

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America®

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISSION STATEMENT

God calls us to Mission and Ministry in our rural community and to the world. Gathered in Faith and nurtured by Word and Sacraments, we commit ourselves to share a hope for the future, to use our resources and talents guided by the Holy Spirit, and to work together to expand our ministry to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ.

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**The Annual Meeting of Hope Lutheran Church
January 28, 2024, 10:00 am**

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH
2023 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA
JANUARY 28, 2024 – 10:00 A.M.

- 1. Call Meeting to Order**
- 2. Opening Devotions**
- 3. Report of Nominating Committee**
- 4. Elections**
 - a. Church Council
 - b. Nominating Committee
 - c. Synod Assembly Delegates
 - d. Endowment Committee
 - e. Cemetery Board
- 5. Presentation and Approval of Budget for 2023**
- 6. Secretary's Minutes**
- 7. Reports:**
 - a. President
 - b. Call Committee
 - c. Board of Trustees
 - d. Board of Deacons
 - e. Board of Education
 - f. Building & Grounds Committee
 - g. Music/Worship Program
 - h. Hope Lutheran Church Women
 - i. Altar Guild
 - j. Cemetery
 - k. Library & Resource
 - l. Prayer Sawl Ministry
- 8. Financial Reports**
 - a. General Fund
 - b. 2023 Approved Budget, 2023 Actual, 2024 Proposed Budget
 - c. Walk Around Offerings
 - d. Petty Cash
 - e. Cornerstone Fund
 - f. Building Fund Checking & Money Market Savings
 - g. GLOW Fund (includes GLOW, Confirmation, VBS)
 - h. Cemetery Permanent Care Fund
 - i. Cemetery General Fund
 - j. Hope Lutheran Church Women
 - k. Memorial Fund
 - l. Youth of Hope Fund
 - m. Endowment Fund & Endowment Building and Property Fund
 - n. Floyd & Agnes Hettling Missionary Sponsorship Fund
 - o. Robert E. & Alice V. Geiwitz Scholarship Fund, Scholarship Recipients
 - p. Scholarship Funds & Pennings Investment
- 9. Old Business**
- 10. New Business**
 - a. Call Committee Update
- 11. Other**
- 12. Closing**
- 13.**

Hope Lutheran Church
Annual Meeting Minutes
January 29, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

Attendance: 77 members

The meeting was called to order by Council Chairman Terri Myhre.

Devotions

Pastor Allen Campbell led us in prayer.

Agenda

As there was a request to move up the voting to the beginning of the meeting, Terri requested a motion to amend the agenda. **A motion was made by Erin Roberts to amend the agenda to begin with elections and voting on Sunday Service time, seconded by Aimee Ascheman. Motion carried.**

Report of Nominating Committee

Moriah Reiss reported on nominations. Five nominees were needed to fill the open positions, and five congregational members accepted which fills the positions. Nominees are Terri Myhre, Emily Hennen, Barb Knutson, Rose Van Uden, and Angie DeVos. **Deb Belaen made a motion to cease nominations and cast a unanimous ballot accepting the five presented nominations, seconded by Moriah Reiss. Motion carried.**

The Nominating Committee for 2021

Three nominees were presented, which fills the positions. Nominees are Keven Larson, Moriah Reiss, and Roberta Josephson. **Bob Nelson made a motion to cease nomination and cast a unanimous ballot to accept the three presented nominations, seconded by Linette Nelson. Motion carried.**

Synod Assembly Representation.

There were no nominees presented and no volunteers from the floor. Council will continue to follow up on this to find people who are willing and able to attend the assembly.

Endowment Committee

There were two candidates presented to fill the two open positions on the Endowment Committee. Nominees are Jerren Roberts and Scott Knutson. **Moriah Reiss made a motion to cease nominations and cast a unanimous ballot to accept the presented nominees, seconded by Emily Hennen. Motion carried.**

Cemetery Board

There were three candidates presented to fill the three open positions on the Cemetery Board. Nominees are Greg Gottskalkson, Guy Jeremiason, and Randy Prellwitz. **Bob Nelson made a motion to cease nominations and cast a unanimous ballot to accept the presented nominee, seconded by LoraLee Miller. Motion carried.**

Old Business

- a. There was no old business to review.

New Business

- a. There had been a request to the council about moving the time of Sunday service to 10 am for all services. Council thought that was a decision that needed to be made by the congregation. There was a request for comment and two people spoke about their support to keep service time at 9 am to allow time for coffee fellowship after services and enable people to attend other events after church. **Deb Belaen made a motion to vote on the service time, seconded by Erin Roberts. Motion carried.** Ballots were distributed and tabulated. The final vote was 10 Yes to change and 67 No to keep Sunday service at 9:00 am. Services will remain at 9 am.

Presentation and Approval of 2023 Budget

The Budget for 2023 was presented by Barry Gronke. One major change that Barry highlighted was for VBS; it was increased to \$4,500. Our VBS program is being organized and run by Green Lake Bible Camp, and there is a set cost for that. We are using them because we don't have volunteers who are available to do the program. There are some adjustments due to inflation and increases in costs. **A motion was made by Bob Nelson to accept the 2023 Budget as presented, seconded by Marsha Danielson. Motion carried.**

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of 2022 were presented in the Annual Report. **A motion was made by Barb Knutson to approve the Secretary's Report as printed, seconded by Marsha Danielson. Motion carried.**

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Barry Gronke. Last year we used almost all of the Cornerstone Fund, and there wasn't enough money to pay back the fund at the end of the year. We are planning to pay back the fund at a rate of \$2,000/month while also meeting our financial commitments. **A motion was made by Jess Moriarty to approve the Treasurer's Report as printed, seconded by Moriah Reiss. Motion carried.**

Reports

The following reports printed in the Annual Report were reviewed as presented:

- a. President (Including Sound & Video and Elevator)
- b. Pastor
- c. Board of Trustees
- d. Board of Deacons
- e. Board of Education
 - a. GLOW
 - b. VBS
 - c. Confirmation
 - d. Youth of Hope / Minneota Area Mission Trip
 - e. Teen Power
- f. Building & Grounds Committee
- g. 150th Anniversary of Hope Lutheran
- h. Music/Worship Program
- i. Hope Lutheran Church Women (HLCW)
- j. Altar Guild
- k. Cemetery Board
- l. Library & Resource
- m. Prayer Shawl Ministry

A motion was made by Lora Lee Miller to accept the reports as presented, seconded by Deb Belaen. Motion carried.

