

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONGREGATION

January 28, 2024



# 2024 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Sunday, January 28, 2024

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# 2023 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Sunday, January 29, 2023

## CALL TO ORDER

- Called to order by Tony Belcher at 10:44 am.
- Opening prayer by Pastor Mike
- 46 in attendance

## PRAYER

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 2021 CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS:

- Annual meeting of January 30, 2022
  - Motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Annual Meeting on January 30, 2022 by Justin . Second – Margaret . Approved.

## REPORTS:

- **President** – Blessed and thankful for returning to service, Covid still lingers but it feels good to be back together. Thank you for the last year and staying committed and hopeful
- **Pastor** – Lots of changed within the last 2 years. Gratitude of all the creativity within the last couple of years. Council gathered in September for a retreat to look at the past, present and future of Hosanna! What came out of that, relationships with others, growing and coming up with ways that we can do in the future. Lots of congregations really struggling financially. We are not letting us get that down, very optimistic on the future instead of being down. Heart, love and passion is what will keep us going, from the leaders to the every person of the congregation. Very grateful for Pastor Mike and the leadership and being the leader you are.
- **Christian Education** – Thank you everyone who participated and supported. Exciting to find new ways to lead faith formation. Learning how we can all grow in our faith. The number of kids is the first thing that people notice, huge value of our church. Raising our children in faith and in our community. Asking for help to volunteer during the faith formation. Ask Cathy to add a sign up for weekly sign up to assist the traditional Sunday school format. Need more adults during the intergenerational time. We use Lutheran curriculum, do not have to come up with lesson.
- **Evangelism** – Team reboot 2021. Internal signage for visitors to navigate, being intentional in inviting and making them feel welcome.
- **Property** -- The LED lights make it look quite brighter. Fresh paint in nursely and continue to clean up. Steve has helped Scott coming up to clean, mop during the week. Big Thanks!
- **Social Ministries** – Nothing to add
- **WELCA** – Nothing to add
- **Worship and Music** – Dr Dan will be leaving at the end of February, currently coming up with a plan for a replacement.
- **Stewardship** – Amazon smiles will be ending.
- **Treasurer's Report** - As Pastor Mike stated a \$38, 000 deficit going into 2023. Checking account balance, cut by over half. Expenses a bit higher after returning. Middle of the year, Vanco had issues with collecting, those members had to re-sign back up. Many of the expense has been kept down with the help of Pastor and the staff. Council struggled to keep the budget as accurate, Expense for 2022 went up 3.75% and we increased expenses for 2023 to 1.6% We have less households giving, but about the same in giving. Working with local daycare facility, not sure how

this will affect our expenses. The HVAC capital campaign, we succeeded in the giving to replace AC units, we reallocated the remaining balance of raised funds to Operating Expense. Raise Right campaign is free money to the church, purchase gift card, the church gets a 'bonus' for the purchase of the gift card, the rate varies by vendor/place of establishment. Tony spoke to congregation about the possible Daycare opportunities and asked for volunteers to form a committee to assist in Tony in getting this going. Questions about religious affiliation and teacher retention

- **Audit Committee Report** – No Report

## Old Business

None

## New Business

- Beth Schoening - 2023 Nominations and Elections
  - Tony Belcher – President (continuing), Ben Cerra – Treasurer (continuing), Council – Alyssa Willett, Duane Witt (continuing)  
Officers: 2 year term  
Justin Noel (2 year term)  
Joyce Uber (2 year term)  
  
Council:  
Margaret Rockhold (2 year term)  
Chris Marple (2 year term)  
Beth Schoening (2 year term)  
  
Nominating 2023- Angelika Schmidt, Pam Schmidt, Ben Oprinovich, Jeremy Grote, plus outgoing council Alyssa Willett and Duane Witt  
Audit – Louise Ahrens  
Justin Noel motioned to close the ballot for voting, Beth Schoening seconded. All approved.
  - Tony recognized those who has served and nominated
  - Mary made motion to accept the nominations, Katharine seconded. All approved
- 2022 Budget
  - Council presented the 2023 budget. Alissa motioned to accept 2023 budget, Justin seconded. Approved.
- **Election Results:**
  - **Council Officers**  
President – Tony Belcher (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Vice President – Justin Noel (1<sup>st</sup> year term of 2 year term)  
Secretary - Joyce Uber (1<sup>st</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Treasurer – Ben Cerra (Continuing council)
  - **Council**  
Duane Witt - (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Alissa Willett - (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Margaret Rockhold – (1<sup>st</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Chris Marple – (1<sup>st</sup> year of 2 year term)  
Beth Schoening – (1<sup>nd</sup> year of 2 year term)

- **Synod Assembly**  
Marty Berggren, Stephen Stubbs
- **Audit**  
Scott Schmidt 3 year term- Continuing [2021, 2022, 2023]  
Robert Hall 3 year term- Continuing [2022,2023,2024]  
Louise Ahrens 3 year term (2023, 2024, 2025)

- **Nominating committee for 2023:**

Alyssa Willet – Outgoing Council, Duane Witt – Outgoing Council, Angelika Schmidt, Pam Schmidt, Ben Oprinovich

Don made motion to accept the ballot as acclimation. Justin seconded. All approved.  
Ballot by vote of voice was approved.

