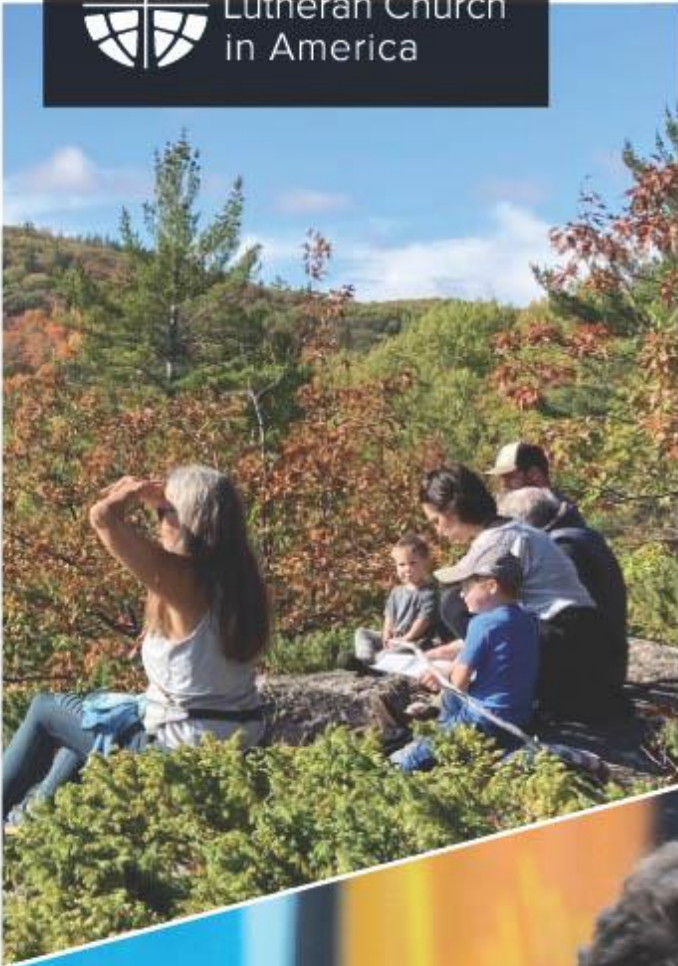




Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



ANNUAL REPORT
2024

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

—Psalm 93:4-5

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

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

Annual Report
For the year 2024
St. John's Lutheran Church
500 Third Street West Northfield, MN 55057
Telephone: (507) 645-4429

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Church Staff

Senior Pastor: Pam Fickenscher *Associate Pastor:* Jonathan Davis *Parish Nurse:* Sally Lindell
Office Manager / Finance Manager: Leah H. Garlie *Facility Manager:* Steve Harner
Director of Children's Ministry: Julie Brehmer *Director of Ministry with Youth & Families:* Kristin Partlo
Organist and Director of Worship, Music & Arts: Nathan Proctor
Children's Music Director and Early Childhood Specialist: Arielle Loy
Directors of Rejoice Ringers: David Sims *Director of Jubilate Choir:* Green Bouzard
Shared Ministry Coordinator: Angie Gehring

Statistical Report

December 31, 2024

I. Membership (<i>statistical adjustments ongoing from database project</i>)	
Baptized Membership	1726
Confirmed Membership	1421
Baptisms	5
Confirmations	10
Transferred In	27
Transferred Out/Released	6
Deceased	22
Number of Households	709
II. Registered Children and Youth	
Three-year-olds through grade five	50
Sixth through eighth grades	32
Ninth through twelfth grades	21
Church School teachers and helpers	14
III. Worship Opportunities During 2024	
Sunday Worship	87
Non-Sunday Worship	15
Average Sunday Attendance	253
Note: Worship services are available live on KYMN radio and livestream. Recordings are available to view on cable TV and the church website.	
IV. Pastoral Acts	
Baptisms	5
Confirmations	10
Marriages	2
Funerals/Burials	21

In Memoriam

The following members of St. John's congregation died in 2024:

Jerry Anderson, Paul Peterson, Shirley Anderson, Dalton Distad, Jane Gelle, Wendy Scholz, Elouise Quinnell, Elaine Hope, Karin Norgaard, Connie Gunderson, Winnifred Alberg, Pamela Nerhus, Patricia Halsor, Carol Solid, Bernie Renander, Joanne Dahlin, Wayne Eddy, Richard Kleber, Jeanne Narum, Lois Pearson, Paul Klinefelter, Donna James

Blessed be their memory; God hold them in love until the day of Jesus Christ.

Agenda

Annual Meeting of the St. John's Lutheran Church Foundation

Sunday, February 2, 2025 / 12:30 p.m., St. John's Hall

Jeff McLaughlin, presiding

- a. Report of the Foundation
- b. Election of Board Members



Agenda

155th Annual Meeting of St. John's Lutheran Church

Sunday, February 2, 2025 / 12:30 p.m., St. John's Hall and via Zoom

Dan Franklin, presiding

- 1. Scripture and Prayer
- 2. Adoption of Rules
- 3. Adoption of Agenda
- 4. Minutes of Annual Meeting: February 2, 2025
- 5. Annual Reports of President, Pastors, Staff, Boards, and Committees
- 6. Report of Treasurer, *Judd Lohmann*
- 7. Report of the Audit Committee, *Martha Erickson, Mark Ulmer, Elden Zempel*
- 8. Resolution (2025-01) Regarding Action of the Congregation Council in 2024
- 9. Presentation of the Proposed Budget for 2025, *Michelle Kramer-Prevost*
- 10. Nomination for Bishop of the SE MN Synod
- 11. Report of the Nominating Committee
- 12. Elections
 - a. Officers, Congregation Council, Board Members, Audit, and Nominating Committees
 - b. Representatives to Lutheran Home of Cannon Valley Corporation (NRC): Sunday, April 27, 2025
1:00 p.m.
 - c. Delegates to SE MN Synod Assembly: Friday-Saturday, May 30-31, 2025, Mankato
(4 voting members plus one additional youth/young adult)
 - d. Delegates to Cannon Valley River Assembly: Sunday, February 16, 2025, 2:00 p.m.,
Urland Lutheran Church, Cannon Falls
(up to 12 voting members)
 - e. Delegates to Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations: Saturday, April 26, 2025,
12:00 – 3:00 p.m.
- 13. Resolution (2025-02) of Gratitude for all Volunteers, Staff, and Pastors
- 14. In Memorium
- 15. Presentation
- 16. Adjournment

Installation of Officers, Council, and Board Members will take place

Sunday, February 9, 2025.

St. John's Lutheran Church stands on the ancestral homelands of the Wahpekute band of the Dakota nation. We respect and are grateful for the generations of native people who have cared for this land.

St. John's Mission Statement

Created, renewed, and empowered by God's grace,

St. John's Lutheran Church

is a welcoming community in Christ whose mission is to

- **celebrate in Word and Sacrament God's gracious actions for the world,**
- **cultivate growth in faith,**
- **encourage service and witness, and**
- **proclaim Christ as the hope of the world.**

Report of Dan Franklin, *2024 President of the Congregation*

One of the many opportunities of serving in church leadership, is the inside look and first hand view of the many people who serve in so many different roles. I was frequently asked how the leadership role was going. This church is so blessed with so many people willing to share their time and talents. The word gratitude comes to mind. Gratitude, that is how would describe my time in church leadership. I am thankful for the many folks who serve and participate! And especially so for people who serve on boards and council - THANK YOU!

On February 3rd, the Council Retreat was an opportunity for new and continuing council members to get acquainted, learn the tips about running a board, how council agendas are created, and basics about church finances. Returning board members shared their thoughts about the continuing goals as well as what things they wished they had known when they became board chairs.

2024 was a year of following and tending to a congregational directive for another appeal to improve our sustainability and outreach to serve others. The Sustaining Grace team worked tirelessly to implement a successful campaign, and our congregation again proved to be most generous - well beyond the target. The campaign had terrific leaders, and many volunteers to make this happen. A heartfelt thanks to all who served and/or contributed. Results so far: solar panels installed (saving the church about \$1,200/month), on demand water heaters save about \$500 per month, and our new HVAC system

saves close \$2,000 per month! As pledges continue to come in, we will continue through the list of improvements to include repaving our parking lot and switching to more energy efficient kitchen appliances.

We've already distributed grant funds to several area non-profit agencies who are seeking to improve their sustainability - see the reports following.

St. John's offers a plethora of opportunities for fellowship and service. As already stated, I am thankful for folks who serve on boards, as greeters, kitchen volunteers, ushers, chairs and co-chairs, campaign solicitors, quilt makers, Sunday school teachers, nursery attendants, ... And church softball players and fans, school kit collectors and backpack stuffers, choir directors and singers, coffee servers, prayer shawl knitters, accompany leaders, communion servers & preparers, Stephens Ministers, bible & book study leaders, AV team members, bell ringers, campaign cookie bakers, ...

A special shout out to the St John's WELCA, who will be celebrating their 150 years of existence in 2025! They provide great opportunities for hands on projects for the church members & community. Our WELCA women are amazing! They provide a variety of functions to help others with Lutheran World Relief "Quilts and Kits" projects, and many other service opportunities. Their Courageous Conversations bring in large numbers for community folks and beyond. Men - please note you are welcome to participate in their wonderful endeavors!

Huge thanks to the church council for their dedication and work throughout the year. Thanks also to the Executive Committee, Pastors Pam & Jonathan, Judd, Elaine, and Michelle. Your guidance and patience was most appreciated. We are in great hands, we have leaders who love and care for the church! Also huge thanks to our church staff who perform numerous unseen tasks in addition to regular job duties. Please thank them at every opportunity - they are most deserving! As noted earlier, we at St John's are truly blessed!

As 2024 is coming to an end, I am eager to watch and see what is in store for St John's in the

coming years. Mid 2025 brings the end of mortgage payments, and due to the growth of the Foundation, more opportunities to contribute to the Northfield community and beyond. As we continue to see growth in membership, we'll have more ideas and occasions to consider new ways of serving. I very much appreciated the chance to serve as part of the leadership and sincerely hope when asked - many of you will say, "Yes, I will to serve!"

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Franklin
2024 President of the Congregation

Report of Pastor Pam Fickenschier, *Senior Pastor*

Sometime in the spring of 2020, I remember thinking to myself, "This COVID crisis will teach us all that there really is no predicting the future."

Alas, that and other lessons from the pandemic seem to have faded in 2024 as life has accelerated again and we find ourselves trying to peer into 2025. Although we've all grown tired of the word "unprecedented," it still seems wise to assume that we cannot predict what the year ahead will bring based on the year past. But we hold to God's promises that God will be there at every moment as we arrive in the future. We can trust that in part because of all the ways that God has been with us in this past year -- another year of God's good grace.

