

Lord of Life Lutheran Church of Baxter 2024-2025 Annual Report



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

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Church Council and Staff

Staff:

Pastor Steven Rye, Senior Pastor
steven@lolbaxter.org

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

Anne Laechel, Parish Administrator
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:

Kurt Porter, President

Andy Isackson, Vice-President

Jessamyn Foley, Secretary

Greg Bennett, Treasurer

Josh Freelove,
Youth Council Representative

Mission Leaders:

Karla Skwira, Mission Upward

Jolene Parks, Mission Inward

Erica Dolven-Kolle, Mission Outward

Brian Orlovski, Mission Ground

Congregational Meeting Agenda

June 2, 2024 - 10:45 A.M.

1. Call to order - President Kurt Porter
2. Opening prayer and celebrations
3. Attendance
4. Certification of quorum - Secretary Jessamyn Foley
5. Adoption of Agenda (Verbal Vote) - President Kurt Porter
6. Minutes of Congregational Meeting - June 4, 2022 - Secretary Jessamyn Foley
7. Presentation and Discussion of Annual Reports - President Kurt Porter
 - a. Worship Survey
 - b. Barrett Property
8. Presentation of Budget for July 2024 to June 2025 - Treasurer Greg Bennett
 - a. Parking Lot
 - b. Capital Campaign
 - c. Motion to adopt, discussion, and approval (Verbal Vote)
9. Nominating Committee Report
 - a. Voting on Council members, Nominating Committee & Financial Review Committee (Verbal Vote) - President Kurt Porter
10. Other business
11. Motion to Adjourn - President Kurt Porter
12. Closing Prayer

2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting called to order at 11:15 a.m. by Council President Steve Schaitberger. Opening prayer led by Pastor Steven Rye followed by review of 2022 activities, thanks to congregation's, staff's and church council's work over the past year. Preview of current projects: second service planning, disposition of Barrett property, repaving parking lot.

Council Secretary Kevin Olson certified that a quorum of voting members was present. MOTION to adopt the Annual Congregation Meeting May 21, 2023 agenda, motion by Bob Nelson, second by Sue Beck, all ayes (CM.2023.05.01)

MOTION to approve Annual Congregation Meeting minutes of June 5, 2022, motion by

Reports

President Schaitberger noted the church continues to move out of COVID 'pandemic times'. Council has strived to focus on worship in its' planning and the strategic plan. Deb Bergstrom, Parish Nurse, noted for the annual report that the newly formed Grief Support Group has been successful.

Budget Discussion:

Treasurer Greg Bennett reported insurance increased significantly over past year. Winter with heavy snow/ice resulted in additional costs. Contributions down from past year. Employee Retention Credit funds (one-time federal program funds allowed for following COVID pandemic protocols) expected in August. Discussions followed regarding continuing to monitor income, developing and endowment fund, having quarterly grounds meetings to monitor church's physical needs. Including church in personal wills suggested with previous examples of donations of church building in NE Minnesota (the sale of which helped start Lord of Life) and the donation of the Barrett property.

MOTION to adopt the budget for July 2023 to June 2024, motion by Pauline Tischman, second by Marvella Larson, all ayes (CM2023.05.)

The Nominations committee 2023 (Dan Tupy, Pam Caughey, Deb Bergstrom, Larry Lundblad, Steven Rye) submitted the following names for election to Church Council:

Council Elections

- President (1-yr): Kurt Porter
- Vice President (1-yr): Andy Isackson
- Secretary (1-yr): Jessamyn Foley
- Treasurer (1-yr): Greg Bennett
- Mission Outward (2-yr): Erica Dolven-Kolle
- Youth (1-yr): Josh Freelove

Financial Review Committee

- Larry Lundblad
- Scott Kraling
- vacant

Synod Assembly Voting Members

- Rick zumBrunnen
- Jeannine zumBrunnen
- Tyler Jensen

Nominating Committee

- Steve Schaitberger
- Kevin Olson
- Marcia Helmen
- Wendy VanMoer
- Marilyn Macik
- Mark Jungclaus

MOTION to cast a unanimous ballot for all nominated officers and Council members, Financial Review Committee, Assembly Voting Members, and the 2024 Nominating Committee, and to grant the Church Council authority to approve unfilled Financial Review Committee person, motion by Sue Beck, second by Larry Lundblad, all ayes (CM2023.05.)

Other Business

Parking Lot: Thanks given for current generosity which has raised \$85k towards parking lot repaving. Final funding and timing of project in process. Disability accessible entrance doors may be included in project.

Barrett Property: Council has discussed and feels church should not be involved in long term asset management. Final sale/no sale will be voted on by congregation. Due diligence is being done regarding sale/no sale/listing/etc. included how would sale proceeds be used, honoring original intent of gift.

Increasing Worship Opportunities; Discussion regarding preferred times of services, length of time gap between services, creating 'healthy' service schedule for musicians, continuance of traditional service on-line.