**i. Proposed Constitutional Changes:**

2016 Churchwide Assembly authorized the secretary of the ELCA

- i. Strike the words ‘ordained minister/s’ and replaced with the words ministrie/s of the Word and the Sacrament
- ii. Strike the word ‘clergy’ and replace with words ‘ministrie/s of the Word and Sacrament’
- iii. Strike the words ‘pastor/s’ and replace with the words ‘ministrie/s of Word and Sacrament’
- iv. Strike the words ‘associate in ministry, diaconal minister and deaconess’ and replace with the words ‘minister/s of Word and Service
- v. Make editorial corrections that identify the rosters of this church and implement the creation of the ministers of Word and Service roster
- vi. Update language in places previously ambiguous to provide clarity

**II. Churchwide Assembly authorized the secretary of the ELCA to:**

- i. Strike ‘synodical’ and replace with ‘synod’
  - ii. Strike ‘the congregation’ and replace with ‘this congregation’ where appropriate
  - iii. Make editorial changes so that the Model Constitution for the Congregations follows the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Church in America and the Constitution for the Synods
  - iv. Update language in places previously ambiguous to provide clarity.
- b. 2022 Churchwide Assembly authorized the secretary of the ELCA

III. Further elaborate on the mission of the church as it is articulated in the constitution

IV. Remove gender-specific language when referring to bishop, pastors, deacons, officers, and members

V. Changes language related to disability to reflect current, understandings and to clarify that inability and incapacity to conduct the pastoral office effectively are the standards to be considered for termination of a rostered leader

VI. Update language in places previously ambiguous to provide clarity

All in favor of Constitutional Changes, all approved

Alison made motion to close annual meeting. Mary seconded. All approved.

Meeting adjourned at 11: 55 am.

**Prayer**

*Respectfully submitted by Janeen Bollhoefer  
January 29, 2023*



# SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

## Partnering with Brighton Academy Early Childhood Education

Sunday, April 16, 2023

There were 42 members in attendance. Quorum was established.

Call to order at 10:25am

Council President Tony Belcher introduced Amada Woods, co-owner of Brighton Academy Early Childhood and affiliates to congregation

Motion was made by Steven Stubbs to move that, Hosanna! Lutheran Church lease part of its facilities to Brighton Academy Early Childhood and affiliates, and that the Congregational Council shall have authority to negotiate the starting and ongoing terms

Brad Kunkel seconded motion. Unanimous approval.

Meeting adjourned 10:38am

*Submitted by Joyce Uber*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear HOSANNA! Family,

As we bid farewell to 2023, a year filled with triumphs and blessings, I am delighted to reflect on the many reasons we have to celebrate as a congregation. Your unwavering dedication to volunteerism has been the cornerstone of our community's growth, playing a pivotal role in the success of events like Rally Day, Faith Formation, and the heartwarming Christmas Program.

A shining moment in our journey was the official opening of Brighton Academy North, offering invaluable daycare services to our community. Witnessing its remarkable growth and the anticipation of reaching full capacity in the coming months fills us with pride.

In 2023, we welcomed new faces and families into our HOSANNA! community, enriching the tapestry of our congregation. While bidding farewell to Dr. Dan and his family, we joyously embraced Dr. Marple as our Choir Director and welcomed Mitchell Jerko as our Accompanist.

As my term as council president concludes, I extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported and guided me over these past few years. My family and I are profoundly grateful for the warmth and unity of our HOSANNA! family and community, eagerly anticipating the journey that lies ahead.

With gratitude,  
Tony Belcher



# PASTOR'S REPORT

I am routinely surprised, inspired, and encouraged by the love, generosity, and grace of this congregation. I admit we're not perfect, and we're not always our best selves (we are human after all!), but I see God's love in you time after time after time. God is doing amazing things through Hosanna! and these are the signs I see:

- Kids share the love they receive at Hosanna! with friends and neighbors in tangible ways.
- People invite neighbors and friends, and they share the resources to inspire and encourage.
- Members go out of their way to support others who are sick, hurting, or going through surgery.
- Someone always shares a positive, unselfish, charitable perspective when bad things happen.
- When something needs to be done or finances are tight, people pitch in and help.
- Confirmation students ask deep and meaningful questions about how faith intersects their lives.
- People have open attitudes when we try new things and are honest about how it goes.
- When confronted by new ideas or perspectives about things like neurodiversity, there is curiosity and a desire to learn from each other.
- Needs are met outside of our congregation, like those of neighbors needing deck repair or homeless people gather for a meal and community
- Veterans and others are shown that they matter
- People are laughing, playing, and having deep conversations over meals, games, and other events.



**About five years ago, a member of our congregation confided in me that she saw all these good things already happening, and that she thought Hosanna! was about to explode with growth and new life.** While she couldn't have predicted the wet blanket that was the pandemic, I've come to believe that she was right.

**Over these 5 years, we have exploded--like a firework blossoming in slow motion.** We have a clearer sense of the grace of God, who we are (and who we're not), and what we value. We're gathering more often for fellowship. We've opened our doors to provide a safe space for over 40 kids in daycare to learn and grow. Money has been tight, but we've exceeded expectations through generosity above and beyond what was committed, cost savings, and new opportunities for support. We've lost some faithful friends to moves, but many continue to find love at Hosanna, and we've gained many more new friends.

**At a time when you hear people talking about less people attending church, congregations struggling financially, and the world going to pot, Hosanna! gives me hope.** God is *not* absent and inactive. The Holy Spirit is building within us. While the boom of our explosive growth hasn't hit yet, and the growth and new life has built internally more than externally at this point, I believe that it's coming. The Holy Spirit cannot be contained, and it's beautiful!

In the coming year, I invite you to join me in looking for the glimmers of grace. I challenge you to open yourself and be intentional about connecting with God and with one another. And when you feel the rumble of the Holy Spirit within you, don't hesitate to let it out.

Thank you for surprising me, encouraging me, inspiring me, and giving me hope in this past year. I look forward to another to much more in the year ahead!



*Submitted by Pastor Mike Kern*

# SABBATICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Sabbatical comes from the word Sabbath - a time apart, set aside, during which we cease our regular life to be renewed by God. In the context of a pastor and congregation, a sabbatical is a designated time for the pastor to step away from their usual duties and engage in activities that promote personal and professional renewal, rest, and reflection.