After many, many months of conversation about how to make St. John's more financially and ecologically sustainable for the future, the Sustaining Grace campaign launched in the spring of 2024, and successfully raised over a million dollars in pledges -- exceeding our goal by more than 25%. Thanks to co-chairs David Neuger, Ruthie Neuger, and Cheryl Buck for their capable leadership, and to the campaign team: Dan Edwins, Dan Franklin, Jeff McLaughlin, and Dean Schoeb.

A particular thanks is owed to Jeff McLaughlin both in his leadership of the St. John's Foundation and his advocacy for the solar project. We would

not be where we are today without Jeff's research, questions, communication, coordination and advocacy over the past many months. In the week-to-week grind that is church life together, Jeff has helped us raise our eyes to the horizon and a bigger view of what St. John's can accomplish for our community and the future.

Over and over again, what I hear from this congregation is our collective gratitude for a staff team that is competent, faithful to the Gospel, and who actually enjoy working together! I couldn't be more thankful for this group of people who serve this community with their whole hearts. Through many personal crises as well as the ongoing challenges of church life, this team has supported one another with the compassion that witnesses to Christ.

There is nothing better than having a colleague with whom you can both laugh and cry without reserve. Through the last (almost) ten years I've come to trust that **Pastor Jonathan Davis** will bring good questions, good humor, fantastic preaching and genuine care to his call to serve St. John's.

Not a Sunday goes by that I don't thank God for **Nathan Proctor**. As a balcony full of Chorale members will attest, he brings the full complement of his gifts to every single worship service, and his enthusiasm -- for both St. John's

deep traditions as well as new directions in church music – is infectious. Hearing his laugh from the church office each week makes my day.

Thank you to **Julie Brehmer**, who passed 20 years of service to St. John's this fall. Her voice is gentle, her ears are always tuned to our youngest ones, and her eye for engaging and fun activities is impeccable.

Thank you to **Leah Garlie**, who continues to support every other member of this staff team with aplomb. In addition to running the numbers and managing our communications, she keeps so many of our office systems running so that the rest of us can accomplish what we need to every day.

Thank you to **Angie Gehring**, whose cheerful presence brightens the kitchen, the Commons and the sacristy; she has welcomed families grieving loved ones, organized hospitality on Sundays, and welcomed dozens of new members in Accompany.

Thanks to **Steve Harner**, who cares for this complex facility. His fix-it know-how never ceases to amaze me.

Thank you to **Sally Lindell**, Parish Nurse, who has served as a helpful resource and emissary to our members navigating health challenges and end-of-life care. Sally knows the challenges of every stage of life and can respond compassionately to a host of situations.

Thank you to **Arielle Loy**, leading our littlest and loudest Lutherans on Sunday mornings and with our Alleluia Choir. This year's Christmas program was a wonderful culmination of her time building relationships and making music with our smallest children.

Green Bouzard has steadily built relationships as well as musical skill with our 3-5 grade choir. And we are grateful for the bonus of Michael Morris' gifts with this age group, offering his own songwriting and the occasional substitute duties in rehearsal.

And thanks to **David Sims** for his leadership of the Rejoice Ringers – and also for the many ways his gifts add to St. John's worship with his arrangements, accompaniment, and occasional filling in on the organ bench.

A special thank you to our **Personnel Committee** this year: Ruth Aaseng, Paul Beck, Greg Colby, Michelle Kramer-Prevost, Jon McBroom, Rob Quanbeck and Solveig Zempel. Good policy helps us be prepared and assures that we are stewardship the gifts of our employees well.

Thank you to those **Council members** who have served this year and are completing their service as board chairs: Rob Quanbeck (Adult Ministry), Alli Mode (Children's Ministry), Ellen Ellickson (Faith and Health), Tamara Jackman (Youth Ministry). You have been a wonderful, thoughtful Council to share leadership with this year.

Finally, thank you to **Elaine Nesbit**, completing service as our **Secretary**, and **Dan Franklin**, finishing out her term as **President**. In the midst of many other responsibilities and calls in life, you have been the wise and trustworthy leaders this congregation needed for this year.

Thanks be to God,
Pastor Pam Fickenscher

Report of Pastor Jonathan Davis, Associate Pastor

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in the Lord." - **Lamentations 3:22-24**

Hesed is a Hebrew that is both hard to translate and, at the same time, is considered one of the most important words in the Bible and in theology. It is all over the Bible and is used to describe the character of God.

Hesed was originally translated as "loving kindness" but was later discovered to be more of a relational, covenant, promise making kind of word. It is a word that is more about mutual commitment that God has made to God's people. It's not just about being loving and kind, it's a promise of loyalty through the best and the worst of life; a promise that says, "I will stay with you."

More recently, *hesed* is translated as *steadfast love*. This is not so much a puppy dog love or a romantic love, but *steadfast love* meaning...a covenant love, a promise-keeping love, not just a love in your heart, but a love in action. A love you can count on.

Dear people of St. John's, your embodiment of the gospel and God's abundant love has been steadfast this year. It has been truly a love we can count on. We have been through yet another year of many deaths and funerals of beloveds in our community, through a greater-than-imagined outpouring of support for the *Sustaining Grace Campaign*, and through the day-to-day and week-to-week tasks of being the Church together. Through it all, you continue to show up with *hesed*. Steadfast love.

When I, and other staff members, experienced a family crisis this fall, the staff and congregation stepped up to both offer comfort, meals, and to provide support so that I could be with my family. That was the steadfast, reliable love of God showing up for me, and I am so grateful.

I hesitate to say it, but in many ways this has been the most "normal" year since COVID. No staff changes – only staff celebrations! This past year, we celebrated 10 years for Pastor Pam and for Nathan Proctor, 5 years for Sally Lindell, and a whopping 20 years for Julie Brehmer. This is an amazing and somewhat rare thing for a church staff, which speaks to the stability and support of this congregation.

Some highlights of this more-typical-but-not-boring year are:

- Reimagining the format and structure of Confirmation/Youth Group on Wednesdays, focusing on playfulness, connections with each other, and shared group value of caring for each other as we learn to live Christian lives together. This has led to more connecting behavior, deeper conversations, and even new friendship, as well as some of our highest and most consistent attendance in years.
- St. John's welcomed 10 new Stephen Ministers – **Ellen Ellickson, Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Mary Hoff, Alison Kavanaugh, Leif Knecht, Shari Ohland, Nancy Simpson-Younger, Lori Skoglund, Peter Skoglund, and Fran Wood**. Stephen Ministry is a critical part to the caring ministries that echo out from St. John's, which would not be possible without the faithful leadership of **Ruth Anglin, Jennifer Edwins, Jo Franklin, Sally Lindell, and Barbara Wilson**.
- Starting a new ministry of sending communion to our homebound members through the ministry of our Stephen Ministers.
- Offering a Lutheranism 101 and Bible 101 class in the spring and fall
- A 7-week Adult Forum series called Rediscovering Genesis, which took us through some of the most well-known and least well-known stories of Genesis, while inviting congregations members to read the whole book throughout the series. Many thanks to **Maggie Odell, Charlie Wilson, Bruce Benson, Jamie Schillinger,**

and **Pastor Pam** for making this enriching series possible.

- St. John's partnered again with First UCC and St. Peter's Lutheran Church for one big youth trip paddling and camping on the Brule and Flambeau rivers in Wisconsin. In July, 31 youth in middle school and high school, along with 6 chaperones, drove up north to Camp Amnicon, just east of Superior. We enjoyed the beauty of the backwoods, tolerated the mosquitoes, and deepened our connections with each other. Many thanks to Jaida Gehring (former St. John's youth) for coming along as a chaperone. This snapshot of ministry and so much more would not be possible without the people I count on everyday as companions in this ministry.

To have a colleague like **Pastor Pam Fickenscher**, who makes you laugh, breaks your heart open with the gospel, and can intuitively move around you while setting up the altar together on a Sunday morning, is such a daily gift that sustains me in this shared ministry. I feel shaped by her ministry and leadership in many ways and I am so happy to be in ministry alongside her.

One thing I have come to cherish about **Nathan Proctor** is how his ministry at St. John's goes beyond music, worship, and arts. Nathan is often keyed into the needs and concerns of people at St. John's through caring conversations in the in-between moments. The way he subtly accompanies people through the hard things amazes me.

Similarly, **Julie Brehmer** has a whole ministry at St. John's that goes beyond children and families of a certain age. In 20 years, she has developed many relationships of care and trust – people turn to her and she's there for them, no matter what age.

It's hard to believe that **Kristin Partlo** has been on staff for just over a year now. Her presence and fit around her feels natural, and her impact has been significant. She is quick to pour out love for our young people and it is building relationships of trust and care.

Sally Lindell shows up for people. Whether through text message, phone calls, or home visits, she makes time for our people in need and walks alongside them. You can count on it.

Angie Gehring is such a faithful and diligent member of our staff. I often hear a need come up and Angie chimes in with, "I can do that!", and you know it will get done. Her ministry can be behind the scenes but she has developed a whole crew of volunteers that help serve the people in our community in a beautiful way.

Steve Harner is a steady presence, especially when things at church are hectic and complicated. I appreciate his direct and willing spirit to just make sure projects and needs around the church are taken care of. He often drops everything to help a staff person with a need around the building.

Arielle Loy can always be counted on to bring a spirit of joy and extensive love to Wednesdays and Sundays at St. John's. A brief encounter with Arielle during a busy or stressful day has a way of making things brighter.

It has been really fun to watch **Green Bouzard** develop relationships with our 3rd-5th graders. She has a great way of letting them be themselves while also teaching them about music and faith as well.

David Sims is clearly a strong and well-beloved leader of the Rejoice Ringers. I can see it on their faces during worship. Through his conducting, cantoring, and accompanying, as well as his thoughtful prayers as assisting minister, David's willingness to be connected to so many parts of worship is a true gift.

I am so glad to be in this ministry with you all. Thank you for all the ways your mirror God's steadfast love for the world.

With joy,
Pastor Jonathan Davis

Report of Angie Gehring, *Shared Ministry Coordinator*

A big heart-felt **THANK YOU to ALL** of St. John's members and friends who have generously volunteered their time and gifts during 2024! You make this church a warm and welcoming place for all who come to worship, eat, and serve our community!

