

2024 ANNUAL MEETING

HELD JANUARY 26, 2025

Annual Meeting Agendas

Opening Prayer

Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation (CLCF) Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Approve the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting held on January 28, 2024
 - Motion to approve Foundation Annual Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve Foundation Annual Report
3. Annual Report
4. Other Business
5. Adjournment

Christiania Lutheran Church (CLC) Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Approve the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting held on January 28, 2024
3. Present and Approve reports
 - Senior Pastor Report - Pastor Jon Rhodes
 - Associate Pastor Report - Pastor Joy Knoppel
 - Treasurer Report - prepared by Linda Heine, Christiania's Treasurer, presented by Christian Donovan, President
 - All Other Reports
4. Approve Ballot of Candidates for Council and Leadership Teams
5. Approve 2025 Budget
6. Unfinished business
7. New Business
8. President's Comments

Closing Prayer

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Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation (CLCF)

Notes from January 28, 2024, Annual Meeting

Call to Order:

Secretary Warren Peterson called the meeting to order. President Larry Thompson was unable to attend the meeting.

Secretary's Report:

Minutes from the Jan. 29, 2023, Foundation annual meeting were reviewed. Motion by congregation to approve, second by Joel Ruan. No further discussion and motion passed.

Annual Report Review:

Warren reviewed the three Foundation funds and the purpose of the Foundation; To encourage, receive, and manage gifts from members and friends of Christiania Lutheran Church for the purpose of furthering Christ's work and teaching within the congregation, the Lutheran Church and its world mission.

1. The Cemetery Fund: can be used to provide care, upkeep and improvements to the church cemeteries.
2. The Endowment Fund: can be used for program enhancements, education and leadership development, outreach, capital improvements and other grant requests as the Foundation Board determines.
3. Special Purpose Fund: to be available for special purposes as determined by the Foundation Board or as the donor directs

Board Members:

* Larry Thompson	President	In LAST year of 2 nd consecutive term
* Julie Fish	Treasurer	In last year of 1 st term
* Warren Peterson	Secretary	In last year of 1 st term
* Barb Bachman		In 2 nd term, expires 2024
* Daryl Rieck		In 2 nd term, expires 2024
* Christian Donovan		In 2 nd term, expires 2024

- Sr. Pastor Jon Rhodes

NOTE: Foundation bylaws allow for board members to serve consecutive 4 year terms. Larry will retire from the Board after serving for 8 years and Julie & Warren completed their first 4 year term. Barb, Daryl and Christian will retire at the end of 2024 after serving two - 4 year terms. The Board will elect a new President at their first meeting in 2024.

Treasurer's Report:

Financials, comparing results from 12/31/2022 vs 12/31/2023

Balances as of:	12/31/2022	12/31/2023
Cemetery Trust Fund	\$ 297,543	\$ 333,533
Endowment Fund	\$ 279,055	\$ 331,643
Special Purpose Fund	\$ 1,769	\$ 1,769
Admin Expense acct	\$ 1,310	\$ 2,325
Total	\$ 579,677	\$ 669,260

Note: The Endowment Fund balance is as of 11/30/23, as the ELCA 12/31/23 statement was not received as of the time of this report.
Financial Summary: \$5,930 grants paid, \$1,675 expenses paid, and \$89,583 increase in market value

Grants submitted and paid in 2023 totaling \$5,930;
* \$3,400 for CYF Camp Onomia camperships
* \$500 for DfD (Dignity for Daughters program in Tanzania)
* \$630 for cemetery grounds maintenance
* \$500 to sponsor a student scholarship for Iringa / Ihemi
* \$500 for Christiania youth staffer at Camp Onomia
* \$200 for youth visiting Tanzania
* \$200 for youth - Sunday School

Expenses paid in 2023 totaling \$1,675;
* \$1,650 for tax preparation and consulting services
* \$25 for Minnesota Attorney General Annual Registration Fee

The board is very grateful again for the gifts received in 2023 which totaled \$5,530 (\$1,820 to the Cemetery Fund and \$3,710 to the Endowment fund).

The “Wreaths of Love” fundraiser also experienced a very successful 12th year. As a result, from the proceeds, \$868 was donated to the Cemetery Trust Fund.

Motion from Congregation to accept the treasurer’s report, second by Robin Martin. No further discussion and motion passed.

Election of Christiania Foundation Board

There are three open positions with Larry Thompson retiring and Julie Fish and Warren Peterson completing their first 4-year term

Ballot submitted to the Congregation for voting.

- Julie Fish - eligible for a 2nd consecutive 4-year term
- Warren Peterson - eligible for a 2nd consecutive 4-year term
- Jamie Minea - 1st 4-year term

The congregation by a show of hands APPROVED Julie, Warren, and Jamie for the terms as noted in the ballot.

General Comments

The Board wants to thank again ALL who supported the Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation in 2023 and a big thank you to Larry Thompson for his faithful service as President.

With no further questions or discussions, Foundation Secretary Warren Peterson adjourned the Foundation annual meeting.

Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation (CLCF)

2024 Annual Report

The Foundation Board's purpose: To encourage, receive and manage gifts from members and friends of Christiania Lutheran Church for the purpose of furthering Christ's work and teaching within the congregation, the Lutheran Church, and its world mission.

There are three separate funds:

1. The Cemetery Fund: can be used to provide care, upkeep and improvements to the church cemeteries.
2. The Endowment Fund: can be used for program enhancements, education and leadership development, outreach, capital improvements and other grant requests as the Foundation Board determines.
- 3 The Special Purpose Fund: to be available for special purposes as determined by the Foundation Board or as the donor directs.

Board Members:

* Barb Bachman	President	Completed 2 nd term - retiring
* Julie Fish	Treasurer	Completed 1 st year of 2 nd term
* Warren Peterson	Secretary	Completed 1 st year of 2 nd term
* Jamie Minea	At Large	Completed 1 st year of 1 st term
* Daryl Rieck	At Large	Completed 2 nd term - retiring
* Christian Donovan	At Large	Completed 2 nd term - retiring
* Pastor Jon Rhodes		

NOTE: Christian served two roles; at large member and Council President

NOTE: Foundation bylaws allow for board members to serve 2 consecutive 4 year terms.

Grants submitted and paid in 2024 totaling \$12,568;

- * \$ 4,000 for youth Camp Onomia camperships
- * \$ 500 to sponsor a student scholarship for Iringa / Ihemi
- * \$ 250 for Iringa / Ihemi capital campaign
- * \$ 1,000 support staffing at Camp Onomia
- * \$ 4,400 for youth trip to national meeting
- * \$ 903 for GaGa pit materials
- * \$ 1,515 for Stewardship materials & related expenses

Expenses paid in 2024 totaling \$2,025:

- \$25 for state annual non-profit filing fee
- \$2,000 for annual non-profit tax preparation fee

Balances as of:	12/31/2023	12/31/2024
Cemetery Trust Fund	\$ 333,523	\$ 356,542
Endowment Fund	\$ 331,643	\$ 362,202
Special Purpose Fund	\$ 1,769	\$ 2,499
Admin Expense acct	\$ 2,325	\$ 2,000
Total	\$ 669,260	\$ 723,243

Note: The Endowment Fund balance is as of 11/30/2024 as the ELCA and John Hancock statement were not received as of the time of this report.

Financial Summary: \$12,568 grants paid, \$2,025 expenses paid, \$8,445 in donations and \$54,083 increase in year-end market value (after grants & expenses).

The board is very grateful again for the gifts received in 2024 which totaled \$8,445 (\$4,585 to the Cemetery Fund, \$3,130 to the Endowment fund and \$730 to the Special Purpose Fund).

The “Wreaths of Love” fundraiser also experienced a very successful 12th year. As a result, from the proceeds, \$568 was donated to the Cemetery Trust Fund.

The Board wants to thank again ALL who supported the Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation in 2024 as well as Pastor Jon Rhodes for his counsel and support.

Respectfully submitted, Warren Peterson (Foundation Secretary)

Election of Christiania Foundation Board

Following is the recommended ballot to fill the vacancies of Barb Bachman, Daryl Rieck and Christian Donovan.

- Brian McGregor - At Large, 4 year term
- Brian Spors - At Large, 4 year term
- Eric Hanson - At Large, 2 year term

NOTE: At the first Christiania Foundation Board meeting in 2025, the Board will elect a new President. The first meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2025.