Thank you expressed to incoming and outgoing Council members, outgoing Council President Steve Schaitberger, Pastoral Staff for their work at LOL and out in the community, church staff and Anne Laechel's work as Ministry Operations Manager.

MOTION to adjourn meeting, 12:10 p.m., motion by Tyler Jensen, seconded by David Devine, all ayes (CM.2023.05.)

Closing prayer 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:

- May 7, 2023 Aria Ann Cervantez, daughter of Paul & Deb Cervantez
- May 14 2023 Rhett Stewart Christopherson, son of Blake Christopherson & Kelsey Kunde
- June 4, 2023 Callen Kae Hermanson, daughter of Kale & Betsy Hermanson
- June 18, 2023 Avery Jean Kempf, daughter of Alexander & Megan Kempf
- August 27, 2023 Oliver Joe Peterson, son of Benjamin & Erica Peterson
- September 24, 2023 Louie Joe Hodnefield, son of Lucas & Anna Hodnefield
- October 8, 2023 Sara Ann Raimann
- October 8, 2023 Tristan Thomas Raimann, son of Christopher & Sara Raimann
- October 8, 2023 Gavin Jay Raimann, son of Christopher & Sara Raimann
- October 11, 2023 Vada James Coonfield, daughter of Bruce & Elizabeth Coonfield
- October 15, 2023 Vincent Harris Freeman, son of Tyler & Carrie Freeman
- December 17, 2023 Carolyn Jeanne Hendrickson, daughter of Jesse & Courtney Hendrickson
- March 3, 2024 Cohen Michael Klimek, son of Kellie Klimek
- April 7, 2024 Everett Henry Erich Lange, son of Christopher & Ashlyn Lange
- May 5, 2024 Mateo Bryant Ornelas, son of Christian & Chelsea Ornelas
- May 5, 2024 Nicole L Vollhaber

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:

- April 18, 2023 Patricia Huhta
- April 24, 2023 Marie Anderson
- May 18, 2023 Ron Meyer
- June 2, 2023 Sharon Syvertson
- June 15, 2023 Jacob Borgstrom
- June 29, 2023 Marcie DeBoer
- August 17, 2023 Braedon Metz
- October 9, 2023 Cliff Sanders
- October 9, 2023 Maxine Sanders
- October 23, 2023 Dawn Benedict
- October 28, 2023 Gladi Eschenbacher
- November 26, 2023 Helen Herbon
- November 30, 2023 Gilbert Williams
- February 12, 2024 James Gruendemann
- March 25, 2024 Darlene Blake

- April 8, 2024 Doug Schultz
- April 11, 2024 Jerry Bergstrom

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

- LuVern Farber, September 20, 2023
- Paula Tollefson, February 4, 2024

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

- Pam Beaulieu
- Matt & Rachel Delaney
- Carol Ellerbusch
- Richard & Anne Holz
- Rick & Judy Osbakken
- Brian & Brittany Peterson
- Daniel Schut
- Caleb Tautges
- Cora Clough
- Tyson Decker
- Jason Fordyce
- Emma Jentsch
- Michael Jentsch
- Madeline Maurer
- Collin Pederson
- Sophia Porter
- Sawyer Riffle
- Avery Vagts
- Allie Koop
- Sophia White
- Avery Wikoff

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

Confirmation – October 29, 2023

Cora Clough, Tyson Decker, Jason Feigum, Jason Fordyce, Drew Haakonson, Lucas Hoglin, Emma Jentsch, Michael Jentsch, Andrew Lofstrom, Madeline Maurer, Aubrey Mithun, Nathan Nybeck, Chloe Patrick, Collin Pederson, Sophia Porter, Sawyer Riffle, Owen Robertson, Landen Stoen, Avery Vagts

Confirmation – May 19, 2024

Camryn Anderson, Andy Ehlert, Evelyn Hagen, Allie Koop, Ryan Larson, Gus Lund, Claire Nybeck, Addi Parks, Tristan Raimann, Atty Speer, Sophia White, Avery Wikoff

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

Cabi Burton, William Delaney, EJ Gehrke, Levi Hanske, Greta Isackson, Anna Jentsch, Thomas Jentsch, Emmett Kempf, Kinley Leonard, Dekker Mithun, Kensington Picek, Isla Porter, William Porter, Nora Rangen, and Emily Rioux.

President's Report

Lord of Life should be proud of all that we as a congregation have endured and the progress we have made. Our shared aspirations for the future further strengthen our sense of community and purpose and we should continue to prioritize our collective mission. The members of Lord of Life have always balanced the religious education of our youth with ensuring opportunities for our other members to congregate, evangelize, and grow in their faith. It was for these reasons that my wife and I joined Lord of Life over ten years ago; it is among the many reasons that countless others have joined our church family over the lifetime of the church.

For so many reasons, the members of Lord of Life should be similarly proud of this year's Church Council. I know I am. As we each took on the positions of trust and leadership, it was not lost on any member of the Council the momentous tasks that we needed to accomplish this year for our church. Your Council took in stride, not just the planned and complicated matters of the church, but the several unplanned and foundational matters that arose throughout the year.

