

Lord of Life Lutheran Church of Baxter 2023-2024 Annual Report



Our Mission: To inspire a deeper and richer connection to Christ, our community, and each other.

Table of Contents

2022-2023 Church Council Members and Lord of Life Staff.....	page 3
Congregational Meeting Information and Agenda.....	pages 4
Congregational Meeting Minutes - June 4, 2022.....	page 5-6
Member Milestones.....	page 7-9
President's Report.....	page 10-11
Senior Pastor's Report.....	page 11-12
Associate Pastor's Report.....	page 12-13
Ministry Team Reports.....	page 14-25
Upward Ministries	
Outward Ministries	
Inward Ministries	
Music Ministry	
Youth Ministry	
Micah Group	
Prayer Chain	
Generosity Team	
Property Team	
Take Them a Meal	
Women's Bible Study	
Stephen Ministry	
Lord of Life Quilters	
Thursday Men's Fellowship	
Accessibility Team	
Sarah's Circle	
Friday Morning Men's Breakfast	
Custodian's Report	
Ministry Operations Manager's Report	
Communication Coordinator's Report	
Synod Assembly Report.....	page 26
Statement of Financial Position.....	page 27
Statement of Financial Activities.....	page 28

Church Council and Staff

Staff:

Pastor Steven Rye, Senior Pastor
steve@lolbaxter.org

Pastor Erika Nilsen, Associate Pastor
erika.nilsen@lolbaxter.org

Anne Laechel, Ministry Operations
Manager
anne@lolbaxter.org

Tim Slinger, Youth Ministry Director
tim@lolbaxter.org

Karen Erickson, Custodian

Paul Erickson, Custodian

Tyler Jensen, Communications Coordinator
tyler.jensen@lolbaxter.org

Kennedy Niska, Music Coordinator
kennedy@lolbaxter.org

Council:

Steve Schaitberger, President

Kurt Porter, Vice-President

Kevin Olson, Secretary

Greg Bennett, Treasurer

Josh Freelove,
Youth Council Representative

Mission Leaders:

Karla Skwira, Mission Upward

Jolene Parks, Mission Inward

Donna Salli, Mission Outward

Brian Orłowski, Mission Ground

Congregational Meeting Agenda

May 21, 2023 - 11:00 A.M.

1. Call to order - President Steve Schaitberger
2. Opening prayer and celebrations - Pastor Steve
3. Attendance
4. Certification of quorum - Secretary Kevin Olson
5. Adoption of Agenda (Verbal Vote) - President Steve Schaitberger
6. Minutes of Congregational Meeting - June 4, 2022 - Secretary Kevin Olson
7. Presentation and Discussion of Annual Reports - President Steve Schaitberger
8. Presentation of Budget for July 2023 to June 2024
 - a. Motion to adopt, discussion, and approval (Verbal Vote) - President Steve Schaitberger
9. Nominating Committee Report
 - a. Voting on Council members, Nominating Committee & Financial Review Committee (Verbal Vote) - President Steve Schaitberger
10. Other business
11. Motion to Adjourn - President Steve Schaitberger
12. Closing Prayer - Pastor Erika

2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes
June 4, 2022

Meeting called to order at 10:56 am by Council President Dan Tupy.

Opening prayer led by Pastor Erika R. Nilsen, and followed by review of 2021 activities for congregation, youth community outreach, building projects.

Council Secretary Kevin Olson certified that a quorum of voting members was present.

MOTION to adopt the Annual Congregation Meeting for June 4, 2022 agenda, motion by Mary Anderson, seconded by Darrell Pedersen, all ayes (CM.2022.06.01).

MOTION to approve Annual Congregation Meeting minutes of June 6, 2021, motion by Denise Stromme, seconded by Jeff Mattson, all ayes (CM.2022.06.02).

Reports. President Tupy reported Lord of Life is moving onward and upward after the pandemic measures of the last two years. Pastor Steven Rye reported gratefulness for his current relaxful, reflective, and renewing sabbatical and that a new music director is in the process of being hired.

Budget Discussion. Steve Schaitberger gave ‘highlights of what’s in budget, reality of what’s not’. Budget formulation was collaborative and narrative process. Current staff has been retained. Questions about children’s ministry position: not in current budget, looking at ways of creatively doing children’s ministry (i.e. volunteers), council may be able to add position at later date. Insurance coverage: pastors covered by their spouse’s insurance plans, support staff (3) is LOL funded. 20K shortfall: from previous year, giving encouraged prior to end of fiscal year (end of July), designated to ‘general fund’.

MOTION to adopt the budget for July 2022 to July 2023, motion by Valerie Jones, seconded by Lisa Tupy, all ayes (CM.2022.06.03).

The Nominating Committee 2022 (Sonja Nefstead, Eric Ding, Sue Beck, Kari Stengrim, Andy Isaakson, Rob Frelove) submitted the following names for election to Church Council:

Steve Schaitberger –First Term as President
 Kurt Porter – First Term as Vice President
 Open – Treasurer
 Kevin Olson – Second Term as Secretary
 Jolene Parks – First Term on Council (Inward)
 Brian Orlowski – Third Term on Council (Grounds)
 Karla Skwira – Second Term on Council (Upward)
 Donna Salli – Second Term on Council (Outward)

Josh Freelove – First Term on Council (Youth Member)

2023 Synod Assembly

Courtney Hendrickson
Ted and Mary Anderson

2023 Nominating Committee

Deb Bergstrom
Pam Caughey
Larry Lundblad
Dan Tupy
Open
Open

MOTION to cast unanimous ballot for all nominated officers and Council Members, Synod assembly Voting Members, and the 2023 Nominating Committee, and to grant the Church Council authority to approve late additions, motion by Brenda Johnson, seconded by Matt Rioux, all ayes (CM.2022.06.04).

MOTION to adjourn meeting, 11:45 am, motion by Anne Laechel, seconded by Ted Anderson, all ayes (CM.2022.06.05).

