our building and bring a fresh face to Kids of the Kingdom and our upstairs classrooms.

The Growing Faithfully Campaign has always been driven by our understanding that we are here for the sake of the world. This is why throughout this campaign, you have heard us sharing about the X, Y, Z's. From the start we have kept Christ at the center and focused on the "You" of our world. Thank you for all the ways that you have let your "Zeal" shine through by supporting this important campaign. You will hear a full report from the Growing Faithfully team during our Congregational Meeting.

The Reconciling in Christ Core Team has also been hard at work to help our congregation live out our Core Value to Welcome All. At the heart of this work, is ensuring that Lord of Life is a place for all people to experience the life-changing love of Christ! Through this process we heard your stories of inclusion and hopes for Lord of Life's future. We 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. We 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. These sacred stories were shared with the team, and they have held them, prayed over them, and learned from them as the gifts that they so clearly are. Again, a final report will be given at the Congregational Meeting that will share the summary of their work and their recommendations for next steps. Having been involved with this team throughout the process I want to say thank you to everyone who served with me on the Core Team: Martin Converse and Rich Kreitz (Co-chairs), Shari Guttormson, Mark Fincher, Natalie Harvey, JJ Minarcik, Neal Stockham, and Pastor Cassandra Nagle. These individuals have given of their time and their spirit to listen to one another and to the stories of people currently at Lord of Life as well as those we hope to be able to welcome in the future. I hope you will join me in thanking them for their efforts on our behalf.

I would be remiss if I talked about the last year without mentioning our talented staff. I have been fortunate to lead this staff for 3 and a half years now. Their reliability, their creativity, their embodying of our mission and vision, and their heart for serving God's people all make our team into a group that can have fun together and can move mountains to bring about the ministry vision we have captured. Our limited staff turn over is rare to find in congregations and I am confident that it is due both to the staff's desire to be connected to a congregation that is doing meaningful work and the congregation's desire to continually care for and walk with the staff. This year has not been without challenges as we continue to search for a full-time Director of Youth Faith Formation. Nonetheless, our staff has rallied around that program and Mia Vu – who has been serving faithfully in a part-time capacity – to ensure that the ministry continues to thrive even in the interim period.

For me, the highlight of the year has been watching our Lead Team (myself, Pastor Cassandra, Dan Fenn, and Patrick Nazaroff) start to gel and work for the success of all our ministries at Lord of Life. I can assure you, none of us on this team are perfect, but by sharing our experience and wisdom we are better prepared to address any challenges that may come Lord of Life's way. Many of the powerful worship experiences or fellowship events that you have attended in the last year either got their start or were otherwise workshopped by our Lead Team. This team had their hands in the Stewardship process, our Worship+ Series, budget plans, and so much more. In this year's report, you will get a chance to hear from each of them directly, but let me say that this team is providing essential leadership for the whole vision of the congregation.

As a final note on this year and the ways in which Lord of Life embodies the reality that God has set us free for the sake of the world, I want to talk about our Congregation Council. It is not the most exciting thing in the world to talk about "church governance" but this dedicated group of 15 individuals and 2 pastors are what make it possible for Lord of Life to carry out our ministries effectively and safely. I want to extend my thanks to those council members who were with us until January of 2025 and I want to celebrate the gifts of those currently serving! I count myself extremely blessed to be serving a congregation with a leadership body that is as well organized, talented, and faithful to our mission and vision as the council at Lord of Life. In the last 12 months the council has helped us update our by-laws, guided numerous projects and initiatives, and continually pointed all of us toward our shared mission, vision, and values. Our shared mission as the people of God is able to thrive, in no small part, thanks to their leadership.

Lord of Life, the past year has, once again, brought us joy and sorrow, grace and conviction. Together we have listened for the wisdom of the Spirit, and we have walked hand in hand towards our shared goals. This work has led us faithfully out of the building to demonstrate that we are set free for the sake of the world, to share our vision for a world where "all have life through the love of Christ." We have done this work through worship, Bible study, asking difficult questions, listening when we don't have answers, and placing our trust in God above all else. I am honored to be working with you all as we pursue God's mission for us. Thank you for showing up, for hearing God's call, and for trusting me to serve in this role. I, for one, can't wait to see what God has in store for 2025 and beyond!

God loves each of you, and I do too.

*Pastor David Bauser*

# Associate Pastor

This Easter season, we hear again the words that Jesus proclaimed to his disciples on Maundy Thursday: *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another”* (John 13:34). In my role as associate pastor, I work with several ministries at Lord of Life, and each of them has been beautifully and faithfully embodying Jesus’ new commandment to love one another.

In our Connecting Ministries, we love one another through building faith-based relationships with each other. Music, Meals, & More on Wednesday evenings is an energizing and nourishing time in our weekly ministry. I am grateful to the Hospitality Committee for hosting these dinners with grace and thoughtfulness, and to the dedicated volunteers who assist with prep and cleanup. Last September, forty-four women went to Lutherhill La Grange for a weekend Women’s Retreat. We worshiped, prayed, studied Scripture, spent time in small groups, played games, solved puzzles (in record time!), and rested in God’s good creation together. I am especially grateful to Tiffany Hensley and Natallie Controne for sharing their stunning musical gifts with us throughout the weekend. In October, our Witness Committee hosted the Lord of Life booth at The Woodlands Pride Festival and greeted over 500 participants at Trunk or Treat. They held a visioning retreat this spring and look forward to focusing their efforts on listening to and getting to know our neighbors. We welcomed 23 households to Lord of Life over our past three new member classes. I thank God for their resounding “Yes!” to join our faith community and partner with us in our mission to seek and welcome all to connect, celebrate, and serve so that all have life through the love of Christ. A special thank you to all the sponsor families who warmly welcome our new members into the community and continue to accompany them.

In our Hands of Faith Fair Trade Store, we love one another through supporting artisans and farmers around the world. HOF donated more than \$13,000 last year in money and products to local and global ministry partners. During our International Women’s Day promotion, your generous purchases totaled \$5,120, which was donated to ELCA Good Gifts and sent 128 girls to school for a full year! Last summer, the Steering Team hired a part-time social media consultant, whose efforts have grown the HOF Instagram account to 900 followers. The Holiday Market in November and its corresponding off-site events were a smashing success. The Steering Team focused its efforts this year on hosting five fair-trade educational events for local community partners, and we have already seen an increase in both shoppers and volunteers. They are also thinking and praying about how HOF can continue to support our artisans and farmers around the world in the coming year. We invite your prayers, too.

In our Health Ministries, we love one another by caring for the most vulnerable in our community. Last fall, we hosted a vaccine clinic and a blood drive, collecting 65 liters of blood and supporting 108 lives. Beth Hall and Rosalie Tuttle co-hosted two series of GriefShare, one in the fall and one in the spring, and they are planning additional reunion-style events for this summer. We hosted four Lunch & Learn events this year, and out of one of them emerged a BSA Eagle Scout candidate who will restore the Lord of Life Prayer Labyrinth for his Eagle Scout project. Thanks to the leadership of our Parish Nurse, Brenda Stockham, and the dedication of our Health Ministries and Hospitality Committees, we also began a weekly meal delivery ministry, which now supports 30–40 members who are homebound and/or in need of extra meals during the week. Another new Health Ministries offering is hospital care bags, created in partnership with our crafting ministries and Hands of Faith. Each care bag contains a handmade blanket, prayer beads, tea and snacks, lotions, and other essential items for a hospitalized member and their loved ones. It is my honor and joy to give these care bags to members on your behalf and to witness firsthand how touched they are by your generosity and how grateful they are for your thoughtfulness amid their seasons of illness or treatment.