CHRISTIANIA LUTHERAN CHURCH BALLOT 2025

(Names without parentheses () do not need to be voted on; they are completing terms they have been elected to in previous years)

Congregation Council

President: () **Brian Buechele** _____ 1 year term
Vice Pres: () **Bruce Lundeen** _____ 1 year term (moves to President)
Secretary: () **Crisa Weerts** _____ 2 year term
At Large:
() **Jon Oney** _____ 2 year term
() **Vonny Laddusaw** _____ 2 year term
() **Adam Fausch** _____ 2 year term
Dan Hurrle ---- 1 year remaining
Robin Martin ---- 1 year remaining

Ministry Board

() _____ Stewardship 2 year term
() _____ Evangelism 2 year term
Kim Robertson ---- CYF 1 year remaining
Lucy Hurrle ---- Congregational Life 1 year remaining
Jane Ward ---- Worship 1 year remaining
Cindy Hildreth ---- Missions 1 year remaining
Anne Schindeldecker ---- Membership 1 year remaining

Nominating Committee

() _____ 2 year term
() _____ 2 year term
Christian Donovan --- 2 years remaining
Eric Weerts --- 1 year remaining
William Kanfield --- 1 year remaining
Sharon Buckley --- 1 year remaining

Audit Committee

() **Karin Moore** _____ 3 year term
() **Eric Weerts** _____ 3 year term
() **Renee Storlie** _____ 3 year term
Bill Kanfield _____ Transition

STATISTICS

Deaths and Funeral/Memorial Dates

Jill Nash - January 6, 2024
 Lois Haglund - January 12, 2024
 Linda Camp - February 8, 2024
 Hollis Larson - February 13, 2024
 Wally Dale - March 21, 2024
 Carl Wicklund - April 10, 2024
 Ordella Gilbertson - May 10, 2024
 Nicholas Young - May 26, 2024
 Royal Saunders (graveside) - June 8, 2024
 Phil Holforty (graveside) - June 17, 2024
 Patsy Pederson - July 2, 2024
 Clark Smith - July 14, 2024
 Lori Henry - August 5, 2024
 Pastor David Anderson - August 24, 2024
 Alan Buechele (graveside) - October 22, 2024
 Bob Jacobson - December 28, 2024

Sunday Worship Attendance

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Avg</u>
In Person	6661	133
On Line	3415	70

Mid-Week Worship (Jan-May)

In Person	776	60
On Line	646	50

Mid-Week Worship (Sep-Dec)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Avg</u>
In Person	374	34

Mid-Week Lenten (Totals)

In Person	436
On Line	188

Confirmations

Raeanna DuLac
 Charlie Fausch
 Max Feilen
 Wyatt Flaa
 Jessa Jorgensen
 Elizabeth Mendez
 Aubrey Moore
 Cooper Smith
 Bailey Strese
 Elise Zaffke

Maundy Thursday (Totals)

In Person	76
On Line	30

Good Friday (Totals)

In Person	107
On Line	70

Easter Sunday (Totals)

In Person	287
On Line	120

Baptisms

McCoy Petersen - May 19, 2024
 Adelyn Christine Dahl - June 23, 2024
 Quincy Ann Lokensgard - June 30, 2024
 Hayden Gail Beissel - July 14, 2024
 Chelsey Ann Riess - September 1, 2024
 Rylie Lynn Pieper - December 15, 2024

Confirmation (Totals)

In Person	303
On Line	58

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Total Avg

In Person	98	54
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Marriages

Danielle Harper & Tilan DeCosta - August 1, 2024
 Meghan Brown & Noah Norgren - August 3, 2024
 Kaitlyn Golant & Tucker Skime - September 14, 2024
 Abby Emmons & Chris Billings - September 21, 2024

Longest Night

9 total

Christmas Eve (Totals)

In Person	448
On Line	74

Affirmations of Baptism

Lauren & Arik Lokensgard - June 30, 2024
 Pat & Gary Hall - August 11, 2024
 Betty Wicklund - December 15, 2024
 Coleen & Bill Keyser - December 22, 2024

Christmas Day (Totals)

In Person	62
On Line	52

Christiania Lutheran Church (CLC) 2023 Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 28, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

President Bill Kanfield called the meeting to order at 10:22 a.m. There were enough church members present for a quorum

Opening prayer provided by Pastor Jon Rhodes.

Approve Minutes from January 29, 2023, Annual Meeting

The motion was made by Andrew Mendez and seconded by Eric Weerts to accept the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes without corrections.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Reports

CLC Meeting Minutes:

Pastor's report- Senior Pastor: Jon Rhodes

- We accomplished a lot together in 2023.
- The Refresh project was nearly complete at the end of 2023.
- We welcomed Nick Clark and Sue Megrund from Interserve this last year.
- Listening sessions for Discovery Team and then Discovery Team for hiring spiritual leader.
- Offsite worship for a few months.
- Flexibility and Grace were good words.
- Directed to page 4 with the list of Baptisms and Confirmations. Of note, an adult was in 2023, and a teenage set of twins invited by a Christiania family.

CYF report-Kim Robertson Committee Chair

- Welcomed Interserve interim CYF leader, Nick Clark, and happy to have him continue to serve.
- Nick Clark created a Discovery team to develop a congregational survey and recommendation. The congregation voted to proceed with a call for a Deacon or Associate Pastor, and the call committee was formed and continues the call process.
- A thank you to all adults as well as many young people who volunteered with Sunday School or confirmation to help children grow in knowledge and faith. On 11/19/23, there were eight confirmands for a public affirmation of baptism.
- Vacation Bible School will be returning next year.
- Thank you to Dan Steele and Dave Frame for leading the Boundary Waters group.
- The 2024 ELCA Youth gathering is in New Orleans July 16-20 and there are talks with Christiania Highview regarding this trip.
- Thank you to Christiania and the Foundation for financial support for camp and youth trips.
- Thank you to the Council President for supporting youth.

Northfield Retirement Community- President Bill Kanfield

- Tom Nielsen, CEO NRC, has expressed appreciation for Christiania support.

Treasurer's Report-Prepared by Linda Heine, Congregational Treasurer, presented by Bill Kanfield, President.

- Offering, expenses, and deficit had lower revenues than expenditures. A transfer of \$20,000 occurred from the ready reserve fund due to deficits in the checking account balance. Cash balances per fund remain positive.
- Giving and offering were less than budgeted.
- The office and facilities expenses for 2024 are projected to be lower to near completion of the Refresh project.
- The loss/deficit for 2023 is \$60,600 offset by checking balances and \$20,000.

Other reports as submitted in the annual meeting packet.

Motion made by Joan Eckdahl and seconded by Joel Ruen to approve all reports as presented in the 2023 Annual Report without corrections.

Discussion: Christiania is self-funded with no debt.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Election of Officers

The presented ballot is full. There were three calls for nominations with no additional candidates identified.

Motion made by Anne Schindeldecker and seconded by David Frame to approve the 2024 ballot for: Congregational Council members-at-large, Ministry board, audit committee, and nominating committee.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Motion made by David Frame and seconded by Dick Panek to approve the 2024 Congregational Council leadership ballot for the following as presented.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Approval of the 2024 budget

- The 2024 budget presented is a balanced budget.
- There is an additional ELCA Tanzania benevolence mission fund for 2024 in addition to the Ihemi and Iringa giving.
- The CYF Leader budget increased from \$60,000 to \$72,000.
- Facility expenses are budgeted lower for 2024 due to roof insulation and Refresh enhancements which are 1.2% of actuals.
- Budgeted giving increased by 14% to accommodate anticipated staffing changes and operations costs.

Motion made by Dan Hurre and seconded by Christian Donovan to approve the 2024 proposed budget.

Discussion:

- Office expenses were \$80,000 in 2023 and are now projected as \$35,000 in 2024. This is due to contracts for Interserve (Nick Clark and Sue Megrund) being paid out of office expenses and not projected to continue. The CYF Leader salary is present for part of 2023.
- The increase in CYF salary is due to the pool of candidates and limited Deacon candidates. The Synod salary guidelines include a higher salary for an Associate Pastor salary vs. a Deacon. Christiania was weak on the synod salary guideline in what we were offering which limits candidates.
- A question was raised about housing allowance with Associate Pastor salary. Housing allowance is usually the candidate's choice. The choice of how much the candidate takes in housing allowance is the candidate's choice due to tax implications. There will be a second opportunity to vote on the CYF position salary when a candidate is chosen. If not approved, it may be difficult to get a candidate this far in the selection process. There is a larger pool of Associate Pastors vs. Deacons. Some good leads are developing.
- A question as to whether this role will absorb the communication needs with Interserve changes will be determined later.

Motion passed by voice vote with some descending votes.

Approval of constitutional updates

- *Motion made by Cheryl Bahnsen*
- *Seconded by Lucy Hurrle to approve the proposed Christiania Constitution updates.*
- There was a request for Pastor to teach confirmation. This requires an amendment to the constitution, and one is not prepared for this meeting but can be addressed later.
- What is the process of making an amendment to the Constitution? The Congregational Council would need to receive a request to create a committee, the Council then starts up a constitutional committee and then work forward. It would need to align with the ELCA model constitution.
- New members receive a copy of the constitution.

Motion passed by voice vote with several descending votes.

Unfinished Business

- Refresh final walk-through.
- ERC refund around \$58,000
- Concerns raised that this money may be smart for a business, but does it make sense for a church?
- Separation of church and state issues.
- CYF Director Call process
- Communications role recommendations and implementation.

New Business

- Continual assessment of the Christiania facility and ministry for improvements.
- Mission and outreach
- The next round of Property Committee requests includes for consideration:
 - Courtyard windows
 - Electronic sign
 - Parking Lot upgrade
 - Asphalt

- Parking Lot lights
- External Light Timers
- Mowing
- Landscaping
- Ash and Cottonwood Trees along the boulevard
- Leveraging Scouts for church projects
- Cleaning Service
- Pest Control
- Bees, ants, mice
- Window coverings
- Stoves/Ovens

President's Comments/Adjournment

- Two words outdo yourself in 2024. It has been an amazing group of people at Christiania and keep it going. Bring a friend if you come regularly. Volunteer- ask yourself what can I do to make a difference? We have an amazing congregation.
- George Silverness led us all to thank Bill for a job well done. There were many challenges during his tenure which included learning real estate and situations that even perplexed realtors!

President, Bill Kanfield adjourned the annual meeting at 11:34 am.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Jon Rhodes led us in a closing prayer which spoke in part about our unity in Christ.

Respectfully submitted,
Lonna Selkirk, Congregational Council Secretary

Congregational Special Meeting Minutes

Sunday, March 10, 2024 · 10:15 am · Christiania Lutheran Church, Lakeville MN

Christian Donovan, <i>President</i>	Brian Buechele, <i>At-large member</i>
Scott Tempel, <i>Vice President</i>	Dan Hurre, <i>At-large member</i>
Andrew Mendez, <i>Secretary</i>	Terry Laschinger, <i>At-large member</i>
Linda Heine, <i>Treasurer</i>	Robin Martin, <i>At-large member</i>
Pastor Jon Rhodes	Warren Peterson, <i>At-large member</i>

1. **Introduction.** Christian explained the purpose and format of the meeting to the congregation: to discuss and vote on calling Pastor Joy Knoppel as Associate Pastor. Scott and Brian ensured that there was a quorum present as per constitutional requirements.
2. **Call to order.** Called to order at 10:04 am.
3. **Opening prayer.** Led by Pastor Jon.
4. **Presentation of resolution.** *Resolution 2024-1* was presented by Andrew to the congregation.
5. **Call for motion.** Christian called for *Resolution 2024-1* to be adopted. Robin Martin moved; Denise Kanfield seconded.