Lord's Prayer led by Pastor Erika R. Nilsen.

Kevin Olson, Council Secretary

Member Milestones

During this meeting, we would like to take the time to recognize some milestones in our members' lives. We are incredibly thankful for our faith family and we look forward to making more memories together in the 2023-2024 year.

During this year, we welcomed the following people into our Church through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism:

- June 26, 2022, Arthur John Setness, child of Blake & Marie Setness;
- July 10, 2022, Ethan Meng Moua, child of Thao & Kanong Moua;
- July 31, 2022, Cailin May Sanow, child of Curtis & Briana Sanow;
- August 14, 2022, Della June Pierzinski, child of Michael & Kasandra Pierzinski;
- August 28, 2022, Stella Amelia Silverness, child of Anders & Alyssa Silverness;
- August 28, 2022, Lucy Nicole Silverness, child of Anders & Alyssa Silverness;
- October 23, 2022, Lochlan Leigh Janey, child of Adam & Leigha Janey;
- March 19, 2023, Owen Wesley Shelby, child of Brett & Amanda Shelby;
- May 7, 2023, Aria Ann Cervantez, child of Paul & Debra Cervantez.

Unfortunately in the last year, we also lost members of our faith family. We give thanks to God for the gifts they gave us as members of the Church, our community and as our friends and family. Let us take a moment to remember:

- Melba Gevik, October 18, 2022;
- Allen Braak, January 9, 2023;
- Eldo Schmidt, February 27, 2023;
- Ken Campbell, March 10, 2023;
- John Berns, March 21, 2023;
- David Schliek, April 10, 2023;
- Patricia Huhta, April 19, 2023; and
- Marie Anderson, April 24, 2023.

We also held funerals for the following people who were not members of Lord of Life:

- Steve Sundquist, January 5, 2023
- Joe Elwell, February 9, 2023
- Brian & Patricia Finch, March 3, 2023

This year, we celebrated 26 people joining our faith family as new members. Let us once again take a moment to celebrate:

- Bob & Janie Duerr;
- Jennifer Olson;
- Christopher, Sara, Tristan & Gavin Raimann;
- Dustin, Kayla, Elle & Eli Richters;
- Mark & Debra Swirmicky;
- Pauline Tischman;
- Pam Beaulieu
- Matthew, Rachel, & William Delaney
- Carol Ellerbusch;
- Richard & Anne Holz;
- Richard & Judy Osbakken;
- Brian & Brittany Petersen;
- Dan Schut; and
- Caleb Tautges

This year, the following individuals became fully confirmed members of our Church:

- Josh Anderson;
- Riley Anderson;
- Nora Behr;
- Alivia Brown;
- Zoe Cervantez;
- Aizlynn Ford;
- Hayden Freed
- Derek Hoglin;
- Kiley Jendro;
- Chad King;
- Abby Larson;
- Madi Miller;
- Straton Pribula;
- Julia Schmeck;
- Amelia Sjostrom;
- Kade Stengrim;
- Raquel Tulenchik; and
- Dylan Wikoff

Finally, we also celebrated the following young people taking their First Communion Class:

Hailey Allard;
Elim Anderson;
Justus Anderson;
Reegan Anderson;
Beckett Campbell;
Carver Clough;
William Feigum;
Gus Hanske;
Ella Hoglin;
Nora King;
Hennisey Mithun;
Kelsey Pape;
Samuel Porter;
Avery Rauen; and
Miles Ryan

President's Report

This spring I went back into the office after working from home for over 3 years due to COVID. I was excited and nervous all at the same time, but most of all excited. Finally, out of the house that seemed so much smaller than 3 years ago. The potential of all the good things this presented was amazing to me. On the way to the office my drive was constantly and literally one pothole after another. Each seemingly larger than the last. My car shook and bounced. Why all the potholes? By the time I got to the office my excitement for the possibilities was so much less. I had a choice focus on the potholes or the possibilities?

I believe our church family over the last year is feeling some of that same "Post COVID" excitement. We are back to consistent in-house worship services, children's and kids programming is back in person, our youth traveled again, the choir and special music is being sung & played, we hired a new music coordinator, a new roof over our heads and most importantly a common and shared bread and communion cup for all. Fading to memories are the Zoom calls, outside worships, online only worship, communion pick-up & blessings and SMART meetings on case counts to name a few. This excitement is shared by the church council as we looked to transition our focus from the near-term needs COVID demanded to long-term growing our mission.

To that end the council traveled to Camp Onomia for a weekend retreat to create a 5-year strategic plan. True to our mission the heart of the plan is worship and looks to deepen and richen connections to Christ our community and each other. The plan focuses on 6 areas:

1. Develop a Mortgage strategy
2. Increase volunteerism at Lord of Life
3. Increase the number of worship opportunities to our members
4. Right size staff & salaries to current needs
5. Implement Family Stepping Stones ministries
6. Implement inter-generational life experiences

Like my opening story, our plan and budget is filled with possibilities. We are blessed with an amazing staff who connect us to Christ and each other. We are looking to increase worship opportunities and the possibilities that presents. We are offering more for our children with the Stepping Stones ministries and the possibilities that presents for our families. We want to provided connections for our church family and Christ through intergenerational conversations, stories, and gatherings. As for the potholes, our contributions are less than our expenses. One of those specific potholes we discussed last year, and still exists, is in Children's Ministry. For the 2nd year in a row, this year's budget does not include a Part-time or Full-time position for a Children's Ministry Coordinator. Does it need to remain a pothole? No. We truly believe offering this role is a vital part to growing our mission. But having the council add it without the dollars to support it would not be a good steward of our dollars. The question for us to answer in the next year is pothole or possibility?

In closing I can't thank each of you enough for helping make Lord of Life the great welcoming and place of worship it is. The church staff for their ongoing love and support for living our mission. The Council members for lending their time and talents to follow and ponder how we grow our mission. The volunteers who usher, read, sing, help in the booth, teach our kids, shovel snow, pray, and others I missed to make Sundays, Wednesday, and all events in between possible. Thank you for coming back to in building worship. Thank you for being a part of our church family and living our mission. It is good to be back home.

