

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

Highlights from 2023 at First

Annual Report

Annual Meeting
Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024
In-person, 11:45am
Fellowship Hall

Welcoming, building community and serving neighbors is nothing new for First Lutheran. Generations of faithful Christians have done this kind of work from First for over 150 years. What is new is using our core values to guide us in our efforts to reconcile with people who have too often been left out, remained uncared for, or have been outright harmed.

The Holy Spirit is up to far more among us than simply putting 'butts in seats.' First Lutheran is doing the far more difficult work of welcoming all and building community in an era when divisions and isolation rule the day. As we look to the possibilities of 2024, we see a presidential election year unfolding alongside an uncertain economy, and filled with uncertainties about so many things. Whatever this next year may hold, First Lutheran is committed to being a steadfast source of strength and peace for its members, our community, and all the world.



FIRST
LUTHERAN

Jan: Stewardship uplifts goals to support Safer Families for Children, help Ukraine through Lutheran World Relief, and to welcome all through music and food ministries.

Faith Alive! U invites Deacon David Rask Behling to speak on becoming an RIC congregation, with additional presentations by Rev. Dione Stepanek and Bishop Felix Malpica.

Pastor Stanton leads an online "deep dive" into the book of Revelation.

The congregation at Wednesday services learns the new *Heartland* liturgy by Jonathan Rundman.

Feb: The First Teen Clothes Closet hosts a teen art show, and the artwork remains at the clothes closet as part of the décor.

Mar: Lenten study: *Beyond Question* by Eric Burtness.

Apr: Over 1,500 attend Holy Week and Easter services, over 200 view services online, and we sing "Alleluia" 142 times in worship!

Pastor Stanton leads an online study of Walter Brueggemann's *A Gospel of Hope*.

12 high school seniors are named recipients of Mabel Anderson scholarships.

May: Faith Alive! U: *Embracing Awkward Conversations*, presented by Rev. Libby Howe.

Members of First Lutheran vote to adopt a new welcome statement, and officially becomes a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Jun: The exterior of the house is painted.

Throughout the summer our congregation brings Flat Jesus with them wherever they roam, making appearances ranging from Hayward, WI and to the Montreux and Crans Mountains in Switzerland!

Jul: Pastor Stanton celebrates 20 years of ordination!

The First Lutheran Foundation awards \$7,925 in grants to 10 groups, such as Oasis and the Holmen Community Center, prayer shawl knitters and the FLY youth group.

Monthly outdoor worship takes place in the newly re-landscaped outdoor worship space on the east side of the church.

Aug: The FLY Flight Crew holds their first monthly meeting, in support of First Lutheran Youth.

Sept: A new ministry of Faith Webs is launched, uniting households and supporting our youth.

Oct: Jon Ailabouni leads a special worship service featuring jazz liturgy.

Nov: Bible Matters, kicked off by Rev. Libby Howe and led by Pastor Karyn, begins studying the gospel of Mark.

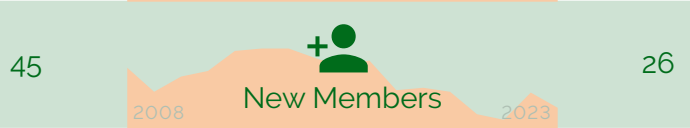
Dec: Over 1,100 attend Christmas services, and over 40 view online.

2022

Statistics

Trend lines in light orange

2023



2023 Financial & 2024 Budget

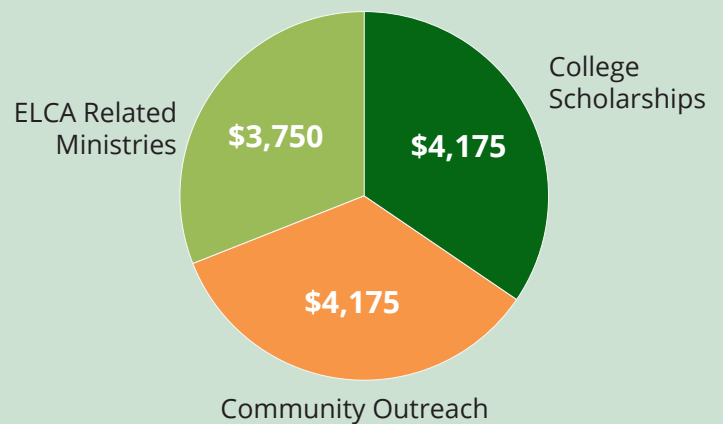
	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2023 Budget	2024 Proposed Budget
Total Operating Receipts	\$ 855,025	\$ 857,358	\$ 889,400	\$ 861,300
<i>Operating Expenses:</i>				
Worship Ministry	\$ 19,714	\$ 20,050	\$ 21,000	\$ 23,100
Faith Alive! Ministries	\$ 150,424	\$ 150,017	\$ 150,000	\$ 154,400
Outreach & Caring Ministries	\$ 107,921	\$ 96,505	\$ 127,900	\$ 93,900
Foundational Support Ministries	\$ 569,262	\$ 578,955	\$ 590,500	\$ 609,900
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 847,321	\$ 845,527	\$ 889,400	\$ 881,300
Excess of Operating Receipts Over (Under) Operating Expenses	\$ 7,704	\$ 11,831	\$ -	\$ (20,000)
Utilization of Operating Reserves to Supplement Shortfall	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,000
Net Excess of Operating Receipts Over (Under) Operating Expenses after Utilization of Operating Reserves	\$ 7,704	\$ 11,831	\$ -	\$ -

Dedicated Accounts Receipts & Expenses in 2023

	Balance 1/1/22	Year To Date Receipts	Year To Date Expenses	Balance 12/31/22
Mission Outreach	\$ 7,181	\$ 5,247	\$ 11,954	\$ 474
Education	\$ 892	\$ -	\$ 892	\$ -
Worship	\$ 2,434	\$ 6,233	\$ 3,489	\$ 5,179
Youth & Family	\$ 10,735	\$ 68,724	\$ 32,405	\$ 47,053
Community Impact	\$ 1,822	\$ 79	\$ 1,093	\$ 807
Memorials	\$ 26,654	\$ 6,542	\$ 6,911	\$ 26,285
Special Events	\$ 2,775	\$ 1,810	\$ 1,159	\$ 3,426
Other	\$ 53,872	\$ 59,898	\$ 25,203	\$ 88,567
TOTAL	\$ 106,365	\$ 148,534	\$ 83,108	\$ 171,791