6. **Discussion.** Christian opened the floor for discussion. Rob Metz—chair of Call Committee—thanked Call Committee members for their service: Robin Martin, Stacy Feilen, Ellie Fausch, Steph Steinbron, Angie Wubben.
 7. **'Call the question'.** Christian closed the floor and called for a vote to adopt *Resolution 2024-1*.
 8. **Vote.** Ballots were passed out and collected. Zoom moderator sent advance-registered online member attendees to individual breakout rooms so votes could be gathered. Zoom moderator collected votes and presented them to certifier for collation with in-person ballots.
 9. **Announce voting results.** Resolution passed. 133 ballots: 126 yes, 4 no, 3 blanks. Pastor Joy Knoppel will be called as Christiania's Associate Pastor.
 10. **Closing prayer.** Led by Pastor Jon.
 11. **Adjournment.** Adjourned at 10:38 am.
- Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Mendez
Council Secretary

Report of Senior Pastor

Pastor Jon Rhodes

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

(Roman 15:13 NRSVUE)



Early in 2024, Christiania's Refresh of our church building came to completion as we took delivery of the last of the new pews, and the pews were installed in the sanctuary. Thank you, Designer Stephanie McKenna, General Contractor Josh Carlson, the team from Treasured Spaces, and the team from Gunder Church Furniture for your excellent work. The Refresh of our facilities has provided us with an amazing and updated home for worship, fellowship, mission, and service. I am most excited that in addition to updating we made the church more accessible with a ramp to the altar area, communion rail accessible on the main floor, better sound and lights, and a third accessible non-gendered bathroom. As we transition from the major project of refreshing our physical space, I offer a special thanks to Cheryl and Bruce Mohn, as well as the Refresh and Revive Teams, and many others who made our Refresh possible in their shared dreams, planning, and generous sharing of time and financial support. Many of us have recognized that in this time of Christiania's lifecycle, we are continuing to Refresh: our staffing, ministries, and life together. The Refresh of staffing appears to have started in earnest in 2024. This year was a transitional year for us and our staff. Special thank you to some of our favorites who completed their service and ministry to Christiania: Interim Youth Minister Nick Clark (May), Office Manager/Bookkeeper Carri Tuma (September), and Interim Communications Manager Sue Megrund (December). Thank you for your friendship and your service to God and this community of faith. We have been blessed and changed by each of you.

2024 brought new energy and life in these new additions to Christiania and our staff: Associate Pastor Joy Knoppel (May), Office Manager/Bookkeeper Coleen Keyser (December), and Communications Manager Alyssa Dale (December). We are thankful for your energy, exuberance, and presence among us, and your passion for the work you all do so well. We look forward to long and fruitful partnerships with each of you for many years to come and we are wondering how you each will change us—and how we will change you.

Thank you to all those who selflessly stepped in to cover our office and bookkeeping when we were in the interim. Big thanks to Kim Robertson who bridged our bookkeeping and kept our bills paid and Treasurer Linda Heine who worked in great partnership with Kim during our transition. Kim was a superhero for Christiania during our time of need. So too, we thank Karen Frame, Renee Storlie, Jane Ward, Cheryl Schindeldecker, Joan Eckdahl, Louise Anderson, Julie Booth, and others who covered the office in September, October, November, and December. We also see the continued Refreshing of Christiania in changes to the Auditing Team, especially during the fourth quarter of 2024. Thank you, Cheryl Bahnsen, Sue Jacobson, and Vicky Thompson for your years of service to Christiania in many ways—particularly on the Auditing Team. Also, we thank Bill Kanfield, David Frame, and Paul Haglund for serving as Interim Auditors until a new team is elected in our end-of-January Annual meeting (1/26/25).

I expect 2025 will bring us a continued Refreshing in leadership teams and, perhaps, team and committee structures—how exciting! I'm looking forward to visioning on behalf of our men's ministry in the first quarter of 2025. Also making plans to gather a small group of visioners to be in prayer and discernment on behalf of Christiania for where we're headed and what's next.

It has been a pure joy to partner with Pastor Joy Knoppel since Christiania called her to us in March. Having another pastor has been an amazing blessing to me personally—I didn't realize how stretched I was. Her partnership has allowed us to serve Christiania better and to provide extended coverage in the world with our partners. Camp Onomia has benefited as both Pastor Joy, and I have taken active leadership roles with their Women's and Men's Ministries. Pastor Joy was part of planning and leading Camp Onomia's Women's Retreat in November, and I had an opportunity to plan and lead two different men's retreats in January and November.

Pastor Joy and I partnered with Pastor Amy Johnson and our friends from Highview Christiania Lutheran Church to plan, prepare, and host two special worship services: the National Day of Prayer Service in May and the Thanksgiving Eve Ecumenical Worship & Fellowship in November. Together with Pastor Joy and Dr. Matt Steinbron we also planned and led a Christmas Communion Worship for residents at Northfield Retirement Community. Dr. Matt and I also prepared and led Communion Worship together at Walker Methodist—Highview Hills in July and October.

Our summer worship looked different in 2024. In addition to Sunday morning worship, Pastor Joy and I enjoyed Summer Psalm Walks in the multitude of Lakeville area Parks with both human and dog friends. It was good for our bodies and our spirits—both fabulous and holy. In summer 2024 Christiania continued monthly worship in the park at Wagner Park in Elko New Market where we enjoyed fellowship, a picnic dinner, and worship in a public way.

In the fall of 2024, we started a new Refresh: “We Make the Road by Walking” by Brian McLaren. Bible studies and worship will use McLaren’s wonderful devotional for one year to guide our study and worship.

Most weeks of 2024, Pastor Joy and I gather with the two pastors of St. John’s Lutheran in Lakeville: Kim Kylo and Nathan Lyke to record a podcast: Altar Echo. We dwell in the word together, sharing insight and discussing what this ancient word has for us currently. You can learn more about it on our website, monthly newsletter, weekly Sunday bulletin insert, or in Christiania’s weekly E-News.

In 2024 I continued my participation in two weekly spiritual groups that keep me grounded and healthy: Contemplative Prayer and Text Study. Both keep me in holy conversations with colleagues, provide support, and challenge me to keep growing and learning. I am an active member of South Conference Pastors & Deacons which provides monthly gatherings where we connect, worship, learn, and share a meal and some laughs. I am also one of three pastor leaders, along with St. John’s Lutheran and Hosanna Church who provide monthly Communion Worship at Walker Methodist–Highview Hills. Again, thank you Dr. Matt for joining in with me on this important ministry.

This year Pastor Joy and I accompanied a team from Christiania as delegates to the 2024 St. Paul Area Synod Assembly in May. Pastor Joy and I attended the 2024 Bishop’s Fall Theological Conference with other pastors and deacons of our synod for this annual October together.

Christiania has a long, rich tradition of financial generosity, and you, people of the church, have continued that history and tradition in your generous gifts which outfitted our worship space with new paraments, stoles, communion ware, and kitchen tools & appliances. Your generosity also funded Christiania’s participation in Stewardship for All Seasons and an angel donation to be accessed when we receive at least ten new Statements of Intent. Thanks be to God!

What will 2025 bring? We are working in the first quarter of 2025 to update our staff review process. We’ll be entering into a time of intentional visioning to better understand God’s plans for Christiania. I expect we will continue to Refresh the areas in our life together that need to be updated.

In the meantime, know both of your pastors love you and care for you. Please help us all by focusing on praying and listening to God’s still small voice, showing up, continuing to listen and discern, share when things are going wrong (but also when they’re going right). We will continue to do what your pastors have always done: worship, worship planning, preaching, teaching, visiting homebound and hospitalized, bringing communion, overseeing baptisms, funerals and memorials, gravesides, and even a few weddings. Pastor Joy and I will continue to listen for what God is doing in our midst and follow it. We will continue to partner in an endless variety of ways with Christiania’s primary partners: Lutheran Social Services, Camp Onomia, Urban Ventures, Northfield Retirement Community, and the tri-county food shelves (serving Scott, Dakota, and Rice counties). Know that we continue to pray for and with others and sit with folks experiencing loss and pain.

Submitted with love and respect,
Pastor Jon Rhodes Pastor

Report of Associate Pastor

Pastor Joy Knoppel

***This is my commandment, that you love one another
as I have loved you.***

(John 15:12 NRSVEU)



It has been a “joy” serving at Christiania Lutheran Church and I am so excited for what is still to come! Below you will find a list of projects and activities that I have been a part of this past year since May 2024. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions from the following list.

CYF

The CYF team at Christiania is amazing. The Sunday School kids are working their way through the Fruits of the Spirit and will finish in May. We also celebrated third grade Bibles and First Communion this year. Our two Sunday School leaders Jill S. and Angie W. have gone above and beyond in making sure that our volunteers and kids have the materials and space needed each week.

I have deeply enjoyed getting to know our Confirmation and High School students. This year some of our events have included Chipotle, The ELCA Youth Gathering (7 students), Trunk or Treat (21 Trunks), a Lock-In (19 students), sporadic coffee dates, Christmas Caroling, and snow tubing (20 students) on top of our Wednesday nights together. I am *immensely* grateful for our Confirmation and High School volunteers who consistently show up and make these activities possible.