As for the potholes, this I know to be true from Matthew 19:26 *"Jesus looked at them and said, with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

Steve Schaitberger

Senior Pastor's Report

There is much I look back upon this past year and feel very grateful. The year began with my return from my sabbatical. I continue to be blessed by my reflections on that time away. I came back renewed and refreshed for ministry. When I returned, I was greeted by our new music director - Kennedy Niska - who has provided leadership and coordination of our congregation's worship music ministry. He has seen that the musicians have what they need so that our music may be a blessing to all who attend. We have welcomed 26 new adult members, not including children or confirmands, this year.

One tremendous blessing for us has been the replacement of our roof. For many years, we had worried about how long it would be before we needed to pay for a new roof. Thanks to insurance funds, all but a very nominal amount has been covered.

Every month, I have the custom of preparing a leadership report for the council. Something I put on the end of leadership reports is this reminder: Much goes on that doesn't make it into these updates. Financial gifts are recorded, bills and payroll are tended to, and numerous communication channels inform a multitude about this congregation's good work and ministry; Volunteers are recruited and supported; Worship music is carefully chosen, and musicians are supported with direction and what they need; the children and youth programming are engaging, and their relationship to God and each other is strengthened, and this building is lovingly and carefully kept clean and in good repair so that it might serve as an adequate space in which to carry out our mission. It seems appropriate to echo these words here as I seek to describe the hard work that the staff does each year. We are blessed to have staff with such passion for our ministry.

I'm tremendously thankful for the leadership we've had throughout the year. There has been a wonderful spirit on the council this past year, and I continue to be blessed to work alongside Pastor Erika Nilsen. She and I collaborate on many projects. A couple of notable ones are that we have launched two sermon series during Lent: Unfinished: Honoring the Space Between the No Longer and the Not Yet. and now the sermon series: Sankofa. A sermon series on I Peter.

While I am grateful for all that has gone on this past year, this has been a challenging year in many ways. The winter has been the longest and snowiest that I can recall in a very long time - perhaps going back to the days I spent in International Falls. But even more so, we have had a number of funerals. The following are people who have passed away...Marie Anderson, John Berns, Allen Braak, Ken Campbell, Joe Elwell, Brian & Patricia Finch, Melba Gevik, Pat Huhta, Don Kottke, David Schleick, and Eldo Schmidt.

I am excited about the work ahead of us. I look forward to the long-awaited ministry authorization and dedication of our Faithworks Building. We have discernment to do regarding the Barrett Property—approximately 35 acres, which is the remainder of the Barrett farm we were given in the early 2000s. We've been holding many discussions throughout the congregation about the need for a New Parking Lot. More about that to come at the annual meeting. And - the focus of my attention lately has been the possibility of adding a new, contemporary worship service on Sunday mornings.

In conclusion, I continue to be grateful to be in partnership with all of you. If you have any questions - please feel free to reach out, and let's have coffee.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Steven Rye

Associate Pastor's Report

*Walking the way, Christ in the center - Telling the story to open our eyes;
Breaking our bread, giving us glory: Jesus our blessing, our constant surprise.
Jesus is risen and we shall arise. Give God the glory! Alleluia!*

This is the second verse of one of my favorite Easter hymns, "Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!" I love this image of Jesus as constant surprise! Yes indeed!!

This past year, in my extended family, we pulled off a couple of great surprises! At a time when days and nights were particularly hard for my parents – we (my siblings and I) kept showing up when they least expected it. Their wonder at it all, their relief, their joy and their gratitude were palpable.

I think about how often this is true for how God works in our lives as well – showing up when and where we least expect it. And I too, when my eyes are open to see it, am filled with the wonder of it all – and deep gratitude. As I reflect back on this past year at Lord of Life, I can see how God showed up in wonderfully ordinary and unexpected ways – surprising us again and again with blessing.

I'm particularly mindful of the addition of Kennedy Niska to our staff and the gift of having a choir for the first time since 2020. New voices and old voices came together once again to sing praise to God. The greatest surprise – the beautiful relationships that emerged or were reignited through music!

One of my weekly delights and a constant surprise this year was seeing what Val Rangen would create for a Kids Time lesson each week. Her commitment, passion, knowledge and faith were poured into each week's lesson and then joyfully shared with other adults to teach and kids to learn. Val also directed the Kids Christmas Program this year – filled with surprises and joy as the story of Jesus' birth was shared through the experiences of the animals in the stable.

While I shouldn't be so surprised, since death is a part of life, the number of deaths this year in our congregation has been quite surprising. But no surprise at all that each time we gathered to celebrate a life and give thanks to God, countless volunteers also showed up to make food, serve food and embody the spirit of our God who is food for the journey. The heart of this congregation is generous and compassionate.

Daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, God always makes sure that we have enough and that we are sustained in our walk. I know that there have been times when I have been discouraged by the struggle to secure volunteers or longed for larger numbers of people showing up, or wondered about the giving. But here we are, at the end of this fiscal year and thanks to you and our marvelously dedicated staff and willing volunteers, good ministry has happened, kids and families have been blessed, and we've grown in a deeper and richer connection to Christ, our community and each other.

And the wonderful surprise is this – though we cannot know what the next year will bring, we do know that God will continue to inhabit us and entrust us with God's church! And maybe we take up the call to be the surprising presence of God in unlikely places and in unexpected ways. What might it look like? I look forward to being surprised!

God's peace,
Pastor Erika

Ministry and Staff Reports

Upward Ministries Report (Submitted by Karla Skwira):

Upward ministries have continued to support the growth of people within our congregation. Thank you to the volunteers that give of their time and talents to help the youngest members of the congregation grow in their faith.

Some highlights this year include Kids' Time during services, youth groups, Bible camp, and ServeCAMP. Year round children of the congregation have had the opportunity to participate in activities at church.

