



CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.



# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**"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

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# Agenda

## **AGENDA**

<b>Welcome</b> (5 mins)	<b>12:15</b>
Opening Prayer (PW)	
Review of Quorum Rules & Voting Rules Review (SB)	
A few words from our Senior Pastor Fritz Wiese	
<b>Reports</b> (10 mins)	<b>12:20</b>
Approval of Staff Reports, Ministry Teams Reports, May 21 <sup>st</sup> Minutes (SB) – Vote #1	
Finance Report – Mid Year Results: Mark Bunker	
<b>Elections</b> (10 mins)	<b>12:30</b>
3 new Church Council Members (SB) - Vote #2	
Election of Synod Assembly Representative (SB) - Vote #3	
<b>Additional Business &amp; Votes</b> (35 mins)	<b>12:40</b>
Bowman House Proposal (SB) – vote #4	
New Business and/or Q & A	
<b>Close of Congregational Meeting</b>	<b>1:15</b>
<b>COS Endowment Fund Annual Meeting</b> Minka Fulton (10)	<b>1:20</b>
Donation Report, Fund Distributions – Vote #5	
Closing Prayer: Pastor Beecher	

## Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting

## **Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church**

### **Annual Meeting**

**January 22, 2023**

The meeting was called to order in the Fellowship Hall at 12:13 PM by Rick Burnett, Church Council President. Pastor Wiese offered the opening prayer.

The necessary quorum was 54. There were over 70 members in attendance including 11 on Zoom. Voting requirements were reviewed as well as Roberts Rules of Order. The procedure for voting by video was explained.

It was moved by Rick Burnett and seconded by Scott Bosecker to approve the Congregational Meeting Minutes of June 12, 2022. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

The church staff and outgoing Council members were recognized and thanked for their incredible service to COSLC.

The Annual Report for 2022 has been made available to the congregation and Rick shared highlights from it. We are blessed with so many who share their gifts and talents with our congregation. It was moved by Rick and seconded by Chip Beard to accept the Annual Report as presented. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Mark Bunker, treasurer, reported on the first 6 months of our Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Our income is slightly higher (.3%) than budgeted and our expenses are below budget (9.6%). Our net income is positive to date. There have been no capital gains on our investment income so far. Designated giving has been strong (\$95,000). The Sanctuary Renewal project has been mostly funded by restricted funds. This has been for IT and lighting.

“Feed My Sheep” (Stewardship program) report was given by Kevin Hawkins. It started earlier than usual in October and focused on 5 specific ministry areas. We came a long way towards our goal. Intent cards cover about 2/3 of our needs. We are about \$177/week short but are optimistic that God will send people to make up the needed amount.

The election of the new Church Council was held. It was moved by the Nominating Committee and seconded by John Musil to elect the following:

Xavier Lee – 1 year term as youth representative

Jason Hausner – 3-year term

Bill Grabill – 3-year term

Mike Earwood – 3-year term

The motion carried unanimously.

Rick provided an update on Church Council activity and a year in review:

The search for a new Minister of Music is progressing. Larry Peterson and his wife, April, will visit with

us this next week. He is a very strong candidate. Rick reported that there has been a learning curve concerning what compensation is necessary to get a quality individual. It will cost more than what we originally thought.

The position of Director of Youth and Family Ministries is listed on our website but no interest has been shown yet. Congregational members are asked to help with recruiting an individual.

The nursery is open and a supervisor has been secured.

Staff and musicians for the Contemporary Worship have been found and that service continues to evolve beautifully.

#### Council Focus

Refer to Rick's report for 2022 in the Annual Report. Much has been accomplished this last year.

Scott outlined the focus for 2023

- Keep the stewardship theme – "Feed My Sheep".

- Support church staff as we transition to new personnel in the Worship and Music programs.

- Support church staff in the search for a permanent Youth and Family Leader.

- Maintain momentum in Sanctuary improvement project.

- Continue to find ways to improve our communication activities.

- Continue to maintain and improve the Palmetto property.

- Continue to work closely with our COS Staff and ministry leaders to make certain they have everything they need to be successful.

#### Mission Endowment Annual Update

David Pfundt reported for Minka Fulton. The principal balance is \$68,956.00. This is an increase of \$5,164 from the previous year. We currently have an unrealized loss on our investments due to overall poor market and economic conditions in 2022. The funds available for distribution in January 2023 is \$2088. The committee recommended that we give 40% to Joshua's Gift (\$835), 30% to Inspiritus, formerly Lutheran Social Services (\$626), and 30% to the Haitian Timoun Project (\$626).

It was moved by Jan Christopher and Keenan Anderson (of the committee) to make these distributions and seconded by Scott Bosecker. Motion carried.

Pastor Beecher shared her personal reflections of this last year's activities in lieu of her forthcoming written report. (She had been in Israel during the due date time.) She recognized Shelly Jakubowski and Laura Hawkins for their outstanding work as interims in their respective areas of ministry and were given a standing ovation. Pastor Beecher closed the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Carol Jensen-Linton



# Minutes of the 2023 Congregational Meeting

**Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church**  
**Congregational Meeting**  
**May 21, 2023**

The meeting was called to order in the Fellowship Hall at 12:30 PM by Scott Bosecker, Church Council President. Pastor Wiese offered the opening prayer. Pastor Wiese then recognized Larry Peterson's contribution to the just finished Sunday worship services and thanked David Beecher for his support during this transition. April Peterson was identified and membership that had not yet met April were encouraged to say hello. Pastor Wiese briefly reiterated the need for membership participation in the ongoing search to fill open staff positions.

The necessary quorum was 54. There were over 70 members in attendance including 8 on Zoom. Voting requirements were reviewed as well as Roberts Rules of Order. The procedure for voting by video was explained.

It was moved by John Musil and seconded by Linda Volckmann to approve the Congregational Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2023. There was no discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

The election of Representatives to the ELCA Southeast Synod was held. It was moved by Jason Hausner and seconded by Ben McCumber to elect Scott & Jo Bosecker to be those representatives. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mark Bunker, treasurer, presented a snapshot of the congregation's financial situation and rationale for the budget that would be presented to the congregation for their approval.

Mark began by thanking our Accountant and the Finance Committee for the work they have done.

Our giving is 6-1/2% higher this year than the previous year. Expenses were reported to be up 4.5% over the previous year. Mark predicted that at the end of this Fiscal Year the church would either break even or incur a very slight loss.

Mark gave a quick history of the financials for the past few years and how the government Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) had helped us to endure the economic stresses of the past few years. A quick review of the current Balance Sheet was presented.

Mark then described the process and timeline used to construct the proposed budget. Mark then indicated that a 5.3% increase in giving had been forecast and that there were also unrealized investment gains that could also be utilized to support the budget. Forecast expenses were then reviewed; among other things, it was noted that the proposed budget included a 5% raise for the staff.

A question regarding the status of the Sanctuary Renewal Project was taken from the floor. Mark Bunker gave some details on possible money available to support the Sanctuary Renewal Project and Pastor Wiese gave a "big picture" review of this project.

Three phases are envisioned:

Phase A – Floor layout of the sanctuary in general  
Phase B – Furnishings for the chancel area  
Phase C – Update the wall behind the chancel area

Going forward, it was expected that the new Director of Worship & Music and musicians would be providing input; Don Livingston and Lezlie Klein were also identified as being in project leadership roles.

It was noted that a big goal of updating and improving the sanctuary lighting had been accomplished!

A question was asked about the status of the congregation's application for the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). Mark gave a brief overview of this government program, that additional paperwork had been received the previous week for us to review and that the potential benefit to Christ Our Shepherd could exceed \$100,000. Mark also noted that this "potential income" was not included in the proposed budget.

At this point Mark concluded his presentation. Mark and the financial team received a round of appreciative applause for their work on the budget.

At this point the following motion was read by President Scott Bosecker:

The Christ Our Shepherd Congregational Council moves that the fiscal year 2024 budget be approved as presented.

Linda Volckmann seconded the motion.

There was no discussion. The motion passed with no known dissent.

President Scott Bosecker asked the members if there was any new business.