Financial Reports

The following Financial Reports as printed in the Annual Report were reviewed by the attending congregation:

- a. General Fund
- b. 2022 Approved Budget, 2022 Actual, 2023 Proposed Budget
- c. Walk Around Offerings
- d. Petty Cash
- e. Cornerstone Fund
- f. Building Fund Checking & Money Market Savings
- g. GLOW Fund (includes GLOW, Confirmation, VBS)

- h. Cemetery Permanent Care Fund
- i. Cemetery General Fund
- j. Hope Lutheran Church Women
- k. Memorial Fund
- l. Youth of Hope Fund
- m. Mission Trip Fund
- n. Endowment Fund & Endowment Fund Building and Property Fund
- o. Floyd & Agnes Hettling Missionary Sponsorship Fund
- p. Robert E. & Alice V. Geiwitz Scholarship Fund, Scholarship Recipients
- q. Scholarship Funds
- r. Pennings Investment

A motion was made by Aimee Ascherman to approve the Financial Reports as presented, seconded by Marsha Danielson. Motion carried.

**A motion was made by Moriah Reiss to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Stan Miller. Motion carried.
Respectfully submitted by Deb Belaen**

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH STAFF

Pastor (William) Allen Campbell (through April 30, 2023)
Dr. Elisabeth Johnson
Chris Pesch
Jason & Jen Johnson & Family
Valerie Buysse
Kasey Denney
Erin Roberts
Jessica Gronke

Pastor
Missionary in Cameroon
Parish Secretary
Custodians
Organist
Jubilation Director
GLOW Director
GLOW Director

CHURCH COUNCIL

Terri Myhre
(The Church President is an advisory member of all boards.)
Barry Gronke
Deb Belaen

President-2025-2nd Term

Vice President-2023-2nd Term
Secretary-2023-1st Term

BOARD OF DEACONS

Barb Knutson - Chairperson
Moriah Reiss
Lizzy Reiss
Dave Dovre (resigned June 2023)

2025-2nd Term
2023-2nd Term
2024-1st Term
2023-2nd Term

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Emily Hennen - Chairperson
Angie DeVos
Amie Ascherman
Jen Anderson

2025-2nd Term
2025-1st Term
2024-1st Term
2024-1st Term

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Terri Myhre – Chairperson
Barry Gronke
Deb Belaen
Rose VanUden
Jason Johnson

2025-2nd Term
2023-2nd Term
2023-1st Term
2025-2nd Term
2024-1st Term

CEMETERY BOARD

Randy Prellwitz
Dave Dovre
Greg Gottskalkson

Ron Thostenson
Guy Jeremiason
Tom Myhre
Clark Corbin

OTHER OFFICES – (Appointed by Church Council)

Scott Knutson
Scott Anderson

Auditing Committee
Auditing Committee

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Roberta Josephson
Keven Larson
Moriah Reiss

Elected
Elected
Elected

CEMETERY SEXTON

Clark Corbin

CHURCH MEMBER STATISTICS

Membership – January 1, 2023	Baptized	Confirmed
Active Membership	580	456
Inactive/Transfer Out Roster	- 0	
Membership Adjustment	+ 5	+ 7
Membership – December 31, 2023	585	463

The following pastoral acts were administered during 2023:

Baptisms	9	Funerals	4
Confirmation	7	Marriages	2

CHURCH SERVICES	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Sunday Worship (Includes two Easter Service in 2023)	50	53
Ash Wednesday, Lent (4), Maundy Thursday, Good Friday	7	7
Thanksgiving (Ecumenical)	1	0
Christmas Eve	1	1
Christmas Day	1	0

ATTENDANCE		
Total Sunday Attendance	5,521	5,125
Average Sunday Attendance	91	84
Ash Wednesday, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday	714	494
Thanksgiving Eve (Ecumenical)	41	0
Christmas Eve	220	258
Christmas Day	34	0

COMMUNION SERVICES		
Number of Services Conducted	27	25
Number of Communion	1,318	1,248

BAPTISMS

Slade Rieder	Dawson Muhl	Lyla Pesch
Carson Farrell	Adelaide Denney	Emmet Jeremiason
Rae Jeremiason	Harper Fink	Camden Noyes

DEATHS/FUNERAL SERVICES of Members

Alta Johnson
Allan Josephson
Ivan Hiepler (held in Madison, MN)
Hazel Johnson
Joan Korman

MARRIAGES

Zac Corbin & Skylar Ziminske
Jennifer Schwieger & Danny Hennen

CONFIRMANDS

Addison Buysse	Heydan Danielson	Landon Esping
Cole Johnson	Madison Minnehan	Brooklyn Ryer
Creed Stassen		

NEW MEMBERS

Kent & Angie Borstad
Shane & Dana Rieder
Jennifer Schwieger.