Sabbaticals provide pastors with an opportunity to recharge physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It allows them to take a step back from the demands of ministry, reflect on their own spiritual journey, and gain fresh perspectives. This renewal can lead to increased energy, enthusiasm, and effectiveness in their pastoral role. During a sabbatical, pastors may pursue further education, attend conferences, or engage in activities that enhance their skills and knowledge. This can contribute to the pastor's professional growth, bringing new insights and ideas to the congregation upon their return.

The congregation can also benefit from the pastor's time away. It provides an opportunity for church members to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community. This can lead to a more resilient and dynamic congregation.

The Hosanna! Sabbatical Committee has been called to assist Pastor Mike in planning what his ideal renewal would look like and the activities he would engage in. We are also working to help design what this could look like for the congregation as well. We are putting together an application to submit for financial reimbursement via the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program to help offset the costs of the events and programs the pastor plans to attend during his sabbatical as well as costs the congregation would encounter during this time. This application will be submitted in March of 2024 for a Sabbatical occurring in 2025.

*Submitted by Tony Belcher*

# OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

**15 Years, Hosanna!** Thanks for keeping me around! My Hosanna! family has truly blessed me in ways I never expected and there is always something going on! Each and everyone of you are special to me. You are in my daily prayers, I love watching your families grow, my heart aches when I know one of you are hurting and it sings when you share your joys with me. Sounds just like a family to me!

There have been a lot of changes around here in the past 15 years but I think the changes this last year have been some of the biggest! The daycare brings a lot of giggles, tears and chatter that I haven't had around here before and my new office mate keeps me on my toes. If you didn't know, we've added a new puppy to our family and I bring her with me to the office a few days a week. The kiddo's love her and she loves them!

I'm looking to see what the future brings here to Hosanna! I'm confident that God has some big and exciting plans and my prayer is that we can be a part of them together. Again, thank you for letting me be a part of this spot in your lives. You bless me abundantly!

*Cathy Baker*  
*Office Administrator*





# FAITH FORMATION

If you want to see the impact our faith formation program has on Hosanna! families, just ask one of our amazing kids! As we entered the second year of our reformed faith formation model, we are seeing the hearts and minds of our congregation growing and deepening in their connection to God and to each other.

For the 2023-2024 school year, we continue to use a blended model that incorporates intergenerational learning, service projects, small groups, and more traditional age-based classes. By choosing one theme and Bible story to focus on each month for the kids and doing multi-week series on the same topic for adults, learners are going deeper in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and how our faith connects with our everyday lives.

We are also thrilled to have Dr. Marple and Mitchell leading music time twice a month for our Kids Crews and to see several of our tweens and teens singing with the adult choir.

Thank you to all our volunteers who plan, teach, organize and shepherd our learners across all types of faith formation.



## By the numbers:

- **20** kids ages 3-12 who regularly attend Kids Crews
- **7** middle/high school aged Confirmation students
- **6** 8th-12th grade God Squad members
- **~20** people of all ages who regularly attend intergenerational classes
- **~10** adults who regularly attend adult education
- **~35** kids and adult helpers participated in the Christmas Program

*Submitted by Alison Kern*

# EVANGELISM

**Evangelism is nothing more (or less) than sharing the Good News of Jesus.** It can involve knocking on doors, but its most genuine form is when we put our faith into action, letting God's love touch people's lives through us. That's why I think Hosanna! is on to something in that we include member care and fellowship under the umbrella of evangelism. **The most honest and powerful witness to the Gospel is supporting one another and sharing ourselves with each other.**

We've welcomed a bunch of people to be part of our church family in the past year, some who became official members and some who simply hang around because they find God's love with us. We've also had a lot of people stop in for a while who have expressed gratitude for what they received--support and affirmation of neurodiversity, online worship during bad weather, comfort at a time of grief, inspiration on their ongoing journey, and much more.

**A group of members has been working to organize fellowship events to give us more opportunities to connect.** We've had a white elephant gift exchange and chili cook-off recently, and we are planning a nice dinner night Feb. 18 and Hosanna! Day March 24. The plan is to have at least one fellowship event every month.

There are an increasing number of people who have become disconnected from the church for one reason or another--a move, a bad experience, a global pandemic, or just getting out of the habit. They still love God and yearn for connection.

Few people come to church anymore out of the blue anymore. Instead, they more often come because of an invitation from someone they know. It might be a comforting word, sharing resources about grief, gifting keychains or stickers, an invitation to a church event, or simply encouragement to get connected with a church when they express how much they miss it.

This year we plan to keep building on the more “traditional” evangelism avenues, including through social media and sending a note to new local residents. However, more importantly, **we encourage you to consider who and how you can invite those you already know to reconnect with God and the church.** It doesn’t have to start with worship, but might include sharing a resource we put out or inviting people to play and serve with us.

You are our greatest evangelists. **Thank you for sharing the love of God through word and action by sharing yourself with the rest of us and those closest to you beyond the church!**

*Submitted by Pastor Mike Kern*

## PROPERTY

Well, another year has come and gone. The church continues to stand strong with the many hands that help keep it going, and the grounds outside continue to flourish during the spring and summer. Just like our own homes, we try to keep the church in good condition whether we have to repair and replace, or just make some kind of change.

While we thought the year before was busy, this past year seemed to be just as busy or maybe a little bit more. The church went through a transformation by adding a daycare which began at the end of the summer. A lot of time was put to reorganize the space we have as we began our partnership with them. All the rooms, and even the outside storage room, were completely cleaned out and reorganized. The downstairs was remodeled where a few walls were opened up in some of the classrooms, rooms and hallway downstairs got a new fresh coat of paint, and the carpets were cleaned. If you need a carpet clean, Pastor Mike can be pretty handy, **LOL**. The upstairs portion was cleaned up and a wall was opened up as well. It too received a new coat of paint and carpets cleaned. Thank you too all that helped organize, go through stuff, and inventory what we have and what we didn't need. A lot of hours and several weekends were put in to get this off the ground.