Wednesday Night Meals: **THANK YOU** to our fantastic energetic dream team of people who made the Wednesday meals run so smoothly (yet again) this past year: Martha Erickson, our meal planner extraordinaire and head cook; Gerri Licke and Fran Wood, our other phenomenal cooks and servers; Doug Johnson & Karen Schuette who helped prepare the serving and dining hall tables in addition to cheerfully assisting with the food serving line, as well as Marilyn Calcutt who also helped us many hours this past year before taking a break to focus on other commitments; our wonderfully dedicated and expert dishwasher operators Bob & Pat Tabery; Craig Schultz and Chris Erickson, who washed the big pots and pans and kept the kitchen area so tidy and spotless; Janelle Martin, Lori Skoglund, Don Sahling, and Fran Wood, who have tirelessly wiped the tables and swept the crumbs off of the hall carpet at the conclusion of countless meals; and thank you to others including the Smith family who've jumped in to help with clean-up when they can! Also, many thanks to Peggy Dell and Kristy Harms who have volunteered this year (yet again) to prepare meals for our special events such as Lenten Soup Suppers, Night to Unite, and the Advent Fair. You are ALL a joy to work with, and these meals would not be a success without your awesome gifts of skill, time, and good humor! It has been wonderful to see all of the lovely faces and smiles of our many repeat customers each week!

Funeral Reception Hospitality: **THANK YOU** to our dedicated funeral reception helpers who gave their time to assist with as many as 21 receptions this past year. Special thanks to Judy Karlson for setting the dining hall tables for nearly all of the receptions and for assisting with our seasonal centerpieces! Also a special thanks to Jim Cederberg and Ted Peterson for volunteering to

run the dishwasher for the lion share of receptions yet again this past year! Many thanks to our frequent and consistent helpers Fran Wood, Karen Schuette, Doug Johnson, Leif Knecht, Rhonda Reece, Lori Skoglund, Marilyn Calcutt, Cindy Clauson, Pat and Bob Tabery, and Pam Groves-Gaggioli for all of your help with serving and clean-up! I would name every occasional volunteer here, too, if I had the space – your help was not overlooked or unnoticed! Please know that everyone who has lent a helping hand is so appreciated! I encourage more people to join our funeral hospitality email list. It is a wonderful thing to show grieving families support and love through our gifts and service.

Treat Donations: **A big THANK YOU** to all those who've donated treats or money for treats for our various social gatherings, including Sunday mornings, Wednesday Night Meals, funeral receptions, and other events in need of refreshments! I want to give a special shout-out to those who have donated especially often, including Judy Cederberg, Cora Scholz, Rhonda Reece, Marie Benson, Deb Christensen, Gerri Licke & Patrice Nordstrand, Doug Johnson, Carol Benson, Debby Becker, Tricia Peterson, Pat & Bob Tabery, Ann Albert, Karen Schuette, and Pam Groves-Gaggioli. Thank you to ALL who have donated when able! So many of you eagerly sign up as soon as the need for a reception is sent out, and I am truly grateful beyond words!

Ushers: **THANK YOU** to ALL 32 of our wonderful and dedicated ushers serving on monthly teams, who create a welcoming and orderly flow to Sunday worship and evening vespers! I'd list you each by name if I had the room! Thank you for your willingness to commit to serving throughout the entire year on a monthly basis, in addition to some special services. Your work is extremely important and I'm very grateful to have all of you here! Also, thank you to those who have stepped up to serve when there was a shortage or volunteered to be a sub!

Sunday Hospitality Volunteers (Coffee Hour Helpers, Communion Prep and Clean-up Helpers, and Greeters): **THANK YOU** to all of those who've been willing to assist with our Sunday coffee hour service and clean-up, and especially to those who jumped in at a moment's notice so regularly, happily helping out when no one else signed up, including Ted Peterson, Doug Johnson, Karen & Dale Schuette, Leif Knecht and Bob & Pat Tabery. **THANK YOU** to those who are new and decided to give it a try! I hope you enjoyed it, and will volunteer again soon! A special **THANK YOU** to Judy Smith, Georgene Johnson, Craig Schultz, Jill Enestvedt, Debby and David Nitz, and Vicki Otis who volunteered to prep and clean-up the communion so often this past year; thanks to Brenda Nelson and Beth Cox for becoming newly involved with doing this special task! **THANK YOU** to those who have regularly volunteered to greet on Sunday mornings to welcome people as they come to worship, including Mary Ellen North, Cindy Clauson, Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Sandra Nyvall, Marie Benson, Mary Hoff, Gerri Licke and Patrice Nordstrand, Leif Knecht, Judy Karlson, Jill Enestvedt, Craig Schultz, and Kibby Errington. Greeters make such a difference by creating an inviting environment that people look forward to returning to. We'd love to have more members jump in and give this a try!

Kitchen Maintenance: **THANK YOU** to Ted Peterson for making sure our church kitchen is always well-maintained, sparkly and clean, in good working order, and stocked with a hearty supply of coffee and clean air pots! Ted, for yet another year (again!), you consistently go above and beyond!

Kitchen Laundry: **THANK YOU** to Ted & Tricia Peterson, Doneen Viall, Marilyn Calcutt, and others who have taken turns graciously laundering the table cloths, towels, and rags so that we always have a clean supply, ready to use!

St. Olaf Choir Breakfast: **THANK YOU** to ALL who donated food and/or serving & clean-up help to the breakfast last January! The choir always expresses their sincere gratitude for this each year with a very special "thank you" serenade in the

dining hall, dedicated to all involved in making the breakfast for them possible!

Accompany: **THANK YOU** to Jane Rinehart and Jo Franklin, along with Alison Kavanagh last spring, for your assistance with our running our Accompany program! I feel so blessed to have worked with all of you in our mission to help build connection among our newest members during our Sunday sessions and events!

Community Christmas Dinner Planning Team: **THANK YOU** to Kirsten Gunn, Jane Rinehart, and Jean Wakely (yet again, my dream team!) for all of the time you gave to our meetings, distributing posters all over town, spreading the word of our event to through various media sources, and for assisting with the sign-up table. **THANK YOU** to Mary Hoff for applying for a \$250 Thrivent gift card that covered the cost of the meatballs we served! We are so grateful!

Community Christmas Dinner Volunteers and Food Donators: **THANK YOU** to each of the 60 hands-on volunteers energetically working in the kitchen, the dining hall, and in the Commons on Christmas Day! It was a delight to see you all serving together! **THANK YOU** Char Carlson and Ron Hebensperger for your invaluable help getting the turkey and meatballs cooking at 7 a.m. bright and early on Christmas morning! **THANK YOU** to Sandra & Bob Nyvall and Deb Schoeb for assistance with decorating the dining room for the dinner! **THANK YOU** to the 64 people/families who donated the food and beverages to complete the meal! **THANK YOU** to Julie Zdenek and Jane Turpin Moore who performed beautiful piano music during the dinner for all to enjoy. This dinner could not have happened without all of you, and its success demonstrates the wonderful things we can accomplish and the love we spread as the body of Christ serving together!

May you all be blessed with peace and joy in 2025. I feel extremely thankful to know and serve with all of you!

Respectfully submitted,
Angie Gehring

Report of the Adult Ministry & Education Board

Board members: Carol Breimhorst, Carrie Dauner, Maggie Odell, Rob Quanbeck (chair), Bob Rendahl, Charles Wilson, and Pastor Jonathan Davis (staff representative). Departing the board after the January 2025 annual meeting: Carrie Dauner and Rob Quanbeck

The Adult Ministry and Education Board focuses on fostering, supporting, and overseeing a variety of small group ministries at St. John's. Included in the board's responsibilities is oversight of the church library and archives.

Lenten and Advent Book Reads

Adult Ministry and Education again organized the Lenten and Advent Book Reads. The book for Lent was Amy-Jill Levine's The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus. Maggie Odell and Chris Engstrom led the Sunday morning sessions (Feb 18, 25, Mar 3, 10), and Mike Mandsager led the Wednesday afternoon sessions (Feb 21, 28, Mar 6, 13). Two dozen members participated in the sessions.

The book for Advent was Gayle Boss' All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings. Adult Ministry and Education organized the purchase and sale of the version of the book for older readers and the one for younger readers. Steve Reece and Susanne Smith facilitated the sessions. Between 12 and 16 people gathered between services on the four Sundays in Advent in the Fireside Room for conversations about the book.

Spring and Fall 2024 Adult Forums

Maggie Odell and Charles Wilson worked with Pastors Pam and Jonathan to design, organize, and invite speakers for the spring and fall Adult Forum Series. The spring series focused on inter-faith connections between the Abrahamic traditions. The fall series centered on the book of Genesis. Scholars from both the congregation and from outside the congregation contributed their knowledge and insights to Adult Forums. All were well received by the congregation.

Finding Our Way: Jews and Christians Thinking Through Scripture

The board organized and hosted three "Finding Our Way: Jews and Christians Thinking Through Scripture" events on Sunday, April 14, and Monday, April 15. Dr. Anthony Bateza, St. Olaf College, and Dr. Jonathan Zasloff, UCLA School of Law, led engaging presentations at the Adult Forum, a lunch-and-workshop on Sunday afternoon, and the Monday evening Pub Theology. All three events were well attended and included community members in addition to St. John's members. The board expressed special thanks to Pastor Pam and Maggie Odell for their work in making the events a success.

Advent/Christmas Card

Adult Ministry and Education continued its outreach to older members of the congregation through the St. John's Advent/Christmas card. The 2024 card combined the work of two members of the congregation, Sharol Nau and John Bade. Sharol created the black-and-white design in 1990. With Sharol's permission, John added color to the design for the 2024 card. Leah Garlie printed the card, and Leah and Sally Lindell generated the list of 201 names/151 addresses which the board used to send out the card. Many thanks to the congregation members who picked up cards at the Advent Fair and wrote on them.

Summer Suppers

Adult Ministry and Education organized "summer suppers" on Sunday, July 21, and Wednesday, July 24. The intent of the suppers is to increase connections within the congregation by bringing together St. John's members who may not know each other well for fellowship over a meal. Thirty-six St. John's member met in the homes of five congregation members. Special thanks to the people who hosted a gathering in their home.

St. John's Library

Deb Schoeb and Joanne Smestad Claussen joined the library team in the upkeep of the library. There are currently 2,537 books in the St. John's Library. In 2024, 132 news books were added to

the collection, and 14 of these are books by authors who are past or present members of St. John's. The library welcomes donations from St. John's members. Note: when donating, please indicate whether the donor would like to have the book returned if it is not added to the collection. Unless otherwise indicated, books that aren't added to the St. John's collection are donated to the Northfield Hospital Auxiliary Book Fair.

Out'n About

Out'n About sponsors speaker events four times a year on the fourth Monday of January, April, July and October. The event is co-sponsored by St. John's Adult Ministry and Education Board and the Northfield Retired Educators. Among the eight speakers featured in 2024 were the presidents of both Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges. The organizing committee for *Out'n About* includes St. John's members Maribeth Beck, Marilyn Calcutt, and Anita Hellie. Suggestions for future speakers can be forwarded to any of these three.