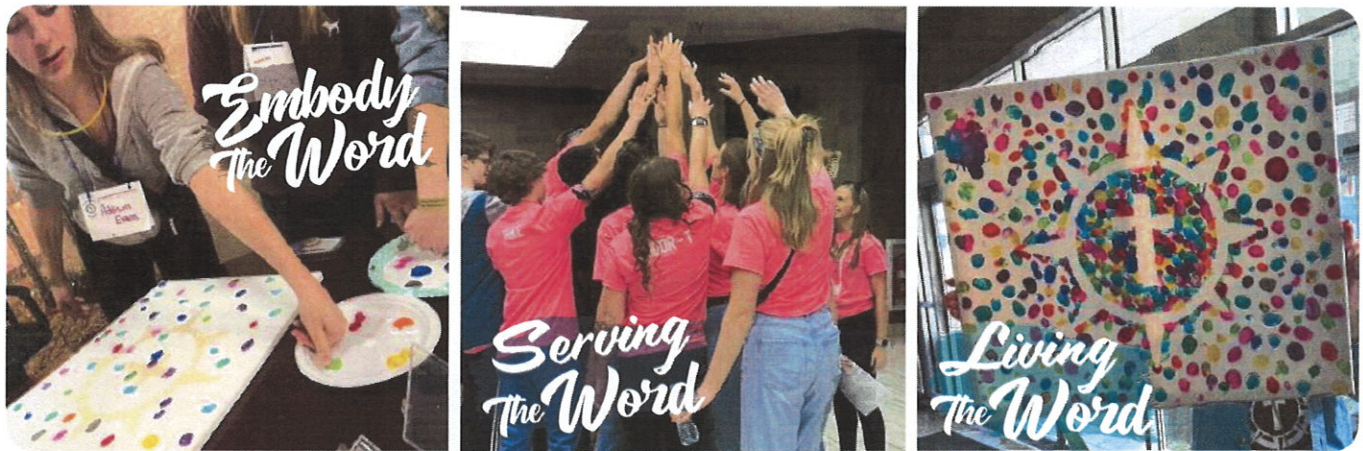
REMOVED FROM MEMBERSHIP – Transfers Out

GIVING PER FAMILY UNIT 2023

\$ 0 – 100	20	\$1301 – 1400	1
\$101 – 200	8	\$1401 – 1500	7
\$201 – 300	3	\$1501 – 1600	1
\$301 – 400	4	\$1601 – 1700	1
\$401 – 500	7	\$1701 – 1800	1
\$501 – 600	1	\$1801 – 1900	1
\$601 – 700	4	\$1901 – 2000	3
\$701 – 800	0	\$2001 – 3000	8
\$801 – 900	4	\$3001 – 4000	1
\$901 – 1000	4	\$4001 – 5000	4
\$1001 – 1100	0	\$5001 – 6000	2
\$1101 – 1200	1	\$6001 – 7000	0
\$1201 – 1300	1	\$7001 – 8000	0
		<u>+\$8000</u>	<u>1</u>
			88

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH PASTORS

The Rev. Olaf Hoel	1876-1892
The Rev. A. N. Kleven	1892-1910
The Rev. E. J. Hinderlie	1910-1925
The Rev. O. P. Stensrud	1925-1943
The Rev. J. David Larsen	1945-1951
The Rev. Otto Dale	1951-1954
The Rev. E. David Natwick	1955-1960
The Rev. Howard C. Gravrock	1960-1962
The Rev. John R. Thorstensen	1962-1977
The Rev. Gerald M. Staehling	1977-1982
The Rev. Karl E. Hansen	1982-1988
The Rev. Timothy P. Larson	1989-1996
The Rev. Timothy J. Wittwer	1997-2002
The Rev. Ann Dwelle Ward	2003-2009
The Rev. Thomas T. Kolden	2009-2014
Interim Pastor Bruce Drackley	2014-2019
Interim Pastor Lance Isaacson	2019-2020
Pastor (William) Allen Campbell	2020-April 2023
Lay Ministers	May 2023-Present



*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.....
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. – 1 Cor. 12.*

One of the great joys of my call is to visit the congregations across this synod. Our territory includes vast plains, rich agricultural land, hilly vistas, quiet lakes, and powerful rivers. God planted our congregations in cities, open farmland, and towns. We are very different from each other; yet in Jesus Christ, we all are one.

As we've journeyed together this year, we have been united by focusing on the WORD: Jesus - the Word-made-flesh, and the word of Scripture – as the source and center of our lives.

- **Embody the Word.** Synod Assembly 2023 brought over 365 voting members together in-person for the first time in 4 years! We rejoiced to sing again in Christ Chapel, passed the 2025 budget, and elected new leaders. And plenary speaker Matt Bloom helped us consider wholistic wellness in daily life.
- **Serving the Word Today.** Rostered ministers gathered for the Fall Theological Conference and considered how the Word is served (our calling to serve Christ) and how we deliver or serve-up the Word to people in our presiding and preaching. Presenter Jason Moore provided insights that can transfer in some way to all of our congregations, as we serve the Word both in-person and online in our both/and world today.
- **Living the Word Today.** Equipping Congregations Day 2023 gathered participants at Vinje Lutheran in Willmar to discover ministry resources – from stewardship to hospitality – to take back home. Luther Seminary Professor Rolf Jacobson led participants to look for the gifts of the Holy Spirit who is at loose in our world today.

Those actions – **Embody, Serving, and Living the Word Today** - provide the framework for reviewing this year and leaning into the next.

Embody the Word

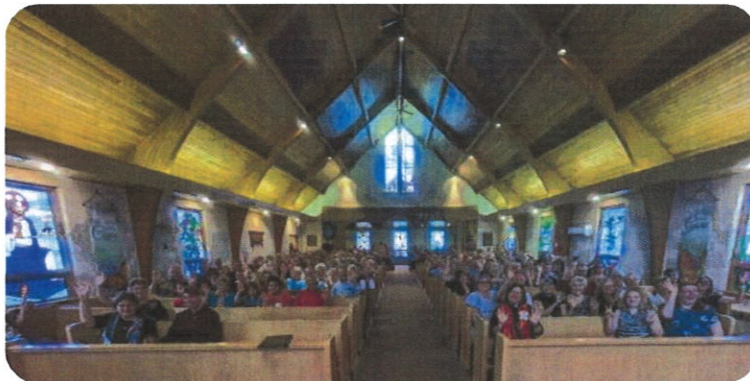
Thank you for the way you, as beloved children of God, embody the word in your congregations and daily callings. You are engaging in ministry that is vital to the lives of your participants and the larger community. Although many of us are still exhausted from pandemic adaptations, congregations are emerging from these difficult years with a clearer sense of who we are and what God is calling us to be and do today. The dedication of our church leaders to ministries of word and sacrament and serving, to compassion, mercy, and justice - has never been greater.

As we review the past year, one place to turn is the numbers. No, it's not all about the numbers, but trends do tell a story, whether in our households, businesses, or congregations. A synod's responsibility is to note the trends occurring among our congregations because these numbers represent real people, hearing the story of God's love in Jesus Christ.

The most recent statistical summary for congregations comes from the annual reports you completed for 2022. Of the 229 congregations in the SW MN Synod in 2022, 166 filed an annual report; 63 filed no report. When the annual report information comes to you in January, please direct the info to others in your congregation who can assist. Talk with your Church Council about the trends you are seeing. Return the form. And then know you have helped us reach a target of 100% responses this year! Thank you!

For numbers-lovers

	2021	2022
Baptized members:	100,421	97,689
Ave. baptized/cong.	439	428
Baptisms age 16+	13	24
Affirmation of Faith	290	353
Transfer in	862	1093
Baptized Received	2,207	2,594
Active Participants	48,944	48,875
Ave. wkly worship on-site	10,662	12,918
Ave. wkly. worship online	14,326	9,554
Ave. att. per cong. on-site	55	64
Ave. att per cong. online	103	70



What stories do those figures tell? There is the cultural trend of fewer people connecting with a faith community. But these numbers also represent stories of outreach as adults are welcomed through Holy Baptism as hospitality is extended and new members are received, and as people are drawn to worshipping together both in the room and online.