One topic that was directly or indirectly present in every Council meeting this year was the financial health of Lord of Life. From our very first meeting over one year ago, our agenda included ways in which we could supplement the income of the church. While I cannot create a comprehensive list here, it behooves me to provide examples: (1) following the pandemic, our church staff have done an outstanding job applying for and obtaining COVID-Relief funds, which have provided the much-needed security blanket during a post-COVID recovery; (2) the Council labored through options with the Barrett Property, which was ultimately listed for sale in February 2024; (3) we took advantage of the high rates of return on CD earlier this year, and deposited the parking lot funds sitting in checking to capitalize on otherwise stagnate money; (4) we campaigned throughout the year for increased giving from our members, to help sustain all the wonderful opportunities we provide. I am happy to report that through the efforts of all our members, Lord of Life experienced an 8% increase in giving this past fiscal year. While we have much to celebrate, we must acknowledge a painful reality: it is not enough. If we are to continue to be a church that places an emphasis on our youth and dedicates to them the invaluable resource of having a dedicated staff member – a Youth Director – then we must do more. If Lord of Life hopes to be the home for future young families, where children scramble through the aisle to collect noisy offering before heading out to learn about Christ, where adolescents come to learn about their faith and themselves, where any person in our community can come and have a place for all phases of life, then it is necessary for all members to recognize our responsibility to invest in that future.

The budget that will be presented at the annual meeting accomplishes the singular objective of balancing; but it does not represent the church I understand Lord of Life to be. It is my sincere hope that the members of Lord of Life see this message for what it is and what it is not. It is not a message of despair or a reprimand that more could have been done. It is a rallying cry. It is a message of hope that our members will show through their giving that Lord of Life is a church where all are welcome, all are supported, and continues its envisioned purpose as a church that “nurture[s] its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love”.

Senior Pastor’s Report

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” — Isaiah 43:18-19

It hardly seems possible that nearly ten years have passed since I arrived in Baxter, Minnesota. That verse from Isaiah was the first theme verse we drew upon in my ministry here. As I think back on the past year, my heart is warmed by the new things that God is continuing to do here in this place, and with each passing year, God is still doing a new thing.

One of the most heartwarming things about this year is that we’ve been fortunate to witness the flourishing of young Kristoffer Koop’s leadership in worship. His collaboration with Koreann has resulted in truly exceptional Wednesday worship experiences, enriching the spiritual lives of our congregation.

Our Master Class Bible study continues to be a source of inspiration. We’re nearing the culmination of our multi-year journey through scripture, and the thoughtful discussions continue to deepen our faith.

The past year has seen a significant increase in funerals served by our church. While this may be partly due to a temporary uptick, we also recognize the reality of our aging congregation. Our funeral ministry will likely be called upon more frequently in the coming years.

We are committed to providing compassionate spiritual support during these difficult times. This past year, we offered comfort to grieving families, including those who tragically lost young men.

The passing of Pat Huhta, a long-time pillar of our funeral ministry team, left a significant void. Her dedication and expertise are deeply missed. However, we are grateful for the continued service of Ginny Orłowski and the funeral crew, who have stepped up seamlessly.

Our commitment to grief care extends beyond funerals. A flourishing grief support group led by Deb Bergstrom and Pastor Erika provides ongoing solace and connection for those experiencing loss.

We embarked on an exciting experiment this year – offering two distinct worship services.

This format, reminiscent of our pre-2009 approach, aimed to cater to a wider range of worship preferences within our congregation. The concept resonated with many, as evidenced by heartwarming stories of members engaging in both services across the building.

While the two-service format didn't lead to the overall expansion we envisioned, it provided valuable insights. The post-pandemic landscape has shifted our community dynamics, and future efforts will consider this evolving context. We plan to return to one Sunday morning worship service throughout the summer and into the fall.

On a brighter note, our music ministry flourished under Kennedy Niska's leadership. The choir experienced a period of revitalization, and I've been grateful for his assistance as we navigated a very complicated time for the music makers. A big THANK YOU to Jennifer Person and the EveryDaySonDay band, too, for their flexibility.

We've had a mix of successes and challenges with our finances.

On the positive side, concerning our Parking lot campaign, we're almost there with \$100,000 raised for the project! When the parking lot is repaved, our church's appearance will be greatly improved. We need less than \$20,000 to go. We've also experienced increased giving: An 8% increase in congregation giving is fantastic! That's well above the typical 3% expectation.

But we also have challenges ahead. The first of which is our lingering budget deficit. The church started with a significant deficit, requiring cuts and, unfortunately, eliminating the Youth Director position from this year's budget. It was not lost on the church council that the mortgage payment is a major drain on our finances, limiting ministry resources. We would not have to eliminate the Youth Director Position if we eliminated the debt.

This brings me to what I hope we will accomplish in this coming year:

Capital campaign: You're looking to launch a capital campaign in Spring 2025 to address mortgage and other needs.