As mentioned late last year, we had some roof shingle damage from wind. While the roof needed to be replaced soon, all was covered under our insurance. We now have a new roof which will hold (we pray) for another twenty-five years, gutters were replaced with a larger size, some screens were replaced, as well as siding repaired in some places. While that was the church's biggest projects and upkeep for 2023, we all know maintaining any kind of structure is never ending. We already have some projects that we will need to work on this year.

One is replacing all the columns (10 total) with PVC columns. I believe that the current columns are the original and have lived out it use. Some have been damaged due to carpenter ants and the

normal water damage. More to come as we will need several hands-on deck to help get this completed this year. The other is to replace the trash enclosure gates. While we may have had these replaced by Jacobs five years ago, the material isn't sturdy with the harsh weather and the trash company coming in. So, we will be looking for help to maybe finding a sturdier material or just replace every so often with what we have. A few other things are maybe do some floor tile repair in the gathering area and also downstairs. And of course, we can't forget the outside as there is a lot to maintain to keep overgrowth down.

There are many who help keep this place going. A HUGE Thank You to Steve Friends who comes in every week to give this place a some tender loving care dusting, sweeping, and mopping—not an easy task especially with those kiddo's running around. Also to Cathy for ordering supplies and Pastor Mike who puts time to do the research and tinker with small projects that need to be repaired. While I don't always see those who help, **THANK YOU**, for your time and assistance in maintaining your church and a place to gather. As always, we could use more hands to help. This is no small place to maintain. "Many hands make light work."

*Submitted by Scott Schmidt, Property Chair*



## **BRIGHTON ACADEMY NORTH**

Upon Brighton Academy North's opening on September 5th, they began with an initial enrollment of 23 children, supported by a dedicated faculty comprising Ms. Casey in Pre-K, Ms. Kaitlyn in Preschool, Ms. Hannah in early Preschool, Ms. Sydney in the two-year-old class, and Ms. Izabella providing assistance across all classes. Throughout the year, they were able to utilize Hosanna! to hold impactful events such as PreK graduation, a parent's night out, a trunk or treat, and a fall vendor fair. In the coming months, they anticipate hosting another PreK graduation, with potential plans for additional parent's night outs.

Their commitment to excellence is reflected in their current enrollment of 40 children, with three more expected to join between March and April, leaving a limited seven spots available for the remainder of this school year.

Noteworthy additions to their team include Ms. Laura, their skilled cook, and Ms. Kalyn, a valuable addition as an assistant 2-year-old teacher. This growth signifies their dedication to providing a nurturing educational environment for the youth entrusted to Brighton Academy North here at Hosanna!

*Submitted by Tony Belcher*

# SOCIAL MINISTRY

Here at Hosanna! we are called to love and support one another. Many thanks to all for your generous contributions and the giving of your time in service to others. This year our projects consisted of:

**Monthly** collection and delivery of non-perishable food items to IAMM (In As Much Ministry) a local food pantry organization in Liberty.

**In February**, we assembled and delivered over 100 hygiene care packages for Valentines for Veterans project. The Sunday school children made valentines which were included in the care packages. The packages were delivered around Valentines Day to the VA in Excelsior Springs.

**For Hosanna! Day** this spring, cards were made by the Sunday school children and distributed to two local senior facilities.

**Twice a year (In July and November)** a Christmas tree is set up in the fellowship hall and Christmas items are collected and delivered to MLM (Metro Lutheran Ministries).

**In September**, on Rebuilding Together Day, Pastor Mike and seven others assisted a woman in Excelsior Springs with much needed repairs to her home

**On Saturday, October 14**, six members of Hosanna! participated in the Alzheimer's Walk in Gladstone. The group raised \$450.

**Kansas City Metro Men's Chorus** performed a benefit concert at Hosanna! on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. \$1,600 was raised for Love INC, Clay County.

Twelve Hosanna! youth and members helped serve at the **Metro Lutheran Ministry Christmas Store** on Saturday, December 9.

*Respectfully submitted by Joyce Uber and the Social Ministry Team*



# WOMEN OF THE ELCA

## About Us . . .

Our Mission: Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Purpose: As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Shirley Circle is the Women of the ELCA at Hosanna! We met the second Monday of each month at the home of Karen Orrill. At the end of the year Shirley Circle had 10 members. The monthly meetings consisted of a devotion, business meeting, bible study from the Women of the ELCA Gather magazine and fellowship time. In April we hosted a Border Cluster event (our cluster is comprised of the churches in the Kansas City area, plus St. Joseph, Lawrence, Atchison and Topeka) and in December a Christmas gathering at the home of Karen Orrill.

Each month members of Shirley Circle called, visited or sent cards to Hosanna members to brighten their day.

**2023 Projects consisted of the following:**

- Central States Synod WELCA - 10% of Offerings
- Project for Once We Were Refugees
- Gift Cards to School Teachers
- Educational fund for Central States Synod WELCA
- InAsMuch Ministry
- Love, Inc.
- MLM

Total donations of \$860.30 not including the Thrivent action team card totaling that was used for the Once We Were Refugees project.

Four WELCA members, Louise Ahrens, Marty Berggren, Karen Orrill and Joyce Uber attended the 35th Annual Central States Synod WELCA convention in June, which was held in Independence. The Theme for the Convention was "The Lord is My Light" and was woven throughout the weekend with Bible Studies, guest speakers and church services. A business meeting was held to handle business and elect officers. Louise Ahrens was elected to serve on the board of CSS WELCA. She served as an at-large delegate for the 2023 Triennial meeting and attended the national WELCA gathering in September in Phoenix.