There not being any new business, Pastor Beecher was asked to close the meeting.

Pastor Beecher shared her personal reflections on the events of the day. She too mentioned the ongoing search for open staff and preschool positions and requested the assistance of the congregation. Pastor Beecher then led us in prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Scott Bosecker

## Staff Reports

# Senior Pastor's Report 2023

Pastor Fritz Wiese

Blessing and curse, both. When church staff and team leaders around the world are reminded that they must write a report for the annual meeting, I wonder if the collective groan can be measured on Richter scales. “More reports? Really? If people want to be reminded of what we’ve done together, why can’t folks just scroll back to the council minutes, or the weekly Thursday ministry email updates, the weekly Words from Wiese, the weekly streamed/recorded worship services, the recorded sermons, documentation on FB and our website, and more? Why another report? Plus, will anyone actually read this additional reflection and summary of life together?”



I get it. I feel (some of) it. Yet, for me at least, a quick review of the past year becomes a spiritual experience of gratitude. While it’s true I might grumble a bit as I sit down to write it, once I’m pouring through my calendar and photos to recall how the year unfolded, I’m awash with appreciation for the creativity, depth, diversity, spirit, consistency, growth, dedication, and authenticity with which God richly blessed COS in 2023. Yet again, what an amazing year of faith journey Jesus has led us on together with our Triune God! God is on the move at COS!

As I write this, the 12 Days of Christmas are still upon me. So, let me share 12 quick highlights for the 12 months of faith journey 2023. Certainly not an exhaustive list. Far from it. But I’m grateful for each and how the Lord brought them alive through the willing hands and hearts of my brothers and sisters in Christ at COS. And I’m glad they represent hundreds of more events, many of which are described by other faithful leaders in the reports on following pages. So read, enjoy, and give the Lord thanks.

January. When the UGA football team won the national championship for back-to-back titles, the whole state celebrated like crazy with great fanfare. While Christian service projects don’t get the same level of fanfare, we were nevertheless very proud of so many of our COS unsung heroes. For instance, the Brunsos led a work group to Tennessee to help tornado victims rebuild. Robbi and Shirley enabled us to support 3-4 lives with every pint of blood we gave in our first of four blood drives. While January sometimes feels like a quiet month after the amazing fanfare of the holidays, COS served our newborn king steadily and faithfully through core ministries of bread runs, Joshua’s Gift, and care/prayer ministries. Winter months can be isolating, but Canvas, Romeos and Julets, Text Talk, GIFT groups, a new conversation community called Speedbumps, and Pastor Miriam’s fun Wednesday Bible Project class connected folks so well.



February. Our Lenten journey meant exploring POSSIBILITIES! “Forgiving yourself and others, breaking outside your bubble, connecting with creation, hearing different perspectives and trusting God to use you” were the God-given possibilities that centered our growth together. Once again, we leaned into deep faith growth through disciple testimonies, lay-written devotionals, and small group discussions.



March. Music is so deeply appreciated at COS in our faith journeys. Certainly, Easter brass is amazing. But all year round, we are blessed by Karl Dietmeyer and his flute, clarinet and brass choirs. Barbara Anderson, Brad Milburn, and Luanne Harms diligently arrange dynamic contemporary services and pitch in to bring alive our community-appreciated Hops & Hymns sing-a-longs at Line Creek Brewery. Skiddles, Music & the Master—all year long, we're so blessed that praise to God rings throughout our campus with so many music makers!



April—A month of new life springing into action at COS! A robust confirmation class saying YES to their faith in Jesus. Creative new members joining us through the Connect Class. As always, we enjoyed a profoundly meaningful Holy Week. Once again, a neat feature was the beautiful Pysanky eggs decorated in special support of Ukrainians enduring the Russian invasion. Thank you, Jayce Lester! COS took 2nd place in our Hoops for Haiti competition (out of March Madness) with several other ELCA congregations. Together, we raised over \$50,000 for faith friends in our hemisphere's poorest country. As always, we take time to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, (Romans 12.15) through cards written, visits made, receptions offered, counseling administered, phone calls shared and in so many small but significant ways that rarely make the highlight reel.



May—What a joy it was to welcome Larry Peterson as our new Director of Worship and Music Ministries! The fruit of a nationwide search to find a dynamic new leader to pick up the baton after David Beecher's 25 years of faithful service, Larry's receiving rave reviews from choir members as an excellent teacher. Meanwhile, worshipers share enthusiasm for the energy Larry brings to organ-playing and his hymn selection. Larry's jumped right in on a variety of fronts, whether helping the praise band, including David Beecher in new partnership opportunities, and a good sense of humor at staff meetings to boot. The fact that his wife, April, has jumped right in with her neat personality and now actually serves as the new director of our preschool is sugar on top!



June—Boating on the Sea of Galilee, affirming our baptisms in the Jordan River, touching the golden star in Bethlehem that marks the traditional site of Jesus' birth, hiking the Jesus Trail, and exploring the sites of Jerusalem where Jesus was tried, imprisoned, crucified, and raised from the dead—these are some of the highlights experienced by COS travelers to the Holy Land. These powerful connections (also experienced by Pastor Miriam in her January trip with the synod) have creatively informed our bible studies, sermons, and reflections. But it was a wonderful reminder that we don't have to fly abroad each year. For every time any of us open a Bible or hear a parable of Jesus, we take our own trip to the Holy Land, and connect with Jesus' journey of faith and life.



July. Summertime (July & August) is always faith and fun time at COS. Our middle schoolers loved heading to Lutheridge in NC for the first time, with some calling it their favorite camping experience ever. In addition to five dynamic counselors visiting us to lead Lutheroad with 20+ kids, our VBS was a beach and

bible party for a very large crew. COS reps attended the Southeastern Synod Assembly in Chattanooga. Personally, it was moving to mark my 30th year of serving as a chaplain at Camp Luther, on the bluff of Lake Erie, a special family church camp where both Director of Children, Ingrid Hudson, and I still experience the Holy Spirit's powerful influence in our family and faith development.



August. With Larry Peterson now on board, it was time to pick up work on our Sanctuary Renewal Project. Don Livingston stepped up as Project Manager and Leslie Klein as Artistic Coordinator. Working with this team was exciting, taking the progress of the Team of 20, and curating it into a comprehensive plan approved by council and affirmed by the congregation. With some generous gifts already provided, we look forward to raising further resources in early 2024 and accomplishing the sanctuary transformation this summer.



September—What a productive month for unfolding dreams at our beautiful 33-acre Palmetto Road property! Thanks to Mark Barbour, the Facility Management Team, and others, blueprints shifted into 3-D structures. For years, the #1 request for ministry expansion at PR was bathrooms. Bathrooms are on the way! The foundation was poured, initial plumbing



installed, and final prep for the septic system and field complete (accomplished in December). With these substantial improvements, it's fun to imagine how God might unfold PR as a continued ministry blessing for our congregation and community . . . in addition to our current spring/fall worship services, camping outings, men's retreats, cross-forging, small group gatherings, VBS and children's events. AND we were so glad to welcome Ethan Miller as our new Director of Youth & Family!



October—Last year, a projected hurricane shut down our first post-pandemic Oktoberfest. (Boo! The whirling rush of a mighty wind brought God's people together at Pentecost; but this horrible weather prediction did just the opposite last year for us). But this year, our Director of Connecting



Ministries Barbara Anderson and team were not to be denied. The bands, beer, food-trucks, local artisans, kids jumpables, horse-rides (from our friends at Lutheranch), and hayrides had God's people smiling all day long. Oktoberfest not only highlighted the ministry gift God gives us in our gorgeous 33-acre Palmetto Road property but captures the growing passion COS holds to be a faith community where visitors experience a hearty welcome and experience religious groups as creative and joyful, not judging, and exclusive.

November. "Multiplying Love" was the title of our 2023 stewardship series, as we joyfully considered how God's agenda flows through us multiplying hospitality, beauty, youth and leaders. Two key goals were achieved: over 150 family units shared faith giving intents and we increased to over 100 families who use regular, online giving. Spicy is one way to describe our Thanksgiving Eve chili supper. But in good COS fashion, while we feasted, we also opened our wallets to ensure that over 120 Haitians were fed for two months in our "80 for Haiti" Thanksgiving drive, and locally over 30 families are provided turkey dinners.