Accessibility improvements: The church wants to prioritize accessibility at the front door.

HVAC upgrades: Replacing aging HVAC systems is important for comfort and efficiency.

Children's ministry coordinator: Adding this staff position would be a valuable addition.

We give thanks that God continues to be at work, "doing a new thing" in our midst. My prayer is that we all enter the year ahead with attentive hearts and willing hands to take part in the work that God has inspired us with and called us to.

Thank you for partnering in this ministry here at Lord of Life.

Blessings!

Pastor Steven Rye, Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor's Report

Throughout the scriptures we are given beautiful images of God as both one who provides the water we need for life and God as the living water we need for life.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters . . . Isaiah 55:1

Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let them come to me and drink." – John 7:37

6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. - Revelation 21:6

This year a new water bottle filling station was installed at church – and so often I thought, that's right! That's what we do! That's who we are as a church! A water filling station. Come you who are thirsty and drink!

As a staff we entered a community challenge to drink LOTS and LOTS of water each day. And while we did not win the community challenge – we each WON because we individually stretched and expanded our intake of water and it blessed our physical bodies AND as a staff we WON, because we encouraged one another in healthy living and cheered each other one when we'd see someone at the filling station or with their water bottle with them at a meeting!

In countless ways, members of this church and community were blessed with a drink of the lifegiving water – Jesus! when they walked through the doors of this church. Here are just a few:

Stephen Ministry: There are currently 8 Stephen Ministers who gather regularly to drink deep from the well of love and compassion that is Jesus. Twice a month they meet for continuing education and to grow in faith and in compassionate skills so that when they walk with their care receivers – the care receivers come in contact with Jesus, the living water.

Over the past 3 months they have studied Ira Byock's book "The Four Most Important Things." This continuing education focus was also open to the whole congregation. Grateful a few additional members could participate.

Grief Groups: Deb Bergtrom lead 2 different grief groups this year and through each group, they were drenched in living water that blended with their tears and showered them with love for the journey of grief.

Service of Grief and Hope: On the darkest night of the year, those who were in need of living water came to give voice to their grief but also to the hope we have in Jesus.

9th Grade Confirmation Parent Retreat: 9th graders and parents were immersed in living water as they gathered for a retreat at Luther Crest Bible Camp. They even poured water on

each other's feet and washed them!!!

*** SEE Tim Slinger's report for all of the good Middle School, High School, and post high school ministry that happened this past year!

Children's Ministry:

Milestone Ministry:

- Blessing of Kindergartners!
- 3rd graders gathered with their families to discover the life giving water that is God's Word. 3rd Graders received their first Bible in October.

Vacation Bible School and Day Camp: Opportunities for our littlest members to get a big drink of living water! Special thanks to Andrea Anderson and Sammi Waloch for coordinating VBS and for Camp Onamia staff for leading Day Camp!

Kids Christmas Program: On Christmas Eve morning we were delighted to hear the story of Jesus' birth through the voices and lives of children! Thanks to Eda Morlock for coordinating and LOTS of volunteers for helping!

Kids Time: thanks to the faithful Water Filler, Val Rangen, and oodles of volunteers, especially our 4 high school students, Madeline Mauer, Chloe Patrick, Avery Vagts and Abby Larson, every Sunday our kids are invited to learn about Jesus, the living water and drink deep from God's Word and be refreshed!

Water Fillers: This is my term for those who volunteered in countless ways to share love, life, faith, hope, sorrow, joy, food, water, Jesus with their faith community and our larger community in so many ways. You were thirst quenching agents of God!!

Now here's your invitation to continue to drink deep from the Living Water! Come, you who thirst! Fill up your ACTUAL water bottle and your SPIRITUAL one here – come to worship, join a small group, volunteer to serve, pray for one another, give generously so that no matter where you are, you will not be thirsty and you will be more fully alive!

God's peace,
Pastor Erika

Ministry and Staff Reports

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.

Music at Lord of Life has grown this year. Our musician team has done an outstanding job providing a variety of high-quality and uplifting music this year. The addition of Koreann Martin to the music team has been a blessing! Having two worship services allows the church to provide everyone with a worship experience that is meaningful and fulfilling. At Christmas, the choir performed a beautiful Cantata.

Planning and executing high-quality worship opportunities takes many hands. Consider helping out during worship by volunteering for one of these tasks.

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):

Music ministry continues to be an important component of the worship experience at Lord of Life. Musicians of all backgrounds and abilities have shared their gifts with the church over the past year as singers, instrumentalists, and leaders at the keys.

Our regular musician leaders on staff – Jennifer Person, Koreann Martin, and Jeff Johnson – have been mainstays in the planning and execution of music for worship. Their consistent leadership and creative programming have been instrumental in creating meaningful music service after service.

Music ministry is enriched even more so by all of the folks who participate, including members of the choir and EveryDaySonDay Band, the dedicated Wednesday night musicians, and all who support music on Sunday mornings.