All women are welcome to join our meetings and other events held by Women of the ELCA. For 2024, we look forward to another year of gathering together and serve where the Lord calls us.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Louise Ahrens, President Hosanna! WELCA*



## **PRAYER WEAVERS**

Once a month a group meet to visit and crochet around prepared fleece for children in our city face challenges. During 2023, we donated 1,171 blankets to the following organizations:

***Children's Mercy Hospital, Children's Mercy Hospital Northland Clinic and other facilities that wish to remain anonymous.***

We are looking for others to help us with this worthwhile project. We welcome all crocheters, new or experienced, along with those who would like to learn how to prepare the fabric. If you are interested, please contact Louise Ahrens at 816-405-8165.

*Respectfully submitted, Louise Ahrens*

# WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Worship and Music has had a very eventful 2023 here at Hosanna! The beginning of the year had us feeling a bit sad for the news that Dr. Dan and his family would be leaving soon. Many congregation members helped ease us through the transition with musical offerings helping with accompaniment and directing the choir. Later, we were blessed to have Dr. Chris Marple officially become the Choral Director and Mitchell Jerko join us with his wonderful organ and piano skills as our new Organist/Pianist. We had a wonderful Christmas program once again this December under the leadership of Alison Kern and many volunteers. The number of people participating in all the different parts of worship continues to grow! We are needing more help with volunteers for worship assistant roles such as Communion Assistants, Greeters, Lectors, Acolytes and Crucifers. There is a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall or you can contact the church office for more information!

*Respectfully submitted, Margaret Grote*



I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to lead the HLC choir this year! We have fifteen consistent members of our choir but are always looking for more. Please know that all skill levels are welcome in our choir; previous singing experience is not required. Come sing for the joy of praising God with the gift that God gave you. This spring, we will be working on a cantata that will be presented the week after Easter. A cantata is simply a collection of themed songs with a narration in between. The choir would love to have some new singers. If you are interested, we rehearse Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:15 in the choir room. Feel free to email me ([chrismmarple@gmail.com](mailto:chrismmarple@gmail.com)) if you have questions about singing in the choir or lending your musical talents to special music throughout the year. Thank you for your support!

*Dr. Chris Marple*



Another year of worship is in the books at Hosanna! Although I recently joined the music ministry in late July of this year, it has been a joy to worship with the congregation and to plan ways to enhance worship through music. We are blessed with many musicians in the church and I am looking forward to incorporating their talents more in our worship. The choir sang numerous times throughout the fall and winter, and we were happy to collaborate with instrumentalists on a few of our pieces. We had a variety of musicians including singers, hand chime ringers, brass players and string players that all employed their talents with us in worship. I am thankful for all of the individuals who are willing to share their talents with us. Each Sunday in Advent, special music was provided during the meditation time by members of Hosanna! A huge thank you to all who provided special music during Advent! I would also like to thank all of the cantors that have volunteered to lead us through the Kyrie. We ended the year with a great Christmas program from the children as well as a few guest organists and pianists. I am looking forward to more music-making this year at Hosanna! and collaborating more with Dr. Marple and the choir.

If you would like to be involved in the music or planning of worship in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [mitchell.jerko@gmail.com](mailto:mitchell.jerko@gmail.com) or to any other member of the Worship and Music committee. We would be happy to have your talents!

*Mitchell Jerko*



## STEWARDSHIP

Dear HOSANNA! Families.

Before Christmas, you may remember me mentioning the catch phrase **CULTIVATING INTENTIONAL GENEROSITY**. Last Fall, Pastor Mike, Louise Ahrens and I attended an online Stewardship Course hosted by the ELCA, in partnership with The Lake Institute – **Cultivating Generous Congregations**. These meetings were to help guide us in our Stewardship leadership by answering questions such as “*What is HOSANNA! deeply passionate about?*”, “*What is HOSANNA! best at?*” and “*What drives our resources?*” While I would love to tell you we have answered these questions, we are still working on answering them and will ask for your help in 2024 The answers to these questions will help us answer the ultimate question of “***What is HOSANNA!’s True Mission?***”

In reflection with Pastor Mike and Louise, we agreed that HOSANNA! and our community of Clay County is consistently a recipient of Intentional Generosity and Active Stewards. We witness generosity with gifts of Time, Talent and Financial Gifts. But in True HOSANNA! Humility, we don’t always share those stories of Generosity. We believe that through these stories, others are moved to pay it forward the most, and sharing these stories of where we were blessed by someone else’s generosity is going to be our starting point.

You may have noticed a pair of bulletin boards in the entry way for the last few months. These boards are where we would like **YOU** to share your story of how someone else’s generosity has positively impacted your life. Whether it be a small gesture like a smile or a warm greeting, or something substantial, we welcome you to share your story with a note card on the board on the LEFT. In return, we ask you to Pay it Forward. How are you going to intentionally spread generosity? Share those ideas, actions or thoughts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> board on the RIGHT. We believe by sharing these stories and hearing how HOSANNA! members are both recipients and influencers of generosity, will help CULTIVATE INTENTIONAL GENEROSITY both inside our HOSANNA! Home and in our Community.

*Best Wishes in 2024*

*Submitted by Robert Hall*



# GOD SQUAD BANK ACCOUNT

For the upcoming youth gathering the Hosanna! God Squad decided to have an account separate for the purposes of tracking for finances. On 12/22/23 the account was opened at Pony Express bank with the opening deposit of \$2,265.00. The balance did not have any credits or debits after 12/22/23, so for the end of the year 2023 the balance was \$2,265.