December. Once again crowds thronged COS hallways for our super-creative Advent Family Night as we kicked off Advent. Our children's play touched our hearts. Holiday Hops & Hymns and staff Christmas caroling at a nursing home supplemented the opportunities to sing "Glory to God in the highest" through incredible generosity via the Angel and Star Tree gift-giving program. Many commented on the Moravian Love Feast shined as one of our very best.



Well, what do you think? If you were writing a report that shared highlights throughout the 12 months, what would you feature? Your list would be spectacular as well. For God is on the move at COS! Our Triune God not only lavishes grace and gifts upon us but uses us as a faith community to bend the world each day a bit more toward God's hopes for the world. And for that, we rejoice! And trust that there is even MORE for 202-four! Thanks be to God.

Gratefully serving with you in 2023 and beyond,

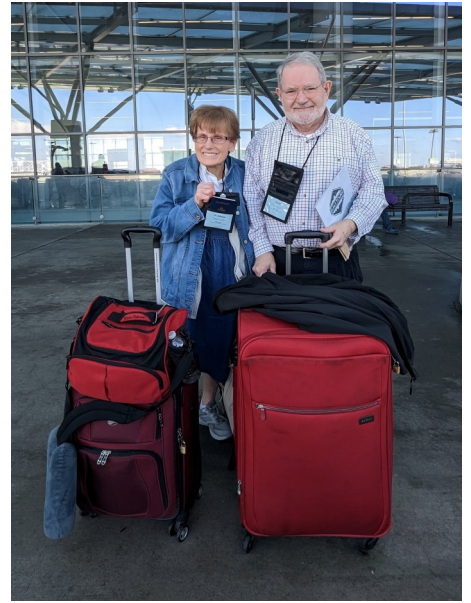
Pastor Fritz Wiese



## Associate Pastor Report

### **2023 was a year of changes, with more promised for 2024.**

The year began with David and me getting on an airplane on New Year's Day. As you recall, it was the first day of David's retirement. What an adventuresome start to the year getting on a plane headed to Israel for a trip that was a wonderfully generous gift. We loved making new friends and reconnecting with old ones. I got to lead devotions for our Bishop-led travel group of new friends from all over the synod. We loved seeing historic sites and admiring the churches built over and around them. To stand in their midst was different from looking at photos; it was more moving and profound. Communing where Jesus fed thousands, wading in the Jordan where Jesus was baptized, reverently approaching the presumed location of the manger, standing in the Upper Room, and standing at the helm of a boat bouncing in the winds of Galilee, dancing with our group on our last night—so many places! The continuing education riches were even more than we expected.



But our most wrenching memories were of the deep divisions among the people who live there. We worshipped in the Lutheran church in Bethlehem and were reminded what a small percentage of the people are Christians. We drove along the heavy wall which separates the Palestinians from the Jewish population. We were prevented from visiting Jacob's well because a shooting happened there the day before our visit. We visited Victoria Hospital (operated by Lutherans) where sick people of all faiths can be treated—unique and challenging for people who must obtain travel permits just to go there. We did not know in January that war would break out in October with thousands killed in just days, but it was really no surprise after what we saw and heard between January 1 and 10. We were already praying for the victims of hate and discrimination, but our prayers grew even darker when many of them started dying.

On a happier note, January was also when Larry and April Peterson visited Christ Our Shepherd. Their responding to the call to serve here was one of the greatest joys of 2023. After David filled in through the end of May, along with many wonderful musicians, Larry hit the ground running. All who have worked with him—or worshipped with him--thank God for sending him to us. And April is a delight.



It has been so encouraging to see that Music and the Master, and our adult bell choirs, and Sanctuary Choir, Contemporary worship and Love Feasts have not only continued, but flourished with the Petersons here. If you

missed the Love Feast, the Children's musical, or the Contemporary service last Sunday, any service, then go listen! Worship has flourished with Larry here! And only a few of us are aware of the dozens of weekly and



seasonal tasks that Larry had to take on as soon as he got here. God has truly blessed us—and them, we trust.

Of course, there was another big staff change in 2023. After months and months of faithful, diligent, joyful, outstanding, effective leadership with our youth, Shelly Jakubowski shifted some of the focus to allow for a new Director of Youth and Family Ministry. The search was arduous and long. Kudos to a fantastic search team!! After interviewing two capable candidates, the committee recommended Ethan Miller for the position. He stepped into the responsibilities this fall even as he continued seminary studies toward becoming a pastor. We welcomed him and were pleased to meet his family, too. Thanks continue for Shelly's support and the amazing support of parents, small group leaders, the search team, pastors, and colleagues. Exciting things are ahead for our youth and families! Don't forget to get your spaghetti dinner tickets!

The Preschool of Christ Our Shepherd has had a rich history in the community. It is staffed with wonderful people! It is presently in a time of re-building post-covid. Good news keeps happening with increased interest for new students and already requests for next year. Colleen Ferris led our preschool for more than twenty years. She gave it her all and advanced the preschool greatly, instrumental in building the loving, welcoming compassionate reputation it has. How does one follow that? Well, like with Larry, God provides!! After meetings, assessing every person of interest, evaluating areas to improve, setting goals, eventually the right person showed up and she was right in front of us, April Peterson. We have loved getting acquainted with her and are pleased that she now serves as the Preschool director. Indeed, she was an answer to fervent prayers!



Both the search processes for Youth and Family Ministry Director and Preschool Director were critical goals for 2023. The searches required a vast amount of time and prayer, and continue to do so, but now our time is spent working on events, plans, goals, celebrating the joys! Thanks to God for the search teams and preschool board, and the congregation! In the end God provided.

In the areas of how this church cares for the people and the needs of others, please take time to read the reports. Social Services, Columbarium, and really, all of them. There are a few caring ministries that somewhat go un-noticed because they are in the background on-going throughout the year. Consider some of the



following ministries: the Prayer team, the Senior Connections, the Eucharistic couple, the Funeral Reception Team, the Meals Team, the shawl makers, the Golden hammers, the Cross makers, and I still haven't named them all. Humble thanks is what I feel.

To observe that Christ Our Shepherd provides a wide variety of ministry opportunities to its disciples is an understatement, and 2023 was no exception. You will read in other reports about all the work teams/committees, Camping Weekends and Sunday Fun Days, Hops and Hymns and youth swimming parties, summer camps for youth and families, Lutheroad and Vacation Bible School, Romeos and Jullets, Canvas creativity and Book Club reflections, fellowship dinners for mothers of children and youth, Palmetto Road services and Octoberfest and Thanksgiving Eve chili supper, and on and on. And of course, there's the huge project of 2024—Sanctuary Renewal, the result of years of planning and dreaming.

Okay, it's confession time! There is so much more to share with you about 2023, so much. But I have already been a bit wordy. I haven't shared about how much this staff does, how talented and caring they are, and how rich my life is to serve alongside them. I haven't shared how remarkable are the working committee and teams, like the Congregational council, FMT, Finance, Personnel. I haven't shared how much I love worshipping here and ALL the various teams and people that make it happen. I haven't shared the fun I have with the 3PM Wednesday Bible Project group. What a joy!! I haven't shared the baptisms, weddings, or those in memorial in 2023. I haven't included the photos that are "almost" ready for you. I haven't shared....

I must mention two big events in the Beecher family in 2023 before moving on: first, on September 1 we brought home Martin, our Shih Tzu/Bichon Frise dog who loves our whole congregation, and second, David's frightening event of October 27. As of today, David still has no diagnosis, but continues to recover and regain strength and stamina. He goes for cardiac rehab sessions three times a week and seems to be doing okay. He was knocked out of action for several weeks but is enjoying returning to areas where he can volunteer.



For me, the most significant event of 2024 will be my retirement. After 25+ years as your Associate Pastor, I will have to adjust to a whole new life. To say that I will miss the ministry at COS and seeing you every week is a staggering understatement. I will deeply, profoundly miss you. But the time is right.