We have been able to revamp one of the youth rooms and are in the process of working on the second one. Special thanks to Christian D., Daron D., and those who have donated gifts towards this project.

A huge thank you to Kim R. for sharing her wealth of knowledge, resources, time, and patience in helping me learn the CYF ropes at Christiania Lutheran Church!

Pastoral Community Outreach

Boba and I love visiting Northfield Retirement Home once a week and working with Urban Ventures once a month (Boba works with the preschool kids!) I had the chance to help plan the 2024 Women’s Retreat at Camp Onomia this year as well. I hope that our church will continue to find new and creative ways to deeply connect with the various organizations and communities around us.

This past summer Pr. Jon and I kicked off a new worship series based off of Brian McLaren’s book “We Make the Road by Walking” along with our Summer Psalm walks. We also started dinner church on Wednesday nights, and I believe that both have been going extremely well. In general Pr. Jon and I share worship planning, home visits, Bible Study, preaching, funerals, baptisms, and podcasting together. We make an excellent team, and I have loved learning alongside him on how to care for Christiania Lutheran Church.

Continuing Ed.

I am currently on the board of YCWI (Young Clergy Women International) and attended our conference in May. I also attended synod assembly (May), Fall Theological (October) and a First Call retreat (Dec). I have enjoyed going to weekly text studies and the South Conference gatherings as well.

Thank you for taking the time to read my report. As I mentioned earlier do not hesitate to contact me if you would like a deeper explanation on any of these topics. Please also know that I have felt immensely cared for by Christiania Lutheran and I adore serving here with you all.

Blessings of Peace,
Pr. Joy Knoppel

Congregation Council

Greetings from the 2024 Christiania Congregation Council and Executive Team,

We began the year with an orientation luncheon for our council members: Dan Hurrell, Warren Peterson, Brian Buechele, Robin Martin, Terry Laschinger, Scott Tempel, Andrew Mendez, and Linda Heine along with staff members and church commission heads. Much was accomplished throughout the year due to everyone's collaborative efforts. We welcomed a new Associate Pastor Joy Knoppel, who has fostered growth and participation among our youth and enhanced our Sunday services with her insightful sermons and engaging presence.

The council reviewed the personnel committee's recommendation to split the roles of Office Manager and Communications Manager. We were pleased to introduce the new hires: Coleen Keyser as Office Manager and Alyssa Dale as Communications Manager in worship on Sunday, December 22, 2024. A special thanks to Rob Metz for his leadership in this process, and to Kim Robertson for the countless hours she dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition for both Coleen and Alyssa.

The refresh of the church sanctuary has been completed, and we updated the office furniture for both Pastor Jon and Pastor Joy, as well as the youth room. Linda Heine, our treasurer, has been an invaluable asset in documenting all church expenses according to proper processes with council approvals. The council approved a landscaping budget to maintain the new landscaping renovation, generously donated by Barb Bachman.

With the council's approval and a generous donation covering the expenses, the Stewardship Commission launched a new campaign called "Stewardship for All Seasons" featuring updated, aesthetically pleasing brochures and bulletin inserts. This initiative aims to achieve ten additional new pledges and increase our overall levels of giving. Lastly, thanks to Andrew Mendez for his meticulous agenda preparation, along with the council's overall readiness for meetings, we were able to keep our meeting times to a couple of hours for the most part. Thank you to the council for your dedication to Christiania and for working together to accomplish all that we have this year.

Submitted by, Christian Donovan, Council President

Stewardship Ministry Team

All Seasons: Why Would One Give to Christiania

Committee Members: Christian Donovan, Eric Weerts, Lori Clausen

The Saint Paul Area Synod approached us in early fall of the year introducing a program called Stewardship for all Seasons. After sitting through several presentations from Synod representatives of the program and then having them present to the Christiania council, the council agreed it was time for us to make a change from the past and elevate our stewardship approach and messaging.

With a very generous donation from one of our council members covering the costs of the program we were able to move forward participating in the campaign. The core of the messaging is “Why would one give to Christiania?” This was articulated in a series of Sunday bulletin inserts as well as a trifold that was created highlighting Christiania’s accomplishments and the work being done and to be done.

These materials had a professional look and were distributed over the course of about 4 weeks culminating on a pledge Sunday.

Benchmarks of giving levels were presented from all the donations from the prior year with a request to move up a level if it is in reach.

Lastly, there was a request to consider a pledge this year if you had not pledged in the past. Many thanks to Eric Weerts for all his work pulling together the content for these brochures and Lori Clausen coordinating with the church office getting information and handling mailings. The committee is looking forward to celebrating the campaigns’ achievements soon.

Thanks to all for your continued support.

Submitted by Christian Donovan,
Co-chair Stewardship Commission
Eric Weerts / Lori Clausen

Property Committee

Refresh and Revive, Property Committee, Cemetery Committee

Refresh and Revive

- The Annual Report for the Refresh and Revive Committee will be completed by that Committee; however, Property members (Brad Smith and Bruce Mohn) were part of the oversight of the project, along with Cheryl Mohn.

Property Committee

Trees around the Church

Emerald Ash Borer were discovered in all Boulevard Ash trees. It was determined that only two trees were worth treating in an attempt to save them. Eight trees need to be removed likely this coming Fall/Winter. We will then look at all the trees around the church and decide whether to recommend replanting any in 2026.

Electrical Updates

A.J. Moore Electric replaced the outdoor light fixtures and upgraded the electrical needs in the kitchen. Thank you, Moore Family.

Landscape Maintenance

A member donated new landscape plants and materials. After a discussion on how to maintain these new plants, the Council approved an additional payment to Outdoor Innovations of \$1,500 annually to maintain the plantings, remove weeds, and mulch when necessary.

Farmland Rental

Brent Mohn and Dan Thompson continue to be good stewards of our land. They are in the 9th year of a 10-year contract. The rental for the 2024 - 2025 crop year has increased by \$18 per acre.

Snow Removal

Bob Fredrickson has been providing the majority of the snow removal services to Christiania since the late 1970s - at no cost to the church. Thank you, Bob.

Committee Membership

The Property Committee is always looking for people who can share their talents and lend a hand in keeping our facility running as smoothly as possible. If you see something in need of repair or maintenance, please feel free to reach out to one of the members or staff.

Cemetery Committees

Monument Repair

The East Cemetery Committee found a company that would repair many of the damaged gravestones. They repaired twenty stones in 2024. During spring cleanup, we will determine if there are other repairs needed.

New Cemetery Committee Members

Three church members came forward and volunteered to be on the Cemetery Committee. At the January 2025 Council, the following members were approved for membership: Dan Hurre, Robert Hurre, and Bill Hopkins. Thank You!

Columbarium

Cemetery members had further discussions on a columbarium. The Committee is still reevaluating our needs.

Respectfully submitted by Property Committee: Brad Smith, Dave Mohling, Bruce Mohn, Jeanne Nash and Cemetery Committee: Bruce and Deb Lundeen, Brad Smith, Joan and Jack Eckdahl.

Refresh/Revive

2024 Campaign

The Refresh project was completed, and the Revive Campaign was finalized. In July the fund balance for the Revive Campaign was \$16,315. It was very impressive that the project ended with a healthy credit balance thanks to the support of our members.

The decision was made to use about \$5500 for blinds for the new windows that were installed in the front courtyard. The plan is to move the remaining balance to the capital fund at the end of 2024.

The Refresh Project team would still like to purchase some greenery for the altar area. The actual purchase has not been finalized, but the plan is to purchase it in 2025 and use the funds that were moved to the capital fund.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Mohn

Worship Ministry Team

2024 Worship

Worship at Christiania provides many opportunities for members to serve. The Worship Ministry Team helps the pastors provide the congregation with meaningful and fulfilling worship services each week by ensuring each service has enough musicians and other individuals whose roles facilitate worship. These include greeters, communion assistants, readers, ushers, and the altar guild who coordinates communion and presentation of the altar area appropriate for the church seasons. We have awesome teams in place to ensure that services at Christiania are made special and beautiful for the remembrance of the birth, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

In 2024, we continued holding Sunday worship services at 9:00 a.m. throughout the year, and Wednesday services at 6:30 p.m. during the spring (both available in person and online). Once summer began, we reduced the number of Wednesday services to one per month and held them at Wagner Park (as we did in 2022 and 2023). Like the past couple of years, these park services were well attended, and we will likely continue them next summer. Wednesday worship changed in the fall when the pastors advocated to hold worship during dinner, thus starting our Dinner Church services. Dinner was served at 5:30 p.m. and service began at 6:00 p.m. as dinner was wrapping up. Holding service at 6:00 p.m. proved to be helpful for Confirmation and music ensembles since they were able to begin earlier with less time between events. We will continue Dinner Church this coming spring and reevaluate towards the end of spring to determine if we will resume it in the fall.

The annual Thanksgiving Eve service was held at Christiania this year. Participating churches usually include Highview Christiania and St. Nicholas Catholic Church, but St. Nicholas was unable to join us this year. The service will be held at Highview Christiania next year and we will reach out to other churches in the area to see if there is interest in a larger gathering like there used to be before the pandemic began. Soon after Thanksgiving, we put on the Broadway musical *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. We had three showings on December 7 at 4:00 & 7:00 p.m. and December 8 at 3:00 p.m.

The cast did an amazing job, and all of the shows had a tremendous turnout. The free-will donations were enough to cover the cost of the show materials and the remainder of the additional microphones that were needed (a generous donor covered the majority of the microphone cost). We are blessed with a supportive and generous congregation!

As we did in 2023, one of our December Sunday services (12/22/24) was a music-led service that included all of our ensembles. Rather than hold a concert outside of worship services, incorporating it into worship allows everyone in the church to experience it without having to drive back later in the day during a busy time of year. A separate Sunday School Christmas play was not held this year due to the time and effort many of the youth put into the musical. A full Sunday School play will be held next year, and we might try a rotating schedule of alternating between musical/drama and Sunday School play. Christmas Eve fell on a weekday this year, so we were able to return to our usual 3:00, 4:30, and 9:00 p.m. service times.