At Kids of the Kingdom Preschool, we love one another through nurturing the Christian faith in the youngest members of our community. Last August, we welcomed two new teachers to the KOK staff and a former teacher to the role of assistant director. Throughout the year, we have celebrated near-full enrollment, with over 100 children experiencing and learning about the love of Christ in the church. At chapel time, the Lord of Life staff give special messages about God’s love, and the children participate in food, clothing, and financial collections for ministry partners like Interfaith of the Woodlands, God’s Global Barnyard, and Montgomery County Animal Center. The KOK Board worked hard over the past year to establish Venmo as a donation option for families, and they started receiving Venmo donations

from parents and grandparents this spring. The KOK community is excited about the upcoming summer renovations to the school, and they are grateful for the collaborative partnership between Director Michelle McGuire and the Growing Faithfully Leadership Team throughout the campaign.

In our Outreach Ministries, we love one another through generosity and service to our local and global community members. Together, our Community Outreach and Global Missions Teams distributed \$36,000 to eighteen ministry partners and organizations. Seven ministry partners received special donations throughout the year, including Montgomery County Food Bank, which received over \$11,000. Thank you for generously giving to our Second Collection coffee cans throughout the year. Every donation makes a difference! Following the devastation of Hurricane Beryl, the church opened its doors as a cooling & charging center for members without power. Several of you loaned extra generators to members in need, and others volunteered at the Red Cross Emergency Shelter at Saints Simon & Jude Catholic Church. On God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, we packed 13,608 meals for people living in Zambia. This year, we also packed 150 school kits and 67 quilts for Lutheran World Relief; filled a truck with used textiles for Phill the Box; donated toys, gift cards, and seafarer boxes at Christmastime; provided a week of dinners for families in danger of homelessness at Family Promise of Montgomery County; fed over 100 people at Lewis Park through Compassion United; and worked with The Champion Project to host a Book Bus for children living in group homes.

As representatives of our Global Missions Team, member Mark Fincher and I participated in a joint trip between the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast and La Crosse (Wisconsin) Synods of the ELCA. We visited with our partner congregation, Filadelfia Church, and their pastor, Ofelia Davila, who is also the president of the ILP (the Lutheran Church in Peru). We planned and volunteered at the ILP children's festival — teaching origami, painting murals, making friendship bracelets, leading interactive prayers, and sharing lunch. We worshiped at Filadelfia Church, had lunch after worship with the community, and gave them two gifts — a dozen catechisms for their confirmation students and a financial gift from Hands of Faith for their women's crafting microloan program. We were blessed with the gifts of a poster and a hand-knit alpaca for the youth program and an embroidered fabric for our worship space. Much of our time was spent in conversation with Pastora Ofelia and the leaders of the ILP, wondering together about how our churches in their various expressions can continue to grow and expand our ministry partnerships. I am grateful to Mark for his participation in this trip and his insights and questions throughout the ongoing discernment process.

On behalf of Lord of Life, I took my second trip to The King's Embrace in Bungoma, Kenya, last February. I used Global Missions reserve funds to purchase and pack my suitcase with puzzles, dice games, and 80 PayDays (the boys' favorite candy!). With Pastor Chris Lake and Rich Obrosky from Tree of Life Lutheran in Conroe, we installed a generator, repaired toilets, installed security cameras, and replaced a water pump on the TKE campus. I preached one Sunday morning worship on the theme of friendship, and I spent my free time playing games of catch with the boys. When saying goodbye, the boys asked me if I would come back again. I promised that I would, and I hope to bring some of you on my next visit.

Jesus said to his disciples, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35). As I reflect on the last year of our ministry together, I am overcome by all these ways (and more!) that you, Lord of Life, have embodied Jesus' commandment to love one another. In times of joy and sorrow, you have loved one another. In our worship and fellowship, you have loved one another. Around dinner tables and on meal delivery visits, you have loved one another. While serving lunches under the bridges of I-45 and packing shelf-stable meals in the Fellowship Hall, you have loved one another. It is my honor to accompany these ministries in their sharing of Christ's love with all people — members and visitors, neighbors and strangers, students and teachers — and it is my continued joy to serve alongside all of you as we work towards a world where all have life through the love of Christ. I thank God for each of you. Thank you for your prayers, your partnership in the Gospel, and your faithful witness to Jesus' new commandment to love one another, just as he has loved us.

With hope that all have life through the love of Christ,  
*Pastor Cassandra Nagle*

# Director of Worship & the Arts

*I come with Christians far and near to find, as all are fed,  
the new community of love in Christ's communion bread.*

“I Come With Joy” – ELW Hymn #482, stanza 2

Last June, I had the honor of serving as the guest musician for a week at Holden Village in the Cascade Mountains of central Washington state (the namesake of our popular sung evening service called Holden Evening Prayer). The theme for that week was “Building Courageous Community.” I chose to open the very first service with the entirety of the hymn referenced above, as it symbolized people gathering from all over the country into a place that forms a different worshipping community on a weekly (sometimes daily) basis, not just during the summer, but all year long.

“Community” is the word that kept coming to me as I was contemplating what to share in this report – perhaps more so in the past year than in the previous five during which I have been a part of Lord of Life. We have welcomed new faces into our music ministry and congregation in the last year that have expressed how meaningful it is to be a part of our community. We are blessed with great pastors, talented musicians, generous folks (with their resources and their time), and parishioners who genuinely want this to be a place where true community is found (I could reference yet another hymn right here, but I’ll spare you how my brain works). We know that people from all walks of life and from every background imaginable need to be part of a community. This is formed not only by just simply being together, but, and I believe more importantly, is most formed through the liturgy. I like to use the analogy of how our distant ancestors used the patterns of the stars and of nature to form their yearly cycles of harvest and of their ideas of “worship” at the time. As someone once said: “Worship shapes us like water shapes a rock.” Over time, the words that we say (sometimes every week, sometimes once a year) smooth us, shape us, and form us into a deeply-knit community bound together by our sharing of the sacraments.

I am so thankful that we still see so much excitement and joy in our Wednesday night meals and kids’ music activities, and we can’t wait to see how we expand these offerings even further as our kids grow up. I am grateful for the support of our concert series – both by your attendance and financial support. I am humbled by the amount of time so many people give to help make Sundays run so smoothly. I love hearing your stories about how a hymn or a song brings back memories of a loved one or of an experience in worship long ago.

As we look back on the last year together, let us all rejoice and remember the words of this simple prayer by Dag Hammarskjöld: “For all that has been, thanks! For all that will be, yes!”