St. John's Archives

At the April meeting, Debby Nitz updated the board on the current work with the St. John's archives. Debby and the board feel that the services of a professional archivist are needed to advise the congregation on the necessary steps to ensure the long-term survival and accessibility of documents from the congregation's early history. The Adult Ministry and Education Board recommends that a subcommittee is formed to develop a plan for the archives that can be carried out over the next three years. The issue has been brought to the attention of the church council.

Thanks to all the members of the 2024 Adult Ministry and Education Board for their faithful service this year!

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Quanbeck, Chair

Report of the Benevolence & Social Concerns Board

Board Members: Andrea Hoff (Chair), Wil Brosz, Andi Carlson, Jo Franklin, Kari Johnsrud, Cynthia Neubecker (partial term), Pam Fickenscher (Staff)

Benevolence

St. John's has a strong history of generous benevolence. This year was no different. As a community in Christ, we are called to love and care for each other and for God's creation; St. John's takes this calling seriously. The B&SC Board is commissioned with the duty to determine how to distribute our discretionary benevolence budget. Our Board strived to handle these decisions with care and thoughtful consideration.

We decided to divide our discretionary budget by allocating 50% to local non-profits and 50% to non-local organizations. The groups St. John's supported financially in 2024 are as follows:

Local

Community Action Center
CAC/Operation Joy
Greenvale Elementary – healthy snacks for low income students
Habitat for Humanity
HealthFinders
HCI/TORCH
Laura Baker
Northfield Union of Youth (The Key)
Northfield Retirement Center
Ruth's House
Three Links

Non-Local

Lutheran World Relief
Lutheran World Federation
Lutheran Disaster Relief

*LIRS/Global Refuge
Lutheran Social Services
ELCA World Hunger
Cannon River Conference
MN Council/Healing Stories
Christmas Lutheran Church – Bethlehem
Dar Al Kalima University – Bethlehem
Mission Partners – Kaitlyn Larson in Colombia and
Iambi Lutheran in Tanzania*

The designated B&SC budget includes a large contribution to the ELCA SE MN Synod as well as grants for seminarians and Lutheran college scholarships.

Social Concerns

Mission Partners – Iambi Lutheran in Tanzania and Colombia IELCO/Kaitlynne Larson

This year, our Board had conversations with Kathy Chatelaine, the SE Synod Director of Global Missions/Companion Synod, in an effort to reenergize our relationship with our mission partner in Tanzania, Iambi Lutheran. We learned about the region in which Iambi Lutheran is located and their ongoing challenges/needs. We explored the various ways we can reenter into relationship with this congregation (post-Covid) and laid the groundwork to, hopefully, initiate an Accompaniment program with Iambi Lutheran in 2025. There are, of course, also ongoing financial needs. This year, through a \$5,000 donation from our discretionary benevolence budget, we are supporting a solar panel project for an affiliated elementary school.

St. John's continues to financially support our other mission partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia via Kaitlynne Larson. We were fortunate to host Kaitlyn at St. John's in August

when she spoke during the service about her ministry for the deaf & disabled in Colombia along with navigating the church's role in the peacemaking process there.

Pr. Pam also was able to travel with an ELCA group to Colombia in October to learn of the ministry, outreach and care happening there through the monetary support from ELCA in coordination with IELCO. God's work is taking place around the world!

Sustaining Grace – recipients of benevolence money

Thanks to a very successful capital campaign this year, St. John's was able to begin releasing some of the benevolence budget for local non-profits projects approved in 2023, including the weatherization of mobile homes through HCI and the installation of an air conditioning unit at Ruth's House. Sustainable projects with Laura Baker and Habitat for Humanity to follow soon.

Meals on Wheels

Thanks to significant help from Angie Gehring and Leah Garlie in coordination with B&SC Board, St. John's covered Meals on Wheels distribution for the month of September. Thank you to the many volunteers who delivered meals to those who are homebound!

With gratitude for the generosity and big hearts of our congregation and for the service of my fellow B&SC Board members, I submit this report.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Hoff, Chair

Report of the Business Management Board

Board Members: Judd Lohmann (chair), Gary Engstrom, Janell Martin, Greg Norman, Pippa Younger-Simpson, Vicki Otis, and Leah Garlie (staff).

Please see the Report of the Treasurer on page 26.

Report of the Children's Ministry & Education Board

Board Members: Alli Walters Mode (chair), Stephanie Bennett, Nick and Lynette Erickson, Adam Loy, Mark Toov, Brian Evenson

As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply grateful for the leadership of Julie Brehmer and the people who volunteer their time and energy at St. John's in the Children's Ministry! We saw more intergenerational events where adults were given opportunities to partner with children as we navigate Christian life together.

We were able to celebrate Julie Brehmer's 20 years of service to St. John's as the Children's Ministry Director! It was so special to honor her with a beautiful tribute written by Brian Evenson, gift cards to her favorite places, and handwritten notes by children of all ages!

Sunday Mornings

We have continued to use two Sunday school lectionary-based curriculum resources this year, integrating worship and Sunday School. We have learned that family conversations have been positively impacted when children can make the link between home and church. Thank you to our wonderful volunteers teaching and leading our Sunday morning program this year: Jenny Nystrom, Arielle Loy, Edy McLaughlin, Stephanie Bennett, Amy McBroom, Marin McBroom, Harper Miller, Suzy Taggart, Jenn Paulson, Micah Hassanally and Brian Evenson. Thank you to St. Olaf student Madeline Gilles and to Merri and Emma Kmoch who give loving care and support to our littlest ones in St. John's Nursery. The Nursery is open Sunday mornings during worship services for children ages 12 weeks to 5 years.

St. John's Sunday School continues to support the "Blessing Box" with monetary gifts and donations. We have continued our monthly donation theme to encourage kids to give to those in need. The Blessing Box, located on the northside of St. John's, provides basic essentials of hygiene and food items to anyone in need. We appreciate the congregation's efforts in sustaining this important ministry!

Sunday school classes and Children's Choirs participated in our Sunday School Christmas program, The Animals Christmas Carol, by Helen Ward this December. The children did such an amazing job! Thank you to the teachers and assistants, to Arielle Loy for leading music and the Alleluia Choir. Marcia Yernberg for accompanying music, and to Brian Evenson for his help with the nativity design. And, thank you to the children who shared their musical gifts during the offering, Anders Loy and Isaac Loy. Also each of our families received a prayer book, Prayers for Faithful Families, with funds from St. John's Foundation.

Wednesday Programming

ROCK, Reaching out to Christ's Kids, is our Wednesday after school program for children in grades K-5. We are grateful for the Wednesday after school bus that transports children from Northfield's elementary schools to St. John's for Recreation and Snack, Catechism (grades 3-5), Choirs (K-5), and Kid's Club (K-2). Thank you to the Wednesday middle school volunteers, Jonah Brownlee, Elliot Davis, Iris Pellenin, Liv Nelson and Madelyn Bennett, our choir directors, Arielle Loy and Green Bouzard, and to our pastors and youth director. Thank you to our Bus Angels for being at the school bus stops every Wednesday to make sure everyone is on board, Amy Tacheny, Jenn Paulson, Jennifer Klaers and Terrence Hassanally.

During Lent, our fourth and fifth grade CAT kids pair up with an adult member from our congregation to be their Prayer Buddy. Prayer Buddies pray for their child starting on Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday. Thank you to our Prayer Buddies and families for participating. We love the relationships that it builds.

Summer

This past June, we offered summer VBS to kids age 4 to grade 2. St. John's along with Bethel Lutheran Church hosted the event. Our theme was "Camp Firelight"! Summer Camp opportunities for children in grades 2-7 were offered at Good Earth

Village in Spring Valley, MN. What wonderful outdoor adventures for kids!

Fellowship/Events

Thank you to the Wednesday Night Meal Team for the delicious midweek meals. The Advent Fair was a great event again this year! Special thanks to the Advent Fair volunteers who help coordinate food demonstrations, crafts, and everything that goes on behind the scenes. Special thanks to Jill Enestvedt and Katherine Norrie for helping with

crafts and Kristy Harms and Peggy Dell for the meal. Other events included Kid's Night Out, Trunk or Treat, Valentine's Party, The Easter Egg Hunt and "No School" events. Thank you to the many volunteers that make this happen, especially the Children's Board members: Alli Walters Mode, Stephanie Bennett, Nick and Lynette Erickson, Adam Loy, Brian Evenson, and Mark Toov.

Respectfully submitted,
Alli Walters Mode, Chair

Report of the Evangelism & Communication Board

The Evangelism and Communications Board has had an active and productive year, focusing on initiatives that enhance our outreach efforts, improve communication, and strengthen our technological infrastructure. In March, we experienced a leadership change when the existing Chair needed to step away for personal reasons. Below are highlights of our key activities accomplishments:

Website Renewal initiative was continued to update our online presence to reflect current images and better connect with members and visitors. New photos were provided by Stephanie Bennet and they have been reviewed. The goal is to get the updates complete by the end of January, 2025.

In 2024, our core evangelism and communications outreach effort occurred through our KYMN radio broadcast and worship service live stream. St. John's has a strong, dedicated AV Team who collectively provide a valuable service to our congregation as well as the community beyond our sanctuary. It was identified to keep this robust, we needed to secure more volunteers and modify how the Sunday streaming process is handled. In 2025, part of the streaming process will be handled by church staff. A special thanks to Dave Zdenek who was instrumental in crafting

a plan to revitalize the AV effort to keep online worship access a valuable part of our outreach.

The AV team recruited and trained six new AV team volunteers to ensure consistent coverage during services. The Board worked to upgrade sound and video equipment to improve quality for live streaming and recordings. Part of this includes the installation of two new cameras in the sanctuary and two new microphones in St. John's Hall. An operations manual was created to standardize procedures and streamline troubleshooting.

Evangelism and Communications is so much more than our radio broadcast and live streamed services. The last few meetings of the year included robust conversations on what can be implemented or enhanced to expand our evangelism efforts. We explored innovative ideas such as social media campaigns, community gatherings and possible partnerships.

Our Board continues to create an action plan to pilot new outreach initiatives in 2025 including consideration of adding short video testimonials to our website, engaging people who use our building for other functions, hosting occasional training workshops for new AV team members, sharing our incredible children's program with the

community, and launching a quarterly evangelism initiative perhaps in conjunction with other Boards.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to all volunteers, staff, and board members who contributed their time, talents, and resources to these efforts. The

dedication has been instrumental in advancing our mission to share the Good News and connect with others through meaningful and impactful communication.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cheryl Buck, Chair

Report of the Faith & Health Board

Board Members: Ellen Ellickson (chair), Deb Loe, Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Susan Lohmann, Connie Menssen, Amy Ripley and Sally Lindell (staff).

The board met monthly over the year. We discussed and participated in events that dealt with the health of St John's Lutheran Church.

Members helped to host several Red Cross blood drives held at St John's. The board served soup during a Lenten evening soup supper. Members contributed items to the Blessing Box.