Foundation Fund

Gifts in 2023



First Lutheran is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

410 Main St, Onalaska, WI 608.783.2236 office@firstlu.org

- Facebook.com/1stlu
- Instagram.com/1stlu
- Tiktok.com/@1stlu
- X.com/1stlu
- Youtube.com/1stlu



ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, 11:45am
Fellowship Hall

1. Welcome
2. Opening prayer
3. Approval of agenda
4. Approval of 2023 minutes
5. Recognition of leaders
6. Mission support summary
7. Report from Finance Team
8. Approval of the 2024 budget
9. Electing members of Vision and Leadership
10. Electing Synod Assembly members, Sugar Creek annual meeting representatives and Foundation Board members
11. Intent of Giving Cards update
12. Closing prayer

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First Lutheran Church Staff

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 Karyn Bodenschatz Associate Pastor 608.433.6002.....karyn@firstlu.org

Bridget Crave Community Impact Directorbridget@firstlu.org
 Kathryn Pedretti Director of Hospitalitykathryn@firstlu.org

YOUTH/EDUCATION STAFF

Cassie Carrell Nursery Coordinatornursery@firstlu.org

SUPPORT STAFF

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 Andy Stutesman Director of Communications & Marketingandy@firstlu.org
 Dan Hurley Director of Buildings & Grounds.....dan@firstlu.org
 Jerry Yushta Assistant Custodian
 Rob Nelson Assistant Custodian
 Diane Finnegan Bookkeeperdiane@firstlu.org

MUSIC STAFF

Gabriel Hicks Organistgabe@firstlu.org
 Jim Knutson Bell Choir Director.....jim@firstlu.org
 Todd Saner Senior Choir Director & Contemporary Music Coordinatortodd@firstlu.org

PRESCHOOL STAFF

Melissa Rolbiecki Preschool Director..... 608.779.4504.....preschool@firstlu.org
 Amy Zimmer 4K Teacher.....beth@firstlu.org
 Marci Leppert Preschool Assistant Teacher
 Angie Strittmater Preschool Assistant Teacher

Vision and Leadership Team

Larry Schreiner	president	second term expires April 30, 2024
Michelle Renkas	vice president	second term expires April 30, 2026
Donna Bossman	secretary	first term expires April 30, 2024
Amanda Zieba		first term expires April 30, 2025
Jason Witt		first term expires April 30, 2024
Meredith Hougen		first term expires April 30, 2026
Phyllis Bey		first term expires April 20, 2025

Pastor Stanton's Report

Dear siblings in Christ,

In my annual report for 2022, I said the Church was experiencing the first phase of its own "Great Reset", a term coined by the World Economic Forum in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The mandated shutdowns, mass retirements and the Great Resignation changed the ways businesses and institutions can function. I then talked about how a church 'economy' has different goals and values when compared to a nation. Instead of being driven by profit, productivity, or even by worship attendance numbers, a healthy church's economy is driven by love for neighbor. The Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann says, 'an economy of neighborliness' is where, "instead of living life to produce, dominate and keep busy, all in an effort to accumulate and acquire... we would instead live life to connect with, support and love our neighbors."

God's call on our lives to serve an economy of neighborliness is why, in 2022, First Lutheran drafted a Welcome Statement for the congregation's consideration. Three core values burn at the heart of our Welcome Statement: 1) We welcome all, 2) We build community, 3) We serve our neighbor. After many one-to-one conversations, Faith Alive! U opportunities led by guest speakers and a variety of forums where questions could be asked, our Reconciling in Christ Task Force made a formal recommendation to the Vision & Leadership Team that the congregation vote as to whether to adopt the Welcome Statement. Minor amendments were made between September 2022 and May of 2023, but on May 21, the congregation endorsed the Welcome Statement almost unanimously.

Here's what I said in June after our May vote:

"Welcoming, building community and serving neighbors is nothing new for First Lutheran. Generations of faithful Christians have done this kind of work from First for over 150 years. What is new is using these core values to guide us in our efforts to reconcile with people who have too often been left out, remained uncared for, or have been outright harmed."

The LGBTQIA+ community, people of color, people with handicaps and indigenous peoples are just some of the groups whom the church has at times actively judged as sinners, or questioned their worth as children of God.


Being an RIC church will provide intentional opportunities to both confess past wrongs and live into a future that receives the gifts of people, communities and partnerships that we no longer want to ignore. In becoming an RIC church, we give up nothing. We seek to gain new friends, new siblings in Christ and claim more of the gospel message for our church and extend that good news to our community.

Endorsing the Welcome Statement to become an RIC church is the end of a process, but the continuation of an ongoing identity at First Lutheran. We are indeed the spiritual descendants of reformers. In May of 2023, we continue that tradition. I pray our descendants are blessed by our reconciling works. May the mercy, love and peace of God be with us always."

Completing the RIC process was indeed a clarifying moment that First Lutheran will point to for generations.

By the fall of 2023, we moved from the theme of "We Welcome All" that dominated the 2022/2023 program year, into the theme of "We Build Community." Our OWLs, Sunday School, Confirmation small groups, circles, study groups and so many more are traditional examples of how we build community. But in the fall of 2023, we discovered a new and profound way of making our church feel smaller as we made connections between generations, all centered around the shared goal of supporting our kids in their faith formation.