*Lord, you call us to your service: “In my name baptize and teach.”  
That the world may trust your promise, life abundant meant for each,  
give us all new fervor, draw us closer in community:  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry.*

“Lord, You Give the Great Commission” – ELW Hymn #579, Stanza 2

Peace,  
*Daniel J. Fenn*

# Director of Faith Formation

This past year has been a wonderful season of growth and connection for our Faith Formation ministry and for Lord of Life as a whole. We have seen increased engagement in our Bible studies and are continuing to expand opportunities for adults and families to connect with Scripture, with Jesus, and with one another. I am deeply grateful to everyone involved in Adult Education, as well as to Nicole Forester and Mia Vu for their dedicated leadership in Children's and Youth Faith Formation.

Over the past year, we sustained four vibrant Sunday morning Bible studies and introduced several pop-up studies to give more people opportunities to step in and grow in faith. Special thanks to the leaders who made these possible and faithfully served our congregation each week:

- Karoline Strauss for Women of the Word
- Joe Cox for The Breakfast Club
- Chuck and Barb Kindsvatter for the Library Book Study
- Kevin McKenna and Erin Duffy for the Youngish Adult Study

In addition to our Sunday offerings, we hosted several mid-week Bible studies that created space for adults to connect with Jesus through intentional learning and community. These groups provided a welcoming environment for members of our congregation, our local community, and even beyond. These included:

- Chocolate With Jesus led by Tammy Fincher
- The Pastors' Bible Study led by Pastor David and Pastor Cassandra
- Ladies' Bible Study led by Barb Kindsvatter, Jeannie Lawson, and Mary Ross
- Men's Breakfast led by our pastors and Joe Cox

Another important aspect of my role is to support and celebrate our Teen Life Ministry and Children's Ministry. I'd like to highlight two standout events from this past year:

- Our Teen Life Ministry embarked on its most ambitious summer mission trip yet—a week-long service experience in Alaska. This trip also marked a meaningful leadership transition, as I welcomed Mia Vu into her new role as part-time Youth Director.
- Our Children's Ministry set a new record with this year's Trunk or Treat, welcoming over 500 children to our parking lot for candy and fun. This event continues to be a joyful way for us to connect with the wider community and share the love and hospitality of Lord of Life.

To all the volunteers, teachers, and participants who help make our Adult Faith Formation programs possible each week: thank you. I see a strong foundation here, and I'm filled with excitement for how our Faith Formation ministry will continue to grow in the coming year.

With gratitude,  
*Patrick Nazaroff*

# Congregation Council

Over the last year, Lord of Life has focused on the Mission, Vision, and Values of the congregation. The building is active not just on Sundays, but throughout the week, with various activities and events taking place. There is the buzz of God's work in action.

The Growing Faithfully Campaign recently provided an update to the congregation regarding the gifts received, projects completed, and work planned for this summer. Progress is being made with the support of the congregation, but there is still much work ahead.

Welcoming All is an integral part of the mission and values here at Lord of Life. The committee established to investigate the implications of Lord of Life becoming a Reconciling In Christ congregation will present their findings and recommendations at the next congregational meeting.

I want to thank the members of that committee for their time and dedication to listening to the members of the congregation. I also want to thank the members of the congregation who took the time to meaningfully engage with the committee. As a congregation, we continue to listen to each other as we seek to live out our values here at Lord of Life.

A recent conversation with a member who moved from another church 3 or 4 years ago revealed their amazement at the level of volunteering and ministerial activities at Lord of Life. This is an aspect we may not fully appreciate or openly discuss. Lord of Life has a skilled and dedicated staff that is crucial in implementing our ministries. Additionally, we recently acknowledged our volunteers, whose contributions are essential to our efforts in Serving God's World. Greater support from the congregation is necessary to sustain these efforts, including contributions of time, talent, and treasure to further engage in God's work and extend our reach into local communities.

The council is proposing a budget for 2025-26 at the next congregational meeting. The support of our congregation is needed as we lean into moving forward in our worship, fellowship, and ministries.

This is an important time for our congregation. I am honored to be leading council, as we all lean into the Mission, Vision, and Values here at Lord of Life.

Yours In Christ,  
*Steve Bark*  
Congregation Council President

# Faith Formation ~ Teen Life Ministry

This past year has been an incredible one for Teen Life Ministry at Lord of Life. We were blessed to welcome Mia Vu as our part-time Youth Director. Even in a part-time capacity, Mia has worked tirelessly alongside our team to expand ministry opportunities for youth and their families.

## Confirmation-Aged Youth

Our Confirmation program has successfully transitioned to Sunday mornings, bringing fresh energy and excitement to this vital ministry. The program continues to grow as we enhance teaching and engagement with our youth.

- Youth are actively participating in monthly service projects and thriving in their small groups.
- This month, we joyfully confirmed 12 youth into the life of faith and welcomed one through baptism.
- Over the summer, 10 youth served our local community through a three-day mini mission trip here in The Woodlands, working with a variety of service organizations. It was a powerful experience to see our youth living out their faith in action.

## Senior High Youth

Our Sunday night gatherings remain a cornerstone of connection and spiritual growth. These weekly events continue to be a safe, fun, and faith-filled space where youth build relationships, play games, and dive into Scripture together.

- Over the past year, we've hosted several memorable events including a photo scavenger hunt, pool parties, and kickball nights.
- We are especially proud of the increasing number of youth stepping into leadership roles within both the youth group and Children's Sunday School, as we nurture and raise up Christian leaders.
- This past summer, we took 34 high school students to Alaska for a transformative mission trip focused on serving the community, experiencing the outdoors, and growing in faith. We're thrilled to be taking another group of 34 youth to Nashville in just a few weeks!

## Voices from Our Youth

*"This program is a space where people are free to be themselves and feel safe." – A*

*"Youth group has helped me grow so much and figure out who I am in this world.*

*My faith is a strength as I move on to college." – J*

## Gratitude for Our Volunteers

I have had the privilege of working alongside an incredible group of mentors, volunteers, and a dedicated Youth Board who support and guide our youth every step of the way.

## Youth Program Mentors:

Kirk Fields, Katie Phillips, Dixie Babineaux, Brandy Buck, Beth Vu, Mark Hoffland, Kevin McKenna, Sarah Page, and Mike Devoley

## Youth Committee Members:

Sarah Page, Crystal Tucker, Kevin McKenna, and Mike Devoley

To all those who have served our youth in countless ways—and to the church staff who continue to love and guide them—thank you. Your investment in the spiritual lives of these young people is making a lasting difference.

While we continue the search for a full-time Youth Director, I am confident that we are in good hands. Our ministry is thriving, and God is clearly at work in and through our young people.

God's Peace,

*Patrick Nazaroff*

Director of Faith Formation

# Faith Formation ~ Children's Ministry

Looking back on this past year, I am deeply thankful for the many ways God's love has been at work in our ministry. Throughout 2024–2025, from weekly Sunday School to our biggest events we've witnessed incredible moments of faith, imagination, and community. Christ's presence has been felt in both the quiet and joyful moments, reminding us of the beauty of growing together in faith. Here's a glimpse into how we are helping children and families grow together in faith:

**Club 56:** Our fifth and sixth grade students had a meaningful and productive year. With the support of our teachers, we stayed focused on creating lessons that were relevant and engaging for this year's students. They demonstrated strong leadership by planning and leading both worship services on November 17, 2024, and by taking active roles in the Children's Christmas Eve service. Monthly Service Sundays gave students valuable opportunities to put their faith into practice — assembling Lutheran World Relief kits, Buddy Backpacks, care packages for people experiencing homelessness, and spring break activity bags for residents at Glenn Loch.