Several members attended a Sacred Sites Tour in the Twin Cities in June. Also in June, members of the board supported the Pride in the Park celebration.

The board added Narcan to the AED boxes located in the church and demonstrated how to use Narcan in an opioid overdose emergency.

In November the board hosted an evening of remembrance and invited people who have lost a loved one to attend and share with others.

Also, in November we celebrated a five-year anniversary with Sally Lindell, parish nurse.

In December Susan Lohmann gave a presentation on Advance Care Planning to the congregation. This presentation will be repeated in January.

All year round, Stephen Ministry is active and ministering to people who are in need of a personal relationship with a caring friend.

Ideas for future presentations include a discussion of medical aid in dying and an evening of information led by the local funeral home. Other possible projects discussed are a grief support group and a caregiver's support group for members.

We thank Deb Loe for her service on the board and wish her well as she goes off the board.

We thank Susan Sharrow for her leadership for the prayer shawl ministry.

The Faith and Health Board continues to support the health of St. John's Lutheran Church, and we pray for the health of each other and for the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Ellickson, Chair

Report of the Property & Grounds Board

Board Members: Dan Hanson (chair), Jo Ann Polley, Susanne Smith, Vern Koester, Rusty Kluver, Brad Gatzlaff, and Steve Harner (staff).

The Property and Grounds Board works with church staff to oversee the maintenance, upkeep, and overall condition of all church property, including the building itself and the surrounding grounds, ensuring they are safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing for the congregation and community; this includes regular inspections, managing repairs, planning renovations, and budgeting for property-related expenses.

- **Heating and Cooling (HVAC)**—In December of 2023 St John's received their building energy assessment from Sustainable Energy Savings, Inc. (SES) that provided several *energy conservation opportunities* (ECOs) or recommendations on how our church could conserve energy. In 2024 we engaged Alliance Mechanical Services of Roseville to integrate our many thermostats & controls into a single automated control package. Alliance Mechanical informed us this fall that Northfield is no longer included in their service area. As a result, we are currently in search of a new HVAC partner to help us complete work on some of SES's most impactful recommendations. Finding ways to improve the heating, cooling, and ventilation will be a priority in 2025.
- **Lighting in St John's Hall**—Church staff and the board understand that the lighting in St John's Hall needs improvement. Many in our congregation have raised concerns that the space is not bright enough; especially in the evenings. The board will make this a priority in 2025. Thank you to Daniel and Andrew Edwins for your initial thoughts and recommendations on how to approach in finding a resolution.

- **Basement Tile Replacement**—We have contracted Specialized Floor Coverings to replace the flooring in the basement classrooms and hallway of St. Johns. We are currently selecting tile colors and work will begin once the contractor has time in their schedule sometime early in 2025.
- **Open Door Preschool Fencing Addition**—The Open Door Preschool requested an expansion of the fencing that encloses their outdoor play space in order to add more outdoor room for activity and improve safety. The new layout now permits an easier and safer transition of children between indoor classrooms and the outdoor play space.
- **Undercroft Refresh**—The Undercroft was spruced up this fall. The carpeting and upholstery were professionally cleaned. New tables, equipped with casters, were purchased to facilitate flexibility in arranging work surfaces to serve the needs of those using this space. The Undercroft is used by a variety of groups each week and this update has improved the comfort, cleanliness, and usefulness of the space.
- **Undercroft Bathroom Update**—The hallway bathroom near the Undercroft had gone unused for many years and was remodeled this fall. Thank you to Steve Harner, Susanne Smith, and Julie Brehmer whose hard work in cleaning, painting, plumbing, and tiling made this a working bathroom once again.
- **Tree Maintenance**—St. John's has many trees on the property that require regular inspection for signs of disease or damage. Dead branches need to be trimmed and dead or dying trees need to be removed. Two trees in the west parking lot were removed in September. These trees most likely died due to Emerald Ash Borer. Thank you, Brad Gatzlaff and Leif Knecht,

for your help maintaining our trees & shrubs and also for your expertise and guidance in their care.

- **Spring and Fall Clean-Up Days**—The annual cleanup days were held in April and October this year and we were fortunate to have many volunteers show up and spend time raking, weeding, mulching, and trimming. Thank you to everyone who helped in tidying up the grounds—we could not keep St. Johns looking so good without your help and we very much appreciate your support. Thank you to Vern Koester and Rusty Kluver for their invaluable service of hauling multiple loads of leaves and brush to the compost site with their trailers during both clean-up events in spring and fall. Thank you to Leif Knecht for getting additional mulch this spring for our gardens. And finally, thank you to Jo Ann Polley for your guidance in organizing these events and directing the work on these days.
- **Courtyard Furniture**—The courtyard furniture has provided a way for people to sit and relax in that quiet and secluded space. Thank you to Vern Koester for removing and disposing of the broken furniture in the courtyard. A special thank you to Carl Welbaum for restoring the wonderful Adirondak chairs he built for St John's as a service project several years ago.
- **Garden Maintenance**—St John's property has many garden plots that are maintained by volunteers in our congregation. These plots are organized

into 15 gardens that are maintained spring, summer, and fall. The gardens in 2024 were well-kept and looked great in all seasons. Thank you to all of the volunteers and especially Jo Ann Polley who recruited volunteers to make sure all gardens were tended and for her invaluable service as a resource in fielding the many questions and concerns about the gardens and their care.

- **Replace Fluorescent Lighting with LED**—This past summer, we worked with Xcel Energy partner EnerChange to arrange for the replacement of 297 4-foot fluorescent bulbs in January 2025. Thank you to Steve Harner who tested bulbs with our existing fixtures and ballasts to ensure the exchange would be feasible. On January 23rd, Frontier Energy will replace the existing fluorescent bulbs with LEDs and safely dispose of the fluorescent bulbs. EnerChange works with non-profits to help reduce their energy waste and the carbon footprint in a number of ways, including bulb replacement, as we have requested. This work will be completed with no cost to St. John's Church.

I wish to thank the members of the 2024 Property & Grounds Board; I very much enjoyed our work together this past year and I appreciated the support and help you provided. I want to send a special thank you to Jo Ann Polley who is rotating off the board this year—your contribution and involvement will be missed.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan Hanson, Chair

Report of the Stewardship Board

Board members: Jill Enestvedt (chair), Grant Aaseng, Alison Kavanaugh, Gordon Moore, Dean Schoeb.

Goals for 2024

- Add staff appreciation as a part of our work
- Develop messaging for a successful Stewardship campaign
- Coordinate a ministry fair to identify opportunities for member engagement
- Acknowledge and thank individuals and families for their stewardship

New this year was our intention to add staff appreciation to our work. We made small gestures throughout the year such as bringing treats or flowers to staff meetings and sending written thank you notes. A formal plan was started to recognize staff work anniversaries and the Stewardship Board will coordinate those events with the staff member's corresponding board.

Staff recognized in 2024 were Julie Brehmer for 20 years, Nathan Proctor for 10 years and Sally Lindell for five years.

A Ministry Fair on Sunday, September 22 and Wednesday, September 25 provided information about opportunities for members to engage in meaningful ways at St. John's. Several boards and committees gained new volunteers, and several members connected with support groups.

Stewardship messaging began in August 2024 to focus on the fellowship and community of our congregation. Our theme was "We are St. John's". Coordinated monthly submissions in the Voice and Sunday bulletins continued through December 2024. Stewardship materials were mailed to members the first week of October 2024 and temple talks were given on four Sundays in support of pledging for 2025.

Respectfully submitted,
Jill Enestvedt, Chair

Report of the Worship & Arts Board

Board Members: Eric Johnsrud, (chair), Jerry Appeldoorn, John Bade, Demian Jackman, Brenda Nelson, and Nathan Proctor (staff).

The Worship & Arts Board met monthly with the exception of July. Here are the most notable highlights of 2024 through the eyes of the Worship & Arts Board chair:

- We celebrated Nathan Proctor's 10th Anniversary at St John's. St. John's Lutheran Church (and the Worship & Arts Board) are deeply blessed to have Nathan Proctor playing a vital role in our congregation and with the Worship & Arts Board. He is an amazing gift from God, so to Nathan and God we give great thanks.
- Nathan completed the second half of his well-deserved Sabbatical in Cambridge, England. He noted that it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, with much music and singing.

- Pursuant to an offer from the Valley Grove Preservation Society, the Board arranged for the display of four Valley Grove Tapestries. The tapestries illustrated the stories of the first immigrants and pastors, the architecture of the churches, the prairie surrounding the site, and the animals common in the area. The Valley Grove Tapestries were well received and were written about in the Northfield News. The display culminated in the April 28th forum at which artist Robbie LaFleur appeared.

- Significant time was devoted to discussing how we can improve our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging initiatives through our worship space. Pursuant to those discussions, the Board authorized purchase of three large maps created by Marlena Myles, a Dakota and Mohegan/Muscogee artist. The three Dakota themed maps are: the Twin Cities, the Red Wing

area, and the Minnesota River Valley. It will be the Board's intent to reach out to the artist to come and speak at a forum hosted by St. John's on land acknowledgment statements and what a vision might be around those statements.

- In 2024, we continued to extend our commitment to musical reparations. This means we recognize that many of our hymns and songs sung in worship are from Black and Indigenous sources that were never acknowledged. Consequently, these sources were never paid for their

contributions by the wider Church. One small way we can work to right this injustice is to make amends financially. This year the Board voted to send \$500 to Walker|West Music Academy. Walker|West is an out-of-school time music school that teaches instrumental and vocal music to students ages 5 to adult from its music center in St. Paul. The organization provides affordable, quality music instruction inspired by the African American cultural experience to young people and

adults.

The number of people that participate in making our worship meaningful each Sunday and for special services is truly awe-inspiring. The good Lord is clearly at work in each of these children of God. The numbers are too many to name individually in this Board report, but include the Chancel Guild, our A/V team, our many wonderful choirs and directors, our music interns, assisting ministers, ushers, countless soloists and musicians, and the list goes on. Please know that each and every one of you make a real difference in our worship experience and your contributions are extraordinary and significant. Additionally, if you participated as a member of the congregation in 2024, we equally appreciate your presence and participation.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Johnsrud, Chair

Report of the Youth Ministry & Education Board

Board Members: Tamara Jackman (chair), Beret Froehle, Wyatt Norrie, Michael Mandsager, Suzy Taggart, Kristin Partlo (staff), and Pastor Jonathan Davis (staff).

Board Members: Tamara Jackman (chair), Beret Froehle, Suzy Taggart, Erik Lindell, Wyatt Norrie, Michael Mandsager, Kristin Partlo (staff) and Pastor Jonathan Davis (staff)

The Ministry with Youth and Families Board (commonly referred to as Youth Board) works with partners in the church to provide middle school and high school youth and their families opportunities for faith formation through fun, education, service, and creating a place of belonging. The work of the Board has primarily been to engage in thoughtful visioning, plan and execute enjoyable, faith-based events for youth and families and work to build relationships between youth and the rest of the St John's community.