This year the youth put on a wonderful Christmas program.

Faith Stepping Stones (i.e. backpack blessings, third grade bibles, etc.) continue to provide touch points and guidance as children mature in their faith.

This year a new group, the Accessibility Team, was created. This team hopes to increase accessibility of our church for persons with various disabilities, including physical, mental, and emotional.

The hope in the future is that we will be able to create more faith stepping-stones and continue to build and support members in our connection to Christ.

Outward Ministries Report (Submitted by Donna Salli):

Lord of Life's Mission Outward ministries continued their work over the last year. Specific activities have included the following:

Our Friends of Habitat for Humanity group has continued to volunteer on the salvage team, in the Restore, and on building sites. A local Women's Build will take place in 2024. Our Friends of Habitat will explore fundraising options and volunteer recruitment for that upcoming event.

Lord of Life hosted Red Cross blood drives in January and July of 2022, and in January of 2023.

Lord of Life returned to working monthly at the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen in 2022 after taking time away during the pandemic.

Lord of Life has continued to make monetary donations to support the mission work of Gary and Shari Hauter in Brazil.

The Quilters group has been very busy making and donating quilts. They have recently also begun making quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

The Friends of Bridges of Hope group has begun volunteering at the Warming Shelter in Brainerd. They hope to make an ongoing commitment to cover needed shifts at the shelter for one week each year. Our Friends of Bridges of Hope group also helps with BOH's Operation Sandwich and also participates in their annual Thanksgiving Basket ministry, which provides holiday dinner ingredients for local families in need.

Our SAIL exercise class has continued to meet. During the pandemic the class transitioned to an online format, allowing an expansion of participants to include folks not physically in this area.

After a hiatus during the pandemic, Lord of Life's clothing give-away resumed in 2022. The Micah group stepped up to lead the event that year.

The Micah Group has been very energized in their work to promote justice. They've sponsored book studies and educational events and are increasingly partnering with other local and regional diversity and justice groups. For detailed information, see the Micah Group's individual annual report.

Lord of Life carried out two special offerings in the last calendar year. The Offering for Ukraine in 2022 collected \$5638 and forwarded it to Lutheran World Relief. In 2023, the Offering for Turkey and Syria collected \$2683, also sent to Lutheran World Relief.

Our Mission Outward ministries have remained devoted to their work and have expanded as opportunities and need arose. Thank you to all who participate in and support the ministry we do at Lord of Life in service to our local and global communities.

Inward Ministries Report (Submitted by Jolene Parks):

The focus of the Inward Mission is to Deepen and Enrich our Connection to Each Other. This is accomplished by offering a variety of opportunities for members to come together in a variety of ways based on common interests and activities. Here's what our groups have been up to this year.

The Caring Friends group raises funds and shares those gifts with those who are experiencing a need. The group has been revised to give Pastors the discretion to distribute funds while maintaining the confidentiality of potentially sensitive situations and Anne provides appropriate oversight. Moving forward, the group may begin to focus on acts of service for those in need like providing a ride to church or a meal.

Our Choir at Lord of Life has grown under the direction of Kennedy Niska. Practices have been moved to before and after church to allow for more participation. The choir is always looking for new voices; consider joining them. Many thanks to our Creative Arts Team for providing visual arts and concerts throughout the year. Most recently, you may have noticed the "Before I die, I want to..." chalkboard in the commons.

The Funeral Hospitality Team has been busy this year helping prepare food, serve, and clean

up after several funerals. God at the Movies hasn't had an event in a while; however, if you're interested one could be set up rather quickly. The Grief Support Group has recently started meeting regularly.

You may have noticed that there has been significant organization and structure to our library. The Librarians have been hard at work ensuring a functional space with resources for all ages. Stop in and check it out sometime. Martha Circle continues to meet regularly at a local care facility, reaching out to members living there. Sarah Circle continues to meet for monthly bible studies.

Men's Breakfast and Men's Fellowship continue to meet and provide fellowship and bible study opportunities. The Prayer Chain and Prayer Shawl Ministries are actively ensuring that all of the needs and prayers requests are taken care of. The Prayer Shawl Ministry is actively creating shawls for baptisms or others who need a physical sign of the congregation's care.

We had a great Rally Sunday in September thanks to the creative planning and leadership of the Rally Day Team. Wednesday night suppers have changed from weekly to once per month. A huge THANK YOU to Vickie Borgstrom who has agreed to prepare meals. The team is in search of more volunteers who would be willing to cook supper on Wednesday nights so we can work towards bringing back weekly Wednesday suppers.

Please reach out to me or a group leader to become involved with any of these great ministries. There's truly an opportunity for everyone.

Music Ministry Report (Submitted by Kennedy Niska):

More than 50 musicians have been part of the worship community at Lord of Life in the past year, serving as hymn leaders, accompanists, choir members, chamber musicians, featured soloists, and members of the EveryDaySonDay Band.

Music Ministry Coordinator Kennedy Niska joined staff in July of 2022. In the last year, we've reestablished the Lord of Life Choir and welcomed many new singers. We also offered a community Advent cantata that involved more than 25 musicians.

Several instrumental musicians have been featured in special music: harp, violin, saxophone, and an Easter brass ensemble consisting of trumpet, trombone, and euphonium. Lord of Life is blessed with a musical congregation and many more musicians who wish to share their musical gifts with the church.

Members of the congregation are always welcome to become involved in music ministry: Perhaps you play an instrument? Maybe you would like to help with music selection? If you enjoy singing, you are invited to join the choir, sing in the cantata, or learn more about leading worship music.

Lord of Life graciously hosted the new Legacy Youth Chorale in their inaugural 2022-23 season. This ensemble, part of the Legacy Chorale of Greater Minnesota, has included

several Lord of Life families. Kennedy, along with church staff and members of the music ministry, would like to offer more youth opportunities in our music ministry program. Stay tuned for a youth choir opportunity at Lord of Life in Fall 2023!