Generosity

We know there is great generosity in our congregations! Although earned income for congregations was challenged last year everywhere, regular giving and other receipts increased. Over the pandemic years, many congregations held special appeals to upgrade technology – what a gift!

You have an impact on human lives every day. Each week in the announcements, try telling a brief story about one of your ministries. Share a photo on a screen. Thank people for their generosity and the difference they are making. If you are looking for resources to help affirm your people's generosity, check out the synod website under the "Generosity" tab! (<https://swmnelca.org/congregations/generosity-stewardship/>)

Thank you for the generous Mission Support you shared in 2022. Although current 2023 figures won't be known until after the fiscal year ends January 31, we have seen a significant decrease in Mission Support this year. Why? We know that the cushion of PPP money is used up. Everything costs more. Some of our congregations' most generous givers are passing away or face high costs for elder care. And there is the tendency that when faced with financial challenges, congregations choose to direct funds close to home. Whatever the reason, we will continue to wisely steward the resources we receive and are committed to prioritizing providing pastoral care of congregations and rostered ministers. Like you, we know that challenges can also lead to doing things in new ways, and we trust in God's creative Spirit as we plan for the future. Thank you for your generosity.

If you have not yet sent in a Mission Support contribution for this year, will you please consider a gift yet in January? And if you have not yet returned a Mission Support Intent form for 2024, please do so. We are deep in planning the 2026 budget that will be presented at the 2024 Synod Assembly, and your planning will help us do our best planning, as well. Thank you!

Serving the Word Today

Thanks be to God for all the Lay and Rostered Ministers leading our congregations today. They are serving Jesus and serving the Visible and Spoken Word to people in worship in this synod and far beyond. Our synod includes 300 rostered ministers, half of whom hold active calls in congregations, specialized calls, and synod calls.



This year, we celebrated the ordination of 5 new pastors: Rev. Chad Duffy, Rev. Mort Meyenberg, Rev. Stefan Swanson, Rev. Bob Ossefoort, and Rev. Sarah Zender. We consistently welcome more rostered ministers to this great synod than we see move away.

One of the greatest challenges for congregations and synods today is securing rostered minister leaders who can “serve the Word” in their context. Today, seminaries are seeing approximately half the number of enrollments they did 15 years ago. The good news is that congregations are embracing the gifts of their people and becoming less pastor-dependent than we were. The other piece of good news is that more lay leaders are sensing the Holy Spirit nudging them to consider part- or full-time ministry – often as a second career; and they are bringing incredible skills and life experiences into these new callings today.

TODAY, I pray that God will “send laborers” into this new and changing vineyard of ministry. My mentor, Rev. Dick Vangerud, often spoke of an initiative of our predecessor church body (The American Lutheran Church) called, “Men for the Ministry.” Yes, back in the 1960s, the initiative was only about “men” for the ministry! But back then, congregations prayed that God would raise up new leaders. Pastors encouraged those they knew to consider ministry as a life calling. Since we can’t grow pastors on trees, this is what I ask you to do:

- Pray in weekly worship and in your own devotions that the Holy Spirit would move hearts for people to consider part- or full-time ministry.
- Notice the people of any age in your church who might have the faith, temperament, and gifts for ministry. Affirm their strengths. Ask them if they might pray about and consider ministry in their future.

We are grateful for the ministry of Gifts of Grace that helps rostered ministers reduce the debt from their seminary training, and for the scholarships that are available from so many sources – including this synod, our seminaries, and the ELCA church-wide. Thank you!

For congregations who have rostered ministers leading you, please take care of them by providing appropriate compensation (see our synod compensation guidelines) and benefits. Encourage them to take sabbath time away from work and make use of continuing education growth. Got a concern? Talk to them, not about them. Give them a word of thanks for their ministry, which they serve 24/7.

Whether there are lay or rostered leaders serving the word with you today, strive to live together as the body of Christ. Nothing is more draining of leadership or destructive of Christian community than behaviors which tear apart the body of Christ. At the end of chapter 12, St. Paul tells the Corinthians, “And I will show you a still more excellent way.” And that is the way of love – the way of Jesus.

Living the Word Today

These are interesting times to be called and sent by the Triune God to live the Word today! The territory of our synod is described by the state demographer as including areas that are entirely Rural, Town/Rural Mix, Urban/Town/Rural Mix, and Entirely Urban. "Cities, farms, and towns together." As demographic trends continue, the report asks, and we as the church can ask:

- How will we support the many older adults who are part of our communities who may live farther from services and family support?
- How will we respond to labor force shortages as more Boomers move into retirement?
- How can our churches help our distinct communities to be more attractive to new residents?
- How can churches make a difference in communities with growing racial and cultural diversity, and create connections and belonging?

Those gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12) will lead the way as God continues to reform us to live the Word today.

This fall we celebrated the reactivation of our relationships with our friends in the South Eastern Diocese of Southern Africa. Four guests came to be with us here in Sept. -Oct., and then five leaders from SW MN made the journey to South Africa and were blessed by warm hospitality, joy in our friendships, and new opportunities to accompany one another in Christ. Another gift!

I am grateful for the leadership of our Synod Council, taking seriously its responsibility to be faithful stewards of our resources of staffing, facility, and funding. I am excited to work together with them on the Council's commitment to *"empower Christian communities to join in God's mission of reconciliation: listening intentionally, loving unconditionally, serving others authentically, and faithfully healing creation."* They have been focusing on the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results they see in this commitment, and are eager to live out this vision with you in the coming year.


I conclude this report by expressing my sincere **thanks and gratitude** to the synod staff who embody, serve, and live the Word each day:

Rev. Heather Culuris – Synod Minister, Tammy Schacher – Executive Assistant, Kristin Bakeberg – Communications Coordinator, Maggie Berggren – Administrative Assistant, and Rev. Dr. Troy Pflibsen – Director for Evangelical Mission. They walk beside you in ministry with wisdom and joy. We are grateful for the ministry of Youth Ministry Coordinator Rev. Nikoli Falenscheck, who served with us for the past year. And we continue to grieve the passing of our colleague and friend, Pr. Naomi Mahler, who brought energy, courage, and faith to her many ministries and lived out + *SOLI DEO GLORIA!* each day.

Thank you for the privilege of embodying, serving, and living the Word together with you as the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA.