Members of the congregation are welcome and encouraged to become involved with music ministry, as there are always ample opportunities to enhance worship through leading service music or offering special music.

The mission of Lord of Life Lutheran Church is, of course, “To inspire a deeper and richer connection to Christ, our community, and each other.” Our music ministry members create connection through the music they provide and enjoy the great privilege of sharing that music with the broader community. Whether it be a captivating prelude that centers folks for worship, a rousing tune that gets toes tapping, or a song that fits the message just right, music is – and will continue to be – at the heart of worship.

Youth Ministry Report (Submitted by Tim Slinger):

Highlights / Events:

- Summer Programs & High School
- Mission Trip to Idaho Servant Adventures
- Milestone Ministries:
- School Year Programming:
- Confirmation, Club 56, Youth Groups
- Collaborative Ministry Events with Area ELCA Congregations

Programming by The Numbers:

- Confirmation / Club 56 on
- Wednesday Nights: 68 participants
- Youth Groups: 20 participants
- Summer Ministry: 43 participants
- First Communion: 15 5th graders
- Two Affirmation of Baptism Services:
- 32 confirmands were confirmed
- Senior Recognition: 20 High School Seniors

Summer Ministry:

When I think about last summer, my mind went to thinking about the mission statement of Lord of Life. Our mission statement is, “to inspire a deeper and richer connection to Christ, our community and each other.”

There were Moments to be reenergized through God’s word, spending time in prayer and worship together! What this looked like or sounded like was always different. Picture taking a much-needed break from the hot summer day after completing a service project with your group whether here in our own community or in small towns in the mountains of Idaho. Time spent in the morning or evening enjoying God’s beautiful creation of the mountains of Idaho rivers, streams, to our local lakes and woods. Picture gathering together around a campfire, singing your favorite songs and enjoy skits with your friends!

Again, this summer was one of collaboration with area ELCA congregations! We partnered together for summer stretch, summer youth groups and our high school trip to Idaho! Strengthening our sense of community and each other!

School Year Ministry:

Wednesday nights were an all-encompassing faith formation experience! We gathered at 6:30 pm for worship where our content and message time was built around the confirmation lesson for the night. This year we took a deep dive into the New Testament, Apostles Creed and a lesson focus called Lutheran Life. The content for each night was built using the Head 2 Heart curriculum from Rich Melhiem and Faith Inkubators. I am thankful for the families and faith community that gathered each week!

Youth groups continued to meet for both middle school and high school! It was a rebuilding year if you just focus on the numbers but we are hopeful for the future with the

committed engagement of the youth attending. A highlight this year was our middle school late night outs on Fridays a few times throughout the winter. We had record numbers attending that event!

Thank You For Your Continued Support:

There is a lot that cannot be covered in this report that happens throughout the year! I am thankful for the continued support of this congregation and its youth ministry programs!

Funeral Hospitality Report (Submitted by Tyler Jensen):

This year, we held 16 funerals at Lord of Life for members of our congregation and people in our community.

So many members of our Faith Family stepped up, volunteering to give hospitality to grieving families. We currently have about 50 volunteers in the Funeral Hospitality Group, who regularly provide their time, talents, and treasures of salad and dessert to help make what can be the worst time of people's lives a little less stressful. I thank them all for their amazing work this last year.

Personally, I am in awe of those who heed the call of the Holy Spirit time after time to serve at these funerals. This spring, when we had three funerals in about a week-and-a-half, I was so thankful to see many of the same volunteers at each service, working without complaint, focused on caring for those who needed to experience the love of God and their Church.

A special thanks to Ginny Orlowski for coordinating the meal volunteers at almost, if not every service we've done this past year. Another special thanks to Robbi Berry and Vickie Borgstrom for cooking the meals.

If you would like to be involved in our Funeral Hospitality Ministry, please speak with myself or Ginny Orlowski, and we will get you on the list to be notified when there is a need.

Prayer Shawl Ministry (Submitted by Brenda Johnson):

Our Prayer Shawl Ministry is still working to wrap people in a physical sign of the love of God and our Congregation. We meet twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. We are in need of more prayer shawls, and welcome new members. If you have any questions about the Prayer Shawl Ministry, or would like to get involved, please speak with Brenda Johnson or Jeannine zumBrunnen.

Fellowship Treat Ministry (Submitted by Brenda Johnson):

Sunday Fellowship Treats are going well. From January through May this year a total of 20 awesome families have donated wonderful treats for Sunday worship.

If you would be willing to help out (by bringing 5-6 dozen cookies, bars, or something else) please call Brenda at (218) 831-9725. You will make everyone happy!

Micah Group Report (Submitted by Patricia Dickson):

Micah Group currently has 67 participants, 13 of whom comprise its CLT (Core Leadership Team). We have continued to provide opportunities for the realization of our Mission Statement during the past year. Events of the past year have targeted all Micah Group goal areas. These are printed in the Micah Group brochure, which remains available in the Narthex, usually with a current calendar of events inserted.