Youth Ministry Report (Submitted by Tim Slinger):

Highlights / Events:

- Summer Programs & High School Trip (Duluth, MN & Upper Peninsula of Michigan)
- Milestone Ministries: First Communion, Affirmation of Baptism & Senior Recognition
- School Year Programs
- Collaborative Ministry Events With Area ELCA Congregations

Programming by The Numbers:

- Confirmation / Club 56: 60 participants
- Youth Group Ministry: 24 participants
- Summer Ministry: 45 participants

Summer Ministry: A Year of Collaboration

The summer of 2022 brought some exciting ministry opportunities in collaboration with ELCA churches throughout the Brainerd Lakes Area! This was a blessing in many ways. We hosted our annual middle school summer stretch program. This brought together 100 youth and adults from seven churches to serve in the Brainerd Lakes Area.

Covid-19 continued to have an impact as the National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN was cancelled. This cancellation brought together high schoolers from Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Lord of Life for our annual high school summer trip. Together we journeyed to Duluth, MN for the NEMN Synod Journey and traveled onward to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan!

We were able to host our annual middle school serveCAMP experience in collaboration with Camp Onomia. This week long camp offered service opportunities throughout our community and day camp experiences led by amazing camp staff! Late night games and tent camping at church were highlights for many who participated!

School Year Ministry:

During the school year we found ourselves getting into more of a routine as our Wednesday and Sunday night programming launched! Youth gathered together for confirmation class, Club 56 and youth groups!

On Wednesday nights we focused on learning more about the Old Testament, Ten Commandments and the life of Jesus! New and exciting this year our confirmation program gathered together with area ELCA congregations on four special class nights! We hosted special guest speakers from the NEMN Synod or enjoyed fun activities bringing hundreds of confirmation families together!

Throughout the year youth were able to connect for special events or retreats! The NEMN Synod hosted an All Youth Gathering event at Cragun's for the first time in three years! Area youth enjoyed gathering together for middle school late night out events and a pancake breakfast before school!

There are more stories and highlights I look forward to sharing with you another time! To end, I want to say thank you for your continued support of youth ministry here at Lord of Life!

Micah Group Report (Submitted by Patricia Dickson):

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8, NRSV

Micah Group has 67 participating members and a Core Leadership Team (CLT) of 10. Three of Micah Group's CLT are members of the Synod's Together Here Ministries (THM) team. Strengthening bonds with other justice groups is one work in progress.

In the past year, the CLT has met 9 times. Eleven book discussions have been held, and three presentations have been given. A three-part Parenting for Social Justice series with luncheons following sessions and a now-in-progress book discussion about social justice parenting have been made possible by a FREC (Facilitating Racial Equity Collaborative) grant. Several Micah Group members have also donated time to the Lord of Life Library.

Micah Group's Calendar is filled through December 2023, with three upcoming presentations, another eight book study sessions, Sharing Bread Soup kitchen first Sunday in August, and the Clothing Give Away in October.

Members of Micah Group have attended/participated in ISD 181 School Board and Equity Task Force meetings as well as Region 5's Cultivating Communities Summit. Collaboration with faith-based and secular groups for Indigenous People's Day 2022 resulted in Baxter Mayor Darrel Olson proclaiming October 10th Indigenous People's Day and in the Blanket Exercise being brought to the Brainerd/Baxter community by the NE MN Synod's Together Here Ministries.

Current collaboration with Crow Wing Energized's ARC (Aces Resiliency Coalition) Group promotes understanding trauma in the lives of people who have been marginalized. Assembling stories of those who have lived trauma, and those who have changed attitudes in favor of supporting them, is in progress. A book of these stories will be published soon. Plans for a video of stories are under way.

Justice Table is a new collaboration of community justice work leaders seeking to increase coordination, collaboration, and communication of justice work being done.

Members have been informed of/invited to NE MN Synod and community justice events. Communication has become better consolidated through a new weekly publication, The Micah Group Word, which is sent to participating members each Friday as well as to community

and Synod groups where Micah Group has involvement.

Micah Group's work in healing justice included serving at the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen on two of first Sunday's and managing the now-annual first week in October Clothing Give Away. Recently, the CLT voted to assume the task of keeping the YMCA's Hours for Showers program solvent. Temporarily, My Neighbor to Love had managed it.

Submitted with gratitude that we can do this work together,
Pat Dickson

Prayer Chain Report (Submitted by Lolly Kalinoski):

Lord of Life's Prayer Chain Ministry currently includes 37 faithful congregation members who have promised to faithfully lift up in prayer the needs and concerns of our church family and our loved ones, remembering what Jesus told us in Matthew 18:19-20: " 'Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.' "

As Prayer Chain Ministry members, our commitment includes: praying for new requests promptly as they are received via phone, email, or our web form; praying for people who receive prayer shawls; and praying for the newly baptized. Complete confidentiality is a requirement. Members of the Prayer Chain are encouraged to pray in their own personal, accustomed manner or style, as there is no "right" or "wrong" way to pray.

We do require a commitment of each member to attend at least one prayer chain in-service during a 12-month period; these meetings are offered quarterly, facilitated by Pr. Steve and Lolly Kalinoski.

Generosity Team Report:

This past year, the Lord of Life Generosity Team has been hard at work trying to encourage increased giving to the Church for both general operations, and special projects.

In the fall, the Generosity Team began the second year's theme 'Live Simply' of its four-year program. During this fall stewardship campaign, the Generosity Team helped organize and facilitate the four 'Stewardship Stew' community meals, where the congregation gathered to discuss their dreams for our ministries.

The team also helped plan and execute fundraising for the upcoming parking lot replacement project.

The Generosity Team is currently looking for members of the Congregation to join them in their work. This past year, Ann Smallman left the group after much excellent service, which we are very thankful for.

Property Team Report:

This year, the Lord of Life Property Team continued its work of updating the lights in the building to LEDs. The most recent updates occurred in the Sanctuary and Commons, two of the areas where lighting uses the most energy in the buildings.