January

We partnered again with Bethel and St. Peter's to provide J-term programming during Wednesday evening confirmation time for middle school youth, providing an opportunity to engage with peers from other congregations and explore different aspects of their faith life through their choice of themed workshops facilitated by congregation members. Thanks to Dan Dimmick, Tamara Jackman, Andi Carlson, Dawn Tommerdahl for their help teaching J-Term classes.

23rd - Second Harvest Heartland: 5 middle schoolers, Pastor Jonathan and Kristin went to Second Harvest Heartland to pack food for families experiencing food insecurity and then out for lunch – and ended up on the local news.

February

We welcomed new board members.

Middle school and high school worked on a community covenant together

19th - Romans & Christians

March

30th - Youth and families hosted the Easter Breakfast and raised ~\$800 to support summer youth trips.

April

10th - Youth visited St. George's Eastern Orthodox Church in St. Paul. We attended a worship service and then had a tour and question and answer time.

17th - Youth assembled Ray of Life kits to provide light and capacity to charge cell phones to people without reliable electricity in Ukraine.



May

Youth board partnered with Children's board to host a series of guided conversations with parents in the St John's community to reflect on what matters the most for and about children and youth ministry at St. John's as a way of visioning for the future. "We invite you to think broadly about the ways you and your family participate – or do not participate – in aspects of life at St. John's. Think about Sundays and Wednesdays and all that goes on in between, from worship to Wednesday dinners, small groups, choir, Sunday School, confirmation, youth group, events, service projects, and more. What are the places, groups, events that are part of your family's rhythms at St. John's?"

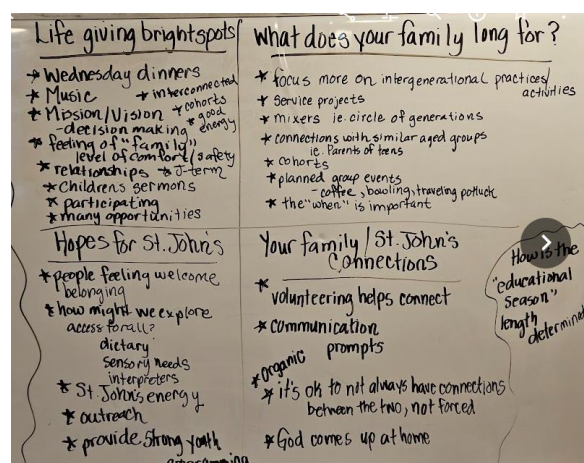
Together, we discussed the following questions:

1. What feel like life-giving bright spots at St. John's for your family?

2. What do you long for for your family at St. John's?
3. What do you hope for – and what do you hope others experience – at St. John's?
4. What helps you make connections between the life of your family and life at St. John's and vice versa?"

13th - Final Wednesday night for the program year: played Romans & Christians and walked to the Blast for ice cream.

29th - 5th to 6th grade bridge event to welcome 5th graders to middle school life: "What has your first year of confirmation been like? What do you wish someone had told you a year ago? Now's your chance to help the current 5th grade students prepare to join us next year in youth programming. More details to come."



June

2nd - High school recognition, a.k.a. "Senior Sunday" for those graduating, presented with quilts made for them by the congregation.

20th - Youth packed meals at Feed My Starving Children and for the first time started weekly volunteering opportunities to help at the CAC food shelf.

July

St. John's partnered again with First UCC and St. Peter's Lutheran Church for one big youth trip



paddling and camping on the Brule and Flambeau rivers in Wisconsin. In July, 31 youth in middle school and high school, along with 6 chaperones, drove up north to Camp Amnicon, just east of Superior. We enjoyed the beauty of the backwoods, tolerated the mosquitoes, and deepened our connections with each other. Many thanks to Jaida Gehring (former St. John's youth) for coming along as a chaperone.

24th - Trip to the Apple Valley Aquatic Center

August

21st - Romans & Christians, always a favorite game; we partnered with Bethel, and St. Peter. About 30 youth participated.

25th - God's Work Our Hands was a multi-congregation volunteer event with different projects spread around town.

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Jackman, Chair

Sustaining Grace Campaign Review

At an August 2023 congregational meeting, the St. John's congregation approved a proposal to make significant investments in renewable energy and to address a variety of needs in the church's physical structure. Initial estimates suggested a budget of roughly \$500,000. St. John's has historically allocated an additional 10% for benevolence outside of our own needs. This resulted in a baseline campaign goal of about \$550,000.

Even in early Sustaining Grace campaign committee meetings, though, we felt our congregation had both the interest and capacity to use that number as a starting point, not an end goal. After several thoughtful, even stressful, conversations, it was agreed upon that our challenging but obtainable goal should be \$750,000.

We were right about the congregation's -- your! -- will and capacity. We erred in aiming low.

Thanks to generous hearts, final pledges amounted to \$1,006,555, from 153 separate giving units. As of December 31 we have already received \$482,841 in donations. That immediate generosity has allowed St. John's not just to start, but actually complete, several approved projects -- most notably our new solar array, but also other enhancements to our building.

While success in a campaign like this should always be attributed to donors as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit; we were also blessed to have a sizable and collaborative steering committee. They devoted hours to planning, building the outreach tools we needed, and to reaching out to hundreds of individual donors.

The steering committee included Bill & Char Carlson, Pr. Pam Fickenscher, Dan Franklin, Don Sahling, and Dean Schoeb, as well as your campaign co-chairs. The campaign would not have succeeded in the manner it did without the committee's energy, passion, expertise and leadership. Additionally, more than 25 people stepped forward to volunteer as outreach ambassadors and their commitment was extraordinary and commendable as well.

An incredibly generous anonymous matching contribution of \$100,000 was provided to the campaign. While the original goal may have been reached without this assistance, there is no doubt that the final campaign total would not have been as significant without this leadership gift.

All expenses for the campaign, from strategic planning to the printing of materials, were covered by donations that have not been counted towards the campaign budget. That means that 100% of contributions made to the Sustaining Grace campaign will be spent on council-approved projects and benevolence.

St. John's is already realizing the benefits of this campaign, as we are already seeing reduced energy costs (and associated reductions in our carbon footprint). This means we can devote more financial resources to our core ministries.

The theme of this campaign – Sustaining Grace – extended the messaging and mission-driven focus of previous campaigns. We are grateful for the many gifts that will allow us to maintain our church's physical structure for years to come. But we are prayerful that the same generosity exhibited here will flow to our ongoing operational budgets. Our congregation needs more than a building, no matter how efficient it might be. We are well-served by our staff and will only sustain our congregation by continuing to support them.

With great gratitude,

Sustaining Grace Chairs - Cheryl Buck, Daniel Edwins, Jeff McLaughlin, David Neuger, and Ruthie Neuger

Sustaining Grace Projects

Thanks to your generosity and immediate gifts, we were able to immediately start the installation of solar panels in the summer of 2024. The panels are on the flat roof portions of our building over St. John's Hall, the Commons, and the library. 139 panels were installed, with a projected annual production of 85,850 Kwh of energy. The system was connected to the grid in October and we have online monitoring to ensure the panels are working. The total system cost was \$196,700.

As of this writing, Xcel has not yet credited our energy produced to our utility bills, but All Energy Solar reports that this lag time is typical, and that we will see a significant back credit appear in future bills. The correction is in process.

The federal solar rebate available to non-profits through the Inflation Reduction Act was applied for in November. As of this writing we have not received the rebate but expect that 30% of the cost of the panels – about \$65,000 – should still be coming.

Many other projects planned for Sustaining Grace are pending scheduling: new tile on the lower level, tuckpointing, and updated thermostats.

In addition to the capital projects, Sustaining Grace benevolence gifts were distributed to two recipients in 2024: 1) Ruth's House received \$5,050 to replace inefficient air conditioners for their shelter bedrooms and 2) Healthy Community Initiative received \$20,000 for their mobile home weatherization fund. We look forward to gifting more benevolence funds in 2025 to Laura Baker Services and Habitat for Humanity of Rice County.

Report of the Treasurer, *Judd Lohmann*

The financial position of St. John's is solid, thanks to the generosity of the congregation and the prudent management by the staff and boards. This allows St. John's to remain focused on the important work of moving forward the mission of our church.

2024 Review

Throughout the year 2024 actual giving and expenses tracked very closely to the budget. Each month the St. John's Church Council reviewed the progress toward budget, and the variance between actual expenses and budget was usually within a few percentage points.

While the numbers appear to generally be as expected, as of this printing the Year End 2024 Budget Report has not been finalized. The review of 2024 preliminary numbers shows the actual offering amount to be slightly above the budgeted amount of \$1,040,000. This could change slightly, as there may have been a few gifts that were intended to be categorized as part of the Capital Campaign, but were included as part of regular giving. Any possible updates are not expected to materially impact the outcome of the total financial picture for 2024. The review of expenses shows them to be about 5% below budget, with a significant portion due to lower expenses in Property Management, specifically in Snow Removal, Utilities and Repairs/Maintenance.

A full 2024 Financial report will be available when the financials are finalized.

Business Management Board Activities

In this past year the Business Management Board has been involved in updating several outdated computers among the church staff, as well as updating financial policies for weddings at St. John's. Perhaps the most significant effort has gone into evaluating and selecting a new insurance carrier, as the Insurance Industry has undergone dramatic cost increases in this past year. The premium increase has been kept to 7%, while the Wind and Hail Deductible has been cut in half.

Respectfully submitted,
Judd Lohmann, Treasurer

Report of the Audit Committee, *Martha Erickson, Mark Ulmer, Elden Zempel*

January 2025

St John's Lutheran Church
500 Third Street W
Northfield, MN 55057

Re: Financial Review

The Audit Committee, consisting of Martha Erickson, Mark Ulmer and Elden Zempel, met periodically throughout 2024 to review St. John's financial records. The basic procedure is to review randomly selected transactions from the bookkeeping system reports to make sure that they are valid expenses with proper supporting documentation and that they agree to bank statements, credit card statements, VANCO statements, etc. More detailed procedures are described in the attached document "Procedures - St. Johns Audit Committee.pdf".