Twelve Micah Group Core Leadership Team (CLT) meetings have been held in the past year.

Three books have been discussed:

- Social Justice Parenting: How to Raise Compassionate Anti-Racist Justice Minded Kids in an Unjust World, 2021, by Dr. Traci Baxley;
- If God is Love, Don't be a Jerk: Finding a Faith That Makes Us Better Humans, 2021, by John Pavlovitz; and
- What We Will Become: A Mother, a Son, and a Journey of Transformation, 2019, by Mimi LeMay.

Four presentations have been offered:

- My Neighbor to Love Coalition – Vicky Kinney
- Changing the Narrative – Destiny Tinnes
- A Brief History of American Slavery and its Legacy – Keith Peterson
- Japanese Americans: A History of Racism and Prejudice – Michael Erickson

Hands-on serving in/to the community have included serving at the Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen the first Sundays of February and August and managing the Annual Clothing Give Away in October of 2023.

At book discussion sessions, Micah Group continues to donate for community needs and has provided food for the food shelf as well as funding for the Hours for Showers program at the Brainerd Family YMCA. Micah Group also assumed responsibility for requesting donations from the faith community for the Hours for Showers program.

Collaborative events with Justice Table, Crow Wing Energized, and CLC were Pride in the Park, 4,000 Words, Connect Effect, and publication of the book Bold but Seldom Told: Crow Wing Community Stories 2024.

Members of Micah Group continue to support justice in education through their presence at School Board meetings.

Formal membership in community groups includes Lakes Area Justice Table and the Crow Wing Mental Health Alliance.

For 2024, Micah Group decided to hold events on Monday evenings. This takes pressure off already-busy Sunday mornings and opens the door for more community members to come to Lord of Life for Micah Group events.

The Micah Group Word (MGW), published electronically weekly, has a mailing list of 170

groups/individuals. The MGW lists mission- and goal-related Micah Group events at Lord of Life and collaborative events in the community. It also lists events for, resources available in, and opportunities for serving or advocating in the NE MN Synod, the ELCA, and the local community.

All members of Micah Group will be invited to the annual gathering in July. There will be good food, an inspirational speaker, special music, and an opportunity to assist in shaping programming for 2025.

Thursday Men's Fellowship Report:

Every Thursday morning, 10-14 men gather in the Commons to discuss faith, life, and sports. Once a month the group will travel to visit homebound members. This year, Men's Fellowship donated money toward the sidewalk addition, repairing the center island light in the parking lot, and bringing electricity out to the front sign. The group says it works to glorify God in all they do.

Tech Help Ministry Report:

This April we began holding a monthly event to help people experiencing problems with their electronic devices. In our first two meetings, we have helped four people who had questions about their phones, computers, and other pieces of technology. The group meets the third Thursday of the month from 11:15 am to 12:15 pm. All are invited to come with their questions.

Friends of Habitat for Humanity Report (Submitted by Bonnie Henningson):

Twelve LOL Friends of Habitat volunteered on our LOL Build Day in August 2023. We made good progress on Jonathan Nieman's home at 506 1st Ave NE, Brainerd. In addition to our designated Build Day, volunteers were on build sites many days throughout the year.

This summer, we are looking forward to several LOL Build Days, one for the Women Build (Early Summer) and the other for the Faith Build (Fall). Friends of Habitat are encouraged to volunteer throughout the year when available.

On April 25, Bonnie Henningson attended the Faith Build meeting at Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity (LAHFH). The information shared will help us get organized for our upcoming events.

On May 15, 4 volunteers from LOL will be assisting with the LAHFH fundraiser at Jack Pine, Pints for a Purpose.

Information submitted by Bonnie Henningson, contact person at LOL for LAHFH

Property Team Report:

This year, the Lord of Life Property Team cleared brush north of the church, resupplied power to the sign out front, and added the sidewalk addition to the west lot.

They also held their annual fall and spring property work days, with the most recent being on May 18.

In the coming year, the team plans to replace lights in the Sunshine Room and add lights along the sidewalk.

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

This year we made 20 quilts for Lord of Life's graduating seniors. As of the end of April, we have also made 42 twin-sized quilts to be delivered to Lutheran World Relief, and 12 twin-sized quilts for local distribution.

We continued with our mission to make fund-raising quilts for local charities. One king-sized quilt will get delivered to Camp Knutson for their August Quilt Auction; we have one for Fishing Has No Boundaries, two for the Bridges of Hope Warming Shelter, and one for the Brainerd Senior Center.

Thanks to all who donated their time to sew some of the senior quilts. Due to decreased membership, we were down to two women working on Thursday mornings. The call for help went out and several volunteers stepped up to sew off-site, and we had new people join our group. With the return of our snow-birds, things have returned to normal.

We do invite interested people to join our ministry. While no sewing skills are required, we do have sewing machines available for use. We will also try to have "kits" available to sew off-site. We meet in Fellowship Hall on Thursday mornings, from 9:00 to 11:30 or so.

We are always accepting donations of cotton fabric.