**Sunday School:** Sunday School continued using the Dig-In curriculum, offering age-appropriate, customizable lessons that help children grow in their faith through interactive storytelling, games, and hands-on activities. This year, the 3rd and 4th grade classes transitioned to a rotating teaching schedule, which made it easier to involve more volunteers in our Sunday School program. Students from Pre-K through 4th grade also took part in worship by presenting a Christmas Eve play at the 4 p.m. service. Throughout the year, classes engaged in small service projects, including decorating lunch bags for Meals-on-Wheels.

**Footsteps in Faith:** Our Footsteps in Faith classes are designed to support families as they grow together in faith and renew their commitment to faith education. Over the past year, we continued to adapt and refresh the curriculum by incorporating new, engaging elements such as prayer stations. A new addition last year was a combined 5th and 6th grade lock-in, alternating each year between the Ten Commandments and Communion. This year's lock-in centered on Communion and included a variety of meaningful activities, from chalice making to a fun service project benefiting Isaiah 117 House. In total, six successful Footsteps in Faith classes were offered, serving children from Kindergarten through 6th grade.

**Family Easter Vigil Dinner Church and Easter Egg Hunt:** This year's Easter Egg Hunt was a great success, especially with the addition of the Barnyard Bash, which helped us support God's Global Barnyard in a fun and meaningful way. The Family Easter Vigil Dinner Church also saw significant growth, offering interactive and engaging opportunities for families to take part in the service. In total, over 60 children participated in the egg hunt, and 120 people attended the vigil.

**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 2024 both camps continued to grow in attendance. We were able to share Christ's love with over 230 children and 70+ volunteers through camps in 2024.

**And much more!** We continue to support and engage families through a variety of events and resources. This year, we hosted two Parents' Night Out events, serving a total of 85 children. Families were also provided with at-home faith resources, including Advent bags, Lenten calendars, and Holy Week boxes. We partnered with Global Mission for the Barnyard Bash and teamed with the Youth to host Trunk or Treat, which welcomed over 500 attendees!

**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: Angela Crissey, Sophie Devoley, Jocelyn Earnest-Heckler, Emilie Grohman, Ken Harvey, Leah Lafont, Ellie Lutz, Cassidy McKenna, Aila McLauchlan, Amanda Tucker, and Marianne Richenberger.

**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.

Respectfully submitted,  
*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 2024-2025 school year are: Pastor Cassandra Nagle, Nicole Forester, Ally Kelly, Jennifer Adam, Amy VanHoy, Kimberly Wong, Amber Barhorst, Joe Agrella, Michelle Kink, and me. Currently, for the 2024-2025 school year, we have 107 students enrolled in classes ranging in age from 18 months through 5 years of age. We have a total of 22 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 13 families with a total of 18 children using various degrees of scholarship. Kids of the Kingdom is providing \$20,040.00 in scholarships from the budget, \$2,460.00 from the director's discretionary fund, \$3,015.00 from our camp fundraiser, and \$17,915.00 from the previous year's general savings. Lord of Life also contributed \$5,880.00 through the Pastor's Discretionary Fund to the scholarship fund. The total amount of scholarship being distributed is \$49,310.00.

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 210 lbs. of canned food to donate to Interfaith Food Pantry and \$544.05 in coins for God's Global Barnyard. At Christmastime, 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 for that month was collecting 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 they are dedicated to serving the young people in our community.

Sincerely,  
*Michelle McGuire*  
Director of Kids of the Kingdom Preschool

# Health Ministries

Over the past year, the Health Ministries at Lord of Life have grown in depth and outreach, promoting our congregation's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being through intentional programming, personal care, and collaborative ministry.

The Health Ministries Committee is led by our Faith Community Nurse, Brenda Stockham. She provides individualized support during Sunday services and church events, and through phone calls, home, hospital, and rehab visits. Additional responsibilities include health education, post-discharge support, end-of-life care, assistance with funerals, and ensuring our members and their families feel supported during times of need. She also plays a key role in connecting our pastoral staff with members requiring spiritual or emotional support. The Health Ministries Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7 pm on Zoom. Its members include Heda Christ, Becky Cox, Beth Hall, Natalie Harvey, Laura Moore, Pastor Cassandra Nagle, Erik Richenberger (chair), Ron Rush, Brenda Stockham, and Rosalie Tuttle.

Highlights from the past year include:

- **Lunch & Learn Series:** Hosted sessions on Disaster Planning, Senior Living Options, End-of-Life Planning, and Prayer Labyrinths as a Spiritual Practice.
- **Vaccine Clinic:** Provided over 40 vaccinations in collaboration with Kroger.
- **Blood Drive:** Collected more than 40 units of blood for MD Anderson Cancer Center.
- **GriefShare:** Beth Hall & Rosalie Tuttle hosted two weekly grief support groups.
- **Meal Delivery:** Delivered meals weekly to members who are homebound or recovering from illness.
- **Hospital Bags:** Created hospital care packages in partnership with Hands of Faith for hospitalized members and their loved ones.
- **Prayer Labyrinth Refresh:** Partnered with an Eagle Scout candidate to revitalize the labyrinth space for peace and reflection.
- **Healing Hearts:** Connie Kaylor hosted quarterly social gatherings for those who have lost a spouse.

In the next fiscal year, we are looking forward to:

- Another successful blood drive.
- Support groups for caregivers and those experiencing memory loss.
- Care packages for those undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment.
- Stop the Bleed/CPR/First Aid Training for all ages.
- Continued partnership opportunities with Hands of Faith and other community health providers.

I would like to close this report with a heartfelt thank you to Brenda Stockham, whose deep compassion and steady presence are the heart of this ministry. Her impact on the lives of our members is immeasurable, and we are blessed by her leadership. Thank you to the congregation and council for supporting our growing ministry, and to the dedicated committee members who serve selflessly to help share God's healing love.