We completed our review of all financial records for the months of January - September 2024. The issues we noted for these months were minor: 2 missing credit card receipts and 3 checks which should have had 2 signatures. We anticipated completing review of 4th quarter 2024 during January 2025. However, due to a combination of health and scheduling issues we have been unable to do so. We commit to completing this review as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Martha Erickson, Mark Ulmer, and Elden Zempel

St. John's Audit Committee Procedures

Items needed from church/Leah

- List of check signers
- Monthly financial statements
- Monthly bank reconciliations
- Monthly bank statements with check copies
- Transaction detail for each month
- Invoices supporting checks written
- Deposit slips from Sunday morning offering count

Procedures

- Coordinate meeting date with Leah and request months to review
- Make sure transactions list is complete – take ending balance from previous month +/- transaction detail total for checking account. That total should agree to the book balance on the bank reconciliation.
- Review payment transactions
 - o Choose a random starting number for each month. Recently we've been using a smartphone random number app to generate the random numbers.
 - o Transaction detail for the checking account – review transactions starting with the random number above and every tenth transaction after as well as every transaction over \$2,500

- Review check/EFT transactions
 - Agree to check copy or electronic payment information on bank statement – verify same amount and payee
 - Agree to supporting documentation – verify that it is a church expense and the amount is correct
 - Verify that checks greater than \$2,500 have 2 signatures
- Review credit card transactions
 - Agree transactions greater than \$250 to supporting documentation – verify that it is a church expense and the amount is correct
- Review deposits
 - Compare deposits on bank statement to CCB, transaction detail and financial statements
 - Compare deposit slips from Sunday morning offering count to bank statement
- Review bank statements and bank reconciliations for any unusual items
- Review financial statements
- Report results to Business Management Committee via the Treasurer

Report of the Budget Committee

Committee Members: Michelle Kramer-Prevost, Judd Lohmann, Cheryl Buck, Jill Enestvedt, Dan Hanson, Eric Johnsrud, Pastor Pam Fickenschier

The Budget Committee met several times in the last quarter of 2024 to review the proposed 2025 budget prepared by the council treasurer, who had closely tracked the 2024 actual giving and expenses monthly throughout 2024. The proposed 2025 budget was based on preliminary estimates of 2024 income and expenses, 2025 pledges received, board budget requests and a salary recommendation of a 5% increase from the personnel committee. The proposed budget was presented to and approved by the council on January 21, 2025.

Thank you to the budget committee members for their valuable input, insights and time working on the 2025 budget proposal.

We are thankful for the continued generosity and support given by the congregation. We are truly blessed to have the resources to uphold the mission of St. Johns!

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Kramer-Prevost, President-Elect

Minutes

154rd Annual Meeting of St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield, MN

January 28, 2024

1. Brent Bash called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m.
2. Brent Bash asked for a motion to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Foundation's minutes. Jane Rizzo made the motion to approve the minutes. Eric Johnsrud seconded the motion. The motion carried.
3. Brent Bash offered key highlights from the Foundation's Annual Report, namely:
 - a. In 2023, the Foundation board allocated \$35,000, an increase of \$1,510 over 2022.
 - b. Funding by the Foundation was designated to specific projects identified by the Church Council. Despite a lower year-end balance at the end of 2022, the Foundation felt it was prudent and appropriate to sustain that giving level, and approved an additional \$35,000 allocation for 2024.
 - c. After a year-long discussion the board also approved changes to their investment guidelines and by-laws to provide for a one-time loan to the congregation to support the installation of a solar array as a part of the congregation's sustainability campaign.
 - d. The Foundation's asset balance at year end was approximately \$1,398,000, up from a balance of \$791,000 at the end of 2022. The Foundation received two gifts large enough to establish new named funds, from John Ferguson and from the estate of Donald Nelson, The combination of these new gifts, a robust equity market, and prudent management resulted in significant asset growth.
 - e. A year ago the Foundation's allocations to the congregation had nearly exceeded gifts to the Foundation's capital base - which would have been a meaningful milestone. The Foundation is grateful that significant new gifts kept the Foundation from reaching that goal this year. Cumulative gifts to the Foundation now exceed \$965,000; the Foundation has returned \$498,000 to the congregation.
4. Brent Bash offered special thanks to Jane Rizzo for 9 years of service to the Foundation board, as her term is now ending.
5. Kristy Harms made the motion that current Foundation board members Cheryl Buck and Jeff McLaughlin serve another three-year term from 2024-2027, and that new member Jennifer Welbaum be elected to serve a three-year term from 2024-2027. Kristin Partlo seconded the motion. The motion carried.
6. Brent Bash offered the chance for members to ask questions; no questions were asked.
7. Wil Brosz made the motion to adjourn, Jane Rizzo seconded it, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Trish Goodrich

Resolution 2025-01

Whereas, our congregation is aware that the Congregation Council acts as the custodian of our material assets, and
Whereas, the Council has conducted the affairs of the congregation in accordance with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of this congregation, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that St. John's Lutheran congregation, in annual meeting assembled, endorse the actions of the Council during the 2024 fiscal year and express thanks for the Council and officers for their leadership.

Resolution 2025-02

Whereas, the church is people called by our Lord to proclaim the Gospel in word and in deed, and to support one another and serve society in Christ's name, and,

Whereas, this congregation of God's people is led by particular persons in many positions of responsibility (congregation officers, board members, ministry team members, leaders of organizations, church school teachers, ushers, choir members, and many other people serving with their gifts in our ministry), and pastors, and staff; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, St. John's Lutheran Church, in annual meeting assembled, express our gratitude to these persons and to our entire church staff for their efforts in our behalf during this past year.

St. John's Lutheran Church of Northfield Foundation, Inc.

2024 Annual Report

The Foundation's mission is to support the ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church in perpetuity by providing funds to extend its ministry beyond its normal church budget, to support its initiatives, and to invest in leadership for the future of the Church. Since 1989, The St. John's Foundation has provided a legacy giving opportunity for those who want their gifts to provide both current and ongoing value.

In 2024, the Foundation board allocated \$35,000, an increase of \$1,510 over 2023, to help fund special projects at St. John's. This represented more than 4% of our 2023 year-end assets. While we know there will be market-driven variations in our investments, the foundation board continues to plan and allocate resources for the long-term.

Thanks to continued generosity and rising markets, the foundation's allocation to the congregation has grown dramatically over the past ten years. It represents an increasingly large percentage of the congregation's budget. Our structure is designed to keep the foundation's focus on the long term. As we consider these resources, our congregational needs, and opportunities to extend our church's mission into our community and and world, we devoted significant time to addressing a key question:

How do we collectively leverage these resources to extend the mission of St. John's in meaningful ways?

Historically the foundation has provided a budget to the church council, but offered minimal guidance or oversight as to how it should be spent. Simply put, budgets have led ideas. We have also encouraged the council to expend resources on an annual basis. This has resulted in short-term thinking to address more-immediate wishes.

But now our size and scope allow us to take a new role, in which ideas can lead budgets. We will better coordinate the foundation's resources with the needs of our church and community.

We are actively seeking projects that accomplish three goals:

One: to extend our church's mission by making a measurable impact in our community. Because foundation funds should be considered above and beyond the church's operating budget, we can use them in creative and unconventional ways. We do not need to be constrained by congregational board structures, nor our previous obligations, nor an annual budget -- we can make a multi-year commitment.

Two: to engage our congregational membership. While many worthy organizations have financial needs which could be addressed by foundation funds, we want to find opportunities where we can back the skills and energy of our congregation with funds -- where we as a congregation can collectively provide a broader array of resources to make a meaningful difference in our community.

And three: to give our congregation appropriate visibility beyond our four walls. We will not seek to brag about our faith, but to signal that we are a place that seeks to live out our convictions in meaningful ways. And, we hope, to appeal to people that might find their place with us at church.

2025 will be a transition year for us, as we work closely with council to generate ideas and consider opportunities. As we move into 2026 and beyond, we will develop a more-consistent structure to generate, assess, and implement ideas.

As a congregation, we are fortunate that Wil Broz and others established the foundation 35 years ago. We are fortunate to have had decades-long consistency both in giving and board leadership, which has grown our asset base. Finally, we are fortunate to have the opportunities to explore new opportunities, to live fearlessly, and to improve the lives of our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

It is with great joy that I thank all those who have contributed to our past success, and with genuine enthusiasm that I look forward to our next steps together.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff McLaughlin, President

St. John's Women of the ELCA Annual Report 2024

We were again blessed this year with many wonderful accomplishments for our missions—many of which started in 2023.

2024 Highlights

- The annual Christmas carols and luncheon program was held on January 6th, 2024 at Ruth's on Stafford. All enjoyed a Norwegian-themed luncheon and program!
- Our goal of reaching out to younger women has been met by forming a new circle called Wellspring. Their group is primarily for women who identify as "Gen-X ". They meet monthly in the evenings.
- On May 11, 2024, we hosted the Cannon River Spring Conference. One hundred forty women represented thirty-nine churches. Jacqueline Bussie, a nationally known speaker, teacher, and theologian was our keynote speaker that day. Dr. Bussie was a delight to meet and her words left an impression on all who heard her that day. The day ended with a delightful lunch where participants visited and shared experiences. Also at the conference, we recognized our own Judy Swanson who designed the WELCA logo used by the entire church and the SE MN Women's synodical banner.
- Julie Zdeneck, a theology student at Luther Seminary, began a series of new bible studies for women.
- Archivists Jennifer Edwins & Pamela Groves-Gaggioli have been cataloging items from the past 50 years & reorganizing other historical WELCA items in anticipation of the 150th anniversary of St. John's Women in 2025.
- In 2024 St. John's WELCA donated \$1970 to
 - Lutheran World Relief
 - Katie's Fund (National WELCA)
 - Planting People Growing
 - Growing Up Healthy
 - Operation Joy
 - Thank Offering.
- 2024 Synod donations \$1291.43
 - Synod contribution \$ 694.13
 - Triennial Convention \$ 400.00
 - Biennial SE MN Synod Conv \$ 100.00
 - Spring Conf Assembly \$ 100.00

The 2024-25 St. John's WELCA Board:

President - *Alison Kavanaugh*

Past President - *Pamela Groves-Gaggioli*

Vice President - *Pamela Groves-Gaggioli*

Secretary - *Janet Lotegeluaki*

Treasurer - *Jennifer Edwins*

Faith Development/Discipleship - *Mary Hoff & Alison Kavanaugh, Pam G-G and Beth Wessen*

Missions/Stewardship - *Jane Rinehart, Sara Bright, and Rhonda Reece*

Education/Justice - *Jo Franklin, Dawn Tommerdahl, Michelle Kramer-Prevost, and Margie O'Loughlin*