The idea was to invite every kid and every adult into a Faith Web. On poster paper, we drew five lines. On the top went the name of a child who, in 2024, plans to experience a faith formation event by attending a Christian camp,



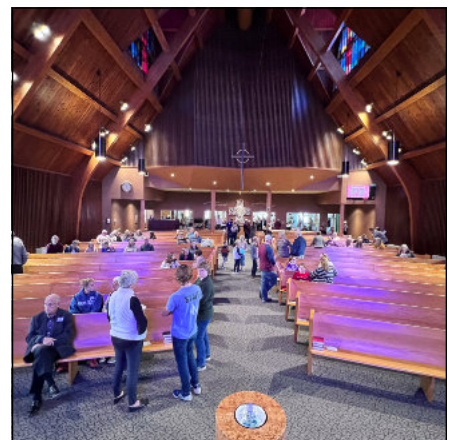
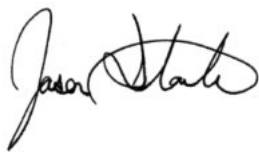
WE WELCOME ALL.
WE BUILD COMMUNITY.
WE SERVE OUR NEIGHBOR.
ALL are welcome here.
ALL are loved here.

our middle school mission trip to Rapid City, SD, or the ELCA Youth Gathering to New Orleans. On the next line down goes the name of the child's family. That family is "supporting household #1" for that child. There is space under that first supporting household for three more. Each supporting household commits to connecting with that child in whatever way(s) they choose. Each month, a menu of possibilities for connections is provided to all the supporting households and kids. 58 kids signed up and more than 150 total families are involved.

By putting kids' faith formation at the center of a group project, people get to know each other. One child might have supporting households of 1) a widow, 2) an 'empty-nester' couple and 3) a 20-something and their partner along with 4) their own parents and siblings. Well, guess what? Those households do not only learn the name and likes/dislikes of the kid. They become familiar with the whole web! That widow meets and becomes known to 7-10 people in that scenario and vice versa for everybody else.

The numbers by which we measure church engagement are still recovering from the shutdown of 2020. But the Holy Spirit is up to far more among us than simply putting 'butts in seats'. First Lutheran is doing the far more difficult work of welcoming all and building community in an era when divisions and isolation rule the day. As we look into 2024, we see another presidential election year, more grim predictions regarding the economy and so much uncertainty about almost everything. First Lutheran seeks to be a source of strength and peace for its members, our community and indeed, all the world.

In Christ,



*Our Faith Web ministry in action!
Middle: one Faith Web,
volunteering together for the
Salvation Army.
Bottom: a Faith Web meet up
between services this
past October.*

Minutes

Annual Meeting Minutes, February 5, 2023

11:30 Meal

12:05 Welcome and Devotions **Pastor Jason Stanton**

Meeting was called to order. Motion by Michael Wiese. Second by Lori Weber.

Quorum was met and verified by counting the number of members signed in: 66.

Devotion led by Pastor Jason.

Approval of the Agenda and 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. Michelle Renkas.

Motion made to approve agenda by Merrill Wachter. Second by Steve Lind. Agenda passes.

Acknowledged correction of one typo in the 2022 minutes.

Motion made to approve minutes by Carla Stanton. Second: Lori Weber. Minutes passed.

Recognition of V&L Leaders, Stewardship Team, Finance Team, Personnel Team and Foundation Team. Michelle Renkas and Pastor Jason.

All members of the above committees were introduced.

Greeting from Bishop Malpica (video).

Report of the Treasurer and Review of the 2023 Budget. Todd Poss.

Reviewed P. 17 details of the 2023 budget and 2022 financial report.

Todd gave highlights of the budget and the actual spending in 2022. Attained the \$40k increased giving goals in 2022. The original 2022 budget included a \$13k deficit, and achieved a surplus of \$7.7k.

Mission outreach highlights were described.

Todd described the dedicated accounts described on p. 18 and p. 19 of the annual report.

General budget goals for giving are \$685k + \$40k = \$725k.

Pastor Jason discussed the end of the year financials, and the learnings and recommendations of a third pastor. The recommendation has been made by the V&L to not proceed with the hiring of a 3rd rostered pastor at this time.

2023 proposed financial budget

2023 proposed budget Overview

Operating Receipts - Giving			
2022 Actual:	\$855,025	2023 Proposed budget:	\$889,400
Operating Expense			
2022 Actual:	\$847,321	2023 Proposed budget:	\$889,400
Net excess of operating receipts Over (Under)			
2022 Actual:	\$7,704	2023 Proposed budget:	\$0

Motion to approve the budget was made by Brian Renkas. Second Steve Lind. Budget recommendation passes unanimously.

Snapshot of 2022 (Bingo). Pastors Jason and Karyn.

Highlights were shared of Clothes Closet, Dinner Theater, Reach, Sabbatical, Confirmation, Hunger Task Force, New Members, Staff, Anniversaries, Social Media, Quilts, Bible Matters, Weddings, New Families, Parents Night Out, Shoe Donations, VBS "Make Waves", Values.

Welcome Statement and the RIC process. Pastor Jason and Pastor Karyn.

Pastor Jason shared a reflection on baptism promises and language, and introduced the purpose and composition of the RIC (Reconciling in Christ) team. Pastor Jason read the Welcome Statement and gave a preview of the Lent study.

It was shared that there should be ongoing dialogue to prepare for the May 21 congregational vote on the Welcome Statement. Invitation was made to discuss and ask questions.

A request was made by a member to post the Welcome Statement clearly on the website.

Election of Leaders. Michelle Renkas.

- 1. Vision and Leadership** (1 position open) nominees: Peggy Daleki, Meredith Hougen, Kathy Pollex. A request for additional nominees was made: no additional nominations were made. Voting was conducted by paper ballot. Results of paper ballot: Meredith Hougen.
- 2. Foundation** (1 position open) nominees: Joel Miller. Request for additional nominations: no additional nominees. Vote by voice approved Joel Miller.
- 3. Election of Representatives to Synod. Nominees:** Indiana Hauser, Peter Kirkegaard, Michelle Logan, Ann Nelson, Rob Nelson. Additional nominee for 1 youth: Sam Renkas (nominations provided by Michelle Logan and Michael Wiese. June 9-11 Synod Assembly. Vote conducted by voice. All approved 5 nominees plus 1 youth nominee.
- 4. Sugar Creek Annual Meeting.** Nominations: Jan Fink, Michelle Logan, Ann Nelson, Rob Nelson. Vote for 2. Additional nominations: None. Vote conducted by paper ballot. Results were Rob and Ann Nelson.

Stewardship Team Update Brian Narveson.

Brian provided an update on our ability to fulfill 2022 commitments, with highlights on Reach and Hunger Task Force. We recently presented checks of \$10k to each of those organizations. We met and exceeded goals for 2022.

For 2023, Brian shared the goals are to again increase giving by \$40k. Objectives include Safe Families for Children, Lutheran World Relief, specifically for Ukraine Fund, Nosh with Neighbors, and special music guests and events.