The team also coordinated with contractors and the Church Council to help facilitate the replacement of the entire Lord of Life roof in the Fall of 2022.

After all the snow we received this winter, and the wind that followed in the spring, the Property Team also worked to remove trees that had fallen in the backyard.

In addition to their normal Fall and Spring Property Work Days, members of the Property Team also came for one Wednesday night confirmation session to lead students in spreading wood chips around trees in the front and side yards of the Church.

The Property Team invites you to the 2023 Spring Property Work Day on Saturday, May 20th, from 9 am to Noon. Many hands make light work and all help is greatly appreciated on these events.

Take Them A Meal Report (Submitted by Colleen Bush):

Take them a Meal delivered meals to 4 families/individuals in 2022. If you are recovering from being in the hospital, had surgery or a new baby and would like some meals, let the church office know. If you would like to be on the list to cook a meal and deliver to others let the church office know.

Women's Bible Study Report (Submitted by Carol Rodseth):

Our Women's Bible Study was launched in the fall of 2019 with a view toward equipping women with the Word of God to promote growth in their personal faith as well as to contribute to the body of Christ in our congregation.

Over the past several years, we have studied the Psalms, Ephesians, James, I and II Peter, and most recently, the Gospel of Luke which we completed the end of this year. This coming year in 2023, we will study the books of Daniel and Esther in the Old Testament.

We began meeting in the church but when the pandemic came, we went to Zoom. The women have wanted to continue on Zoom even though we could now meet in person. Our average attendance is between 8 to 10 women. Many have expressed how their faith has deepened with increased knowledge of the Bible and it's application to their personal lives. Fellowship, prayer and sharing in a safe place has been meaningful to our group participants in addition to the growing knowledge of God's Word.

Stephen Ministry Report (Submitted by Lolly Kalinoski):

We, the Stephen Ministry Team, thank you for the prayers and the support that have allowed LOL's Stephen Ministry to continue well into it's fifth year as a robust, energy-filled, well-established, all-volunteer program within our congregation.

The mission statement of the worldwide Stephen Ministry is "Christ caring for people through people." After much discussion and teamwork, we created a statement of Lord of Life's Stephen Ministry Vision: "By establishing and growing the Stephen Ministry system within our faith family, we strive to share Christ's healing love, because God first loved us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are committed to providing:

- A place where no one has to suffer alone. When someone experiences a challenge or difficulty, a caring Christian friend comes alongside to help bear the person's burden and offer support for as long as needed;
- A place where lay people who have God-given gifts for caring are equipped and empowered to use those gifts in meaningful ministry to others; and
- A caring ministry that reaches out to more and more people, within both Lord of Life and into our larger community, offering God's love to them."

At this writing, we have a team of ten trained and commissioned Stephen Ministers, each walking alongside an individual care receiver, providing the "distinctly Christian care", for which Stephen Ministry training prepares us. Our Stephen Ministers are committed, generous, well-equipped folks, each meeting with their care receiver for one hour a week, in complete confidentiality. In addition, all Stephen Ministers meet twice a month for peer supervision and continuing education sessions; each of these bimonthly meetings lasts 2-1/2 hours.

We are in the planning stage for the next training course, which will be LOL's third 50-hour training course, with the goal of equipping at least another six members of LOL to provide care. The start date of the training will soon be decided as we are recruiting more potential trainees. Please pray for guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit as we seek to train more Stephen Ministers to provide care for the growing number of folks who are living with difficult-to-navigate life events and stressors.

Currently, the trained Stephen Leaders are: Pr. Steve as Leadership Team Coordinator and Trainer, Pr. Erika as Referrals Coordinator and Trainer, and Lolly Kalinoski, as Continuing Education Coordinator, Awareness-Building Coordinator, and Trainer. Soon we will have a fourth trained leader; Julie Johnson is in the last week of her online training. She will be commissioned here at LOL this spring, after which she will facilitate the bi-monthly peer-supervision meetings and also be a trainer in the new course. Deb Bergstrom, who is a past leader, continues as a Stephen Minister and will also provide some of the training in the next training course. The leaders' team meets at least one time a month for planning purposes.

LOL's Stephen Ministry Team stays close and connected with additional activities, including

providing the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen meal on the first Sunday of each June.

It's been such a gift to be able to watch the trust, strong support, and spiritual growth that take root and grow deeper within our team as we meet as a team, share our care-giving experiences with confidentiality firmly place, encourage one another, pray together, eat together, continue learning together, and also do a good amount of laughing together!

Please continue to pray for our Stephen Ministers, for the folks they care for, and for the leaders as we continue strive to be the ears, heart, and hands of Jesus in our troubled world.

Lord of Life Quilters Report (*Submitted by Irene Christofferson*):

The quilters have had a very productive year. We continued our ministry during the summer for the first time. After cleaning and organizing, we began assembling quilts. During the summer, many of the quilters volunteered their time assisting and encouraging the kids with sewing during their week at Serve Camp. The kids sewed, pressed, and completed 3 quilt tops. It was a fun time for all, and we are so proud of their work.

This year we made 23 quilts for Lord of Life's graduating seniors. In addition, we made 49 twin-sized quilts to be distributed throughout the community. These will get delivered to Crow Wing County Social Services, Community Behavioral Health Hospital, Habitat for Humanity, Lakes Recovery Center, and the Brainerd Senior Center.

Our former leader, Janice Hardesty, was working on smaller patchwork quilts at home. After she passed, we received the quilt tops she had made and completed them. These smaller, brightly-colored quilts will be donated to St. Joseph's Hospital to comfort dialysis and oncology patients as they receive their treatments. We will donate 13 smaller comfort quilts and two baby quilts in all. We also made several specialty quilts during the winter months: one for Brighter Days Foundation, one for Camp Knutson, one for the Synod Assembly, and one for Fishing Has No Boundaries.