Respectfully Submitted,
Irene Christofferson

Lawn and Garden Team Report (Submitted by Carol VanDenBoom):

Helping to keep Lord of Life beautiful!

Our mission is to maintain and improve Church grounds by providing labor for the general upkeep of the existing church landscape,

We are proud of all our accomplishments over the last year. The team began with a methodical sweep around the church, clearing underbrush, clippings, and debris, filling more than 75 wheelbarrow loads and volunteering countless hours of labor.

Major projects in 2023 were to plant only deer-resistant annuals. We eliminated a flower bed and created a new pollinator garden. Dying shrubs were removed and new plants added.

The playground has been downsized, horseshoe pits removed, along with weekly demands of trimming, weeding, and watering. There is a good supply of garden tools stored in the Faith-Works Building.

Join the Tuesday Morning Team if you enjoy gardening and fellowship, and appreciate a beautiful Lord of Life landscape.

The 2024 season will begin on May 28, from 9 to 11 am.

Other Groups

The following groups also continue to meet at Lord of Life on a regular basis:

- Sarah Circle Women's Fellowship Group: Second Tuesday of the month at 1 pm;
- Martha Circle Women's Fellowship Group: First Thursday of the month at 1 pm;
- Tuesday Morning Bible Study: Second and Fourth Tuesday of the month at 9 am;
- Wednesday Women's Bible Study; Wednesday's on Zoom at 10:30 am, with one in-person fellowship event a month;
- Friday Morning Men's Breakfast: Weekly at 7 am;
- Master Class Bible Study: Wednesdays at 7:30 pm on Zoom; and
- Parkinson's Support Group: First Thursday of the month at 1 pm.

Business Administrator's Report (Submitted by Anne Laechel):

Thank you! Lord of Life is the place it is because of you.

Several big changes have happened in my area in the past 12 months.

This past year I was promoted from Ministry Operations Manager to Business Administrator, and I was tasked with additional administrative and supervisory duties, in addition to managing the membership and financial records, and scheduling building use, among other duties. My ministry at Lord of Life falls under the Ground Ministry category (Administration, Generosity, Finance, and Facilities.)

Last summer Lord of Life applied for and received the Employee Retention Credit. In the fall, our insurance was non-renewed, so Treasurer Greg Bennett and I spent significant time researching and securing new property insurance. Thank you, Greg, for your work on this and the many other projects you have been a part of this year.

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. When setting up or adjusting your online giving we invite you click "Yes" to paying the additional tax-deductible 3% transaction fee. It would save us \$3.29 on a \$100 credit card gift and would be greatly appreciated. We have also set up giving through Venmo. Search for us as Lord of Life Baxter or LOLBaxter.

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):

What a year it has been here at Lord of Life!

To start off, I thank everyone who has volunteered here at Lord of Life. Whether it is in worship, special events, or the routine work that is needed to keep our ministry running, your contributions are greatly appreciated.

We continue to work to improve the volunteer process, if you have any suggestions or thoughts, please feel free to share them with me.

On the communications end, I feel that we have had a better time reaching people regarding our events and programs this year. Our online metrics show we are continuing to reach more people!

My goal for this coming year is to place more emphasis on telling the story of our ministries here at Lord of Life. At least every month, I want to create highly-polished content that lifts up how we make an impact in our community, and around the world.

If you have a passion for art, photography, writing, etc., I would love to have your help and input. Please feel free to stop by my office for coffee and conversation!

Synod Assembly Report

The ELCA's Northeastern Minnesota Synod's annual assembly was held Saturday, April 27 online. The Synod Gathering was broadcasted from Trinity Lutheran Church in Brained. The theme for the assembly was "Make Us One"

Lord of Life's voting members included Rick and Jeannine zumBrunnen, and Tyler Jensen. Pastors Steven and Erika also attended.

In total, 264 registered members attended the gathering.

The Assembly passed the 2024 Budget totalling about \$1.15 million, down from \$1.16 million in 2023.

Approved language changes to the Synod Constitution related to Synod Assembly membership, record-keeping by pastors and congregations and duties of the Synod Treasurer. A full breakdown of the changes can be found at nemnsynod.org.

Additional information about the 2023 Synod Assembly can be found at nemnsynod.org.