Closing Prayer . Pastor Karyn

1:15 p.m. Motion to adjourn made by Lori Weber. Second by Brian Narveson. Motion to adjourn approved.

Minutes submitted by Donna Bossman

Congregational Meeting Minutes, May 7, 2023

Call to Order - Larry Schreiner

A quorum was noted (>50 attendees), with an estimated 100 people in attendance.

Prayer.

Recount Process Description.

Welcome Statement was read (Donna Bossman):

First Lutheran Church Welcome Statement

We Welcome All. God DELIGHTS in the beautiful diversity of humankind and UNITES us through the love, grace, and forgiveness of Jesus. We CELEBRATE God's creation in all its forms and the inherent worth, dignity and giftedness of people of all abilities, ages, cultures, classes, races, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.

We Build Community. The Holy Spirit EMPOWERS us to be a community of disciples COMMITTED to individual and communal practices of listening, learning, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Together, we work for the restoration of relationships, pursue racial equity, and affirm those who have known the pain of exclusion and discrimination.

We Serve our Neighbor. Jesus GUIDES us in ways of nonviolence, healing, and peacemaking. We PROCLAIM God's relentless, widening welcome and deepening love for all. We INVITE you to join us as we walk with Jesus toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

ALL are welcome here. ALL are loved here.

Larry Schreiner noted that "The Statement comes moved and seconded from the V&L Team"

An invitation was made for discussion or comments from members. 5 members spoke. (Patty Shepherd, Jenny (?), Pat Honey (sp?), Amanda Zieba, and Brian Reinkas. All voiced support and personal stories supporting the RIC vote and journey.

Vote was taken by written ballot.

The ballot says: "I endorse the proposed Welcome Statement"

Vote was tallied.

Election result: There was a majority of "yes" votes and motion passed.

Pastor Jason read welcome from David Behling, Ambassador of Reconciling Works

People of First Lutheran Church,

When Pastor Jason shared the news about today's vote with me, and invited me to be here with you, I was excited. You are becoming a Reconciling in Christ community! Congratulations! I wish I was able to be with you in person, but unfortunately that's not possible. Instead, I'm sending this greeting, and I look forward to seeing and visiting with some of you at the Synod Assembly in La Crosse next month.

The Reconciling Works staff, the rest of the RIC community, and I are all excited to welcome you. Walking with you, we will help you take the next steps of your RIC Journey. Today is important, obviously, but becoming RIC means you are now ready for the next steps in the ongoing journey towards true affirmation, inclusion, and equity. Some of those next steps are practical and procedural; however, other steps are less tangible while still being incredibly important. Starting today, you will need to learn how to live into your identity as a Reconciling in Christ congregation. You will need patience, humility, and the willingness to continue to learn together in the years ahead.

But okay, let's focus more on today. You've done a lot of work to get to this point. Relax, take a deep breath, and then give yourselves permission to celebrate your achievements. This really is a big day! Congratulations!

Deacon David Behling, RIC Ambassador

Prayer of thanks

Motion made to adjourn.

Mission Support

From the La Crosse Area Synod



La Crosse Area Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Cultivating Life-Giving Relationships Rooted in God's Love

Our Mission Support at Work in 2023: Locally, Nationally and Globally

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
(Acts 20:35)

**Thanks be to God and to the people of First Lutheran Church-Onalaska
Congregation**

Your generous 2023 contribution of \$63,390.93 to ELCA/Synod Mission Support helped to cultivate life-giving relationships rooted in God's love by funding the following ministries:

Within the La Crosse Area Synod

Synod, Staff, Programs and Facilities

\$31,695.47

- Pastoral counseling to congregational pastors, deacons and lay leaders
- Facilitation of call process for congregations in pastoral transitions
- Resources and training for congregations seeking renewal
- Consultation for worship, faith development, outreach, justice/advocacy, stewardship, and vitality ministries in congregations
- Professional development for rostered leaders through educational meetings
- People and resources to aid congregations in conflict
- Connection to companion churches in Peru and the Czech Republic
- Process and support for candidates for rostered ministry
- Facilities, to be used by congregations and synod leaders, for meetings and events
- Synod School of Theology

ELCA Seminaries - Wartburg & Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

\$633.91

- Educate, examine and prepare trained leaders for the professional rosters of this church
- Provide practical and theological training for church leaders outside of regular degree programs
- Faculty who are willing to serve the whole church, often invited to speak at congregations, lay academies and special events
- Facilitate learning that promotes understanding of inter-religious and ecumenical relationships
- Provide field opportunities in multiple local and international contexts for hands-on, transformational learning

Lutheran Campus Ministries in La Crosse

\$1,267.82

- Pastoral care to students attending UW-La Crosse, Viterbo and Western Technical College
- Weekly worship and Bible studies for students
- Common Ground Building (14th & Pine St., La Crosse), an ecumenical, grace based outreach center for all students and members of the campus communities
- Continuation of a Lutheran faith presence to students as they leave home congregations
- Service learning mission trips
- Leadership development for young adults

Partnership Ministries

\$633.91

- Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin working for justice and peace
- Wisconsin Council of Churches working to promote healthy ecumenical relationships
- First Call Theological Education to aid rostered leaders in transition from seminary to parish
- Wisconsin Lutheran Planned giving to assist donors with major gifts for ministry

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Churchwide Programs

Christian Community and Leadership (CCL)

\$10,364.42

Grows the church and spreads God's word by working in conjunction with synods and congregations.

- Directors for Evangelical Mission (DEMs) – Pr. Dione Stepanek in the La Crosse Area Synod
- Advocacy & Public Policy Ministries
- New and Renewing Congregations
- Youth & Young Adult Ministries
- Outdoor & Campus Ministries
- Ethnic Specific & Multicultural Ministries
- Seminaries & Colleges
- Domestic Hunger & Poverty ministries
- Lutheran Social Services in America
- Lutheran Disaster Response
- Stewardship Ministries
- Worship Ministries

Service & Justice (Formerly called the Global Mission Unit)

\$5,958.75

Supports and builds capacity of this church's work in other countries and its relationships with churches throughout the world.