A special thank-you to David Frame for hardwiring the internet line to our video controller. We were having buffering issues during our streams using the Wi-Fi connection and the wiring paid off, no more issues! David also lowered the rear camera so that the street traffic is no longer visible to our online viewers. Thanks, David! Early in 2025, Matt will be upgrading the computer hardware to handle multiple simultaneous shows to different screens to allow the online viewers to have the same text that is projected in the building, but in a way that will not obstruct the entire screen.

We want to thank everyone who has volunteered for the wide variety of needs our worship services call for. All of your diligence and hard work has enriched our worship experience. God has truly blessed Christiania with talented individuals that all work together to make our worship special each week. We will continue to work with Pastor Jon Rhodes and Pastor Joy Knoppel to make sure our services are meaningful for all who attend.

Respectfully submitted,

Tania Drexler, Joan Eckdahl, Robin Martin, Dr. Matt Steinbron, and Jane Ward

Altar Guild

Serving on the Altar Guild

Why serve on the Altar Guild? Good question.

After several years of being a member, I continue to believe that the basic motivation for serving in the Altar Guild is gratitude. Members of the Altar Guild are grateful servants. We are blessed for all that God has done and is doing for us. This service demonstrates our thankfulness. In addition, it is a chance to work behind the scenes with some awesome fellow members. Martha Nelson, one of our past members, always said that once you are on the Altar Guild you always replace your hymnal “correctly” and she “encouraged” her husband to do the same. We come to notice things that most members likely take for granted.

This year, like most, has brought some changes. We are back in our fully refreshed and beautiful sanctuary. We can again receive communion at the rail on given Sundays. We are communing by intinction on 5th Sundays. We have begun using our beautiful paraments (appropriate for all seasons of the church year) made possible by memorial gifts from the families of Grace Storlie Hirdler, Bonnie Lindquist, and Pastor Charles von Fischer. We also have new communion trays for the wine and bread thanks to Don Eide, given in memory of Bonnie Lindquist. We are grateful for these gifts and encourage people to remember the Altar Guild when making decisions about memorial funds.

Our primary task is to prepare the altar area and sanctuary for services. We replace altar candles, change the paraments as appropriate for the church calendar, and care for the altar cloths and linens. Preparing the bread and wine for communion on Sundays and Wednesdays is a major focus for our group. Ensuring Bibles, hymnals, offering envelopes, and giving cards are available is an ongoing task. Ash Wednesday, Lenten services, Easter, summer worship, All Saints Sunday, confirmation, Christmas services, and church in the park are special times that require our attention and cooperation.

Next year I will count the times we prepare communion and the number of funerals, baptisms, and other events needing our special attention. It might surprise us.

The Altar Guild members consider it an honor and privilege to serve Christiania in this way. We accept new members throughout the year. We hope you all will consider this opportunity to demonstrate your gratitude by joining this “behind the scenes” group.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Cheryl Bahnsen, Jackie Dulac, Rachel Fausch, Karen Frame, Lucy Hurrle, Pam Kleeberger, Vonny Laddusaw, Becky Ruen, Anne Schindeldecker, Cheryl Schindeldecker, Linda Storlie, Renee Storlie, Calvin Tonsager, Jane Ward-Chair

Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Team (CYF)

CYF Report

Committee Members: Kim Robertson, Jackie DuLac, Susie Stiehl, and Pastor Joy Knoppel.

2024 was again a year of transition with the arrival of our new Associate Pastor, Joy Knoppel. Her call was approved in the spring, and she joined us on May 5th. Pastor Joy has brought a lot of energy and new ideas to our youth programming. We look forward to working with her as we grow our programming and walk with the young people of the congregation on their faith journey.

Sunday School: Jill Spors and Angie Wubben are serving as Sunday School Superintendent this year. This year’s theme is Fruits of the Spirit. We have seen 34 students registered with an average of 25 attending each week. Thank you to our teachers for dedicating time each week to helping our children grow in knowledge and faith, and to all the other adults who help make this program run. Our teachers: Jackie DuLac, Jill Spors, Angie Wubben, Danelle Kline, Ashley Klis, Kelly Lundeen, Stacy Feilen, and Amy Cooper. Helpers include Missy Rhodes, Mona Gorter, Kate Buechele, Ellie Fausch, Barbie Strese and Dana Casto. The music is led by Dr. Matt, Lori Clausen,

and Carol Metz. This year the Sunday School kids participated in the church Christmas musical, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. It was awesome!

Confirmation and High School Youth Group: Pastor Joy is leading programming this year along with a handful of mentors. 6-8th graders are learning about the connection between their faith and service to their neighbor. Pastor Joy is also leading a High School/Post Confirmation Group on Wednesday nights. Both groups have enjoyed activities together such as pumpkin carving, Christmas caroling, and snow tubing. Special thank you to Jackie DuLac, Lisa Smith, and Polly Flaa for your continued service as mentors.

Affirmation of Baptism: On May 19, 2024, ten youth made public affirmation of their baptismal promises.

Vacation Bible School: We had the pleasure of hosting 14 students for our 4-day VBS program in June. We celebrated at Wagner Park with the congregation and had a lot of fun sharing our joy and songs! Thanks to the team of youth and adult volunteers for helping to organize fun and meaningful activities grounded in the gospel. Thank you to Dr. Matt for making the music happen.

ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans: Pastor Joy Knoppel and Pastor Joe Jorgensen brought seven youth to the ELCA Youth Gathering this year. The theme was “Created to Be” and the group enjoyed hearing from a diverse group of speakers on what it means to live into all the things that God has called you towards. The group expressed interest in attending the Youth Gathering again in MPLS.

Camp Onomia: Every year many young people from our congregation attend Camp Onomia’s summer camps. We also want to highlight the Grandparents camp that many attend each year with their grandkids. Camp continues to be a highlight for many of our youth. The CYF Team will continue to budget for camperships to help kids attend.

Youth-related activities: We kicked off the year with sledding at Buck Hill followed in February with Valentines Card and Cookie decorating. The 2024 Egg Hunt was a huge success again this year. We had a hot dog stand at the 1st annual farmers market and Classic Car Sunday. Youth participated in God’s Work, Our Hands, and Rally Sunday. A huge thanks to everyone who decorated a trunk for Trunk or Treat. Congrats to Ghostbusters for winning the decorating contest. Pastor Joy hosted a Lock-in with a trip to Grand Slam. A good time was had by all. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make those events happen!

Fundraisers: The youth held several fundraisers this year to help with the cost of camp, summer trips, and other youth activities. We thank everyone who contributed to the fundraisers. Thank you to Terry Laschinger for organizing and running the plant sale every spring. Thank you to Kim Robertson for taking the lead on our final bake sale this year. After fourteen years of holding a bake sale, CYF has decided to explore new opportunities in the future to help the youth raise money for their trips.

As we look forward to 2025, we are excited about new opportunities for our youth to grow and serve. Among the activities being planned for the coming year are VBS in June in our newly remodeled space, a Youth Summer Mission Trip, Lock-ins, a Weekend Youth Retreat, and the return of Family Fun Day. As always, many of our youth are looking forward to attending Camp Onomia over the summer months. We continue to look for ways in which the youth of our congregation can get engaged with some of the various ministry programs at Christiania.

If you have youth in the program, please prayerfully consider joining the CYF Ministry Team!

We have openings on our team for confirmed youth and adults. We know God has a plan for our youth program and are excited for what the future holds. We are immensely grateful for our authentic, available, and affirming adults who make this ministry possible!

Respectfully Submitted by,
CYF Ministry Team

Missions Ministry Team

2024 Report

Committee Members: Cindy Hildreth, Sue Jacobson and Daron DuLac

The Mission Team has been dedicated to making a positive impact in our church and community and supporting various efforts throughout the year. Below is a summary of the key activities we were involved in:

1. Blood Drives with Red Cross

The Mission Team successfully hosted two blood drives in partnership with the American Red Cross. These events provided the opportunity for our congregation and community members to donate blood, helping to save lives and support the Red Cross' ongoing efforts to maintain vital blood supplies.

2. Donation Gift Tree Initiative

The team organized a donation gift tree, encouraging participants to contribute non-perishable food items, monetary gifts, and gift cards. This initiative resulted in the collection of: (1) 33 pounds of food, (2) Monetary gifts, (3) \$625 in gift cards

These contributions were distributed to local families in need, spreading warmth and generosity during the holiday season.

3. Mission Sunday Decorations

As part of our Mission Sunday celebrations, the team decorated.

4. Support for Urban Venture Garden

The Mission Team also supported the Urban Venture Garden, contributing time and resources to help sustain its growth and development.

5. Food Shelf Donations

The Mission Team made significant contributions to local food shelves, including both food and financial donations. A total of \$5,471 was donated to help support those in need.

6. Camp Onomia Fundraiser

The team worked diligently to raise \$2,877 for Camp Onomia, supporting this important initiative aimed at providing a nurturing environment for youth and fostering spiritual growth.

7. Lutheran World Relief Donation

The Mission Team contributed \$500 to Lutheran World Relief, supporting global efforts to alleviate poverty and provide assistance in crisis situations worldwide.

8. Northfield Retirement Center Donation

In support of seniors in the community, \$1,600 was raised for the Northfield Retirement Center.

9. Lakeville Assistance Donation

The Mission Team contributed \$300 to Lakeville Assistance.

10. Lutheran Social Services - Christmas Offering

The Christmas Offering raised \$3,105 for Lutheran Social Services.