Respectfully submitted,

*Erik Richenberger*

Chair of the Health Ministries Committee

# 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 the 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 fund these organizations directly:

<b>\$5,000</b> to the Rise Against Hunger (God’s Work, Our Hands Day 2024 project)	<b>\$1,847.86</b> to LWR school kits and general fund
<b>\$5,000</b> to Children’s Safe Harbor for their capital campaign	<b>\$1,500</b> to Andrea Kopataki, a Hungarian missionary & special needs teacher
<b>\$3,000</b> to the YES to Youth Bridgeway House activity and enrichment fund	<b>\$1,500</b> to Nourishment for the Needy for A/C in the back warehouse
<b>\$3,000</b> to Isaiah 117 House for furniture & supplies for their new house	<b>\$1,152.14</b> to The King’s Embrace for general operating costs and gifts
<b>\$3,000</b> to Interfaith of the Woodlands for grocery delivery for homebound seniors	<b>\$1,000</b> to Upbring for back-to-school supplies, including laptops
<b>\$2,000</b> to Fill the Gap for deposit & rental assistance	<b>\$941.24</b> to Homeless Ministry for Salvation Army warm items and kit supplies
<b>\$2,000</b> to Angel Reach for their Transitional Living Program	<b>\$500</b> to God’s Global Barnyard: through the LOL Children’s program
<b>\$2,000</b> to CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) for one-time urgent financial needs	<b>\$500</b> to Kids of the Kingdom for tuition scholarships
<b>\$2,000</b> to Y-Knot Missions for a chicken coop and goat program	<b>\$103.75</b> to support a Girl Scout Gold Award project

Through special collections, we were able to donate:

**\$11,301.05** to the **Montgomery County Food Bank**  
**\$2,319.60** to **McCullough Junior High School** for lunch debt reduction  
**\$1,679.68** to **The Abundant Harvest Kitchen**  
**\$1,137.59** to **Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service)**  
**\$408.16** to **God’s Global Barnyard**  
**\$1,000** to **Kiva** for microloans around the world  
**\$433** to **Isaiah 117 House** from Club 56’s Cocoa for a Cause

## Highlights

- In February, Pastor Cassandra visited The King’s Embrace for the second time. She brought puzzles and dice games for the TKE boys to play together, and 80 snack-size PayDays – their favorite candy! It was enough to share with all 70 TKE boys and various young boys living on the streets in Bungoma, Kenya.
- After many years of preparation, we saw the Isaiah 117 House open in Montgomery County! Congregation members attended the ribbon cutting and the Black Walnut Café fundraiser dinner, earning \$557.15 for them. Several of us have already volunteered in the home, changing the way foster care begins.

## 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> for food-insecure children in Conroe ISD	<b>48 Angel Reach dinner kits</b> for youth aging out of foster care	<b>84 Christmas boxes</b> for seafarers at the Port of Houston	<b>875 Hug-a-Bears &amp; 17 Cough Pillows</b> for Memorial Hermann Hospital
<b>12 Spring Break Boxes</b> for Glen Loch Elementary School families	<b>50 hot weekend lunches</b> for the Salvation Army	<b>About 125 unopened toys</b> for Interfaith Christmas gifts	<b>A house full of furniture</b> for a Ukrainian refugee family
<b>60 Food Bags</b> for walk-ins at Hope Center Houston	<b>Countless monthly food donations</b> for the Montgomery County & Interfaith Food Banks	<b>Christmas Gifts</b> for 56 seniors	<b>300+ warm items</b> for the Salvation Army
<b>360 sack lunches &amp; personal care kits</b> for the Salvation Army	<b>FULL TRUCK of used textiles</b> for Phill the Box	<b>Christmas Gifts</b> for 43 foster children	<b>150 School Kits</b> for Lutheran World Relief
<b>3,032 personal items &amp; clothing</b> for Conroe ISD nurses to distribute	<b>Several bags of glasses &amp; cases</b> for the Lion's Club	<b>Countless assorted jewelry pieces</b> for Brighter Lipstick, Bigger Earrings	<b>67 Quilts</b> for Lutheran World Relief

### 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.
- This year, we had a huge response to our used textile collection through Rise Against Hunger, benefiting Phill the Box. They donate the items to people in need, sell what they can to fund their programs, and recycle the rest. They commit to putting nothing in a landfill, and boy, did we deliver!

## 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.
- **Family Promise of Montgomery County:** We host families in danger of homelessness.
- **God's Work, Our Hands Day:** 140 congregation members packed 13,608 meals that were sent to Zambia.
- **Lunch Bunch:** We tour our ministry partners' facilities to see our impact firsthand.
- **Quarterly Staff Service Project:** The staff participates in a hands-on service project every fifth Tuesday.
- **Red Cross:** After Beryl, trained members volunteered at Saints Simon and Jude's emergency shelter.
- **Scouts BSA:** We serve as Scout leaders weekly to the over 175 Scouts in our program.
- **The Champion Project Book Bus:** We assist in providing books and fun to children in group homes.
- **The Woodlands Township:** We clean a mile of pathways quarterly with the Adopt-a-Path program.

### *Highlights*

After having dinner with families at Family Promise, our congregation members had this to share:

- “Dinner at Family Promise Tuesday went well. The moms were all friendly & easy to talk to. The many kids were very polite & enjoyed telling us about their day. Each family came in staggered, when they were ready, & were in no hurry to leave. Wonderful fellowship & great evening.”
- “We had an amazing visit with the families!! They ate every single bite of chili and she appreciated the vegan chili I brought for her. He LOVED playing with the boys and they were dancing and then eventually ended up in the game room. My favorite part of the night was coloring with two sweethearts N & Z. How blessed are we to spend this time with the families. They’re very appreciative of LOL and the meals.”

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

The Hands of Faith Fair Trade ministry (HOF) had a very successful fiscal year with solid sales in the store. This resulted in HOF's ability to once again increase our support for our artisans, farmers, and fair trade-vetted vendors by purchasing more merchandise from them. We continue to maintain our membership in the Fair Trade Federation (FTF). The members of the HOF

Committee are Debbie Cox, Beverly DeJarnett (co-chair), Beth Kuper (co-chair), Gayle LeBon, Lynne Ledbetter, Jenny McKenna, Pastor Cassandra Nagle, and Linda Nance.

An important mission of HOF is to educate people around the Houston area about what fair trade is and the positive impacts it can have on our artisans, farmers, and Fair Trade vendors. To that end, we hosted five educational events for various community and church groups this past year, including the LDS Lake Woodlands Ward Relief Society, two National Charity League meetings, and two Philanthropic Education Organization (PEO) meetings.

Due to our strong sales and the unwavering support of our congregation, HOF was able to make donations to many groups throughout this past fiscal year. The donations of gifts and cash totaled a little over \$13,000 and included the following:

- **\$5,120 to ELCA Good Gifts** from International Women's Day sales
  - Sent 128 girls to school for a full year
- **\$2,500 to ELCA Good Gifts**
  - Sent 20 girls to school for a full year
  - Sent 2 women for Farmers' Field School
  - Provided school supplies for 2 classrooms
  - Provided latrines to 2 villages
  - Stocked a Health Clinic for 1 month
  - purchased a portion of an irrigation project
  - purchased a portion of a safe water access project
- **\$2,000 to the Lord of Life Growing Faithfully Development Campaign**
- **\$1,500 to Lutheran World Relief: Keep Girls in School (Sierra Leone)**
- **Gifted a percentage of sales to 5 onsite presentation groups** from the community
- **Donated baskets** of fair-trade items to fundraisers for **Lutherhill, Upbring, & Irons Jr. High**
- **Donated items to Kids of the Kingdom Preschool & All Nations Community School**
- **Donated items to Lord of Life**, including a Pig Roast basket; gifts for baby baskets; prizes for youth group bingo night; Easter basket for Easter Madness bracket winner; gift certificates for new member families; and metal art & baskets to decorate the LOL parlor.