- Missionaries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, Latin America & the Caribbean
- Companion Synod Relationships
- Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM)
- ELCA World Hunger support

Mission Advancement Unit

\$2,301.09

Shares the ELCA's message of God's love to all audiences, across all media, and directs efforts

for support of the ELCA through major gifts, appeals and planned giving.

- Marketing & Publications: Seeds for the Parish, Living Lutheran online, ELCA.org
- Funding for the ELCA & Partner ministries including new congregations, World Hunger, ELCA Foundation, Fund for Leaders, and Lutheran Disaster Response
- Resource Centers of the ELCA for Leaders and Congregations

3 ELCA Offices:

\$10,535.57

Office of the Presiding Bishop, Office of the Secretary, Office of the Treasurer

- Ecumenical Relationship of the ELCA
- Strategic Planning for Mission
- ELCA Archives
- Congregational Administration Resources
- ELCA Budget & Finance
- Information Technology
- Strategic Initiative Fund
- General Treasury, Retiree Minimum Health obligation and Depreciation

In addition, all designated gifts to local, national and global ministries as specified by your congregation are forwarded 100% to those causes. **\$22,484.25**

Ministry Reports

First Teen Clothes Closet



The First Teen Clothes Closet continues to serve teens at a record pace, with a record number of 320 teens shopping during 524 visits, up from 443 visits a year ago. We continue to host "open shopping" Mondays from 4-6pm. with private appointments available on request. We use the term shopping because the clothes closet is set up like a boutique, where teens are made to feel welcomed as they select the items they want and have a place to try on their clothes. There is no charge to use the clothes closet and no qualifications for who can come.

The clothes closet was given a new look this spring with some artwork made by Logan and Onalaska high school art students. We hosted an art show and open house on April 2, and the art pieces all remain on permanent display.

The FTCC wouldn't exist without a great group of volunteers who contributed over 700 hours to make the clothes closet a positive experience for area teens. There is always a space for more, both teens and adults. Most of the volunteering opportunities are on location at Trinity Lutheran Church, where the FTCC is located. Volunteers host open shopping, sort donations and give them the teen seal of approval, tag donations, restock, host private appointments and shop for new items. This past year we have again been a volunteer site for Viterbo's monthly Service Learning events.

We kicked off the beginning of school again with the shoe giveaway during Trinity's Neighborhood party. This is not only a chance to give kids a pair of shoes to start the school year, but also to make them aware of the clothes closet. A big thank you to First Lutheran members who took a tag from our shoe tree this summer and bought a pair of tennis shoes for a teen.

Generous donations from our church members and the community help stock the Clothes Closet with gently used, in-style teen clothes for every season. We also purchase new undergarments and toiletries as well as clothing needed to supplement donations including winter coats and shoes.

Major FTCC funding: \$18,400 from the La Crosse Community Foundation, \$7,500 from Altra Credit Union and \$2,000 from the First Lutheran Foundation. In 2023, our expenditures were \$10,800. \$3,000 was spent on shoes, \$1,700 on men's sweatpants, \$1,300 on bras, \$1,300 on winter coats and \$1,000 ethnic hair kits and the remainder on a variety of other items.

*Respectfully submitted by the First Teen Clothes Closet Steering Committee:
Bridget Crave, Lori Lunney and Patty Shepard*



Hospitality



This year has been wonderfully busy. Greeting and welcoming as many people as I can into worship has been a highlight of my week. Giving out birthday gifts at the welcome center when someone comes in with their birthday postcard has been great fun. I hope you all have enjoyed your gift from the staff.

A big thank you goes out to Mary, who made us 15 new children's worship bags this summer. Cassie and I restocked them with new materials and visual cards to help parents with small children communicate. Sometime this year, the same visual cards will be found hanging from the pews, helping parents and children communicate during worship.

I so enjoyed getting to know our new members during our new member socials both in April and October. We had 23 households that we connected with either by phone, letter or both in 2023. I sent out half a dozen postcards thanking our guests from other churches.

I so enjoyed being part of the confirmation in October, presenting them in worship and reading their names and verses during their confirmation.

On the first Wednesday of each month starting in April, I gave away popcorn to our community members who stopped by and continued throughout the summer ending with caramel apples in September and hot apple cider in October and November. The Miller family gave away hot chocolate during the parade in December, and we opened the narthex for anyone who needed to warm up.

I love being able to interact with everyone in our church family, from the smallest child to our older wiser Lutherans and everyone in between. Thank you all for this opportunity to be God's hands and feet to you all.

In Christ's love,

*Kathryn Pedretti
Director of Hospitality*



A few snapshots from the community give aways in 2023!

Office Reports

Membership

The following people were accepted into membership in 2023:

- Todd & Eva Marie Restel
- Nancy & Jim Whalen
- Andrew Logue
- Shay Strasser & Dan Schraith, Nathan, Connor, Elena
- Leah Metz, Nicholas Hilton
- Jake & Shelbi Stumlin, Connor, Olivia
- Ian Olson
- Bill & Patty Thompson
- Peter Barsness
- Angie Strittmater
- Sara & Ben Sykora, Maggie
- Lisa Varnum
- Linda Kouba

The following people requested transfer from membership in 2023.

- Chad & Melinda Schultz
- Caleb Davidson
- Larry Komperud

Pastoral Acts

Marriages

- Cody Hougom & Sidney Brunholz
- Alyssa Vinz & Matt Stees

Deaths

- Helen Halverson
- Neta Niedfelt
- Dan Zubich
- Kathy Kirkegaard
- Mary Etta Anderson
- Jordan Lass
- JoAnn Briggs
- Gilbert "Gib" Chick
- Irv Wittenberg
- Linda Jensen

Baptisms

- William Allen Matz
- Beckett Zane Bauman
- Ava Louise Housker
- Finnley Nora Housker
- Noah Nicholas Petit
- Natalie Ray Paulson
- Callum Isaiah Campbell
- Mia Mae Jaromin
- Charlie Hunter Ingenthron
- Paisley Grace Brueggen
- Connor James Stumlin
- Olivia Jayne Stumlin
- Raela Lynn Honeck
- Peyton Nicole Ring
- Carmela Rae Stewart
- Sophia Charlotte Hand