Holy God, we praise you for calling diverse people into your church and its ministries. Uphold all leaders with your strong and loving arms. Empower ministers to serve your people with the word of scripture, the water of life, the meal of grace, and deeds of love and mercy and justice. Equip them with both beloved traditions and fresh ideas; grant them joy in their tasks; and renew them daily by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Word among us, now and forever. Amen. (adapted from ACS, p. 46).

+ with grace, peace, and love,



Rev. Dee Pederson, D. Min

Bishop, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fellow members of Hope Lutheran,

As I begin to write this, I reflect on the past year and am in awe at how many incredible things are happening in our congregation! As a congregation, we have worked together to continue to thrive! I am so proud to be part of a congregation that continually pushes forward, that comes together to find solutions to any challenge, and who consistently prays for and supports one another. We have been blessed to have Tim Velde as our lay minister for a majority of this year, and we cannot thank him enough for his insightful messages and encouraging words.

If you've taken in a Wednesday night at GLOW, you can easily see that we are blessed beyond measure! Our church is bursting with kids who are excited and enthusiastic to be learning about God! We have over 130 youth registered for GLOW, and it is so encouraging to know that the future of our congregation is strong and vibrant. We are indeed blessed to have incredible youth programs. Teen power has been meeting, and the Minneota Area Mission Trip is beginning to plan for another trip in 2025. The GLOW Christmas program was another success, and it brought the Christmas Story to life! A HUGE thank-you to everyone involved! This couldn't be done without the leaders, the teachers, and those willing to help in the kitchen. We have so much to be proud of and we are so thankful to anyone who helps in any way!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who served on the Church Council this year. I appreciate your input and the collaboration of everyone to fill in and help as needed.

Again this year, I am also thrilled to report that we have several new members in our congregation. Please extend a warm welcome to them!

As you will read in the call committee report, we are still actively seeking a full-time pastor. There has been a great deal of collaboration with St Paul's Lutheran and Bethany-Elim to complete our MSP (Ministry Site Profile) and to prepare for interviewing of candidates. Thank you to those who are serving on this committee and we will continue to pray that the right applicant will find their way to our congregation.

As we reflect on 2023, I know it has been a year of some unknowns, but as a church family we have and will continue to forge ahead. I am reminded that the faith we share brings us together and keeps us working together for the good of God! As I read Deuteronomy 31:8, "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged", I know that we have reason to be optimistic, and we can look forward to 2024 with faith, hope and trust that we will continue to grow and prosper as a congregation! We are blessed with incredible youth programs, and I pray that all members of our congregation continue to work together, encourage one another, and share the good news of God through service and prayer. May God Bless each of you!

Terri Myhre, Chairman Hope Lutheran Church Council

CALL COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2023-2024

The Call Committee, comprised of members from Hope, St. Paul's and Bethany-Elim (Dawn Van Keulen, (Chair), Terri Myhre, Jerren Roberts, Tom Myhre, Beth Buysse, Pam Gregor, DuWayne Johnson, Wendy Rost, Bernie Olson, Kristina Richmond) kicked off the search for a pastor with a meeting in May. We met several times with a goal of completing a MSP (Ministry Site Profile). This was completed quickly and submitted to Pastor Heather Culuris, our contact at the Synod, for her review. She met with the committee via Zoom to go over the MSP and the process in mid-July.

In the Zoom meeting, she indicated that we had a strong MSP. She outlined three ways we can find candidates for our pastor:

1. We can self-nominate. We ask people who might be a good pastor, get name/location/synod – send to Pastor Heather then they will vet those individuals. Note: Pastors can't move w/in 25 miles of current call.
2. 1st call – new pastors get assigned to regions (our region got none assigned)
3. Pastors can self-nominate; they may want to be in our area and may ask to move – she will pass them on to us.

She informed us that all names come through the Synod – they're the gateway. Our final MSP was submitted on August 4th and the waiting began. We proactively created lists of interview questions so we would be ready when a name came to us.

In the meantime, I was made aware of the name of a potential candidate in October (following method 1 above) and reached out to Pastor Heather to inquire about this individual. I was given the go-ahead to make contact. In our long discussion, the Pastor was adamantly only interested in a part-time position. The Call Committee met to discuss whether a part-time pastor could be considered and if that would fill our need. After a good discussion, it was the unanimous opinion of those attending that we can NOT meet our needs with a part-time pastor and that we should continue to pursue a full-time pastor. The discussion was that 1.5 might work however, if that were to be an option in the future.

At that meeting, we also decided to cast a wider net and start a social media campaign to try to find a candidate. I created a Facebook post which was shared widely and an advertisement on Indeed (reviewed via email by the committee) which went active in early November.

I have contacted Pastor Heather about twice a month to see if she has any updates. On November 15th, I was contacted (through the Indeed ad) by an ordained Lutheran pastor. After a few emails back and forth, he withdrew his name citing our affiliation with the ELCA.

On November 28th, I received another inquiry from an ordained Lutheran Pastor. He started by asking me a group of questions and our discussions grew from there. He is on the clergy roster of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (aflc.org). After many lengthy discussions, it was clear he would NOT sign onto the ELCA Roster due to fundamental Biblical theology/interpretation differences with the ELCA. He would be willing to serve as an interim pastor or as a Lay Pastor if the Synod would agree to this. I then called Pastor Heather for guidance. She told me that our constitution says we MUST call an ELCA Pastor. She went through some steps to get someone on the ELCA roster and asked me to have him call her, so I arranged for a conversation with both Pastor Heather and also the Bishop. In the end, I was told he could not serve us in any manner without signing onto the ELCA roster.

Pastor Heather then followed up with an email to the Council Presidents stating that, "The bishop and I have both had extensive conversations with this pastor and he is not theologically aligned with the ELCA on many issues. In congregation constitutions, ELCA congregations need to call an ELCA rostered pastor or deacon to serve them, otherwise the congregations remove themselves from ELCA membership."

In my conversation with Pastor Heather, I also learned that our region did not receive an assignment of new seminary graduates – they were all sent to the Cities. Also, she told me the roster has dwindled farther as far as potential candidates.

On December 21st, I received an inquiry from a pastor who wished to return to Minnesota and was interested in serving in a long-term interim role. This individual is a rostered pastor on both the LCMC Roster and the NALC Roster and was not willing to sign onto the ELCA roster for many of the same reasons cited above.

I reached out to Pastor Heather regarding our inability to work with someone outside the ELCA roster. She informed me that we could consider someone from some other churches (Full Communion Partners) including: Presbyterian, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, The Episcopal Church, The Moravian Church and United Methodist Church...but not any other Lutheran churches.