Statement of Financial Position

Lord of Life Lutheran Church		
Balance Sheet as of 04/30/2024		
Account Number	Account Name	Amount
Assets		
Current Assets		216,819.68
Fixed Assets		2,941,557.70
	Total Assets	3,158,377.38
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		4,000.00
Long Term Liabilities		591,367.02
	Total Liabilities	595,367.02
Equity		
Unrestricted Net Assets		16,180.76
Restricted Net Assets		2,546,829.60
	Total Equity	2,563,010.36
	Total Liabilities + Total Equity	3,158,377.38

Statement of Financial Activities

Lord of Life Lutheran Church Statement of Activity

Year to Date for the period of 7/1/2023 to 4/30/2024

		2023-2024			2024-2025
		Actual	YTD Budget	Annual Budget	Proposed Budget
Income					
Total Donations		482,604.56	505,168.50	602,943.00	572,000.00
Total Other Income		239,505.90	20,000.00	24,000.00	10,400.00
Total Income		722,110.46	525,168.50	626,943.00	582,425.00
Expense					
Total Pastoral Ministry - Personnel		152,254.89	155,805.70	186,967.00	186,860.00
Total Lay Ministries - Personnel		191,959.62	192,216.50	230,660.00	169,850.00
Total Ministry - Ground		91,614.86	89,743.20	101,830.00	112,540.00
Total Ministry - Inward		11,168.97	7,166.80	8,600.00	10,320.00
Total Ministry - Outward		27,145.26	21,750.10	26,100.00	27,100.00
Total Ministry - Upward		19,936.82	3,824.90	4,590.00	7,550.00
Total Capital Campaign Expenses		22,315.08	56,830.00	68,196.00	68,205.00
Total Dedicated Expenses		89,496.46	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Expense		605,891.96	527,337.20	626,943.00	582,425.00
Net Income (Loss)		116,218.50	-2,168.70	0.00	0.00

Worship Survey Results

Expand

Collapse

Which worship service(s) do you currently attend?

Response Count:
187 (96.4%)

Answered Responses	Answer	Responses	Percent of Total Responses
	Sunday - 8:30am Traditional	104	55.6%
	Sunday - 10:30am Contemporary	85	45.5%
	Wednesday - 6:30pm	44	23.5%
	question not answered	7	3.6%

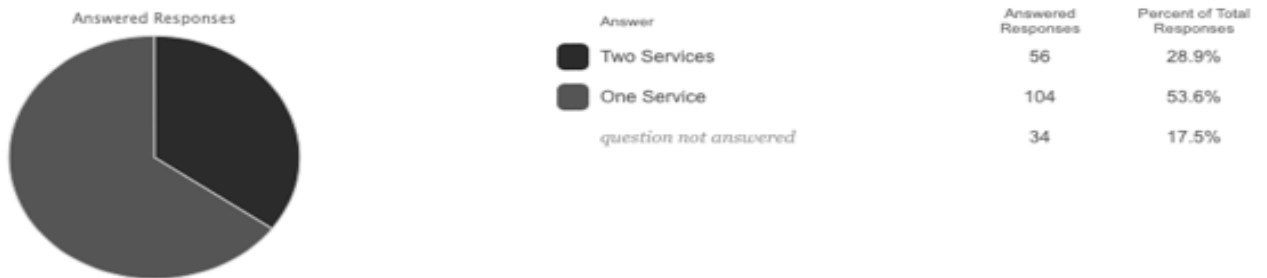
How often do you attend worship services at our church?

Response Count:
184 (94.8%)

Answered Responses	Answer	Responses	Percent of Total Responses
	Weekly	120	65.2%
	Monthly	45	24.5%
	Occasionally	29	15.8%
	Never	0	0%
	question not answered	10	5.2%

What would your preference be for Sunday Worship service?

Response Count:
160 (82.5%)



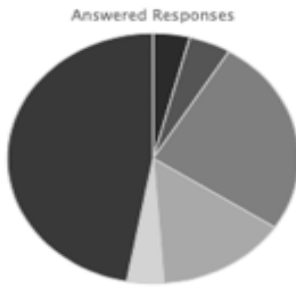
If the church were to offer only one worship service, what time would you prefer it to be held? (Select all that apply)

Response Count:
162 (83.5%)

Answered Responses	Answer	Responses	Percent of Total Responses
	8:00am	2	1.2%
	8:30am	9	5.6%
	9:00am	90	55.6%
	9:30am	92	56.8%
	10:00am	23	14.2%
	10:30am	6	3.7%
	11:00am	2	1.2%
	Other (specified below)	1	0.6%
	question not answered	32	16.5%

▼ If the church offered only one worship service, would you prefer it to be: (Select one)

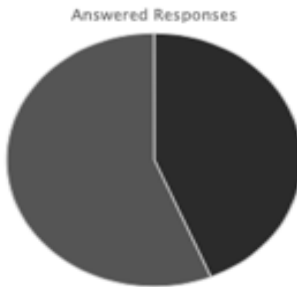
Response Count:
172 (88.7%)



Answer	Answered Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Only Traditional worship	7	3.6%
Only Contemporary worship	8	4.1%
Alternating Traditional and Contemporary Worship	44	22.7%
Primarily contemporary with elements of traditional worship	25	12.9%
Primarily contemporary with elements of traditional worship	7	3.6%
A blend of traditional and contemporary elements throughout	81	41.8%
<i>question not answered</i>	22	11.3%

• If the church offered two services that alternated worship styles (traditional one week, contemporary the next), which service would you be more likely to attend?

Response Count:
144 (74.2%)



Answer	Answered Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Traditional	63	32.5%
Contemporary	81	41.8%
<i>question not answered</i>	50	25.8%