Confirmation

Confirmed October 29, 2023

- Adam Amundson
- Jack Barth
- Jackson Bosch
- Norah Carlson
- Preston Elston
- Addyson Ferguson
- Kai Gallant
- Mia Gallant
- Zander Garbrecht
- Easton Glebke
- Saydee Hink
- Zachary Imgrund
- Carter Johnson
- Ryan Johnson
- Sophia Knight
- Sydney Kranig
- Ryan Mackeben
- Bella Malecek
- Marshall Mason
- Elizabeth Matz
- Makena McGarry
- Tristan Molling
- Bennett Rieber
- Danielle Schmit
- Andrew Stanton
- Bella Waters
- Perry West



Analytics for Communications, Marketing & Technology

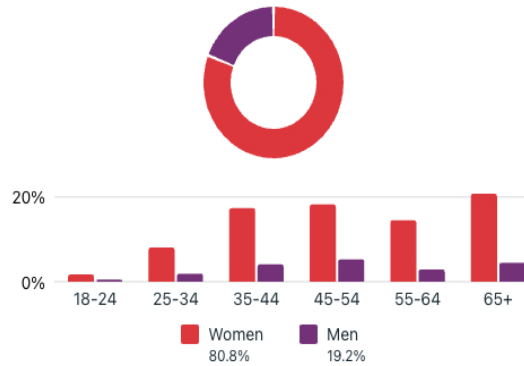
	2022	2023
Email subscribers to updates & publications	102	94
Facebook page followers	1,129	1,182
Facebook reach	Not recorded	55,150
Facebook visits	Not recorded	18,465
Instagram followers	218	261
Instagram reach	Not recorded	4,360
Instagram visits	Not recorded	352
Live Stream Peak Views: Facebook	1,187	1,090
Live Stream Peak Views: Website / Boxcast	1,048	1,110
Live Stream Peak Views: YouTube	860	773
Live Stream Peak Views: Total	3,095	2,973
Newsletter mailings	510	437
TikTok followers	9	46
TikTok video views	3,019	11,226
TikTok reached audience	2,484	9,894
TikTok most viewed post	436 views	735 views
Tithely total giving	Not recorded	\$2,155
Vanco users & giving via PPD (Prearranged Payments & Deposits)	43 \$68,143	No longer available
Vanco users & giving via web, ACH (direct withdrawal)	75 \$104,317	111 \$241,829
Vanco users & giving via web, credit card	72 \$85,214	137 \$111,147
Vanco users & giving via text	7 \$3,255	4 \$1,410
Vanco total users & giving <i>(giving is for all funds, not just general)</i>	197 \$260,929	252 \$354,386
Venmo transactions & giving <i>(after fees)</i>	NA	5 \$170
Website visitors, yearly total	14,000 (unique)	14,000 (unique)
Website page views, yearly total	41,000	44,000
Website user hardware	51% mobile, 49% desktop	56% mobile, 44% desktop
Website top referrers	45% direct, 43% search	Direct 10,334 Google 7,749 Facebook 1,667
Website popular content	Live Stream Worship Preschool This Week @ FLC	Live Stream 3,450 Worship 2,755 Preschool 1,201 Clothes Closet 1,108
X followers	112	112
YouTube subscribers	258	320
YouTube views	5,813 total 4,346 live stream 1,341 videos 124 shorts	25,675 total 16,010 shorts 5,088 videos 4,577 live stream
YouTube watch time	1,406 hours	1,767 hours

Andrew Stutesman, Director of Communications and Marketing, andy@firstlu.org

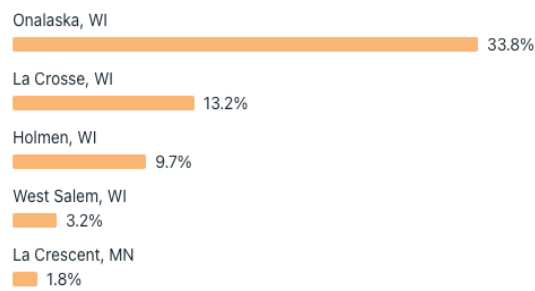
Audience Analytics

Facebook

Age & gender ⓘ

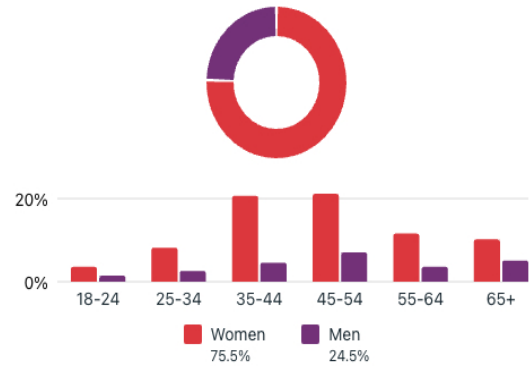


Top cities

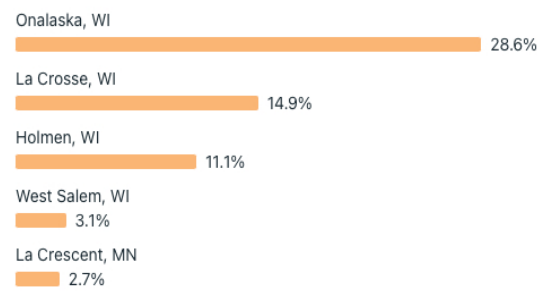


Instagram

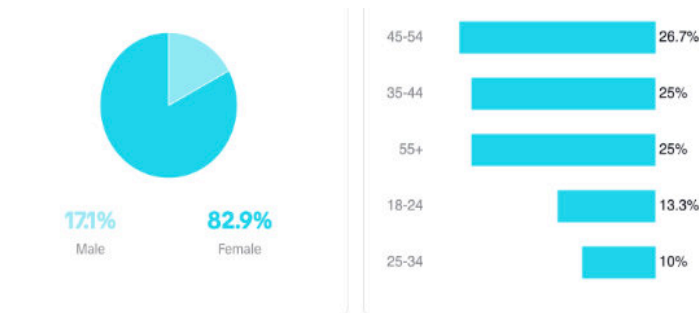
Age & gender ⓘ



Top cities



TikTok



Top countries



Top cities



YouTube

Age and gender

Views · 2023

All Videos Shorts



Top Posts



First Lutheran Onalaska

Published by Instagram · December 3, 2023

She's back!!!