*Submitted by Sarah Read*

# TREASURER REPORT

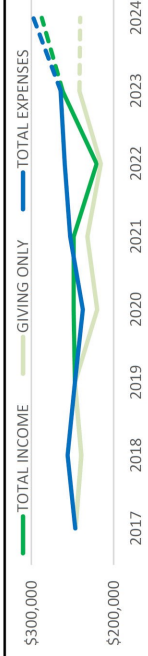
	12/31/2020	12/31/2021	12/31/2022	12/31/2023
<b>CHECKING ACCOUNT</b>	<b>\$77,033.49</b>	<b>\$74,396.19</b>	<b>\$55,476.41</b>	<b>\$31,799.93</b>
Building Reserve Fund	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
Pr. Continuing Education Fund	\$2,217.86	\$2,083.20	\$2,217.86	\$1,117.86
Pastor Discretionary Fund	\$264.66	\$263.93	\$264.66	\$264.66
Youth Fund <i>(to be transferred)</i>	\$3,551.01	\$5,576.01	\$7,946.00	\$8,896.00
<b>Undesignated</b>	<b>\$50,999.96</b>	<b>\$46,473.05</b>	<b>\$25,047.89</b>	<b>\$1,521.41</b>
<b>MEMORIAL ACCOUNT</b>	<b>\$10,056.65</b>	<b>\$14,178.55</b>	<b>\$14,187.00</b>	<b>\$8,256.13</b>
2023 Changes Included: <i>Gifts Received - Security Cameras \$1,100</i> <i>- Folding Tables \$913 - Coffee Maker \$994 - Copier Buyout \$2,945</i>				

*Submitted by Ben Cerra*



# HISTORICAL INCOME / EXPENSES + 2024 BUDGET

INCOME	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	Comments
Faith Commitments/Envelopes	\$134,862	\$51,140	\$19,701	\$156,374	\$163,000	\$161,995	\$148,268	2024 Budget: 33 pledges 2023 Actual: 32 pledges (98% met) - processing fees
Free Will & Loose	\$112,197	\$160,265	\$210,823	\$58,583	\$58,000	\$77,923	\$91,650	2024 Budget: Based on 2023 pledge+loose 2023 Actual: + unrecorded pledges
Designated to Operating Expenses		\$8,435	\$1,473	\$678	\$1,500	\$1,684	\$800	Flowers, Bibles, and other gifts designated to operating items
Charitable Receipts				\$1,444	\$1,500	\$3,631	\$2,500	2023: Thrivent Choice (\$2,473), Amazon Smile (\$249), RaiseRight (\$909)
Fundraising				\$3,599		\$266		2023: Athletics Parking 2022: Capital Campaign Excess Income
Daycare Rent + Utilities					\$0	\$7,827	\$42,450	2024: \$38,400 rent + \$4,050 utilities 2023: 4 months ramp - credit
Grants (PPP, ERC, Synod, Util. Rebate)		\$28,787	\$16,801	\$0	\$1,770	\$8,761	\$1,770	2024: Employee Ret. Credit (expect 2023) 2023: Synod Daycare, Every Rebate
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$247,059</b>	<b>\$248,627</b>	<b>\$248,798</b>	<b>\$220,678</b>	<b>\$224,270</b>	<b>\$262,087</b>	<b>\$287,438</b>	
EXPENSES	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	Comments
<b>BENEVOLENCE</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$4,936</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	To Synod/ELCA 2023 Actual: Missed payment 2024: 2023 make up + increase
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	<b>\$135,419</b>	<b>\$138,453</b>	<b>\$149,973</b>	<b>\$157,707</b>	<b>\$163,315</b>	<b>\$158,862</b>	<b>\$175,572</b>	
Pastoral Ministry	\$92,817	\$96,516	\$105,499	\$116,420	\$117,384	\$109,177	\$125,283	Some funds move between Salary and Benefits, based on pastor's elections
- Salary, Housing	\$57,421	\$57,920	\$63,227	\$68,639	\$68,684	\$68,686	\$76,000	2024: +\$7,000 to approach Synod Guidelines 2023 Budget: Wrong number used
- Social Security / Medicare Allowance							\$6,296	Employer allowance
- Benefits (health, retire, disability, etc)	\$32,651	\$38,263	\$40,172	\$45,762	\$46,500	\$38,565	\$40,487	Pre-2024: Not separated out, combined with salary
- Continuing Education	\$800	\$135	\$800	\$774	\$800	\$800	\$800	2023: 11 of 12 payments made (\$3,506 difference) - # depends on when paid
- Mileage	\$1,129	\$198	\$463	\$504	\$600	\$0	\$500	2024: Unchanged, per Synod Guidelines
- Supply Pastors	\$816	\$0	\$837	\$741	\$800	\$1,126	\$1,200	2023: Mileage not submitted for reimbursement
Administrative Assistant + FICA	\$24,958	\$25,023	\$26,293	\$23,084	\$26,576	\$31,881	\$28,089	2024: 6 Sundays at \$170 + mileage (4 vacation, 1 youth gathering, 1 sick)
- Salary						\$21,523	\$26,093	2024: \$1 increase to \$19.26/hr @ 26 hrs/wk.
- Social Security / Medicare						\$10,358	\$1,996	Employer contribution Pre-2024: Not separated out
Music Ministry	\$17,644	\$16,914	\$18,181	\$18,203	\$19,355	\$17,804	\$22,200	2024: No change. \$1,325/month Pre-2024: Not separated out
- Organist/Planist						\$10,229	\$15,900	2024: No change. \$500/month Pre-2024: Not separated out
- Choir Director						\$4,000	\$6,000	2024: \$150/substitute Pre-2024: Not separated out
- Substitutes						\$3,575	\$300	2023: Interim Musicians
<b>MINISTRIES</b>	<b>\$44,944</b>	<b>\$36,126</b>	<b>\$35,145</b>	<b>\$35,813</b>	<b>\$38,000</b>	<b>\$47,078</b>	<b>\$44,050</b>	
Office	\$8,546	\$3,611	\$1,861	\$1,777	\$7,500	\$8,606	\$4,000	2024: No copier lease (\$5,700), add copier supplies/maint. (\$1,200)
Building & Property	\$10,323	\$12,748	\$13,279	\$10,651	\$5,500	\$11,166	\$6,500	2023: \$4,500 daycare prep (paid by grant)+\$1,868 lighting (paid by utility rebate)
Utilities	\$13,363	\$8,549	\$7,651	\$9,548	\$9,500	\$12,540	\$14,000	2024: Inflation + 8 month daycare (\$2,500) 2023: Includes 4 month daycare
Insurance	\$7,171	\$7,473	\$8,428	\$8,629	\$10,000	\$10,617	\$12,000	2024: Anticipate increased cost
Faith Formation	\$1,814	\$1,711	\$483	\$1,013	\$1,500	\$1,492	\$1,800	2024: Expect new ministry costs
Evangelism	\$186	\$552	\$809	\$934	\$1,000	\$398	\$1,000	Cakes, hospitality expenses, permit, etc. 2024: Planning more events
Fellowship	\$528	\$0	\$362	\$583	\$500	\$239	\$1,000	Costs are often donated.
Social Ministry	\$50	\$121	\$0	\$0	\$100	\$0	\$100	
Stewardship	\$563	\$310	\$0	\$78	\$100	\$346	\$250	
Synod Assembly	\$883	\$0	\$195	\$555	\$300	\$195	\$900	2024: Will be in person next year 2023: Held online
Worship & Music	\$1,517	\$1,051	\$2,077	\$2,045	\$2,000	\$1,479	\$2,500	Much offset by designated giving to flowers 2024: Addl. music opportunities
<b>MORTGAGE</b>	<b>\$63,936</b>	<b>\$57,982</b>	<b>\$63,977</b>	<b>\$64,011</b>	<b>\$63,936</b>	<b>\$58,468</b>	<b>\$68,000</b>	2024: Rate adjust/reamortization in August 2023: Interest only in Aug./Sept.
<b>TAXES</b>							\$0	Unrelated Business Income Tax due to rental income. Anticipate \$0.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$247,299</b>	<b>\$237,498</b>	<b>\$253,095</b>	<b>\$259,531</b>	<b>\$269,251</b>	<b>\$264,408</b>	<b>\$297,622</b>	
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$247,059</b>	<b>\$248,627</b>	<b>\$248,798</b>	<b>\$220,678</b>	<b>\$224,270</b>	<b>\$262,087</b>	<b>\$287,438</b>	
<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$247,299</b>	<b>\$237,498</b>	<b>\$253,095</b>	<b>\$259,531</b>	<b>\$269,251</b>	<b>\$264,408</b>	<b>\$297,622</b>	
<b>DIFFERENCE</b>	<b>-\$240</b>	<b>\$11,129</b>	<b>-\$4,297</b>	<b>-\$38,853</b>	<b>-\$44,981</b>	<b>-\$2,321</b>	<b>-\$10,184</b>	