11. Hoop House Initiative

In October, the Mission Team also contributed their time and resources to the Hoop House project. This greenhouse initiative aims to grow more vegetables and increase local food production. One potential idea for expanding this initiative is the installation of heating systems in greenhouses along Lake Street, which could further extend the growing season and improve yields.

Respectfully Submitted by: Cindy Hildreth, Sue Jacobson and Daron DuLac

Financial Review Committee (FRC)

Committee Members: Christian Donovan, Karen Frame, Linda Heine, Bill Kanfield, Pastor Jon Rhodes, Cheryl Schindeldecker, Melanie Rudiger, Kim Robertson and Coleen Keyser

The Financial Review Committee (FRC) responsibilities are outlined in the constitution:

C13.09.01. The Financial Review Committee shall oversee the policies and procedures and be responsible for the management of this congregation's business and financial affairs, subject to the direction and approval of the Congregation Council.

The committee met monthly in 2024, and key outcomes included:

- All Financial Policies and Responsibilities are updated as needed.
- Regular review of policy issues for Treasurer, Bookkeeper, Financial Secretaries and Auditors. Treasurer's Instructions updated. Bookkeeper's Instructions in the process of updating.
- Achieved consistent alignment with policies across roles to continue Auditors to complete the 5% random sample of checks to be audited.

- Updated the FRC Teams area to include policies, minutes, instructions books, and annual reports, which included a new policy on Financial Record Retention.
- Identified and recommended to Council an outside audit company - Clifton Larson Allen LLP to complete an annual audit of 2024.
- Suggested and approved by Council that Kim Robertson be back up to Bookkeeper.

Policies and procedures that the congregation should continue to be aware of that will minimize issues:

- Policy: Taxes are not reimbursed; congregation members can get a tax-exempt form from the Office Manager, so they do not have to pay taxes on purchases made on behalf of the church.
- Policy: Reimbursement can only be done when the Check Request Form is submitted and approved by signature or email submission from the appropriate Staff, Ministry Team, or Committee. The data on the form is critical to correct budgeting, processing, and auditing.
- Policy: To be reimbursed, receipts and requests for reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days.
- Policy: Checks not cashed within six months will be canceled. Cancelling a check results in a \$20 stop payment fee. If members do not plan to cash a check, please do not request reimbursement as we must cancel the check to complete the bookkeeping reconciliation properly. If a check is reissued, the \$20 stop payment fee is deducted from the new check.
- Procedure: When possible CLC items to be reimbursed should be on a receipt separate from personal purchases; this simplifies the bookkeeping and auditing processes.

We appreciate the hard work of the Auditors (Cheryl Bahnsen, Sue Jacobson, Vicky Thompson for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year and Bill Kanfield, David Frame and Paul Haglund for the last quarter of the year), Financial Secretaries (Cheryl Schindeldecker, Karen and David Frame, Melanie Rudiger, Tia Burnham, Kermit Berg, Debbie Lundeen and Lori Peterson), Linda Heine (Treasurer), Carri Tuma (Bookkeeper) for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year and Coleen Keyser for the last quarter of the year and the congregation for helping us to keep our financial house in order! Special thanks to Robin Martin and Rachel Fausch - who continue to be great partners at New Market Bank.

Respectfully submitted by the current FRC Committee Members.

Audit Committee

Christiania Lutheran Church and Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation Accounts

Committee Members: Cheryl Bahnsen, Paul Haglund, Sue Jacobson, David Frame Vicky Thompson, Bill Kanfield the Audit Committees met throughout 2024 and completed reviews of financial statement and records for the following Christiania accounts:

Christiania Lutheran Church Accounts:

- New Market Bank Checking
- New Market Bank Savings
- New Market Bank Refresh/Revive
- Insured Cash Sweep Account

Christiania Lutheran Church Foundation accounts:

- Cemetery Trust Fund
- Endowment Fund
- Special Purpose Fund
- Carlson Capital/Schwab (investment fund)
- ELCA Foundation (investment fund)
- Lincoln Financial (investment fund)
- Christiania Lutheran Church Women account

2024 OUTCOMES

- Audit findings were limited to procedural issues versus financial impacts:
- Reimbursements including sales tax, missing dual control approving payment, etc.
- Office Manager/Bookkeeper role transitioned to Kim Robertson and then to Coleen Keyser
- Contract was initiated with Clifton Larson Allen, LLC for a CPA audit of 2024 to be performed in 2025
- Elected Audit Team resigned mid-year/mid-term
- An interim audit team (Paul Haglund, David Frame, Bill Kanfield) completed September-December

Submitted by 2024 the Audit Committee

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRY TEAM

Committee Members: Lucy Hurrle, Mariann Storlie, Donna Silverness, Dona Jo Braun

Congregational Life has been busy this last year. We have been trying to make certain we have enough coffee and donuts on Sundays as well as enough supplies for the kitchen and other activities. We have planned evening dinners for Wednesday Night Dinner Church and other occasions. We have also assisted with other events including helping with the two blood drives done this year.

In God's Hand, respectfully,
Lucy Hurrle

Communications

Alyssa Dale

As I reflect on my brief yet blessed time at CLC in 2024, I am filled with gratitude. It has been an honor to step into the role of Manager of Communications, and I am so thankful for the warm welcome I've received as a new staff member of the church. It has been a pleasure meeting many of you, and for those I haven't had the chance to connect with yet, I eagerly look forward to the opportunity in the near future.



As I settle into this role, I've been entrusted with taking over a variety of communication responsibilities. These include managing announcement slides, weekly announcement inserts, the e-note, the monthly newsletter, calendar updates, and the church website. Additionally, I oversee the creation and updating of content across our social media platforms, along with other key communication tasks that keep us connected as a congregation.

Looking ahead to 2025, I am excited about the potential for continued growth and improvement in our communication efforts. I plan to make thoughtful updates to the website and refine other materials to ensure they reflect the heart of our community. I am also thrilled to collaborate with church members, staff, and community leaders on new ways to enhance our communication strategies and outreach initiatives.

One of my key goals for the coming year is to amplify storytelling within our congregation. I envision regular features such as a rotating member spotlight, faith stories, and highlights of the incredible work being done by our various committees. This will be an exciting way for us to celebrate and share the diverse experiences and ministries that make CLC such a special place. Additionally, I aim to expand our presence on social media, explore new platforms for outreach, and continually improve our website to serve as an even more effective tool for both our congregation and the broader community.

Insight into the analytics

To capture information from 2024, please find insight into our online presence. This is an overview of key metrics comparing 2024 to 2023. This year has seen significant growth across both our website and social media channels, alongside some noteworthy trends in our online worship services and in-person attendance.

Website Traffic Overview

- **Unique Visitors:** Our website experienced a **39% increase** in unique visitors in 2024 compared to 2023. This growth signifies that a wider audience is discovering our website, suggesting that our digital outreach is successfully attracting new people.
- **Sessions:** We also saw a **49% increase** in sessions, which refers to the total number of visits to our website, including repeat visits. This indicates that visitors are returning to our website.

What This Means for the Church:

The growth in both unique visitors and sessions is an encouraging sign that our online ministry is expanding and reaching more individuals. As our digital presence grows, so does our ability to connect with current members and potential newcomers. These increases are a clear indication that our digital efforts are resonating and that our website is becoming an important resource for spiritual engagement and connection.

Top Engagement: Worship Section

One of the most significant insights from our website analytics is that the Worship section received the most time and attention from visitors in 2024. This highlights the central role of worship in our digital engagement. We are encouraged by this trend and look forward to continuing to expand and enhance this section to provide more resources that deepen our community's connection to worship.

Facebook Engagement Growth

Our Facebook presence has seen impressive growth in 2024, with key metrics indicating a dramatic increase in engagement. The following are the notable statistics for the year:

- **Views** increased by **23.4%**.
- **Content interactions** (likes, comments, shares) grew by **189.3%**.
- **Visits** to our page were up **119.9%**.
- **Followers** increased by **2.9%**.

What This Means for the Church:

These significant increases on Facebook reflect a growing interest in our content and an expanding digital community. The rise in views and interactions demonstrates that our posts are resonating with a wider audience, sparking conversations and encouraging sharing. Furthermore, the increase in visits to our page suggests that more people are actively seeking out information about our church. While the growth in followers may seem modest, it still indicates a steady increase in people becoming connected with our ministry through social media.

The growth we've seen in 2024, both in terms of online engagement and in-person attendance, is a sign of good progress in the digital world. The increase in website traffic, social media interactions, email engagement, and physical worship attendance all point to a thriving and connected community. As we move into 2025, I remain committed to building on this momentum, continuing to expand our digital presence, and creating more opportunities for people to engage, both online and in person.

YouTube Engagement & In-Person Attendance

While we have seen impressive growth in our website traffic and social media engagement, our average YouTube views for Sunday services have decreased by 15% compared to the previous year. However, this trend correlates with a similar increase in in-person attendance, as more individuals are returning to worship services in person.

What This Means for the Church:

The decline in YouTube views, while notable, is balanced by the encouraging increase in physical attendance. It appears that as people engage with our worship services online, many are also transitioning to in-person participation. This growth in in-person attendance highlights the effectiveness of our hybrid model, where both digital and

physical attendance are important avenues for spiritual connection. Our online content is serving as a bridge, inviting people to explore our church community and, in many cases, leading them to become active participants in person.

Email Engagement: Open Rate

One particularly exciting development in 2024 is our email open rate, which averaged 60%—well above the industry average of 36%. This means that nearly 6 out of every 10 recipients are opening and engaging with our emails.

What This Means for the Church:

A 60% open rate is a strong indicator that our congregation is highly engaged with the emails we send. It shows that the content we are delivering, whether it's updates, event notifications, or newsletters, is relevant and valuable to our audience. This engagement rate is significantly higher than the industry standard, highlighting the trust and interest that our community places in our communications. The fact that our open rate is nearly double the industry average underscores the strength of our relationship with our members and their continued interest in staying connected with the life of our church.