Each time I reach out to the Synod, I'm told we need to be patient, consider growing our own and that the pool of candidates is very small.

As of January 2024, we have received NO NAMES to consider from the Synod.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dawn Van Keulen, Chair, Call Committee

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

2023 has been filled with trials and blessings. We began 2023 with a deficit of \$13,900 remaining owed to the cornerstone fund. Due to renting the parsonage, reducing utility costs, and additional work by our members to reduce our expenses we were able to continue operations and repay the entirety of this debt to the cornerstone. Additionally, under the advice of the endowment committee, the council entered into a wind easement agreement that will help us build the cornerstone fund to approximately three times our monthly expenses. The annual cash flow produced by the wind easement agreement should help us to continue operations even during the toughest of times.

As we look forward to 2024, we are excited to see what candidates the synod will send us for call. That being said, we must plan accordingly for the time when we call a full time pastor. As you can see we have approximately \$198,000 of budgeted expenses for 2024. This includes the Pastors salary and benefits package. This is a very large budget and may be the largest budget we have ever submitted to the congregation. More, now than ever, it is important to remember that every little bit helps at ensuring our church is able to continue. No gift is too small, and everything is appreciated, either monetary gifts or in-kind gifts.

Although large, the 2024 budget is attainable. If we look at our budget in relation to confirmed active members (456 in 2023) the budget can be met by every confirmed active member donating just \$8.36 weekly or \$434.72 annually. If we look at our budget in relation to envelope boxes (approx. 192) the budget can be met by every recipient of an envelope box donating \$19.72 per week or \$1025.44 annually. Some families can give this amount or more and we appreciate your generosity. Some families may not be able to donate as much as others, but do not let that discourage you from giving what you feel is appropriate, we appreciate your generosity just as much. As I stated earlier, every gift helps us reach our goal of hiring a full-time pastor and continuing to spread the word

We continue to offer online giving through our website at hopeminneota.org. It is a convenient way of giving. Just click on the "Give" button under the "Worship" section and it will prompt a very easy to follow page that works extremely well.

I will be stepping down from Treasurer and from Council, however, I believe, we are set towards a path of success and prosperity.

I hope you and your loved ones have a very blessed 2024.
God Bless

Barry R. Gronke, Jr.

BOARD OF DEACONS

The Board of Deacons was led by Chairperson Barb Knutson with Moriah Reiss, Lizzy Reiss and David Dovre as members of the committee. David Dovre resigned from the church council in June.

The committee continued to carry out the Christian work of the congregation as we worked together in ministry. Local outreach from our monthly walk-around offerings were shared with Adaptive Bike for Minneota School, Women's Rural Advocacy Program (WRAP), Marshall Food Shelf, Vacation Bible School, HELP (Health Equipment Loan Program) in Elliot County, Kentucky (Mission Trip), Minneota Senior Center, Update to Church Website, School Supply Program for Minneota School, ELCA Hawaii Fire Relief Fund, Hope Harbor House in Marshall and GLOW curriculum.

We thank the monthly Work Group Chairpersons who were responsible for ushers at our services and people to prepare for fellowship following services. The Deacons also delivered grocery donations from congregational members to the Marshall Food Shelf. The winter gear collected before Christmas was also taken to the public school for youth to use as needed. The Deacons also called for Scripture readers and communion servers for our church services.

Pastor Allen Campbell resigned/retired the end of April. A farewell service was held on Sunday, April 30th. Tim Velde, lay minister from Hanley Falls, graciously agreed to lead our worship services beginning in May on a temporary basis.

Thanks to David Dovre and Keven Larson who provided video during our church services and Linda Nuytten who visited shut ins taking communion to homebound members of our church.

The congregation has enjoyed the growth of the GLOW program and the large number of youth now active at Hope. The third Sunday service of "Let It Shine Sunday" highlights our youth ushering, reading the lessons and sharing music at these services.

We welcomed numerous new members in September and we continue to look forward to growing as a congregation.

All who have donated their time, efforts, and resources to Hope Lutheran are commended for their diligence.

The Deacons strive to bring the message of Jesus Christ to our congregation through His Word, GLOW youth program, music and our working together through the many responsibilities of a church.

May God continue to guide all of us in His ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Knutson, Deacon Chairperson

BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Education (Amie Ascheman, Jen Anderson, Angie DeVos, and Emily Hennen), we would like to thank the educational leaders who oversee the various programs that enrich the lives of our youngest Hope Lutheran members – GLOW (Erin Roberts, Jess Gronke, Terri Myhre, Lynda Nuytten, and all the wonderful teachers), Confirmation (Angie DeVos and Barb Knutson), Youth of Hope (Tony & Kathy Opdahl), Minneota Area Mission Trip (Andy & Emily Hennen) and Teen Power (Roberta Josephson and Terri Myhre). Thank you very much!

Vacation Bible school was held on July 24-27 from 9am - 2:15 pm. Four counselors from Green Lake Bible Camp planned and led the program/activities for students finishing Pre-K through 5th grade here at Hope Lutheran. 38 campers attended VBS throughout the week along with 7 older Hope students that assisted as counselors. The fun-filled week concluded with a parent program and meal on Thursday night. A special thank you to Amie Ascheman who coordinated VBS with the Green Lake Bible Camp counselors as well as Barry & Jess Gronke for providing lodging to the Green Lake counselors.

Confirmation was led by Pastor Allan Campbell and Barb Knutson for students in 7th-10th grade. This fall, Angie DeVos took over Pastor Campbell's vacancy. A parent /student meeting was held prior to the start of Confirmation classes with parents in 7th - 9th grade to discuss expectations of students in order to be confirmed. This year we have 25 students attending confirmation classes which includes two 8th graders from Bethany Elim (8th - 14, 7th - 11). The curriculum being used this year is "Here We Stand". On October 22nd, the 9th graders were invited to share their Statement of Faith with their families and Church Council members after a lasagna meal provided by the Church Council. On October 29, 7 students were confirmed at Hope: Addison Buysse, Heydan Danielson, Landon Esping, Cole Johnson, Madison Minnehan, Brooklyn Ryer, and Creed Stassen. One student, Gretta Buysse was confirmed at St. Pauls.

Youth of Hope (YOH) underwent some reorganization this fall. Kathy and Tony Opdahl are taking the lead for our Youth of Hope. Youth of Hope refocused to 6th, 7th and 8th graders instead of 7th -12th in hopes of getting more participation and involvement. A survey was given to the students to determine their interests and ideas for Youth of Hope activities. In December, the youth adopted a family from the Christmas Angel program at the Minneota Public School. The students went shopping for gifts and wrapped them as a group.