Love, Pastor Miriam

## Director of Worship and Music, Annual Report 2023

Since May 1, 2023, it has been non-stop in learning the new traditions, new names, new procedures, new passwords, new, new, new at every turn. It has been an invigorating and exhausting 7 months. I want to thank all my colleagues for their patience and support during my onboarding. A word of special thanks goes especially to David Beecher, who has been so supportive in passing the music baton; Karl Dietmeyer, who, from day one, has been “instrumental” (pun intended) in keeping the robust instrumental program going and who has given invaluable insight on navigating the musical traditions; Richard King, who has been essential in overseeing all the IT needs I had while setting up my office. Lastly, a huge word of thanks to Cinda and Richard King for coordinating the army of volunteers who arrived at our house in Jonesboro on April 28th to help unload the shipping containers full of our household items. To have 3 large containers arrive and be fully unloaded on the same day is a miracle in and of itself!



The two biggest tasks that I had to undertake from the first day were to begin planning the Children’s Christmas Musical and the Love Feast services. Before that could happen, I had to get a handle on what some of the resources the church already had on hand and what might need to be secured to implement those two large endeavors. Joni Sieprt, the assistant to the Director of Worship and Music, was invaluable in providing multiple lists for such things as the bell music library, choral music library, choir personnel roster, bell choir personnel rosters, etc. Jumping ahead several months to December 2023, the musical “Breaking News, A Baby



Born in Bethlehem” aired and received a great reception! Again, this happened with help from a great number of people! M&Ms would not be what it is without the weekly volunteers. A huge debt of thanks is due to Sue Byers, Pat Oliver, Chelby Gambrel, David Beecher and Joni Sieprt. Also, I am so grateful for Kendra Milburn -Campbell who took on the theatrical direction of the musical and Brad Milburn who handled ALL the technical production aspects. The children did an AMAZING job and their hard work shone that day all the while proclaiming the light of Christ!

On the heels of that weekend of special worship, the Love Feast services were presented. I could and should rave on about the services, but I think all who attended can attest to the excellence of the music presented and the inspiration of the Word proclaimed through music that moved so many. I am aware that I am the Director of W&M but I cannot recognize Karl Dietmeyer enough for ALL the details, instrumentally and logistically, that he takes care of. COS is truly blessed by his ministry!!!!!! Also, a monumental baton was passed this year when Mike Oliver took over Diener responsibilities. For years Pastor Miriam and David Beecher spearheaded this portion of the service. Please thank Mike when you see him! I look forward to many more joyful musical moments this coming year!!!!!! Thank you for the privilege of serving as your Director of Worship and Music at Christ Our Shepherd!



Larry B. Peterson



## Children and Family Ministry

We had a wonderful year with the children and families of Christ our Shepherd Lutheran Church! Starting in September, we continued Sunday School for ages preschool-5th grade. We met each week to study the Bible using a curriculum called Shine. We prayed, collected offering, listened to Bible stories, completed crafts, and grew in our faith together. This program was only made possible by a wonderful group of volunteers who helped plan and facilitate Sunday School each week!

SKIDdles also continued this year as well! SKIDdles is a musical group for children who are 4 and 5 years old. This group was hosted by our wonderful and talented Barb Anderson. We sang, played, and had fun fellowship together each week. This group of children also participated in our Christmas Pageant this year.

The Children's ministry also called for some fun! In April, we hosted an Egg-stravaganza! The Saturday before Easter, we hosted an event that took families



on a walk through Holy Week. Families collected eggs that had small symbols in them that represented the different parts of Holy Week. Members of the church told the children/families that part of the story as they collected eggs along the way. The last station had a celebration to rejoice over the empty tomb! The event concluded with a wonderful Easter vigil service. We definitely plan to continue this event in 2024!

Summer was a busy time for the children and families for Christ our Shepherd as well which included the addition/return of two high school summer interns! Livvy Zimmerman and Chelby Gambrel brought so much excitement and fun! We began the summer hosting Vacation Bible School the first week of June. We had 50 children in attendance and over 30 volunteers. It was a sports-themed VBS with lots of fun music, Bible stories, crafts, games, and snacks! Soon after VBS, families were invited to attend Family Camp at LutheRanch in

Tallapoosa, Georgia. It was a fantastic week with families from all over Georgia and beyond! Children and families spent the days in Bible study, crafting, swimming, hiking, and horseback riding. We ended summer fun with LutheRoad Day Camp. This included 5 NovusWay camp counselors coming to our church. They led 32 children in daily Bible lessons, music, games, and even a water day complete with 18-foot water slide! It was a great week and one I know many families are looking forward to in 2024!

The summer also included Children's Chapel for children to complete Bible stories during worship for the 9:45 and 11:00 services! This was a great way to bridge the time of the year where Sunday School does not meet. We had a great turn out and lots of fun every Sunday!

In December, we were able to host our fourth Breakfast with Santa! Children and families enjoyed a morning in the Fellowship Hall with breakfast, Christmas crafts, and, of course, a visit with Santa! It was a wonderful event for children and adults alike! Ingrid looks forward to another fantastic year and is so very thankful for the families, volunteers, staff, and precious children of our church and community!



## Youth and Family Ministry 2023

The Youth program at Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church continues to be both well supported & well attended. We have maintained 30-40 youth on our rosters with 20-30 regularly attending both Wednesday night LOGOS & LOFT meetings as well as extra activities on the weekends and during the summer. Pastor Miriam & Pastor Fritz have been very supportive in the lessons presented each week. We have 2 adult small group leader volunteers for each age group. Allison McCumber & Andrea Fisher lead LOFT or our high school youth group. Buddy Troy & Jennifer Catlett are small group leaders for our 7th & 8th grade LOGOS group. Becky Lee & Shelly Jakubowski are small group leaders for our 6th graders in LOGOS. Shelly Jakubowski finished up as Interim Youth Director in August when Ethan Miller was hired as the permanent Director of Youth & Family Ministry here at COS.

In January, our confirmed youth were encouraged to attend & vote at the Annual Congregational meeting & we were excited to celebrate Xavier Lee (10th grader) becoming the youth representative on Church Council. Xavier has been very active in our Youth Group since 6th grade & has done an outstanding job of attending meetings to update the council on the youth activities. We were very excited to bring back the Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction Fundraiser. The original planners Rebecca Shriner & Cindy Irvin were kind enough to advise & pass on their well-organized event to a new committee. Katie Hausner, Melanie Kreutzer & Becky Lee added their own flair & put on a very successful event. All of the youth & their parents worked hard to serve our congregation & our congregation was very generous! We sold 206 dinner tickets, auctioned off 112 donated items & made \$4418.56. The money is used to help send our youth to local events like D-Now, to regional events like Lutheridge summer camp and even to save up for national events like the National Youth Gathering! We also had a Moe's Taco Tuesday fundraiser in May where we earned \$460.

We continued posting events that our youth are involved with in the Constant Contact email under "Youth Fan Club". This is a great way to go cheer on our kids outside of church with their extracurricular activities as a sports team player, band member, actor, dancer, singer, etc. The Moms' Night Out continued monthly meeting at different restaurants. They even took in 2 concerts: Departure at The Fred in May and Mercy Me/Toby Mac/Zach Williams at State Farm Arena in November.

In March, COS sent 20 youth to the Fayette County Disciple Now (D-Now) event. It was a full weekend of fun & worship with tons of youth from other churches in the area. It is always a great event! It requires a lot of parent volunteers to make it all happen with transportation, meals & even hosting sleepovers in their homes. This year we included a high school lock-in at the church on Saturday night.

COS College students are reminded twice a year that we miss them & are praying for them. In the spring, the Holy Folders helped to pack 20 care packages to be mailed out in time for Easter & in the fall, the youth packed care packages in time for Halloween.