HOF hired a part-time person to help increase our presence on social media, especially Instagram. As a result, HOF increased its number of followers to 900, an increase of approximately 600 over the past year. This exposure has led to more people in our community stopping by the store to shop Fair Trade.

We are unsure what effect proposed tariffs will have on our prices in the future, but as a member of the FTF, we should receive up-to-date information on any ramifications the tariffs may have. We have not increased our prices yet, as most of our vendors have not increased their prices.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Beverly DeJarnett and Beth Kuper*  
Co-chairs of HOF Steering Committee

# 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, we continue our annual Pig Roast and our support of community members in need through our 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. The PDF allows Lord of Life to share the love of Christ through tangible assistance that keeps families in safe housing, keeps their utilities on, and their refrigerators stocked.. The assistance offered is typically \$200-300 for rent, utilities, or other expenses. These needs are assessed through a brief application which is then reviewed by Pastor Cassandra and 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 through a crisis and 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 increased significantly. When Pastor David began working with the PDF in 2017, he received 3-5 requests a month in the busiest months. Now, we receive an average of 20-25 requests per month. We have set boundaries on where, how much, and how often we provide assistance to applicants, and we have continued to see a rise in the needs of our neighbors. In the last twelve months, we fulfilled 163 requests and gave out over \$45,000 in assistance. In December 2024 alone, we provided \$8,500 to 29 community members. We received generous end of year gifts that allowed us to continue the care of our community in the new year. Your generosity has allowed us, in 2025, to distribute an average of \$5,000 each month to a total of 62 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. In 2024-25 we have also seen significant contributions come through all year long to continue to support this ministry that is vital to our community. At the time of this writing, we are preparing for our annual Pig Roast and look forward to celebrating another great event made successful by your generosity! 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*

# Connecting Ministries

Connecting Ministries at Lord of Life play a critical role in providing fellowship and connection time in the church community, allowing us to share our lives, experiences, and individual faith journeys and to build meaningful relationships with each other.

**Witness Committee:** Under Jim Card's leadership, we have been exploring the Witness Committee's purpose and how that relates to our congregation and the community outside our congregation. A recent Visioning Retreat will help develop our community outreach. Greeters are the first contact visitors have when they enter the church. They continue to provide a warm and welcoming environment for all who come to Lord of Life.

**New Member Class:** We had a total of 23 households join the membership of Lord of Life over our three new member classes in May, September, and January of this fiscal year.

**Volunteers:** We have many volunteers who support Sunday morning services, as well as committees, music programs, VBS, Sunday School teachers, senior meal deliveries, Angel Reach, feeding the hungry, and so many more ministries that are too numerous to list.

**Hospitality:** The Wednesday meals during Music, Meals & More have been a central focus for Hospitality this past year. This ministry provides food and fellowship for all members of Lord of Life each week during the school year. Attendance varies each week, but we typically serve 65–100 people each meal. Additionally, each Wednesday meal provides 30-40 extra meals that go out the following day through Health Ministries to seniors of our congregation. Hospitality continues to support many other events and activities throughout the year including, stocking the Welcome Center for groups meeting in the church during the week, Sunday Morning Coffee & Donuts, receptions for concerts, new members and confirmands, Mother's Day & Father's Day celebrations, Volunteer Recognition Sunday celebration, Pig Roast Event, Congregational Meetings, & Trunk or Treat Event. We provide support and guidance for other ministry groups that use the kitchen for VBS, Day Camp, Youth Fundraisers, Lenten Soup Suppers, and Funerals.

**Small Groups:** The Stitch & Sew ministry group continues to share their talents to provide prayer quilts for the ill, baptismal blankets for baptisms, and other quilts for baby blessing baskets. In addition, they provided hats and scarves for the Seafarer's box ministry at Christmastime and supplied Health Ministries with blankets to go in Hospital Bags for hospitalized members. The Cards for a Cause ministry collected gift cards throughout the year to support food-insecure people in our community, providing grocery and gas cards to those who are in need. Lord of Life and Trinity Episcopal Church connect each month through the Common Table ministry, where members from both churches gather for fellowship and food at local restaurants. The Bunco group met for fun and fellowship over the past year and fostered meaningful relationships among the group of ladies attending each month.

**REALM:** I continue to advocate the use of Realm, assisting those who need help in getting the App on their device or using the App, providing one-to-one support. The Realm database is being maintained, and I am always looking for new ways to increase the use of Realm and exploring new ways to use its features.

God's blessings,

*Peggy Sloan*

Director of Connecting Ministries

# Property & Technology

Growth and Maintenance. Those are the words to describe the past year for your Property and Technology Committee. We have seen some growth, but we have undergone a great deal of maintenance. And that maintenance will help this church grow stronger into the future.

I want to thank our committee members: David Harris and Bill Lutz (co-chairs), Larry Gaskamp, Bob Arend, Tommy Eubanks, Drew Minarcik, Mike Devoley, and Billy Forester. Here are just some of the highlights of 2024/25:

## Property

**Broken Pews** – For a short time in March, 2025, we had to rope off two pews due to broken legs. We discovered six legs that had to be replaced because of decay and deterioration. We were able to get the legs replaced before Easter.

**Landscaping & Tree Removal** – Hurricane Beryl did lots of damage in our community and while the church came away unscathed, some of our landscaping was not as lucky. We had to remove several dying and damaged trees that were in danger of hitting the building or damaging cars in our parking lot. Meanwhile, in the past month, we have seen new-life in our landscaping. With the help of Mike Devoley, and Bill and Sue King, we have revitalized the Kids of the Kingdom Butterfly Garden. The kids are helping also. Bill and several others planted new plants to help beautify the area in front of the Welcome Center. And Mike installed new raised beds. In addition, a new rain barrel has been added to the area.

**Ice machine in Kitchen** – We all remember the ice machine that leaked and caused the huge flood in 2023. Well, we have replaced that ice machine with a new and improved one that has not leaked once. This new machine has proven to be an asset in the kitchen.

## Technology

**Administration Printers** – While we had hoped that we would not have to take on this project until the upcoming fiscal year, we had to replace both of our administrative printers in early 2025. Our main printer had over two million copies and died during Lent. Luckily, since we were already in the process of finding a new printer for the upcoming fiscal year, we were several steps ahead of the game and were able to replace both printers within a week after the main printer died. We now have a brand-new Sharp printer, and a used printer that we can use as a backup. We now own both printers and hope they last as long as the last ones did.

**Security Cameras** – We have been planning to increase the number of security cameras around the building for several years, and, thanks to Drew Minarcik, that is now becoming a reality. Drew helped change our current cameras to a new online system and installed a new security camera in the Fellowship Hall. As part of the construction in our education wing this summer, Drew will also be installing additional cameras in the Kids of the Kingdom halls and new cameras upstairs.

**New Computers** – The technology team only added one computer in the last year, for Youth Director Mia Vu when she was hired last year. In the upcoming fiscal year the team will have to be much more aggressive with upgrades and additional computers since almost all computers are on Windows 10. As you may know, support for Windows 10 will end in October 2025. Until that time, we will be working to either convert existing computers to Windows 11 or replace computers that cannot upgrade to Windows 11. We will have to replace at least four computers during the next few months.