# PARISH STATISTICS

## NEW MEMBERS

Colin, Abby, and Rowan O'Leary - May 14  
John, Eleece, and Morgan Kaiser - July 23  
Richard Moore - July 23  
Noah, Melissa, and Kennedi Nash - July 30

## MEMBERS LEFT/REMOVED

Tommy and Janet Anderson  
Bob and Carla Betsworth  
Dan, Ellen, Eva, Colin, Liam Bruggeman  
Fran and Craig Lantz  
Mike and Cindy Plesko  
Amanda, Stryker, Maverick, Wyatt, Gunner, and Helena Stilwell  
Earl Taylor  
Duane Witt  
+ Additional Statistical Adjustments

## BAPTISMS

Rowan O'Leary	May 14
Kennedi Nash	July 30
Benjamin West	August 27

## FIRST COMMUNION - May 21

Leah Cerra  
Ellasyn Eickman  
Emery Hall  
Olivia Noel  
Nona Oprinovich  
Anna Willet

## WEDDINGS

Scott Carlson and Charlynn Marshall      November 4

## DEATHS

Duane Witt	June 20
Earl Taylor	November 7

## FUNERALS

Randy Fox (non-member) July 13

## MEMBERSHIP

Baptized: 206 (173 Active, 33 Inactive)	[2022: 252]
Confirmed: 157	[2022: 185]
Active Friends: 31	

## WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

2023: 87 (76 in person, 12 online)  
2022: 89 (75 in person, 14 online)  
2021: 74 (60 in person, 14 online)  
2020: 79  
2019: 102

# We are part of something bigger!

We work in partnership with faithful people throughout our community, region, country, and the world as members of the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

*We are part of the  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America (ELCA);  
a church that shares a*

*living, daring confidence in God's grace. For us this faith comes through the good news of Jesus Christ and gives us the freedom and courage to wonder, discover and boldly participate in what God is up to in the world.*

## WHAT MAKES UP THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD?

As the Central States Synod of the ELCA, we are one of 65 synods (geographic areas) in the U.S. that connect its congregations with one another and with the larger denomination. Our synod includes 160 congregations throughout the entire states of Kansas and Missouri. There is great diversity throughout the churches in our territory. Parishes range from small rural churches to inner-city churches, with a good number of mid-sized suburban congregations as well. Ethnic diversity also spans the synod — from Hispanic ministries in Garden City, Dodge City and Wichita; an Oromo Ministry in Kansas City, MO; and a Sudanese Ministry in St. Joseph.

**Vision** - The Central States Synod would be a place that:

- Witnesses to the centrality of faith as individuals and communities embrace and actively live the way of Jesus.
- Empowers ministries and congregations to participate in God's reign of justice, loving neighbor through acts of charity and the work of advocacy.
- Nurtures engagement in spiritual practices that deepened faith and courageous acts of love for the neighbor.
- Invites others into this transforming way of Jesus.



### **Mission:**

We are united with Christ in Baptism, traveling the way of Jesus, joining God's reign of justice and radical love in the world.

1. United with Christ – In the waters of our baptism, we are united to Christ and to one another. This is the reality and truth which continually transforms us and is the defining lens for our actions and behaviors.
2. Traveling the way of Jesus – The way of Jesus is not a static concept we are invited to affirm, but an active way of living and moving into and through this world.