Publicity - *Julie Zdenek*

Archivists - *Jennifer Edwins & Pamela Groves-Gaggioli*

Cannon River Conference Convener- *Merilyn Calcutt*

SEMN WELCA board / Stewardship and Discipleship - *Jane Rinehart*

Education and Justice

Courageous Conversations

- Finished theme "Hope is a Muscle"
 - February '24 – "Love your Transgender Neighbor"--Austin Hartke speaker. Austin is a Luther Seminary graduate and a former St. John's member. There were 73 people present and 49 people watching on our Facebook page.
 - March '24 – Dr. Artika Tyner spoke about the power of literacy. 36 attended.
 - April '24 - "Hope and Resilience—a Lakota Perspective" Speaker was Dr. Kelly Sherman-Conroy. 92 people attended.
 - May '24 - "I Am A Prisoner of Hope" with Samuel Lotegeluaki, a member of St. John's and retired college professor. He spoke to 37 people.
- The theme for Fall 2024 is "We Belong To Each Other"
 - September '24 – "Faith in Democracy?" Kathryn Lozada, an ISAIAH organizer, was the speaker. 62 attended.
 - October '24—Angela Denker, a pastor and author, presented "Christian Nationalism." 130 people came to hear Pastor Denker speak.
 - November '24 – "The Interconnectedness of Everything." Heidi Goldberg was our speaker and brought along wonderful pieces of art. 58 people were present.
- Courageous Conversations Book Group
 - Winter/Spring of '24—Democracy Awakening, by Heather Cox Richardson
 - Summer '24— The Politics of Persecution: Middle Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire by Mitri Raheb
 - Fall/Winter '24—The Hundred Years War on Palestine" by Rashid Khalidi

Stewardship

- Mission Mornings
 - April 20th – Forty women created 64 hospice kits for Global Health, 50 Personal Care Kits, 50 baby care kits for LWR, 6 quilts, and 100 rolled bandages were created.
 - September 28th – Our guest speaker was Kim Dickey from the Global Health Ministry. She provided some wonderful information and slides of our work being sent worldwide. Thirty women that day made 50 newborn kits, 60 hospice kits, 50 personal care kits, 233 rolled bandages, 2 quilts and received \$200 in cash donations.
- School Kit packing
 - About 20 children with adult help packed about 230 school kits for LWR to help children worldwide get off to a good start in school.
- Global Health Ministry

- Three trips to the GHM warehouse in St. Paul to help get provisions ready to ship. About five women volunteered each time.
- Total Quilt & Kit Donations for 2024
 - Quilts - 239
 - Baby Care Kits - 100
 - Personal Care Kits - 100
 - Hospice Kits - 124
 - Rolled Bandages - 1,720
 - Knit baby blankets - 11
 - School Kits - 230
 - Prayer Shawls – 10

Discipleship

- Hosted the Women's Luncheon in Jan 2024
- Hosted 1 coffee chat for new women congregants - a total of 5 in attendance
- Participated in St. John's Ministry Fair on September 24.
- Hosted the Great Lutheran Cookie Bake-Off & packed & distributed 80 boxes of Christmas cookies to homebound & assisted-living congregants.
- Met with IWL St. Olaf students on numerous occasions, invited them to attend church with us, and supplied them with finals week goody bags.
- Attended and visited with members of Mary, Elizabeth, Lydia/Paul, Wellspring, and Boomers circle meetings as WELCA board representatives.
- Manned the registration desk at all Courageous Conversation programs and other WELCA activities.
- Planned the Women's Little Christmas luncheon for the holiday celebration.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Kavanaugh
 WELCA President 2024-25

Southeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA Looking Toward Ministry in 2025



For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so, through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV)

The Use of the Means of Grace, a teaching document of our denomination, emphasizes the importance of baptism happening in the midst of the gathered assembly. In baptism, we claim the promises of God for the baptized, and the gathered assembly has the distinct privilege of hearing those promises for themselves, too.

Baptism happens in community because the promises of baptism are for the community.

Indeed, in the rite of baptism, members of the congregation participate as the newly baptized is welcomed among them. Promises to accompany the newly baptized in the journey of faith are spoken aloud.

In baptism, we remember the promises of God as we hear them spoken, again and again, by those in our midst.

I spent a number of years in a faith tradition that emphasized the power of personal testimony. Individuals would testify to the work and power of God in their lives and the lives of those they knew. In these spaces of testimony, we collectively remembered the promises of God. The faith of those gathered was buoyed as they were reminded of God's work in the world.

Testimony. Reclaiming of the promises. These essential practices in the Christian faith keep us grounded and assured in who God is and what God does, especially in times when it is hard to see. We hear the promises of God over and over again because we often need to be reminded of them. We need to be reminded that in Christ, all God's promises are "Yes!" Practicing faith in community strengthens us to reply, "Amen!"

As we look ahead to the coming year, I want to pay particular attention to our claiming, naming, and proclaiming of God's promises for us and all of creation. There may be days in which our faith wobbles, when the promises of God seem a far cry from fulfillment. On those days, harkening back to our baptisms, we benefit from hearing the promises of God proclaimed by our communities loud enough for others to hear. *(continued)*

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- 42 congregations were engaged in call process
- 13 Rostered Ministers were welcomed to the synod
- 1 new worshipping community was created: the Nuer Community Lutheran Church
- 3 Power+Boundaries workshops were hosted to equip lay people, church staffs, and Rostered Ministers
- A Chrism Mass Advent Worship was offered to leaders for the first time



In the first part of 2025, members of the Office of the Bishop will intentionally collect stories of God's work in the world from members throughout the synod. Our hope is to create a library of stories told by all kinds of voices that give testimony to what God has done and hopes of what God will yet do.

How have the promises of God been fulfilled in your life? In the lives of those you love? In the aspects of creation you explore? In the life of your congregation or larger community? What testimony can you share for the sake of building up the community of faith?

The life of discipleship is, in the words of the late Rev. Eugene Peterson, "a long obedience in the same direction." It is an obedience best undertaken in community with a chorus of believers surrounding us crying, "Yes!" and "Amen!" as we lift our voices to do the same.

May this year in ministry be one in which we claim and proclaim the fulfillment of all the promises of God so that our faith might grow and the world might live more fully into abundant life.

How is the Spirit inviting your congregation to join the chorus of "Yes!" and "Amen!"?

In Christ,

Bishop Regina Hassanally

Bishop Regina Hassanally



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Synod Assembly took place with roughly 360 people in attendance, celebrating the theme: **"Every Congregation Connected"**
- Fall Theological Retreat took place with 145 attendees (including Rostered Ministers and congregation staff) in La Crosse, WI, with the theme **"Will You Be My Neighbor? Called to Community"**
- Gatherings were hosted to support leaders who are new to the synod, in their first years of ministry, and retired





**Northfield
Retirement Community**
Innovation. Choice. Tradition.

Annual Report to Congregations

2024 Annual Meeting

**We look forward to welcoming the delegates from
your congregation on**

Sunday, April 7

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

900 Cannon Valley Drive ~ Northfield

Dear Friends,

We are grateful to all of you for your support and involvement with NRC. As of this writing, we're filling Christmas stockings with the gifts from so many of you to our residents. How fortunate we are!

We knew at this time last year that 2023 would be a transitional year for NRC, as indeed it has been. In this report, we share the major highlights of the year for our organization. But allow us first to mention the most important transition of all:

Our residents have moved from the isolation of the COVID years to once again freely and joyfully sharing in fellowship and in fun and interesting activities that brighten and lift spirits. To see people enjoying meals and activities together, worshipping and attending concerts in our chapel, participating in Bible study and hymn sings, spending time with family, sharing laughter and stories with children from local schools who come to visit, warms our hearts and brings smiles to our faces each day.

The return of shared experiences and life in this community means that we are living our mission:

Rooted in Christian values, supporting independence, dignity, and quality of life for the aging by providing innovative living options and services.

Innovative Living Options and Services

As we reported in the *NRC Outlook* in June and September, dealing with issues of staffing, funding, and finances occupied a great deal of 2023. As the Board of Directors analyzed our situation, it became increasingly apparent that the best decision for current and future residents and for the future of NRC was to delicense our Care Center (skilled nursing facility) and to transition the entire campus to assisted living. This significant change in operations went very smoothly thanks to excellent teamwork among staff and to the gracious reception of the changes by residents and family members alike. Fortunately, we were able to move all but two individuals to a new unit on campus and to find appropriate new homes for the individuals leaving NRC. All affected staff chose to remain at NRC.



Innovative Living Options and Services (continued)

NRC now offers a continuum of assisted living and services to residents: Parkview East and West are traditional assisted living apartments; Cannon Valley Suites-MC provides secure memory care and Cannon Valley Suites-EC provides enhanced care for residents in need of a higher level of care than that offered in traditional assisted living with onsite nurses approximately 16 hours/day. Evergreen Lodge remains a dedicated memory care residence. The Manor and Northwood Pines offer an independent option.

We were very pleased to welcome 48 new residents to NRC this year, and we are continuing to expand our outreach efforts to reach full occupancy in what we hope will be the near future. We are also planning to create a new unit in place of the Care Center and are currently determining how best to configure and staff it to meet the growing needs of the community.

Expanded Outreach: Church and Community Relations Committee

As was the case for the majority of organizations during COVID, NRC spent three years focusing inward—maintaining and adjusting our operations to serve our residents to the best of our ability. The time has now come when we can renew our long-standing partnerships with you, our member congregations, and other organizations in the broader community. The Church and Community Relations Committee of the Board is now back in full swing with monthly meetings. The primary goal of the committee is to ensure that, just as you assist us with financial contributions and volunteer projects, we provide you with ongoing communication and with a range of programs of interest to you, such as educational presentations concerning eldercare issues. In addition, in 2024 we would be glad to attend your annual meetings, just as you attend ours! To that end, we will contact you in the near future to determine whether you would like an NRC representative to join you. And of course, NRC welcomes your suggestions and ideas about how we can best serve you and the elders in your congregation.

Staffing and Financial Stability

NRC received the *Northfield News* 2023 Readers' Choice for Best Senior Living/Retirement setting. We credit this honor to our committed staff in all departments. As one resident commented, "We are so fortunate to have such a talented and friendly staff. They are so willing to help in many ways, as well as bending an ear to listen to our concerns. They make living here a pleasure!"

Since January, 62 new employees have joined NRC. Twenty of them have received training at NRC and have become certified nursing assistants. We are always recruiting new talent and offer a market-based competitive compensation and benefits package.

Our financial situation continues to improve as we make strides in occupancy and continue to manage our expenses effectively.

Your Contributions to NRC

Again, thank you for your involvement with NRC—for your many volunteer contributions and for your financial support which helps to strengthen our Spiritual Care department and employee and resident assistance funds. We look forward to our collaboration in 2024 and to welcoming you to our annual meeting in April.

Wishing you a blessed Advent and Christmastide,



A William Nelson
Chair of the Board of Directors



Tom Nielsen
President & CEO



Joe Amy
Chair of the Church
and Community Relations Committee

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks ...

God, we praise you and give you thanks.
You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.
We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.
We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.
We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.
We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.
We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift
and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,
that the world may know you and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God



Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586-1649; tr. Cathering Winkworth, 1827-1878

Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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 **[LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA](https://www.lutheran.org/sfia)**.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America