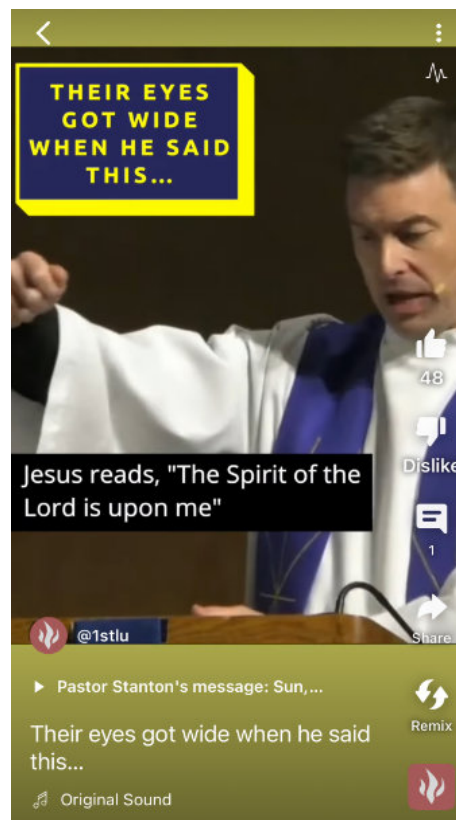
On Facebook

Post *She's back!* 338 engagements, reach of 855



On TikTok & Instagram

Short *Some Good News*
Reach of 283 on Instagram, 753 views on TikTok



On YouTube

Short *Their eyes got wide when he said this...*
2,410 views

Property Management Team

The Property Management Team is led by our lead custodian, Dan Hurley, who is assisted by the rest of our assistant custodians including Jerry Yushta, and Rob and Evan Nelson.

In addition to the regular maintenance of our facility, we updated the landscaping on the east wall of the sanctuary, which required the removal of two dead trees, along with the installation of steps, new rock and shrubs.

The outside of the house was painted in the spring which dramatically changed its appearance.

When tiles were found to be loose in the storage room of the preschool during summer cleaning, we hired a certified asbestos abatement firm to safely remove all problematic tiles and flooring.

The Main Street entrance on the north side of the parking lot required new concrete, which was poured in November.

The sanctuary had a sensor that repeatedly triggered false alarms, which required many conversations with our security provider. New reflector panels were installed, and all is now well.

We continue to maintain a safe, clean and functioning facility that serves our preschool, ministries and worship services.



A special thanks to the Sunshine Team, who help every first Thursday of the month at 9:30am with odd jobs. All are welcome to join us! Many hands make light work!

Financial Reports

First Lutheran Foundation Fund

The Foundation/Endowment Fund was established in December 1989 upon the passing of Ms. Mabel L. Anderson. Mabel was a longtime member of First Lutheran, having been baptized and confirmed here. Her will/trust bequest a substantial sum to First Lutheran in memory of her parents, Peder and Johanna Anderson. It was Mabel's wish that this monetary gift would enable further growth of our church, its ministries and stewardship within the community.

Per the Foundation Fund bylaws, 5% of its total assets can be spent each year toward four categories:

1) Mabel Anderson Scholarships (for graduating high school seniors), 2) Community Outreach (grants to agencies to which the congregation relates and to programs designed for those in our parish area who are in spiritual or economic need), 3) ELCA Related Missions (home and overseas) and 4) Capital Improvements of First Lutheran Church. The Foundation has graciously donated over \$120,000 to various organizations over the past 10 years.

Contributions to the Foundation Fund are not spent, but invested. The money is currently invested in mutual funds managed by two fiduciary investment money managers. As such, contributions made to the Foundation Fund serve as "seeds" that keep on giving. Contributions can be made through gifts, wills and estates through estate planning, memorials, beneficiary designations through life insurance policies and other ways.

Committee members: Audrey Vinz (chairperson), Sharon Kjos, Michelle Logan, Joel Miller, Ann Nelson, Randy Nedrelo and Merri Shupe.

INVESTMENTS AS OF 12/31/2023

Merchants Bank Checking Account: \$7,175.16
Thrivent Mutual Funds: \$152,224.75
Edward Jones Mutual Funds: \$164,994.36

THE FOUNDATION COMMITTEE APPROVED DISBURSEMENTS TOTALING \$13,915 FOR 2023 CONSISTING OF THE FOLLOWING:

Category 1: Scholarships \$4,175
Category 2: Community Outreach \$4,175
 Oasis Respite - \$500
 RSVP - \$825
 Confluence - \$1,200
 Holmen Area Community Center - \$1,650
Category 3: ELCA Related Missions \$3,750
 First Lutheran Preschool - \$800
 Knitters - \$1,000
 Quilters - \$300
 Helping Hands Fund - \$500
 Our Saviors Clothes Closet - \$750
Category 4: Capital Improvements Unrequested



Celebrating some of our 2023 scholarship recipients at First Lutheran.

2023 Financial/2024 Budget

First Lutheran Church Operating Budget

Year Ending December 31, 2023

	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2023 Budget	2024 Proposed Budget
Operating Receipts				
General Fund Giving	\$ 684,074	\$ 682,499	\$ 725,000	\$ 680,000
Preschool Ministry	135,274	125,617	124,200	123,300
Receipts - Other	33,011	39,681	35,100	44,000
Receipts - Miscellaneous	2,666	9,561	5,100	14,000
Total Operating Receipts	\$ 855,025	\$ 857,358	\$ 889,400	\$ 861,300
Operating Expenses				
Worship Ministry	\$ 19,714	\$ 20,050	\$ 21,000	\$ 23,100
Faith Alive! Ministries				
Programmatic Ministries (includes Preschool)	150,424	150,017	150,000	154,400
Total Faith Alive! Ministries	150,424	150,017	150,000	154,400
Outreach & Caring Ministries				
Mission Outreach	99,113	85,019	120,500	80,300
Outreach and Hospitality	1,786	2,763	1,600	7,100
Church in Society	50	257	300	0
Stewardship	6,972	8,466	5,500	6,500
Total Outreach & Caring Ministries	107,921	96,505	127,900	93,900
Foundational Support Ministry				
Conferences and Conventions	1,630	1,883	1,500	1,800
Employee Salaries	310,880	330,372	336,600	341,000
Employee Benefits	113,103	103,904	108,300	114,500
Church Office	36,901	36,410	34,000	40,700
Communications	6,043	4,093	7,200	7,000
Property/Maintenance	25,841	27,508	25,400	31,400
Other	8,579	9,098	7,200	4,300
Insurance	28,093	26,695	29,700	29,600
Utilities	33,961	33,351	35,000	34,000
Debt Reduction	4,231	5,641	5,600	5,600
Total Foundational Support Ministry	569,262	578,955	590,500	609,900
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 847,321	\$ 845,527	\$ 889,400	\$ 881,300
Excess of Operating Receipts Over (Under) Operating Expenses	\$ 7,704	\$ 11,831	\$ -	\$ (20,000)
Utilization of Operating Reserves to Supplement Shortfall				20,000
Net Excess of Operating Receipts Over (Under) Operating Expenses after Utilization of Operating Reserves	\$ 7,704	\$ 11,831	\$ -	\$ -