Thank you once again for the incredibly warm welcome I've received. I am always open to conversations, feedback, and brainstorming sessions, so please don't hesitate to reach out if you have ideas or thoughts to share. Here's to an exciting year ahead as we continue to grow in faith and connection together!

Respectfully Submitted by Alyssa Dale

Christiania Lutheran Church Women (CLCW)

CLCW Secretary Report

CLCW Committee Members: Linda Otto, Vonny Laddusaw, and Karen Frame

The CLCW met on the third Wednesday of each month for fellowship, Bible study, and a business meeting.

Highlights of 2024:

- Donated 39 quilts: 12 to B. Robert Lewis House, 14 to Marie Sandvik Center, and 12 to Northfield CAC. 1 quilt was donated to Camp Onomia for auction. Special quilts were given to: Pastor Jon, Pastor Joy, Dr. Matt & Highview Hills Senior Living in Lakeville - a military theme dignity quilt.
- Served Wednesday Lenten meals following the noon worship service.
- Mailed 13 cards to those celebrating their first baptismal birthday.
- Served ten funerals.
- Sunshine correspondence sent greeting cards to members on the prayer chain and to members who lost loved ones.

We are presently looking for someone who would like to provide this service for our church members.

The CLCW meetings have been currently suspended.

Thank you to each person who contributed their time and money during 2024 for the service to Christiania and the glory to God.

Respectfully submitted, Vonny Laddusaw, CLCW Secretary

CLCW Treasurer Report

Christiania Lutheran Church Women Treasurer's Report for 2024

Beginning Balance, January 1, 2024	\$5,212.45
2024 Income	\$4,433.91
2024 Expenses	\$3,067.99
Ending Balance, December 31, 2024	<u>\$6,578.37</u>

INCOME:

Funerals	\$3,437.99
Interest Income	\$1.92
CLCW Offering	\$35.00
Lenten Lunches	\$459.00
Memorial - Lois Haglund	\$500.00
TOTAL Income	<u>\$4,433.91</u>

EXPENSES:

Benevolences Total	\$1,050.00
Camp Onomia Quilt	\$250
360 Communities	\$200
Peace Center	\$200
Rice County CAC	\$200
Hope for the Community	\$200
Funeral Expenses	\$2,017.99
TOTAL Expenses	<u>\$3,067.99</u>

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Frame. CLCW Treasurer

Christiania Lutheran Church
General Operations Activities
2025 Budget and 2024 Actual Comparison

	2025 Budget	% of 2025 Budget Total	2024 YTD Actuals	% of 2024 Total	2024 YTD Budget	% of 2024 Budget Total
Revenues						
Total Regular Giving*	\$556,721	96.4%	484,712		\$514,401	
Total Special Offerings	\$9,050	1.6%	29,824		\$10,550	
Total Farm & Other Revenue	\$11,943	2.1%	11,160		\$9,275	
Total Operational Revenue	\$577,714	9.9%	\$525,696	-1.62%	\$534,226	
* Includes \$334,170 Pledged - Including \$10K from anonymous donor						
Expenditures						
Total Benevolences	\$40,200	7.0%	55,955	10.3%	\$40,550	7.6%
Total Facilities	\$58,909	10.2%	42,710	7.9%	\$53,255	10.0%
Total Office Expenses	\$32,443	5.6%	55,399	10.2%	\$35,298	6.6%
Total Programs	\$20,040	3.5%	11,453	2.1%	\$15,487	2.9%
Total Staff Expenses	\$426,122	73.8%	376,599	69.5%	\$389,636	72.9%
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$577,714	6.6%	\$542,116	1.46%	\$534,226	
Budgeted Income / (Loss)	\$0		(\$16,419)		\$0	
Expense Summary						
Staff Total Budget	\$426,122	73.8%	\$376,599	69.5%	\$389,636	72.9%
All Other Expenses	\$151,592	26.2%	\$165,517	30.5%	\$144,590	27.1%
	\$577,714	6.6%	\$542,116	1.46%	\$534,226	

NOTES: Variance of 2025 budget vs 2024 actuals.

Benevolences: Decrease of \$15.8K due to Iringa Scholarships 2024 actuals was over \$11.8K budget but in 2025 kept to \$5K - did not budget entire \$16,790 and Planting Hope commitment less this year

Facilities: Increase of \$16.2K due to building insurance increased significantly due to remodel by \$10K, increase of \$1.1K church building, Utilities increase of \$3K mostly due to heating, added landscaping and décor budget of \$2K.

Office Expenses: Decrease of \$23K - Communication Consultant of \$21.8K not put in 2025 budget and CYF Interim not repeated in 2025 of \$17.6K due to hiring an Associate Pastor in May 2024. Offsetting is the addition of \$15K for an outside audit per Christiania's Constitution.

Staff Expenses: Increase of \$49.5K due to hiring a new Associate Pastor in May of 2024. The budget of 2025 consists of a full year of this position and staff received 2.5% increase in salaries.

Christiania Lutheran Church
Statement of Activities
January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024
General Operations Fund

	2024 YTD	% of 2024 Total
	Actuals	
Revenues		
Total Regular Giving	484,712	92.20%
Total Special Offering	29,824	5.67%
Total Farm & Parsonage Revenue	9,964	1.90%
Total Misc Revenues	1,196	0.23%
<hr/>		
Total Revenue	525,696	
Expenditures		
Total Benevolences	55,955	10.3%
Total Facilities	42,710	7.9%
Total Office Expenses	55,399	10.2%
Total Programs	11,453	2.1%
Total Staff Expenses	376,599	69.5%
<hr/>		
Total Expenses	542,116	
<hr/>		
Total Income / (Loss)*	(16,419)	

*Offset by checking balances and \$10,000 from Reserve Operating Balance

Christiania Lutheran Church

Cash Balance by Fund as of 12/31/2024

Capital Campaign	\$55,923.81
Cemetery Maintenance	\$26,985.90
Cemetery Plots	\$47,210.05
Confirmation Gift 2024	\$39.42
Emergency Assistance Balance	\$846.46
Flowers	\$912.20
Future Building	\$2,400.00
General Fund	\$18,205.49
Land	\$1,270.83
Memorial Anderson Angie	\$830.00
Memorial Campership	\$436.00
Memorial Clark Smith	\$75.00
Memorial Hanson Agnes	\$577.78
Memorial Hollis Larson	\$1,200.00
Memorial Lois Haglund-Quilters	\$500.00
Memorial Rev. David Anderson	\$5,708.00
Memorial Robert & Jean Henry	\$575.00
Memorial-Undesignated Missions	\$7,028.00
Memorials Music	\$250.00
Mission Garden	\$1,302.84
Music and Worship	\$43.82
Reserve Operating Balance	\$78,061.64
Special Music Balance	\$8,500.57
SS Savings/Xmas Program Offeri	\$2,512.44
Sunday School Scholarship Bala	\$910.00
Youth Fundraising Balance	\$13,439.18
Youth Memorials	\$250.00
Youth Special Purpose Fund	\$6,327.33
<hr/>	
Total Liquid Assets	\$282,321.76

**Includes CD - Cemetary; Checking Acct, Savings Acct,
Refresh/Revive (formerly Youth) Account**



Camp Onomia enjoyed an incredible year in 2024! We are so thankful for your continued support for the summer and year-round ministries that happen through Camp Onomia. As was the goal 75 years ago, our youth (and also adults) today need a place set apart for Christian nurture and study, where they can come to experience the love of Christ while being in awe of creation and surrounded by their peers. We invite you to stay connected and welcome you to join us in 2025 on the shores of Lake Shakopee.



In 2024, Camp Onomia made an impact by:



Engaging youth and families through summer programs:

- Completing our 75th year of getting our youth outdoors and engaged in their faith through summer camp
- Saw a large increase in Day Camps/VBS Programs with serving 300+ youth across 8 congregations
- Saw an increase in Family Camp Programs with almost 150 people registered for weekend and weeklong programs



Being a place for rest and rejuvenation:

- Over 1,200 people joining us spread across 40 retreat groups

Continuing to update our facilities:

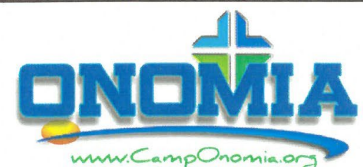
- Project to remodel the Braun Chapel bathrooms was completed
- The Retreat Center entrance was remodeled for better accessibility and climate control



Celebrating 75 wonderful years of ministry:

- Through our annual quilt auction, which raised over \$34,000 to help support reducing financial barriers for youth to attend camp
- Joint worship in the historic Braun Chapel hosted by Immanuel Lutheran (Hillman) and Bethany Lutheran (Onamia)
- Making plans for the next 75 years of ministry

Since 1949, Camp Onomia has offered a life changing experience which invites all to encounter Christ through Creation and Community





Annual Report to Congregations

Merry Christmas Dear Friends! We are truly grateful to all of you for your ongoing support and commitment to our community. As we reflect on the numerous acts of kindness and generosity you've shown, we can't help but feel fortunate to have such a strong network of supporters who help us uplift our residents through your thoughtful gifts and unwavering encouragement.

Your Contributions to NRC Again, thank you for your involvement with NRC— for your many volunteer contributions and for your financial support which helps to strengthen our Spiritual Care department and employee and resident assistance funds. We look forward to our collaboration in 2025.



SPIRITUAL CARE At Northfield Retirement Community (NRC), we're dedicated to fostering a nurturing environment for our residents' spiritual well-being. Milosha Malecha, our Director of Activities and Volunteer Opportunities, has been working tirelessly to create engaging spiritual care activities throughout the year. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the local churches for their invaluable support and involvement in these programs. This season, we're excited to finalize a more consistent spiritual care program, which we hope to announce soon! Stay tuned for more details.