This summer we will transition to making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. We could use more hands to lay out fabric squares and prepare "kits" to be sewn, layer quilts and tie them, and turn the bindings to be sewn. We do invite interested people to join our ministry. While no sewing skills are required, we do have sewing machines available for use. We also enjoy "show and tell" where members bring in amazing projects they have completed at home. We meet in Fellowship Hall on Thursday mornings, from 9:00 to 11:30 or so.

We are always accepting donations of cotton fabric.

Thursday Men's Fellowship Report:

Every Thursday morning, 10-14 men gather in the Commons to discuss faith, life, and sports. They also make a huge impact in people's lives. This year, Men's Fellowship donated \$1,000 to a parishioner going through health problems, donated \$300 to Tyler Stoen's Eagle Scout project, and wrote letters of support to another parishioner who was battling addiction.

Accessibility Team Report (*Submitted by Suzanne Rye*):

The Accessibility team was formed before Christmas and has only had a few meetings. Our goal is to identify any barriers that may prevent a person from participating as fully in the activities at Lord of Life as they would like.

At the time of the writing of this report, a survey of the congregation asking for any concerns related to accessibility is in the process of being distributed and compiled. Our work going forward will be to communicate with the council and congregation regarding the results of the survey and to help develop a plan to reduce or remove any identified barriers.

If you have a passion for working with people with unique needs, or have a creative mind for problem solving, or just would like to receive more information please let the church office know. The accessibility team is currently planning to meet quarterly unless projects dictate the need for more frequent collaboration.

Sarah Circle Report:

The Sarah Circle meets the second Tuesday of each month September through May. We meet in the LOL Fellowship Hall at 1 p.m. for coffee and treats followed by Bible Study. Our study is "Sixteen Bible Studies for your Small Group." It has been a new adventure and very enjoyable in every way! If you have any questions, please call Brenda at (218) 831-9725.

Recently, Sarah Circle donated \$120 for students looking to attend ServeCAMP in 2023.

Friday Morning Men's Breakfast Report:

The Men's Breakfast group continues to meet Friday mornings at 7 am. The group gathers for breakfast, prayer and conversations about the outdoors. This year, members of the group have also served several shifts at the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen on Lord of Life's commitment to coverage on the first Sunday of the month.

New members are always welcome, please speak with Ted Anderson for more information.

Custodian's Report (Submitted by Paul and Karen Erickson):

Wow! Can you believe it is 2023? Time flies by fast. I was asked to give a small report regarding my job as custodian for Lord of Life Church. I and my husband Paul have been taking care of the church building since 1995 shortly after Lord of Life moved into our new building.

Since then there have been two building projects that included a new education wing to the East and a 350+ seating capacity sanctuary to the North. So our job as custodian has grown a lot over the years. We went from three bathrooms to six. Lord of Life had two large spaces and a double class room for gathering in 1995. In 2023 we have four large spaces and two double class rooms. Paul and I average 20-25 hours a week to keep our bathrooms clean and all our spaces ready for the various meetings and events.

Lord of Life is also a place for the community. We are a polling place. We are a practice place for the Legacy Chorale. We are a gathering place for several high school teams to celebrating their end of season banquets. These are just a few of the many groups that gather in this space. So yes the custodians are very busy. And as we continue to grow and welcome all to gather in this space we will continue to be very busy. Thanks be to God!

Ministry Operations Manager's Report (Submitted by Anne Laechel):

Thank you! Lord of Life is the place it is because of you. I have been privileged to call Lord of Life my church home and my employer for the past 19 years. My current role is Ministry Operations Manager, and I am primarily tasked with managing Membership and Financial records, including the LOL Connect database (lolbaxter.ccbchurch.com), scheduling building use, entering contribution records, bookkeeping and payroll. My ministry at Lord of Life falls under the Ground Ministry category (Administration, Generosity, Finance, and Facilities).

Several big changes have happened in my area in the past 12 months. In September 2022, we switched our mailing address to PO Box 685, Brainerd MN 56401-0685. If you haven't updated your records, I encourage you to do so. Also, our contract with our online giving provider was expiring, and the Finance Team suggested updating our accounting software at the same time. So, in February of 2023 we switched both our accounting software and online giving to Aplos/AplosPay. The new features and reports have been a great help and we were able to stay within budget for both changes. If you are not already set-up for automated giving, we invite you to sign up at <https://www.aplos.com/aws/give/LordofLifeLutheranChurch/>. We currently receive 45% of our contributions online.

Your generous contributions and the careful stewardship of our staff in using those resources allows us to continue deepening and enriching our connection to Christ, our community and each other. We are extremely grateful for you!

Communication Coordinator's Report (Submitted by Tyler Jensen):

It is hard to believe it has been about two-and-a-half years since I started working here at Lord of Life as the Communications and Volunteer Coordinator. I continue to be impressed by the amazing work Lord of Life and its congregation do for our church, our community, and our world.

One of the big changes we made this year was in how we perform the Sacrament of Holy Communion, going from pre-poured glasses to volunteers pouring wine for you as you walk through the line. This required additional volunteers, and I was so thankful for the response we received from the Congregation when we asked. I'm also so grateful for the leadership of our Worship Environment Team on this each week. They are looking for additional volunteers to help setup and clean up Communion after worship. If you are able to help, please speak with Judy Bialka.

This year, we made great improvements with the sound system in the Sanctuary, fixing some of the issues we were having with the worship experience. I was once again impressed by the technical expertise of people in our congregation like Keith Binggeli, Bob Nelson, Jeff Johnson, and our own Pastor Steve.

Speaking of the sound system, I'm very happy to announce that we have a new volunteer trained to operate the soundboard, Kim Macik! One Sunday morning, Kim came up to me and asked if he could become a member of the Sound Team. Thanks to Keith Binggeli, we got him trained on the system and he is now a valuable contributor to our work in making worship sound excellent. Kim is an example of how you don't need a background in sound engineering to become a member of our team.