Finally, I just want to say a few words about the upcoming year. The entire committee and I will be working with the Growing Faithfully team during the renovations this summer of our education wing. We will also work to continue to improve and maintain our entire campus.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Rick Janacek*  
Office Manager



# Growing Faithfully Campaign

God continues to reveal His plan through the efforts of the Growing Faithfully campaign. You as a congregation have reacted with Zeal! You remember the symbols for our theme? The X, Y, and Zs – Christ, You, and Zeal. When we started out, we were not sure exactly how Zeal would fit, but You all showed us by being inspired and reacting with Zeal! Your generous, timely contributions have allowed us to embark on a significant phase of our campaign. What a testament to Christ and dedication to our mission to “seek and welcome all to connect, celebrate, and serve in God’s love”.

After just over one year into a three-year campaign, your prayers and generosity have allowed us to move forward with the renovation of the Education Wing this summer, including the Kids of the Kingdom preschool and 2nd floor classroom areas. We are also making great progress in our rebranding efforts. All this in addition to tithing \$40K to various grateful organizations! Read on for more details

## **The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT):**

The Strategic Leadership Team continues to receive sub-team updates and provide guidance as needed to ensure campaign objectives are being met. We have worked to align campaign initiatives with available funding and provide ongoing budget oversight. Each quarter, we have reviewed and recommended proposed tithe recipients to the Council.

## **The Branding Team:**

This team represents a diverse cross-section of the congregation that has been working with brand consultants Kineto Creative since last October to develop a new branding strategy for Lord of Life. Meeting twice monthly since the first of the year, the group is finalizing the development of a new logo and color palette to be used churchwide as an easily recognizable representation of the church’s branding.

Key areas of work that are ongoing include an in-depth review and refinement of Lord of Life’s communication strategies and a new and upgraded website architecture. This work serves as a foundation for making recommendations in the fall for the rollout of a new website and communication structure that serves as a branding strategy that enables us to more effectively live out the Lord of Life mission and vision.

## **The Facilities Team:**

in July 2024, the roof above the office section of the church was replaced and none too soon. The bucket placement brigade was tiring! Funds for this project along with other Facilities improvement projects were approved by the congregation in January 2023.

Last summer the Facilities team reviewed other facilities related projects with staff and end users. A general contractor was contacted to provide budget estimates once the scope was confirmed in August. Estimates enabled the SLT to align needs with anticipated available funding, recognizing certain time constraints (i.e. preschool renovation during summer months). With a plan in place, the facilities team engaged an architectural firm to provide construction drawings for the Education Wing (1st and 2nd Floor). Competitive bids for renovations were solicited in February and a contract with the low bidder was executed in March. Construction will take place over the summer months. The team has been working with staff to minimize the impact to planned programming (VBS, summer camp, etc.) and outside organizations that use our space. A big thank you for all their support!

**Tithe Team:**

The tithe team began meeting regularly last fall to identify potential recipients for tithes from the Growing Faithfully campaign. It was determined that tithes, based on receipts, would be made quarterly for the duration of the three-year campaign. To date \$40K has been dispersed. Recipients include: Interfaith of the Woodlands, The King’s Embrace, Kindred Kitchen, Lutheran Disaster Response, and Lutheran World Relief – Keep Girls in School. What a joy to be able to help our neighbors through this campaign as we better equip our church to live out our mission.

**Fundraising Team:**

We could not do all these exciting things without the support and work achieved by this team. The Spirit has been working with us! The team has done a great job delivering a meaningful theme as well as executing a pragmatic, comfortable approach reaching out to our congregation for their support. Over 60% of total funding was raised in the first year. Current pledges represent 86% of our goal. The team will continue to seek pledges so we can keep pace funding future phases of the campaign. It is truly amazing what this congregation has accomplished!

**Communication & Logistics Team:**

This team has done wonderful work keeping the congregation informed on the progress of the campaign. From videos, to posters, to letters sent out to the congregation, all have been timely, informative, and well designed. Most importantly they have manifested the X, Y, and Z theme in their message.

All the Growing Faithfully teams have worked hard again this year, so 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*  
Chair of the Strategic Leadership Team

**Growing Faithfully Teams**

**Strategic Leadership Team**

Pastor David Bauser  
Tim Donoughue  
Susan Gallup (chair)  
Becky Havill  
Marlene Hoffheiser  
Deb Spiess

**Facilities Team**

Larry Gaskamp  
Marlene Hoffheiser (chair)  
Stephen Pfeil  
Chuck Spiess  
Susan Gallup  
Rick Janacek

**Tithe Team**

Tim Donoughue  
Gayle Lebon (chair)  
Jenny McKenna  
Pastor Cassandra Nagle  
Peggy Sloan

**Branding Team**

Marna Arlien  
Pastor David Bauser  
Kim Born  
Dan Fenn  
Nicole Puig-Herz  
Olivia Romere  
Deb Spiess (chair)  
Laura & Dwight Odelius  
(consultants)

**Fundraising Team**

Becky Havill  
Beth Kuper  
Keith McPherson  
Larry Miller  
Doug Nelson  
Rita Van Sickle

# Stewardship Committee

If you are reading this report, then you know that the community we build at Lord of Life is impacting hundreds of lives every week. Whether you are joining us for worship, dropping off your child at Kids of the Kingdom, coming for a Wednesday meal, or requesting emergency assistance, our congregation continues to create spaces for people to connect with God, with each other, and with the broader community. None of these connections are possible without the generous support you all continue to show to God's ministries in this place. Thank you!

This past fall, the Stewardship Team led the Boundless Generosity Campaign. This annual stewardship appeal was crafted to invite you to take a step in faith and experience God's boundless capacity for generosity that is revealed when we release our grip on the gifts God has placed in our care. This year, as in so many years past, you all stepped up to the challenge. We received 168 Commitment Cards from meaningful contributors to Lord of Life – a far and away record in recent memory. Our annual giving continues to trend positively as we close the gap in our planned deficit budget. And, thanks to your generosity, our ministries continue to thrive by connecting to people where they are and by giving them the opportunity to experience God in their midst.

Over the past several years, we have been blessed to hear some of your stories of how you came to experience and live out God's *Boundless Generosity*. These stories are an incredible gift that challenge long-time supporters of this congregation to think about their own story and that invite new supporters to explore what God has in store for them. Thank you for being willing to share with us! This fall, we hope to share more of your stories. To submit your story, go to the church website ([lolonline.org](http://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!