Minneota Area Mission Trip actively fundraised and prepared for the 2023 Mission Trip. On June 25-30, 33 students and 8 chaperones departed from Hope Lutheran Church to embark on our mission trip to Elliott County, KY. It was a truly memorable experience for our youth and chaperones. Thank you to 4.0 Busing for donating transportation to and from Minneapolis. Thank you to the area congregations, businesses and communities that supported and continue to support our mission trips through fundraisers, support and prayers. Plans and fundraising has begun for the 2025 Mission Trip.

Teen Power continues to help our confirmed teenage members gather and grow in their faith. They have been an active part of the Wednesday night activities and provide varied services to our community. Again this year, they collected shoes for the Shoe Away Hunger (formerly Soles for Souls) program.

Other religious educational activities held throughout the year:

- Baccalaureate - Senior Sunday was held on May 14, for 7 graduates: Peyton Gillund, Isaac Pohlen, Autumn Dovre, Ireland Stassen, Kayla Myhre, Logan Myhre, and Devyn Hansen with the Church Council serving breakfast for the graduates and their families; Graduates were presented with their quilts by the HLCW and their yard signs.
- First Communion - preparatory class was held April 12, 3:30- 5:15pm for 5 - 5th grade students; held on April 16, 2022; Students were presented with their own chalice made by Lynn Okrina and personalized by Pat Myhre. Students making their First Communion at Hope Lutheran were Aiden DePestel, Peirce Ascherman, Taryn Myrvik, Wyatt Opdahl, Keatyn Bouwman,
- Bible Distribution - On October 1, 2023, 7th graders received their adult Bibles and 3rd graders received their Action Bibles.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Hennen , Education Chairperson

Minneota Area Mission Trip

The year involved continued fundraising, planning and organizing for the mission trip to Elliott County, KY June 25-30. Our annual spaghetti supper included a Tastefully Simple and bake sale fundraiser. All were successful.

At 3:00 am on June 25, 33 students and 8 chaperones departed from Hope Lutheran Church to embark on our mission trip to Elliott County, KY. Despite a three hour flight delay in Minneapolis, we landed in Nashville, TN and set out for a four hour drive to our home for the week at New Beginnings Assembly of God church in Grayson, KY. At New Beginnings Assembly of God, we met our Next Step leaders and joined two other smaller church groups. Each morning we started with breakfast and lunch prep prior to our morning group worship time. Worship time was followed by church clean-up and morning exercises before we headed to our worksites. Our group was divided into six work groups. Throughout the week, our work groups worked at four locations around Elliott County on projects involving landscaping, construction (ramps, decks, enclosing garage, and wood storage), and organization/clean-up. At the end of the week before returning home, we were able to visit the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, in Louisville, KY.

Shortly after their return, the Minneota Area Mission Trip held a Recap & Recruit night at Hope Lutheran church. At the Recap & Recruit night, students and chaperones viewed a PowerPoint presentation and shared their memories and sang songs accompanied by the PraiseBand. Currently, there are approximately 64 students interested in attending the 2025 mission trip. Location has yet to be decided. Students have started to fundraise for the upcoming trip. Fundraisers thus far have included Bend Rite food stand, concession stand at Belgian American Days softball tournament, Boxelder Bug Day food stand, Polish Days food stand, Food at Football, Wilno Church breakfast, Mary & Martha fundraiser, and Christmas Baking. Thank you to everyone who supported the 2023 Mission trip and continue to support the plans for the upcoming 2025 Mission Trip. We especially want to thank the Hope Lutheran Endowment for their continued monetary support of the Minneota Area Mission Trip.

Emily Hennen

GLOW

The 10th year of God's Love on Wednesday's (GLOW) kicked off in September. GLOW, again has many volunteers who continue to offer us their time and talents. Our classes are taught by the following people:

Pre-K & K: Amie & Trevor Ascherman

1st Grade: Jessica Horner & Brenda Desmedt

3rd Grade: Tyler Gronke & Tiffany Gronke

5th & 6th Grade: Matt Myhre

2nd Grade: Angie Borstad & Rachel Bednarek

4th Grade: Kathy & Tony Opdahl

We have over 135 students in grades Pre-K through 12th registered for Wednesday night youth programs at Hope Lutheran this year! It is amazing!

We are so thankful for those who are in the kitchen every Wednesday – Linda Nuytten and Terri Myhre. We are appreciative of the time that they give organizing and cooking meals in the kitchen for GLOW. We have an online sign-up sheet to have help in the kitchen every Wednesday. We thank all the teachers and kitchen managers so much for their hard work week after week.

This year, we are trying a new online curriculum called Trueway Kids. Each week's lessons are bible based, creative, educational, and printer friendly. One of our current barriers is the internet system in our church, but we are hoping to have a solution to this soon. The kids look forward to their weekly lessons and the teachers do such a great job. After class, we meet in the sanctuary at 7 for a short, energetic service with a message and our much-loved GLOW prayer.

This year, we have continued to incorporate music into our GLOW evenings under the direction of Katheryn Madson and Erin Roberts. The students are separated into smaller groups and take part in learning songs for our student-led "Let It Shine" services that we have incorporated into the church calendar.

GLOW had a fantastic Christmas program once again. It was led by Jess Gronke, Emily Hennen, and Tegan Gillund. It was a VERY well-attended service and was enjoyed by all.

GLOW has gotten a lot of great support and we are certainly impressed with how well it is still being received. The kids have a great time and get excited every week to come.

We'd like to thank ALL who have contributed and continue to contribute their time, money and talents to make GLOW a success! If you have never been to GLOW, please make it a priority. It is amazing to see THAT MANY KIDS in our sanctuary THAT excited about God's word. It's a crazy, fun time that EVERYONE can enjoy.

Respectfully submitted,
Jess Gronke and Erin Roberts, Directors

Teen Power

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

Hope Lutheran 9-12th graders meet Wednesday evenings at 5:30 for supper and at 6:00 we start with our lesson, 'Highs and Lows', devotions, games, skits, where students take turns participating, and discussing how God, Christ, and the bible Scriptures influence our lives today.

Students of the Teen Power group had lead roles for the Christmas Program so we practiced on Wednesday nights in November and December during our lesson time.