2023 Cash Summary

Year Ending December 31, 2023

Cash Balance, 1/1/23		\$	352,835
Sources of Cash:			
Operating Receipts	\$	857,358	
"Net" increase in Dedicated Accounts		<u>65,426</u>	922,784
Uses of Cash:			
Operating Expenses	\$	845,527	
Capital Campaign Expenses		20,697	
Increase in Prepaid Expenses		395	
Decrease in Accounts Payable		<u>4,723</u>	(871,342)
Cash Balance, 12/31/23		<u>\$</u>	<u>404,277</u>
Cash Summary:			
Operating Account	\$	187,102	
Dedicated Accounts		161,541	
Capital Campaign/Reserve Account		55,634	
Total Cash Balance, 12/31/23		<u>\$</u>	<u>404,277</u>

2023 Dedicated Accounts

	Balance 1/1/2023	Year To Date Receipts	Year To Date Expenses	Balance 12/31/2023
Mission Outreach				
700 Disaster Relief	75.00	300.00	325.00	50.00
701 World Hunger	7,092.18	4,942.79	11,610.63	424.34
703 LIRS Immigration Refugee	14.04	4.68	18.72	0.00
Mission Outreach	<u>7,181.22</u>	<u>5,247.47</u>	<u>11,954.35</u>	<u>474.34</u>
Education				
710 Christ Ed Development	892.44	0.00	892.44	0.00
Education	<u>892.44</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>892.44</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Worship				
720 Handbell Fund	(531.28)	1,000.00	0.00	468.72
721 Choir Fund	839.57	0.00	0.00	839.57
722 Altar Flowers	243.60	1,858.26	1,572.00	529.86
724 Funeral Inc/Exp	1,321.42	1,675.00	941.87	2,054.55
725 Wedding Fees	560.80	1,700.00	975.00	1,285.80
Worship	<u>2,434.11</u>	<u>6,233.26</u>	<u>3,488.87</u>	<u>5,178.50</u>
Youth & Family				
730 Youth Fund	710.29	24,865.11	15,080.38	10,495.02
733 Clothes Closet	2,987.01	10,010.00	1,914.14	11,082.87
736 Clothes Closet-La Crosse	4,302.75	17,900.00	7,552.29	14,650.46
737 Clothes Closet-Diverse	2,334.77	0.00	2,208.29	126.48
740 Summer Youth Trip Fund	400.00	0.00	400.00	0.00
741 Middle School Mission Trip	0.00	2,397.99	900.00	1,497.99
745 ELCA Youth Gathering Fund	0.00	13,550.40	4,350.00	9,200.40
Youth & Family	<u>10,734.82</u>	<u>68,723.50</u>	<u>32,405.10</u>	<u>47,053.22</u>
Community Impact				
728 Operation Christmas Child	53.34	78.89	132.23	0.00
738 Community Impact	1,768.20	0.00	960.98	807.22
Community Impact	<u>1,821.54</u>	<u>78.89</u>	<u>1,093.21</u>	<u>807.22</u>
Memorials				
750 Designated Memorials	8,427.95	1,977.16	6,911.45	3,493.66
751 Non-Designated Memorial	4,569.22	4,235.00	0.00	8,804.22
752 Jane Skogen Low Memorial	6,354.21	320.00	0.00	6,674.21
754 Piano Fund	6,037.49	0.00	0.00	6,037.49
755 Stained Glass Lighting	1,265.15	10.00	0.00	1,275.15
Memorials	<u>26,654.02</u>	<u>6,542.16</u>	<u>6,911.45</u>	<u>26,284.73</u>
Special Events				
770 Church Women	2,775.07	1,810.00	1,159.38	3,425.69
Special Events	<u>2,775.07</u>	<u>1,810.00</u>	<u>1,159.38</u>	<u>3,425.69</u>
Other				
7 Foundation Account	6,577.11	13,475.00	12,876.95	7,175.16
8 Youth Ministry Associate	3,000.00	0.00	3,000.00	0.00
9 T. Skogen Estate Fund	0.00	39,113.38	0.00	39,113.38
756 Office Refurbish	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
782 First Helping Hands Funds	807.75	3,223.00	2,350.00	1,680.75
789 Stephen Ministries	700.00	0.00	700.00	0.00
790 Office Discretionary Fund	624.45	0.00	0.00	624.45
791 Seminarian Fund	3,035.00	0.00	0.00	3,035.00
792 Faith Alive Resource Center	905.10	0.00	0.00	905.10
796 Organ Fund	29,452.00	930.00	0.00	30,382.00
798 House	3,850.03	0.00	2,565.72	1,284.31
801 Sugar Creek Bible Camp	3,270.47	3,157.06	2,410.77	4,016.76
803 Sugar Creek Counselor	1,550.00	0.00	1,200.00	350.00
Other	<u>53,871.91</u>	<u>59,898.44</u>	<u>25,203.44</u>	<u>88,566.91</u>
CASH-DEDICATED FUNDS	<u>106,365.13</u>	<u>148,533.72</u>	<u>83,108.24</u>	<u>171,790.61</u>



FIRST LUTHERAN

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 [Youtube.com/1stlu](https://www.youtube.com/1stlu)

[#faithalive365](https://www.youtube.com/1stlu)

First Lutheran is a congregation of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

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 Hollantse Boerenlities en Contradansen, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

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Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice. Read stories and learn more at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America