The COS youth program is strongly supported by the congregation & staff. The time & talents of so many individuals are what make each event, lesson & relationship great. In April, COS confirmed 9 Youth. Carol Jensen-Linton, Kathie Manes, Eric McDowell, Christie Pedersen & Kris Schmitz were a huge help with everything that led up to and went into that day: photography, gowns, stoles, personalized gifts, ceremony & reception. We also recognized 10 graduating youth on Senior Sunday with well wishes on their next chapter. Special thanks to Wayne Martens for making their crosses & stands. We finished up our Wednesday nights with a "messy" game night: ice cream sundaes made on faces, shaving cream beard contest, cup of milk relay, just to name a few.

This summer we spent a good bit of time enjoying the outdoors & the water! As soon as school was out, we headed to Ellijay to go tubing! A huge thank you to Don Livingston for opening up his home & giving the



youth such a FUN experience! In June, COS sent 20 youth to Lutheridge summer camp, chaperoned by Jennifer Catlett & Shelly Jakubowski. Our confirmation kids got to experience a phenomenal program! It is a great time to unplug & see the kids in a different environment trying new activities, bonding as a group & meeting new friends. The high school students enjoyed some water activities such as white-water rafting. The youth got together for a pool party at the Jakubowski's house before school started. We kicked off the school year with a huge super slide at the church!

In August, a new Director of Youth and Family Ministry was welcomed into COS. Ethan Miller is taking on the position while he is attending seminary and is enthusiastic about sharing his passion with COS youth.

In October, COS held its 2nd Octoberfest at which many youths were present to enjoy the festivities, games, and sell baked goods. They earned nearly \$500 with the generous help of volunteers and donations! In October, the youth also had a Halloween party, filled with carnival games and a special guest, Ms. Victoria Schuette, who led the youth in a painting course.

Just before December, the youth had a Christmas party where they played their favorite games, decorated each other as Christmas trees, and had an ornament swap. The next week, in conjunction with the children's ministry, the youth hosted Family Advent Night. Youth and children made crafts, played games, made music, and wrote letters. We had a great turnout and joyful noises filled the halls.

During the Moravian Love Feast, many of our youth participated in the musical offerings. After the Saturday service, youth rode together on the bus, got ice cream, and rode around Peachtree City looking at the many Christmas lights.

In 2024, the youth are looking toward new adventures, some familiar and some novel. Of particular note is the National Youth Gathering, where ELCA youth across the nation will come together in New Orleans for community, service, and worship.

The youth group extends its gratitude to the entirety of Christ Our Shepherd for its continued support. The outpouring of generosity and caring helps nurture their spiritual formation towards a Christ-guided life. Thank you for all the support.

God Bless,  
Ethan Miller & Shelly Jakubowski





## Office Administrator's Report

Administration covers all the Operations side of Christ Our Shepherd. The Facility Management Team oversees both properties, buildings, usage guidelines, repairs, and upkeep. I oversee the equipment within the buildings and the budgets to handle them. I often feel that Operations is not really seen as a Ministry of the church. And then I read a wonderful article entitled the Priestly Role of a Facilities Professional. It is way too long to include in this report; however, I would love to share it on Constant Contact some time. And if you would like a copy, please let me know and I will send it to whomever would like to read it. I will be sending it to all my volunteers on the Facility Management Team and all the volunteers that assist me in keeping Christ Our Shepherd's office open and running.

This year has been very productive, especially for the Facility Management Team. After years of wishing for improvements at our Palmetto Road property, Fayette County gave us the "thumbs up" for putting in a Septic System and building rest rooms. At this date the septic system is in and Mark Barbour, Kurt O'Clair and a fantastic group of volunteers have been working diligently to build the restrooms. We are close to beginning the inside walls. I do believe they will be completed in the first quarter of 2024.



FMT completed the floating dock, with Eric Jakubowski in charge, just in time for our first Fishing Derby at the lake. It had been a year since Tom Conrad made the arrangements to stock the lake with fish. We look forward to future Fishing Derbies.

And we must recognize Mark Barbour and Wayne Martins for all the upkeep on the Palmetto Road property. There is a tremendous amount of grass to keep cut.

Back at 101 North Peachtree Parkway we purchased a new refrigerator. We also had a new water heater and a new shut off valve installed. At present we are researching a new commercial dishwasher for the kitchen. And of course, FMT representatives are a part of the Sanctuary Renewal teams. Normal maintenance of the building and property are a constant in keeping Christ Our Shepherd looking presentable and welcoming to visitors and our own membership. This building is old enough that it must be maintained. Again, we thank volunteers like the Heffelfinger family, who graciously volunteered to take care of cutting the lawn all summer during the growing season.

In the office the front desk volunteers are Kim Mashburn, Dannee Barkow, Judy Owens, Kathy Manes and Rebecca Nicholson who keep the office humming. I could not do my job without each and every one of them.

And Jean Dohany, my right-hand woman!! She allows me to get everything done that keeps us moving forward.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the "Holy Folders" who come in when we have mailings to do and assist us in stuffing envelopes.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Christ Our Shepherd. They are the many parts of the body of Christ.

In His Service,

Linda Volckmann

## Communications

The main responsibility has been to lead and improve all communication efforts internal and external for COS and if necessary “pulling” information from the worship teams, social service teams and stewardship team to keep the congregation and the community informed.

### **COS Website**

New features and updates continued to be added to the COS Website this year as we strived to make communications to our congregation and visitors easily accessible and up-to-date. We continued to work with ReachRight Studios, our website host, with all the website projects.

In 2023, ReachRight continued to maintain our Google Ad grant and we meet every other month with ReachRight to go over data. Recommendations for online content, website updates/pages and ad directions are discussed at these bimonthly Zoom meetings. ReachRight’s tweaking of Google Ads continues to drive traffic to specific pages on the website. The Home Page, Prayer Page, Live Page, Serve Page, Christmas Page, etc. all benefited from these efforts.

In 2023, COS received \$36,273.95 worth of free Google ads through this grant. These adds delivered 43,838 impressions and resulted in 4,671 clicks to our website. We had a conversion rate of 74.69%, which is extremely high for churches. (In our case, conversions are a metric measuring initial clicks from ads that resulted in additional exploration of our website.) The monthly report that ReachRight sends us also includes the top search terms that resulted in ads for our church so that we can continue to tailor our website to respond to the words being used for searches.

### **Streaming & Video**

In response to COVID closures, we continue to live stream both Contemporary and Traditional services on Facebook and YouTube, and the high resolution video is maintained on Vimeo. Links to the videos are distributed to our email list each week. The audience level varies from week to week, but traveling COS members, homebound COS members, and additional people from around the country continue to watch our services via video. The available analytics suggest that our services were watched online an average of 31 times.

### **Constant Contact Emails**

We continue to use Constant Contact to manage church wide email communications.

The emails sent through Constant Contact include:

- The weekly update sent each Thursday
- Word from Wiese, a weekly email from Pastor Wiese sent each Wednesday
- COS Congregational Worship email, containing links to the videos of services and worship guides, sent each Sunday
- Lenten and Advent Devotions
- Memorial announcements
- Various other announcements as needed.

## Social Media

COS services stream on both Facebook and YouTube. We also maintain a presence on Facebook and Instagram with announcements and photos from events. We continue to look at ways to engage both our membership and others in the community through social media.

## Realm

Events are also posted in Realm so that members can just look in the app to see what's coming up at church. There has been a learning curve associated with this new platform, but we continue to explore how we can use Realm Events to better communicate with our membership.

## Printed Materials

In coordination with Barbara Anderson, Director of Connecting Ministry, we updated or created several printed materials this year, including:

- Calendar flyers to be distributed at the Homecoming and Christmas Eve services
- Opportunities to Connect Flyer
- Advent Event postcard

## Signage

With the assistance of John Musil, the logo sign on the gate at Palmetto Road was replaced, because the old sign was in disrepair.

Tom Rehak created a new structure for displaying temporary banners on the lawn at 101 N Peachtree Pkwy. It fits existing 6'x3' banners that we have and has an option to expand for 9'x3' banners. The new structure debuted with the Christmas Eve Service banner on December 13<sup>th</sup>.