The sound and video management of our worship services is incredibly important for both our in-person worshipers and those who join us online. I want you to know how incredibly thankful I am when I see comments on our Facebook posts saying how much the service meant to them. The same goes for when I hear from you after worship as we enjoy coffee and fellowship treats together. Feedback and ideas are welcome and I invite you to let me know what you think.

Now, it's not just our full worship services that are reaching people online. We also take the Pastor's sermon each week and post that as its own video. This serves people who may have missed our worship service, but who still need to hear God's message, and also those who just want to experience the sermon a second time.

This coming year, I hope to share more content, both through our current platforms, and by expanding our presence on Youtube and Instagram, where Gen Z (those born between the mid 1990s and 2010) is most active. As we look to ensure these young people continue to be rooted in faith, we need to reach them where they are.

In closing, I just want to thank God for blessing me with the Lord of Life community.
-Tyler Jensen

Synod Assembly Report

The ELCA's Northeastern Minnesota Synod's annual assembly was held Friday, April 28 - Sunday, April 30 at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd. The theme for the assembly was "The **Son** makes you free!"

Lord of Life's voting members included Mary and Ted Anderson, and Courtney Hendrickson. Pastors Steve and Erika also attended.

Through the auction of quilts, including one produced by the Lord of Life Quilters, \$14,350 were raised for ELCA World Hunger.

The Assembly passed the 2024 Budget totalling about \$1.16 million, down from \$1.23 million in 2023.

A resolution supporting the Sacred Tiny House program, which aims to address homelessness by allowing organizations to build tiny house communities on their properties was approved.

A resolution designating the Synod a 'Pollinator Synod', meaning it supports efforts to sustain and repair pollinator habitats, was approved.

A resolution responding to the Kairos Moment of the Climate Crisis, encouraging all congregations and members to care for the Creation, was approved.

Additional information about the 2023 Synod Assembly can be found at nemnsynod.org. A link to the full synopsis of the Assembly is posted at lolbaxter.org.

Statement of Financial Position

Lord of Life Lutheran Church Balance Sheet as of 04/30/2023

Account Number	Account Name	Amount
Assets		
	Current Assets	98,533.71
	Fixed Assets	2,941,557.70
	Other Expenses	0.00
	Total Assets	3,040,091.41
Liabilities		
	Current Liabilities	3,750.00
	Payroll Withholdings	0.00
	Long Term Liabilities	626,476.20
	Total Liabilities	630,226.20
Equity		
	Unrestricted Net Assets	-41,770.47
	Restricted Net Assets	2,451,635.68
	Total Equity	2,409,865.21
	Total Liabilities + Total Equity	3,040,091.41

Statement of Financial Activities

Lord of Life Lutheran Church Statement of Activity Budget: Year to Date for the period of 07/01/2022 to 04/30/2023

		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Account Name	Actual	YTD Budget	Annual Budget	Proposed Budget
Income					
Donations					
	Contributions - General Fund	386,298.63	426,586	500,943	480,000
	Expected Increase in Generosity				44,284
	Loose Offerings	6,501.74	2,845	4,000	7,000
	Lent Offerings	2,136.00	2,000	2,000	2,000
	Contributions - Capital Campaign	53,453.43	0	0	69,648
	Total Donations	448,389.80	431,431	506,943	602,932
Other Income					
	Church Rental	2,134.00	3,056	4,000	4,000
	Other Income	1,430.01	0	0	20,000
	Restricted Income	344,548.38	0	0	0
	Total Other Income	348,112.39	3,056	4,000	24,000
	Total Income	796,502.19	434,487	510,943	626,932
Expense					
Pastoral Ministry - Personnel					
	Total Pastoral Ministry - Personnel	148,719.04	151,155	180,747	186,967
Lay Ministries - Personnel					
	Operations Staff	93,103.65	94,480	113,376	121,589
	Program Staff	45,809.23	44,667	53,600	57,314
	Worship & Music Staff	19,679.26	23,619	28,343	33,343
	Other Employee Expenses	10,579.10	14,181	17,017	18,414
	Total Lay Ministries - Personnel	169,171.24	176,947	212,336	230,660
Ministry - Ground					
	Church Operations - Administrative	8,980.11	10,298	11,540	11,460
	Church Operations - Maintenance Services	36,334.07	29,678	32,820	42,740
	Church Operations - Office Expenses	15,033.99	15,428	18,514	17,999
	Church Operations - Utilities	26,188.04	23,969	28,298	29,620
	Total Ministry - Ground	86,536.21	79,374	91,172	101,819
Ministry - Inward					
	Worship	3,778.57	4,067	4,400	4,900
	Hospitality	3,471.57	3,267	3,700	3,700
	Total Ministry - Inward	7,250.14	7,333	8,100	8,600
Ministry - Outward					
	Benevolence - Synod & ELCA	18,972.40	17,709	21,000	22,350
	Benevolence - Heartland Conference	0.00	250	250	250
	Benevolence - Local	746.00	1,860	2,000	2,000
	Publications/Advertising/Micah Group	1,044.13	1,042	1,150	1,500
	Total Ministry - Outward	20,762.53	20,861	24,400	26,100
Ministry - Upward					
	Adult Education	0.00	188	225	225
	Children's Ministry	2,157.98	1,958	2,200	2,450
	Youth Ministry	1,371.47	1,773	1,915	1,915
	Total Ministry - Upward	3,529.45	3,919	4,340	4,590
	Total General Fund Expenses	435,968.61	439,589	521,095	558,736
Capital Campaign Expenses					
	Mortgage Payments	57,919.00	0	0	68,196
	Total Capital Campaign Expenses	57,919.00	0	0	68,196
Dedicated Expenses					
	Restricted Expense	296,109.37	0	0	0
	Total Dedicated Expenses	296,109.37	0	0	0
	Total Expense	789,996.98	439,589	521,095	626,932
	Net Income (Loss)	6,505.21	-5,102	-10,152	