We are now collecting footwear of all kinds, (shoes, sandals, boots, etc.) for our annual shoe drive, "*Shoe Away Hunger*". Footwear is dropped off and gathered at Hope Lutheran and then taken to Schuler Shoes in St. Cloud. The new and gently used shoes may be donated to shelters and then at shelters sold for \$5.00 with the money then being donated to the shelter food shelf. Some of the other shoes stay in Minnesota for people in need and others are taken to other countries where they are needed for people without any shoes. Everything is useful! Even if people donate single shoes or if shoes are pretty worn, the shoes are ground up and used for playground mulch! Our Teen Power group will be gathering shoes through March, 2024. Please bring your footwear to Hope Lutheran Church! Thank you for all of your donations!

We have such a terrific group of youth in our congregation! We certainly are blessed to be sharing this spiritual journey with them!

Roberta Josephson and Terri Myhre, Teen Power Teachers/Leaders

BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

The Building and Grounds committee has had a relatively quiet year. The parsonage roof was replaced, and we are extremely thankful to Guy Jeremiason and his crew for getting this job done! A very special thank you to Jason and Jen Johnson and the boys for all their work in keeping our facilities looking great!

As we look ahead, we don't have anything major planned for the coming year, but know that attention will need to be given to the bell tower at some point. We have also talked about checking insulation throughout the church and perhaps adding more if needed.

HOPE LUTHERAN MUSIC/WORSHIP PROGRAM

Praise the Lord with music!

Under the new leadership of Kassandra Denney, Jubilation will be leading worship on the 1st, 2nd and Sunday services of the month. We are excited to have the Praise Band enlighten the service the last Sunday of the month and the GLOW students to stimulate and lead the service the 3rd Sunday of the month.

The Music and Worship Committee consisting of Val Buysse, Kassandra Denney, Nona Gottskalkson, Emily Hoffmann, Roberta Josephson, and Gayle VanVooren meet about every other month to read the monthly scriptures and select appropriate hymns for each service, as well as choral groups, soloists, or other special music for our worship services.

Praise Band Members include Scott Anderson, Val Buysse, Kassandra Denney, Darwin Dyce, Nona Gottskalkson, Roberta Josephson, Scott Josephson, Scott Knutson, Erin Roberts, and Todd Sonnenburg. Many thanks to Nona for picking out music and coordinating the Praise Band Sundays.

We are excited to be together to praise the Lord with music and singing!

Respectfully submitted,
Roberta Josephson

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH WOMEN (HLCW)

The HLCW (Hope Lutheran Church Women) is the organization all of the ladies in our church belong to. While the meetings are attended by a small number, when there is an event, our ladies step forward to help. We can be proud of the work that is being done in the church.

We have ladies who make decorations for the Fellowship Hall to lend a caring atmosphere to all who gather there. And we have ladies who plant and tend flowers in the warm months to beautify the outside. And we have many who work at home, and in church, to support our members and others in the community. Making quilts is another important outreach for our ladies. The tops are made in our homes and then we gather in the Fellowship Hall to finish them. One block is included in each work saying "Hugs from Hope." These quilts are then given to our seniors as they are to go off to college, work, or wherever they plan to go. It is our way to remind them that they are always welcome back to their home church.

Those in charge include Gayle VanVooren, Kathy Bulander, Barb Okrina, Sandy Tolk and Sandy Josephson. But they are supported by so many more in our congregation.

Rose VanUden led a large number of ladies through our annual fundraiser – the Swedish Meatball Supper – in the Fall. There is planning, seeking funds to help with costs, people to organize in work groups, then the actual cooking, serving and cleanup. It is a large undertaking and has been very successful. We ladies are hoping to give our church kitchen a make over with the funds we have raised the past two years.

The Altar Guld is one of the oldest groups in our midst. Our members change paraments during the seasons of the church year, keep the altar areas clean, and prepare for all communion services, as well as fill candles on the altar.

The Cheer Committee, led by Rita Dovre, sends cards to our members for special occasions, and visit those returning from the hospital with fruit baskets and a visit. They rely on others to learn of those sick to help with

this mission. And when visiting, a prayer shawl is also often given, made by the Prayer Shawl committee. These ladies work quietly together, and at home, to support our members in times of need.

We thank God for the women who come forward to help through our various organizations. Small things are accomplished for the good of all. Thank you to Women of Hope Lutheran Church – you are making a difference.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Van Vooren, President

ALTAR GUILD

The Altar Guild is made up of 12 dedicated members who serve on teams of two each month.

Regular duties include preparing the altar for worship services, serving communion, filling the candles, changing paraments, and taking care of the flowers.

I would like to thank all the members for their faithful service this past year.

We are always looking for new members. Please let an Altar Guild member or myself know if you are interested in joining.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlys Skaar, President

HOPE LUTHERAN CEMETERY BOARD

We are grateful that 2023 did not represent the same challenges for Cemetery upkeep that we experienced in 2022. As a reminder, in 2022 we had flooding in the spring and the Derecho event in May, with massive tree clean up the rest of the summer. In 2023, we sort of 'took the year off', and did not tackle any capital project or other events, other than the annual clean-up day in May. Thank you to all who participated. Most of the new evergreens that were planted in 2024 are doing their job of growing, and the few that did not survive will be tended to in 2024. Marlys Skaar kept the lawn mowed all year, and intends to do so again in 2024. We are looking at replacing the riding lawn mower in 2024 if funding permits. There is still one very large evergreen in the central part of the cemetery that was snapped off about 15 feet up in the big storm. We will see about removing what remains of that tree in 2024, as well.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dave Dovre

LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTER

The Hope Library and Resource Center's collection continues to grow. The library has many new books for all ages. We encourage members of Hope to make use of these materials. Thank you to everyone who has remembered the library by donating materials or by contributing to the memorial fund.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Hagen and Kathy Bulander

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY REPORT

The Committee has seven active members. We gave out 13 prayer shawls/afghans in 2023. Thank you to all who contributed to the ministry.

VOTING BALLOT

CHURCH COUNCIL

(3-year terms - vote for four)

Deb Belaen

Cory Myhre

Sandy Josephson

James Danielson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(vote for 3)

Moriah Reiss

Keven Larson

Roberta Josephson

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

(vote for 2)

(To be held May 2-4, 2024, Voting for new Bishop)

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

(vote for 1)

Scott Josephson

CEMETERY BOARD

No positions open at this time

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

No positions open at this time

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Son of God, Eternal Savior

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

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,
2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.
3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;
4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,

Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,
Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.
hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.
Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:

you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead:
Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,
by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,

fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.
we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be.
quench our fe - vered thirst of plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.
grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

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