## Palmetto Road Internet

Following discussions with Directory of Technology, Brad Milburn, we explored options for improving the internet available at Palmetto Road. With the help of member Richard King, we compared service options from Hughesnet (the existing satellite service), Starlink, Comcast (the cable provider in that area), and Verizon. We determined that the best “bang for the buck” would be the Verizon 5G internet with a cellular amplifier. This was put into place and significantly improved both the upload and download speeds and dramatically improved the latency.

***\*\*Once again, a big thank you to our volunteer, Jean Dohany, for editing and scheduling our Constant Contact emails each week after they have been created and formatted. Jean was also instrumental in publishing the Lenten and Advent Devotions. She is truly a blessing to COS.***

**Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Hawkins  
Communications Coordinator**

## Connecting Ministries

There was lots of “connecting” going on at COS in the past year! Following is a month-by-month listing of just some of the high points from 2023.

In January, kicked off the new year with a “Volunteer in the New Year” temple talk, using the newly revised Ministry Interest Form. Coordinated daily emailed devotionals for Lent, topic Possibility.

In February, planned a congregation-wide Pass the Peace event. With Shelly J., hosted first Ladies Game night; noticeably big attendance. Worked with Jaycine Lester on a new push for communion assistants and Carol Talbott on Altar Guild. Recorded skit to communicate Pastor Fritz’s “Two Minute Drill” initiative. Helped coordinate Lenten suppers.

In March, began initial conversations about Octoberfest. With Laura Musil, hosted Ladies Game Night. Worked with Cheryl Dietmeyer to get updated photos of new staff and council members.

In April, worked on communicating “name tags,” recorded skit. Hosted new member class; welcomed three new family units; several attendees chose not to officially join at the time. Began discussion with Robbi Martin and Shirley Brown about new small group called Speed Bumps.

In May, planned pool days with Ingrid for preschool and elementary groups. Began process of pen order.

In June, worked with Jaycine Lester to communicate with a new small group, Juliets. Hosted Ladies game night. Hosted luncheon to welcome April Peterson. Daytripper event to Botanical Garden. Hosted Hops & Hymns.

In July, planning for Octoberfest began in earnest.

In August, began planning the Leadership Summit. Met with Karen Shelnuttt to investigate her services; discussed possible Parish Health sermon series. Communicated “drivers needed” initiative. Communicated Two Sparrows Daytripper event. Worked on shoring up Cross Ministry participation.

In September, hosted a new member class; welcomed 7 new family units; several attendees chose not to officially join at the time.



In October, hosted a Leadership Summit. Octoberfest was held on 10/22; estimated that about 300 attended. Begin communicating \$80 for Haiti leading up to Thanksgiving.

In November, hosted a luncheon for Carol Axford and Rebecca Nicholson to discuss new study group. Helped plan Thanksgiving Eve Chili Supper and Hymn Sing. Called on list of Missing Members. Investigated information about Martin Luther Exhibit in Savannah for Daytrippers event. Began discussions of new Hospital Visitation Team small group. Began planning Advent Devotional series.

In December, hosted Hops & Hymns at Line Creek; best attendance yet with over 50. Planned staff visit to The Reserve assisted living facility.



This listing does not include many duties that are on-going, such as continuously following with visitors and those members who have been missing, working with other staffers to improve COS in a variety of ways, and all the behind the scenes planning and after action follow up that goes with every event.

In 2023, we have CONNECTED to each other in ways old and new. We have begun several new small groups and are actively planning a new study group to kick off in January of 2024. We routinely hear from visitors and new members that we are the “friendliest” and “most welcoming” church!! This is a change from what we have often heard past years. We welcomed 10 new members “officially” and have many other committed visitors who are long-term attenders. Many in both groups have become fully involved at COS.

I look forward to continuing my close work with Pastor Fritz as we help others connect to Jesus’ pathway of joy and life.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Anderson

Director of Connecting Ministries

## Technology for Worship & Presentations Ministries

2023 was a year filled with installations, innovations, and collaborations. We made significant upgrades to our streaming technology, installing new PTZ cams in the Sanctuary and converting all our feeds to NDI. A digital stage box was installed in the Fellowship Hall replacing the old snake, and after a significant storm in August finished off a few ailing pieces of equipment, we took the opportunity to upgrade when the necessary replacements were installed.



After a huge collaboration brought the praise band to the Sanctuary and the COS Brass & Sanctuary choir to the Fellowship Hall for Palm Sunday, our team felt confident heading into a busy fall season. Our semi-annual outdoor worship service included a baptism and gave us a chance to display our new wireless mics. Oktoberfest followed and was a smashing success! Not only did our equipment shine, but the newest member of our team, Curt Griffin, proved invaluable.



The Advent season gave us the opportunity to help our new Director of Worship, Larry Peterson, bring his style and vision to COS. We added over-ear mics for the children's musical, drastically improving our ability to hear the singers. Larry's help in planning the tech for this season allowed us to capture over two hours of COS-produced Advent music making this year's Annual COS Yule Log the longest yet at 134 minutes!

We look forward to an exciting year in 2024!



Respectfully submitted,

Brad Milburn

Director of Technology for Worship & Presentation Ministries

## Church Council and Standing Committee Reports

## Christ Our Shepherd Church Council President 2023 Annual Report

As 2023 came to an end, I spent some time reflecting on what had transpired this past year. As I did this, I kept seeing people's faces: faces of the Church Staff, faces of the Church Council, faces of volunteers, faces of members and visitors of Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church. What an amazing group of people! I am indeed blessed to be in the company of such a community!

As 2023 began the Church Council said goodbye to Rick Burnett, Sue Byers & Lisa Manthey and hello to Mike Earwood, Bill Grabill & Jason Hausner as they joined the existing members: Patrick Bauer, Steven Gundersen, Brad Harris, Carol Jensen-Linton, Shelly Jones, Xavier Lee (Student Rep), Mark Bunker (Treasurer), Pastor Beecher, Pastor Wiese & myself.

One of the Council's priorities this year was to "Thank people who are moving the ball forward". Council member Shelly Jones took that concept and turned it into reality by sending Thank You cards to folks. There's a long list of people to thank and only so many cards, but you can help. While constructive criticism is always useful, take time also to thank staff and volunteers for the things they do. Christ Our Shepherd couldn't function without the tireless work being done by so many here. Offer some words of gratitude and encouragement; I'm sure it will be appreciated.

Other priorities facing us this year included staffing and stewardship.

We were blessed to have involved and dedicated church members and staff take these staffing challenges head-on. As a result of all that work, Larry Peterson became our Director of Worship & Music Ministries, Ethan Miller became our Director of Youth & Family Ministries and April Peterson became the Director of Preschool.

Stewardship is what allows this place to keep its lights on and is a huge part of what permits all the good things flowing from 101 N Peachtree Parkway to happen. Stewardship certainly involves members of the congregation's regular donations – and we are grateful for each and every one – but, in addition to that, it is the responsibility of Council, staff & volunteers to be good stewards of those gifts as well as to take advantage of any opportunities that may present themselves.

With that in mind, in early June we completed an application for a government program called the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). Staff & church lay people, assisted by a CPA located Minnesota who had helped other Lutheran Churches, successfully filled out the paperwork and we await word on our application. Normally, by this time we expected a response from the IRS on this matter. However, in late summer, the government announced that it was Shocked! Shocked! to discover that some applications for this largess may have been fraudulent. We are comfortable that our application is a legitimate request but the additional government scrutiny on this program has slowed down the response time significantly.

Stewardship and dedicated volunteers have allowed an unexpected opportunity to be actively exploited. When volunteers checked with Fayette County government to see what options we might have available to build restrooms at Palmetto Road, we were given the green light to build this much-needed facility!

That's the condensed version. Suffice it to say that much work was done by Mark Barbour and many others to make this happen and we are VERY close to having this project completed. The Stewardship part comes from financing this project. The old Called to Action account was an obvious source of funds but an Apple Tree Society member had indicated that his estate would be supporting Palmetto Road at some point.