Holiday Events on Campus

- Thanksgiving Eve service in the chapel for everyone to attend brought in about 40 people
- Tuesday Dec 10th St. Dominic's Catholic Service/Communion 10:30- Chapel; 11:20 Evergreen Lodge
- Monday Dec. 16th 10am Christmas Mass/Communion Lead by Pastor Jon and Pastor Joy from Christiania Lutheran
- Monday Dec. 23rd Scripture and Song service led by Deborah Ward at 3:30
- Tuesday Dec 24th St. Dominic's Catholic Service 10:30- Chapel; 11:20 Evergreen Lodge

For any questions or additional information, please contact Milosha Malecha at MMalecha@northfieldretirement.org or by phone at 507-664-3472.

NRC Census Continues to Climb Our Northfield Retirement Community (NRC) census is at its highest since 2019, reflecting the trust and satisfaction of our residents and their families. We have witnessed remarkable growth in the past year. Compared to this time last year, our census has increased by 14 residents, demonstrating a strong demand for the high-quality care and services we provide. Our Enhanced and Memory Care units continue to be in high demand. This growth positively impacts our budget, allowing us to further invest in the well-being of our residents and maintain our commitment to providing exceptional care and support. We want to express our gratitude to everyone who has chosen NRC as their home. We remain dedicated to fostering a warm, inclusive environment where residents can thrive and enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

ST. OLAF STUDENTS AT NRC In an innovative solution to address housing challenges, the Northfield Retirement Community (NRC) partnered with St. Olaf College to provide a unique living arrangement for students. From its success, this affiliate housing program has extended to carry on through 2026. This collaboration strengthens the longstanding relationship between NRC and the college while offering significant financial benefits for the retirement community. This partnership serves as a creative approach to addressing housing needs, fostering intergenerational connections, and providing enriching experiences for residents. The collaboration creates a synergistic environment where students and residents learn from each other. Additionally, nursing students from St. Olaf engage with NRC through nurse-aide training programs and hands-on experiences, further demonstrating NRC's commitment to creating a thriving, financially sustainable community that benefits all residents while nurturing a supportive and engaging environment.



FOUNDATION AND VOLUNTEERS NRC celebrated its 55 year anniversary with a special time capsule event in our Chapel last month. Thank you to all our congregations that helped NRC achieve this milestone! The holiday season is fun and busy for the NRC Foundation as we work to secure funding for holiday light



displays on our 30+ acre campus, help staff in need through our holiday giving tree, fundraise with our annual holiday appeal and secure grant funding to assist staff pursuing college degrees and bonuses for caregiving staff in 2025. Volunteers and supporters are always welcome and appreciated by the NRC Foundation. Please reach out to DawnMarie at 507-664-3471 or dvihrachoff@northfieldretirement.org

CHRISTMAS STOCKING DRIVE: Please help NRC share in the joy of Christmas! Our goal is to fill 200 stockings for residents. Stocking ideas: adult coloring books; color pencils; large-print word finds; lotions, perfume, and cologne; Chap Sticks; wall hangings; 2025 calendars; ladies' scarfs; small flashlights; beverage coasters; notebooks, fun pens, envelopes, and stamps; assorted birthday cards; and store-bought goodies. If you are willing to donate, please contact Milosha Malecha at 507-664-3472 or mmalecha@northfieldretirement.org to let us know what we can count on for a donation. THANK YOU for helping to make the holiday season special for our seniors!

STAFFING Northfield Retirement Community (NRC) is proud to announce that we have been recognized as the Best Senior Living/Retirement Setting in the Northfield News 2024 Readers' Choice Awards. Additionally, and for the second year in a row, our Assisted Living housing options received high satisfaction ratings on the Minnesota Department of Human Services Assisted Living Report Card. According to the report, NRC ranks higher in satisfaction than other assisted living facilities across the state on measures such as resident quality of life and family satisfaction. The exceptional work of our staff across all departments has been integral to achieving this recognition. Their commitment and passion for their roles create a warm, supportive environment that allows our residents to flourish. Since January, we have welcomed 48 new employees to the NRC family, with 10 of them receiving comprehensive training and becoming certified nursing assistants. We are continuously seeking talented individuals to join our team, offering market-based competitive compensation and benefits packages to attract the best candidates. For more information about our quality awards and other recognitions this year, please contact Mallory Dingman.

12/18/24

2024 Annual Report of the Synod



Bishop Lull

As we come to the close of 2024, these are complicated days in our world. I think most congregations in this synod are faring better than many other organizations and institutions when it comes to focusing on a core mission, living out their values, and being financially stable. Yet, anxiety is widespread and lots of people are angry and disappointed, fearful and disenchanting. All these dynamics create a perfect context for witnessing to the good news from God. We have much work to do but we know that we work best when we act as church together in this synod.

As we come to the close of 2024, these are complicated days in our world. I think most congregations in this synod are faring better than many

“Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you: I have said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord, my good above all other.’”

Psalm 16:1 (ELW translation)

other organizations and institutions when it comes to focusing on a core mission, living out their values, and being financially stable. Yet, anxiety is widespread and lots of people are angry and disappointed, fearful and disenchanting. All these dynamics create a perfect context for witnessing to the good news from God. We have much work to do but we know that we work best when we act as church together in this synod.

This past year the synod staff and the Synod Council adopted this mission statement and core values:

**As followers of Jesus, we are called to accompany faith communities and equip leaders for God’s mission in the world.
Our core values are – authenticity, connection, compassion, and curiosity.**

This understanding of our mission allows us to focus staff time and budget dollars to create the most lasting impact in our common work. The core values thread through the way we interact as synod staff and the way we show up in conversations with congregations and the wider public.

In summer 2024, I hosted five Listening Sessions to hear directly from Lutherans like you where you find hope in your congregation and also the worries that weigh on you. Over 100 persons participated and 50 people joined a Zoom presentation to hear what I had learned.

Here are two strategic steps we are taking as a synod to respond to all that I heard: In 2025 we will inaugurate a year and a half emphasis on worship renewal in congregations. This will be funded in part by an ELCA Churchwide grant with an emphasis on inviting our neighbors to join us in worship experiences. Secondly, as a synod, we will encourage and support efforts to make respectful conversations a hallmark of congregational life. You’ll hear more about both initiatives in early 2025. During 2024, the synod staff over saw call processes and transitions with more than 30 congregations. Several of those included the calling of multiple rostered ministers. This means that nearly a third of the congregations in the synod were in a time of transition this past year. I am grateful for all who have served on a call committee, for our interim pastors, and for faithful members who trust that we are always being called forward into God’s mission for us as the church.

I was privileged to ordain four persons in 2024, including Pastor Wesley Kimball, serving as associate pastor at All Saints in Cottage Grove; Pastor Pepe Demarest, serving as pastor for the Recovery Church in St. Paul with the United Methodist Church (a full communion partner); Pastor Ruthie Mhanga, serving as associate pastor at Gustavus Adolphus in St. Paul; and Pastor Nathan Lyke, serving as associate pastor at St. John's in Lakeville. Three of these candidates were from the Saint Paul Area Synod where we currently have 24 persons in the candidacy process to serve as pastors or deacons in the ELCA. I am grateful for those who serve on the Candidacy Committee, for those who mentor and encourage our candidates, for our seminaries and intern sites, and all who support persons as they discern how God is calling them to live out their vocation in the church and world. This is work we all share, knowing that for many the seeds of wondering about becoming a pastor or deacon begin during the elementary school years.

A highlight in 2024 was welcoming Eternal Flame Lutheran Church to recognized congregational status during the Synod Assembly in May. This vibrant congregation, rooted in the growing Hmong community in the East Metro, began as a mission start many years before. The financial support and prayers of many have accompanied this process, as well as our shared work with the ELCA, led by our Director of Evangelical Mission, Pastor Justin Grimm. Also in 2024, St. Mark Lutheran in St. Paul marked its holy closure as a congregation, after more than 100 years of witness on West 7th Street in St. Paul. There are now 106 congregations in the Saint Paul Area Synod with just over 100,000 baptized members.

The Planting Hope Campaign, a synod-wide initiative to support congregational vitality, youth development, and outreach efforts in the synod, continued to bear fruit. With our partners at Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, we celebrated the opening of the Early Learning Center-East Side in August, thanks to a \$1 million investment from the campaign. \$100,000 was shared with congregational vitality efforts this year; over \$50,000 was used to fund paid summer internship for nine young adults. To date over \$1.7 million dollars has been raised for The Planting Hope Campaign. I want to thank all who have donated to the campaign while continuing significant mission support, which allows us to do so much together. God continues to bless our congregations with people and financial resources. The gifts of time, talent, and treasure enable us to live into God's mission in ways no one congregation could do in isolation. This includes support of our mission starts and redevelopment congregations. In 2024 these included Shobi's Table, Foundation of Life, Eternal Flame, Cristo Rey, St. Paul - Wyoming, Lutheran Church of Peace - Maplewood, and Christ the Servant - Vadnais Heights. An exploration of a possible mission start in Rosemount began in 2024.

Finally, I know you join me in thanking those who serve on the staff of this synod. They include Rachel Holsten, Mary Smith, David Roinas, Kirsten Levorson, Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer, Justin Grimm, Kirsta Lind, Leslie Ortiz and Patricia Lull. Together with Synod Council members, deans, committee members, congregational leaders, and all of you, we have been able to do much to share God's good news to a world, so eager for hope and direction. I am grateful to serve as the bishop in this time and place, knowing that God alone is our hope and refuge, as the Psalmist proclaims. May we live out that deep truth with joy and confidence in the year to come.

Yours in God's Service,
Bishop Patricia Lull