Lord of Life, the Stewardship Team is deeply grateful for the ways you have stepped up to share your financial support and your time with God's ministries at Lord of Life. 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*

Chair of the Stewardship Committee

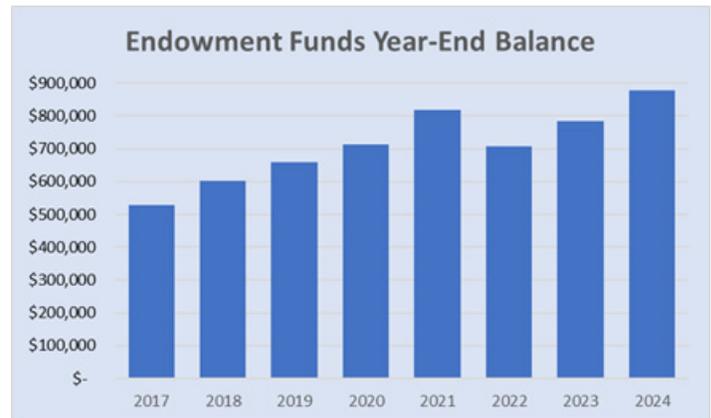
# Endowment Committee



Again this year, the Endowment Funds Administration Committee was busy overseeing, promoting, and monitoring investments in Lord of Life’s three mission endowment funds: Gebert Mission Outreach Fund, Mission in Ministry Fund, and Mission in Facilities Fund.

Committee activities included:

- Disbursed \$36 thousand from the Gebert Outreach Fund in calendar year 2024. The Gebert Mission in Outreach Distribution Committee then approved the distribution of this money to 18 worthy organizations in the local community and internationally. (The Distribution Committee is comprised of the members of the Administration Committee plus the chairpersons of the Community Outreach and Global Missions teams).
- Received \$11 thousand in new contributions in 2024.
- Coordinated with the Community Outreach and Global Missions teams to celebrate “Blessing Sunday” in June to publicize the good works done by the Gebert Mission Outreach disbursements and to give thanks for the ability to help so many in our community and the world through the endowment funds.
- Celebrated “Endowment Sunday” on All Saints Sunday in November to promote giving to the endowment funds. This included a special video and bulletin insert for the worship services.
- Coordinated with John Roalson, Gift Planner for Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, as he helped members with their legacy planning.
- Carefully monitored fund investments to ensure they were prudently managed as required by the Continuing Resolution. Established a cash reserve equal to more than six years of annual disbursements to ensure money would be available during periods of market downturn without having to sell investments at depressed prices. Fund investments totaled over \$877 thousand at year-end 2024 (up 12% from 2023).



Work plans for the coming year include proposing revisions to the Continuing Resolution, updating fund communication materials, and preparing a video focused on encouraging legacy giving to the funds.

I thank current committee members Jim Annelin, Pastor David Bauser, Elizabeth McPherson, Nicole Puig-Hertz, Whitney Terrell, and Beth Vu for their hard work and dedication to this important ministry.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Mark Fincher*  
Chair of the Endowment Committee

# Financial Secretary

For the Ten Months from June 1, 2024 through March 31, 2025

## Operating Revenues

Actuals thru March 31, 2024	\$ 1,166,000
Budget thru March 31, 2024	\$ 1,170,000
vs Budget (over/under)	\$ (4,000)
vs 2024 (improve/decline)	\$ 17,900

## 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 ten months. The final report for the 2025 fiscal year will be available by mid-June, but it now appears regular giving will be ~ \$1,395,600, (\$35,500) less than the approved budget of \$ 1,431,100.

Operating revenues (general fund offerings) for 2025 are 1.5% higher through March 31, 2025 as compared to the same period of the previous year. Average donating families per month is up slightly at 181, compared to last year at 180. Through April 30, 2025 our average attendance, including both in-person and online participants, is 180 per service. This number does track lower than 2023, but the drop is accounted for by an adjustment to how we are tracking online views. Our in-person only attendance, tracked by per month average over the same period, is up from 1,292 in 2023-24 to 1,350 in 2024-25.

Below is a graphic that shows total regular giving by fiscal year for the past five years. Also included is a trend-line indicates a consistent increase in giving over the period of + 8.3% per year.



## 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 2024/25 contributions to these funds thru March 31 are \$548,946 (vs \$583,397 in 2023/24 same period). Included in this number is \$360,737 for the Growing Faithfully Campaign. Lord of Life's Other Restricted Funds include The Pastor's Discretionary Fund, multiple Outreach Programs, Food Pantry, Endowment, Social Ministries, Music Programs, the Harvestwood event and Property Contingency.

Thank you for continuing to support all that we do at Lord of Life.

Gratefully submitted,  
*Matt Spielman*  
Financial Secretary

# Finance Committee

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.

## 2024-2025 Fiscal Year Results

**Actual results for the full 12-month period of June 1, 2024, thru May 31, 2025, are projected,** given that final April-May results are not yet available. Total general fund giving in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24 increased about \$61,000 or about 4.5%. Actual giving was \$1,429,000 or about \$9,000 below the budget of \$1,438,000 or 0.06%. Many thanks to our congregation for the increases in donations. We continued to have strong support of the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund. Also, we continue to receive significant gifts to the Growing Faithfully Campaign. We are forever thankful to the congregation for responding when the needs are great!

Year	Expenses Budget	Expenses Actual	Variance Fav (Un-fav)	Offerings Budget	Offerings Actual	Variance Fav (Un-fav)
2023-24	1,448,135	1,353,371	94,764	1,405,000	1,367,874	(37,126)
2024-25*	1,556,406	1,511,406	45,000	1,438,000	1,429,000	(9,000)

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

## 2023-24 versus 2024-25 and % Change

Contributions	2024-25	2023-24	% Change
Total Contribution	1,429,000	1,367,874	4.5
Designated Gifts*	710,586	772,332	-8.0
Total	2,139,586	2,140,206	-0.1

- 2024-25 10month Actual+ 2 months forecast

Expense by Department	Actual	Budget	Over / (Under) Budget
Outreach Ministries	151,100	151,100	0
Worship & The Arts	25,050	25,050	0
Faith Formation	17,900	17,900	0
Connecting Ministries	12,050	12,050	0
Congregational Life	42,900	42,900	0
Office	45,580	45,580	0
Technology	26,100	26,100	0
Utilities	62,000	67,000	(5,000)*
Maintenance	112,500	92,500	20,000*
Overall Property	35,600	35,600	0
Total Support Services	281,780	266,780	15,000
Staff	980,626	1,040,626	(60,000)*
Total	1,400,540	1,448,135	(45,000)

All departments are coming in at budget during the 2024-25 fiscal year, any changes in the amounts will be 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. The increase in Maintenance is due to the purchase of a New Ice Machine, Tree Removal from last summer's storm. The favorable variance in Staff is due to 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 **\$82,400**.

As of March 31, 2025, we estimate the church will have unrestricted cash reserves of approximately \$348,392. This also is an estimate that could change once April and May 2025 actuals become available, with full year around June 10, 2025.

### **2024-2025 Proposed Budget**

The proposed 2024-25 expense budget is detailed in the back of the handout.

- New position of Director of Teen Faith Formation for 12 months
- Staff salary increase
- Increases due to increases in maintenance or service fees that are known

I'd like to thank the members of the Finance Committee this year for their dedication, effort and valuable insights. Thanks to Beth Vu, Matt Spielman, Pastor David Bauser, Joe Cox, Brian Dawson, Darrell Havill, Michael Riewe, Steve Bark, Mike Gallup, Chuck Hoffheiser, and Rudy Martinez.

Respectfully submitted,

*Neal Stockham*

Chair of the Finance Committee