Working with the Finance Committee, the council took a loan from the Called to Action account to finance the Palmetto Road Restrooms. If other funding for Palmetto Road arrived within a certain time frame, that

money would be used to pay for the restrooms and the loaned money would be returned to the Called to Action account to be available for other projects... like the Sanctuary Improvement Project.

All this is coming to fruition. While this is still a work in progress, it seems Palmetto Road is a beneficiary in the Ron Bowman estate, which will provide the funds for the restroom project. This should allow the loaned Called to Action money to be returned and used elsewhere. Many thanks to the Finance Committee for providing their expertise to make this happen!

Speaking of the Sanctuary Improvement Project, that also was a priority for Council this year. I am pleased to report that that project is moving forward with gusto! Much hard work is going on to make this happen in 2024!

Early this year, at the Council-Staff retreat, I had indicated that this would be a year of transition. Looking back on the year I can truthfully say that this was the case. However, the concept of "Transition" was hammered home by the last item of this report...

At the November Church Council meeting, Pastor Beecher announced her intent to retire in April 2024. While some preparatory work had been done by Staff and church leaders prior to this announcement, our attention is now directly focused on a particular timeline.

This will truly be the end of an era. Plans to celebrate Pastor Beecher's work at Christ Our Shepherd will be forthcoming. I look forward to Christ Our Shepherd joyfully - but with misty eyes - honoring her service at some point this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Bosecker  
Council President



## CANVAS

CANVAS continues to thrive in the joys of creative expression. This is a diverse offering of “whatever makes you happy”, aka crafts of all kinds.

Sometimes we create as a group, led by whomever would like to. And sometimes our projects are individually focused.

This year we enjoyed card and gift-bag how-to's, needlepoint, egg painting, and Christmas trees made from recycled mattress coils.

We had a wonderful celebration in December - food, fun, an exchange of fabulously self-created gifts, and a mini concert from our beautiful Charlotte Pointek.

CANVAS is about fellowship and taking time for ourselves; encouraging one another in art and in life. These are the true gifts of this group who welcome all.

The first Monday of each month, 6pm, Room 212.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tracee Daniel and Lisa Manthey

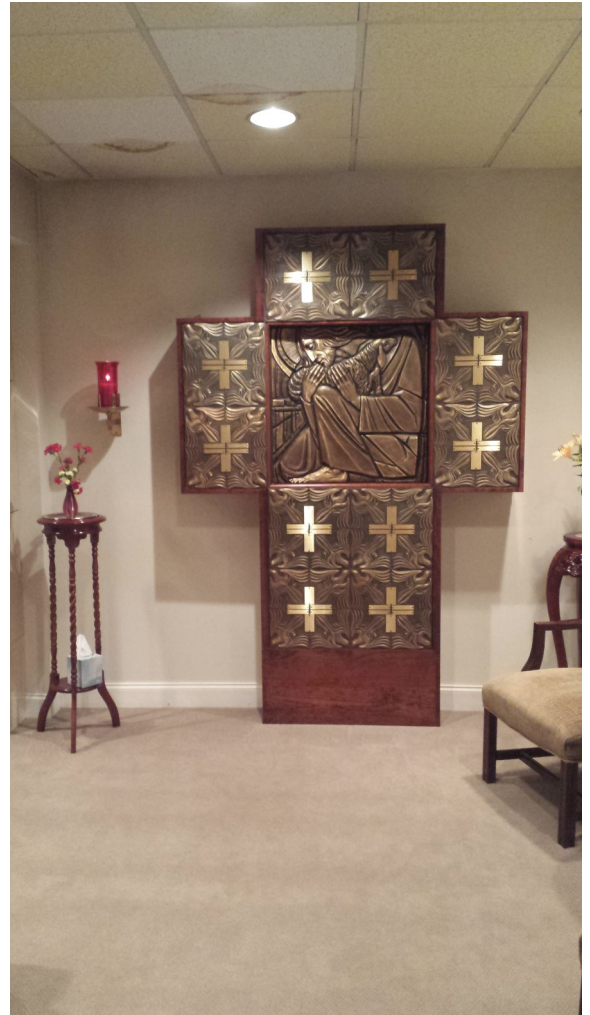
## COLUMBARIUM MINISTRY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Christ Our Shepherd Columbarium provides a peaceful and reverent location for the inurned cremains of church members and their extended family. The Columbarium is located just off the Narthex and provides a private and tasteful environment with numerous Vault and Niche configurations for the preservation of cremains in a convenient and secure location. Numerous opportunities for annual, periodic, or permanent memorialization of a deceased loved one can be designated for use in the Columbarium, other locations in our main facility, or at our Palmetto Road location.

The Columbarium contains a total of 210 Niches in two Bronze Vaults and three Marble Vaults. Rights of Inurnment for 142 of the Niches have been purchased leaving 68 niches still available. One Right of Inurnment was purchased and three Committal Services/Inurnments were conducted in 2023.

Consider purchasing a niche for yourself and/or a family member as part of your estate planning or when the need arises.

Application Packets are available in the Church Office. You may also contact Bob Spruck, Chairman of the Columbarium Board of Directors, for an Application Packet or for more information.



## Disaster Ministry

This year COS Disaster Ministry participated in the Southeastern Synod Martin Luther King Service Project. We worked alongside other Synod churches from Tennessee and Alabama. Our trip was coordinated by Pastor Morgan Gordy who serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Disaster Ministry. We served in Waverly, TN, where a flash flood had devastated the town.

COS had six participants. The trip focused on two houses. We worked on one of the houses where we repaired drywall, installed lights, and worked on making sure the electrical switches were ready to go. Our main task was installing LVP flooring. We completed two bedrooms, a hall, the bathroom, and most of the laundry room.

Everyday we started our morning with morning prayer before heading out to the site. We worked hard but had a great time. Every evening we had evening prayer before we retired for the night. On our last full day there we ate lunch at a church that had been serving the community meals since the disaster happened. This was over two years ago, but this church was still serving both survivors and workers. We were able to talk to people about their journey through the process. Most of the ladies serving had been impacted. They lost everything, but still found the heart to serve others! One lady explained that God has a purpose for us, and it is our job to figure out what that means. How humbling for me to hear that.

We have been in contact with several areas that have had recent disasters to see where our next opportunity may be, but, as of this report, we don't have a fixed plan. Stay tuned for our next opportunity!

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Brunso COS Volunteer Disaster Coordinator

# Social Services Ministry

## GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS: The Social Services Ministry

Detailed below, you will find an overview of the many programs that have touched lives. A sincere and genuine thank you to the Christ Our Shepherd Congregation for making a difference!

### **January/February – Gloves and Socks**

The Bread Run team sees the homeless waiting patiently outside Redeemer Lutheran Church in downtown Atlanta and realizes that My Sister's House, a residence that houses women and children are in need as well. Knowing that January and February are cold weather months, COS members helped provide 175 pairs of gloves and 371 pairs of socks to help keep hands and feet warm.

### **March/April – Easter/Children's Village at Christian City**

The Children's Village, part of the Christian City community, is built on the Biblical foundation of family. These children, in crisis, come to live here and work on building trusting relationships with their house parents and peers. The Children's Village is centered around HOPE for the future! Easter is very special for these children! Forty-six beautiful Easter Bags were delivered to children of all ages (4-18) living at the Children's Village. Every child was given a \$10 Amazon and a \$10 Chick Fil A gift card as well.

### **May, June and July – Summer Lunch Program**

The Summer Lunch Program was about reconnecting; hugs, smiles, constant chatter and prayer, yet our purpose never forgotten...to make sure all families received their lunches. An average of 287 children were fed every Monday, 2,296 lunches were made, 2806 sandwiches were provided (high school children receive two sandwiches) and 9 drivers with 25/30 assistants driving nine routes for eight weeks. Many groups to thank: 30-35 volunteers showed up Monday mornings to make, pack and deliver lunches, church members who donated food items or money, kitchen cookie bakers who provided 4,590 delicious chocolate chip cookies, Thrivent and Publix who donated \$250 gift cards to help purchase turkey, cheese and bread. In addition, our neighbors and friends, The Church of Latter-Day Saints and St. Andrews in the Pines Episcopal Church brought chips, drinks and energy working alongside COS members every Monday!