Traveling this way invites us even deeper into a love of God and love of neighbor.

3. Joining God's reign of justice and radical love in the world – God's reign has broken into our world calling us beyond acts of charity to justice for our neighbor to participate in God's radical love which challenges the status quo to bring about reconciliation and a new way of being.

## WHO LEADS THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD?

The Rev. Susan Candea was elected to a six-year term as Bishop in 2019. She oversees the ministries of the congregations in the synod and the work of the synod's rostered leaders and Parish Ministry Associates.

The highest legislative body of the synod is the Synod Assembly Voting members from each congregation and all rostered leaders gather annually for this meeting. Between assemblies, the Synod Council serves as the "board of directors." The Synod Council is made up of voting members from the five conferences, as well as the Bishop, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

## WHAT IS MISSION SUPPORT

Mission Support provides 80 percent of the resources to enable the ELCA to begin new ministries and accompany existing congregations as growing centers for evangelical mission. These funds also provide the staff and resources for the development of new leaders, partnership with churches around the globe, alleviating poverty, working for justice and peace, and so much more.

Through the spiritual practices of invitation, reflection, and response, we faithfully consider how to share God's abundant grace. In this way, we act as church together for the sake of the world. You can find stories of our work together to download and share in Stories of Faith in Action at [www.elca.org/SOFIA](http://www.elca.org/SOFIA).

This money funds the work of the synods, and some portion of Mission Support that is shared with the churchwide organization comes back to your congregation and synod in the form of services, programs, resources, and grants. Typically, more than 90 percent of a congregation's offering remains in the congregation to help pay for ministries, outreach, and the building – supporting your congregation's vital presence in your community.

# A MESSAGE FROM CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

## BISHOP SUSAN CANDEA



### *Together: Traveling the way of Jesus.*

The word “synod” means “walking together.” As congregations and ministry sites across Missouri and Kansas, we have committed to walking together, and we recognize that together we can do more ministry than we can individually.

Understanding the reality that we are United with Christ in baptism, we are connected to one another, and together we are traveling the way of Jesus. It is all about Jesus. It is in this relationship with Jesus that we ground our actions, our ministry, and our purpose as communities of faith.

**Together:** The presiding bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton, often spoke of how we are church together for the sake of the world. That is the understanding that has guided my calling as the bishop and pastor of this synod. We are not the church in isolated silos but in an interdependent relationship with one another and the whole ELCA.

**Traveling:** Since the last synod assembly, I have traveled to 38 of our congregations and ministries, to preach, teach, and hold conversations. While I often wish I could “smush” the synod together, eliminating some of the miles between destinations, I always appreciate the opportunities to be with folks in their own congregations. (No, I have not kept track of the miles I have driven!) It is still my goal to visit every single congregation on a Sunday morning.

**The way of Jesus:** What does it mean to travel the way of Jesus in the midst of very anxious systems? The pandemic took a toll on all aspects of our life today. Worship attendance and financial support continue to decline. Divisions are deep and painful. It is easy to want solutions or answers to fix things. It is also easy to become reactionary and blame others for what may make us uncomfortable. But Jesus doesn’t give us answers. Rather he invites us into a relationship and a journey as travelers in the reign of God.

There have been some significant challenges for me as the bishop. I have had consultations with four congregations who have or are in the process of disaffiliating. Each disaffiliation is the ending of a relationship which I grieve wondering why we can’t continue to walk with one another to proclaim the gospel. We also instituted synod administration of Bethany Lutheran Church in Webster Groves. The remaining members refused to work with me to close the congregation which was no longer functioning. I also experience tremendous support as the bishop for which I am so appreciative, feeling that this is indeed where Christ is calling me to travel at this point in the church, together with all of you!

Rev. Susan Candea, Bishop

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### **We are more than the people who gather as Hosanna!**

We work in partnership with faithful people throughout our region, the nation, and the world. Learn more about our purpose and what we accomplish together as the Central States Synod of Missouri and Kansas at <https://www.css-elca.org/about>.

# A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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

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

Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice.

Read stories and learn more at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA)

# 2024 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING NOMINATIONS

## **Officers** (2-year term)

President: Justin Noel  
Vice President: Alissa Willett  
Treasurer: Tony Belcher

*Continuing:*  
Secretary: Joyce Uber

## **Council** (2-year term)

Mike Jennings  
Charlynn Marshall-Carlson

*Continuing:* Margaret Rockhold  
Chris Marple  
Beth Schoening

## **Synod Assembly Voting Members**

Ryan & Alissa Willett

## **Nominating Committee** (1-year term)

John Kreidler  
Sue Tonks  
Scott Schmidt  
Ryan Willett  
Margaret Rockhold (*outgoing council*)  
Beth Schoening (*outgoing council*)

## **Audit Committee Member** (3-year term)

Richard Moore (2024; 2025; 2026)

*Continuing:* Louise Ahrens (2023; 2024; 2025)  
Robert Hall (2022; 2023; 2024)



Justin Noel



Alissa Willett



Tony Belcher



Joyce Uber



Mike Jennings



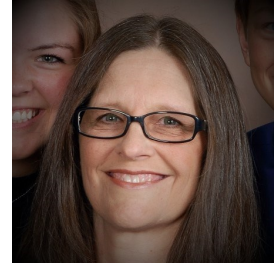
Charlynn Marshall-Carlson



Margaret Rockhold



Chris Marple



Beth Schoening



Ryan & Alissa Willett



John Kreidler



Sue Tonks



Scott Schmidt



Ryan Willett



Louise Ahrens



Robert Hall

# Let us pray...

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

**And also with you.**

Almighty God, teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Give us the ability, creativity, and faithfulness to adapt to the cultural, economic, and social changes occurring in the people we serve.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures and its successes, and offers wisdom to others.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders among us who lead us to live consistent with God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Receive our prayer, O God.**

Almighty God,

**you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



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