### **August/September – Eripoto**

Eripoto is a nonprofit organization that protects and empowers at risk women and girls in northern Tanzania through a range of programs, including community-based education, school programs, scholarships, and a safe house. COS members, Mark and Juliet Cutler, who lived as ELCA missionaries and volunteer teachers in Tanzania in 1999/2000, have been strong supporters of Eripoto through Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry and Operation Bootstrap in Africa. In February, \$700 was raised as part of Super Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday. During August and September, COS helped raise over \$1,000 through donations and handbag and jewelry sales to support at risk women and girls in northern Tanzania. In addition, many greeting cards from COS children brought encouragement to the girls in Eripoto's safe house. This ministry was so well received by the congregation!

### **October/November - Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving bags were assembled for families served by the Real Life Center. Thanks to the generous support from our church family, fifty-one bags were filled with groceries and a \$15.00 gift card from Publix, Kroger or Walmart.



## **December - STARTREE**

This marvelous ministry is undertaken with a sincere, genuine caring for human hurt, need and Hope! The STAR TREE supported ten families/nine children with \$3,090 worth of gift cards this Christmas Season.

### **Other Projects**

Joshua's Gift is an ongoing ministry at COS that exists to feed under resourced school children by providing bags/backpacks filled with food for the weekend. This is our tenth year working with four Fayette County Elementary Schools: Crabapple, Fayetteville, Huddleston and Peachtree City Elementary. At present, we are serving 55 children.

The Bread Run Team, Buddy Troy, Heidi Byerly, Judy Owen, and Bill and Jim Volckmann, and substitute drivers, delivers day old bread and pastries to Redeemer Soup Kitchen and My Sister's House four days a week. Publix at Starr's Mill and Publix in Tyrone donate the items. This team has been vigilant in making sure this food gets to where it needs to go!!! Never a week missed!

Redeemer Soup Kitchen – In 2023, Christ Our Shepherd has continued to volunteer at Redeemer Soup Kitchen, part of Redeemer Lutheran Church. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month, volunteers head to downtown Atlanta to serve lunches to the homeless population. Several new members have participated this year, and it remains an important and vital ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayne Troy, Social Services Coordinator

# Stewardship Team Report

The 2023 COS Stewardship Team had momentum with Kevin Hawkins and Pastor Fritz Wiese returning from 2023. We were grateful to have Jason Hausner join our team to provide new insights and energy.

Last year in 2022, we participated in a new program called Large Church Stewardship for All Seasons, led by professional coach Nathan Swenson-Reinhold, and including six other large ELCA churches around the country. The focus was on identifying specific ministry initiatives that require concrete levels of financial support and asking faith givers to step up to the next level of giving to enable those initiatives.



Following that success, we once again participated in the Large Church Stewardship for All Seasons program. We established our theme for the 2023 campaign, **“Multiplying Love,”** based on Ephesians 3:18. Key Sundays were October 22, November 5, and November 12. Sermons and testimonies focused on “Multiplying Love” through four key ministry initiatives aligned with COS congregational priorities. Below are highlights of the initiatives:

## 1. Multiplying Hospitality

We’re delighted visitors cite how welcome COS makes them feel. Staff coordinating visitor connections and an engaging website for seekers is essential. Likewise, testimonies of appreciation keep pouring in from disciples who need to worship online and count on streaming quality and reliability. HVAC updates, utilities, freshened spaces, and even building bathrooms at Palmetto Road are costs we embrace to multiply hospitality to members, visitors, and an ever-increasing number of community groups who call our spaces home. To meet this need, we asked to grow our giving by \$183 per week.

## 2. Multiplying Youth

Youth in instrumental groups. Youth sharing highs and lows in faith Wednesday nights. Youth leading AV in worship. While youth are busier than ever before, they participate at COS because of our investment in them. Sending our high schoolers to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans this upcoming summer, the middle schoolers to Lutheridge in North Carolina, and our children and families to Lutheranch in western Georgia are just three fantastic faith multiplying opportunities which require investment. Simultaneously, we feel God’s call to keep multiplying love via food programs for under-resourced kids locally and globally in Haiti. To meet this need, we asked to grow our giving by \$192 per week.

## 3. Multiplying Beauty

Last year, the congregation instructed council to search the country for a new top-notch Director of Worship. Wow, are we glad we did! Larry Peterson is multiplying worship enthusiasm. In turn, Karl Dietmeyer, Luanne Harms and others multiply worship dynamism, participation, and beauty in both traditional and

contemporary worship. Let's not forget how God's beauty is multiplied when we support spiritual and mental health through support and care groups, all requiring ongoing resources. To meet this need, we asked to grow our giving by \$231 per week.

#### **4. Multiplying Leaders**

COS thrives by countless lay leaders activating their abilities. But they appreciate the direction and coordination of paid staff and pastors who work diligently to "equip the saints for ministry." Ephesians 4:11-13. "Sustaining ministry excellence" with competitive packages is a commitment through which we'll enjoy, in turn, the multiplication of Christ's impact via volunteer small group leaders, musicians, youth interns and more. To meet this need, we must grow our giving by \$510 per week.

This year we emphasized both maximizing participation measured by the number of responses and increasing weekly giving. We challenged the congregation to return 150 Faith Giving Intents and have 100 households participate in scheduled automated giving. We also sent individualized letters asking for a "step up" in giving. The congregation came through in a big way, meeting both challenge goals and increasing the total amount pledged! The \$2,036 in new weekly offerings next year will allow more of God's work through our hands.

We received positive feedback on the campaign from many of our fellow worshipers, including several veterans of past Stewardship Committees. The generous response of the congregation will fund the key ministry initiatives in 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Hawkins, Jason Hausner, and Pastor Fritz Wiese

## Finance Reports



## Finance Committee Report for 2022

Throughout 2023, the Finance Committee (FC) has provided the Church Council with a detailed monthly analysis of the church financial position.

Mark Bunker, Treasurer, and Steve Profeta, Accountant, continued to work with the FC to manage designated accounts to improve the reporting and operations of finances. It was a challenge this year to meet the budget. The first half of the year we experienced a small deficit, but the second half was favorable. For the calendar year, we will end up in the black. Some Personnel positions were unfilled and volunteers helped to fill those positions. The Church Staff is working hard to keep expenses under control; 2023 ended in a workable position.

Four key financial policies were updated this year.

1. Offering Collection and Reconciliation Policy FP-001
2. COS Credit Card Policy FP-009
3. Purchasing Policy FP-004
4. Capital Expenditure Policy FP-008

Also, the Sunday collections process has been adjusted. Based on input from ushers and the FC, it was recommended that a new, more workable procedure be implemented. Many families now contribute electronically as has been emphasized for years. We have placed an offering box in the Narthex in which members and non-members can deposit their offering as they enter or exit the Sanctuary. The offering continues to be taken up to the altar by an usher to be blessed.

Bob Spruck, Secretary, continues to do a great job keeping the minutes of the FC meetings and updating the Financial Policy Manuals.

Two major projects have also been started and work is progressing.

1. Restroom facilities at Palmetto Road have started to be constructed and great progress has been accomplished.

The facility is expected to be finished in April 2024.

2. The Sanctuary Renewal Project, represents a major transformation of the Sanctuary. Many people have been involved in getting the project started and many will be needed to keep it going.

Thanks to all involved with these two major projects.

Finance Committee: Mark Bunker - Treasurer

John Musil – Chairman      Scott Bosecker – Council Representative,

Bob Spruck - Recording Secretary      Bill Volckmann – Finance Secretary,

Members: Buddy Troy      Pam Gould      Kevin Hawkins      Bob Blackburn,

Steve Profeta - COS Accountant      Pastor Fritz      Pastor Miriam.

Respectfully submitted, John Musil – Chairman, Finance Committee

# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

## OPENING LITURGY

### Son of God, Eternal Savior

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

#### **And also with you.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

#### **Receive our prayer, O God.**

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

**Amen.**



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

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

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

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

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

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

arr. Julius Röntgen

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