



BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





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2023 BENEVOLENCE

Benevolence gifts are made from the General, Memorial, and Women of Bethel Funds. In addition, many Bethel volunteers provide their time, talent and private financial resources to these and other organizations.

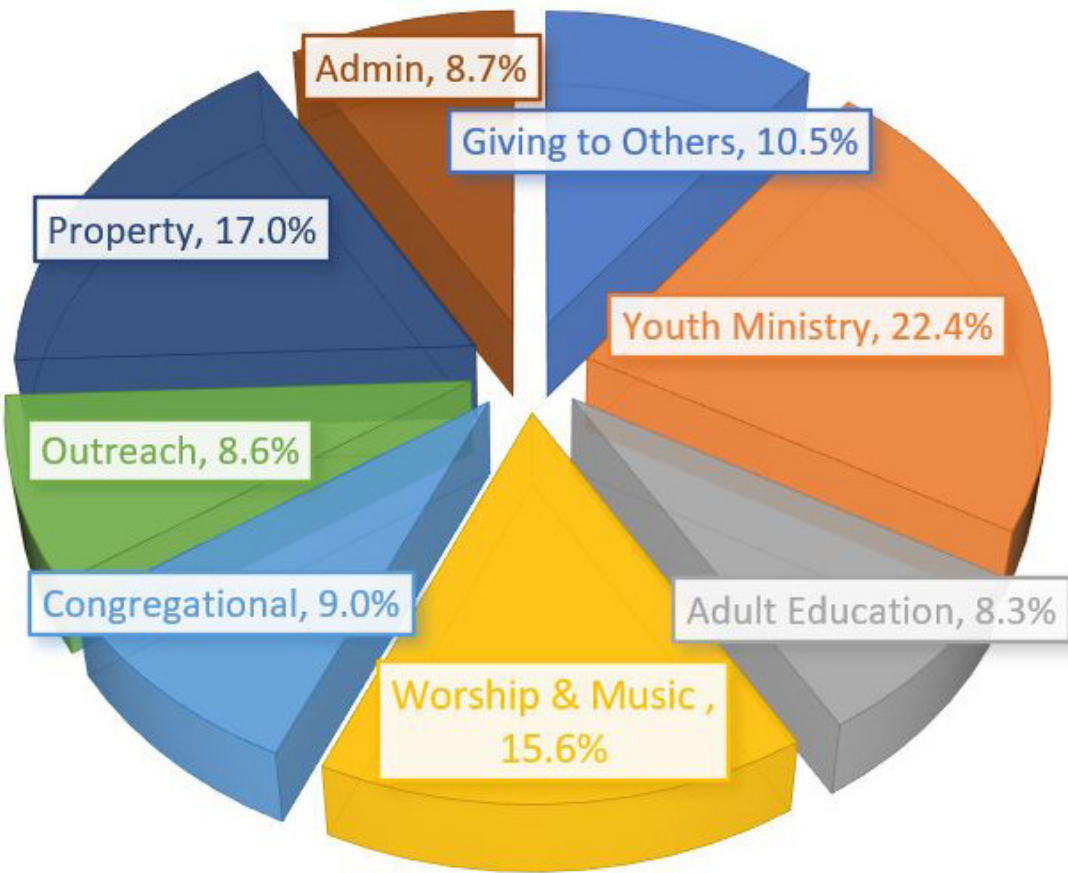
2023 MISSION & BENEVOLENCE FROM ALL BETHEL SOURCES

NW Synod of WI	67,000	Grace Place	3,071
Tanzania Mission	27,000	Pine Ridge	3,011
Operation Help & Source	16,200	Quilting Mission	1,867
Lutheran World Relief	13,500	Luther Point	1,800
LDR Nat'l Fire & Storm Relief	12,400	Women of the ELCA	1,600
Tanzania Scholarships	12,000	Our Neighbor's Place	1,500
Good Samaritan Assist GF Exp	9,014	Global Health Ministry	1,290
Camp Wapogasset	8,025	Habitat for Humanity	1,200
Backpack Program	6,125	Raider Network at Hudson High	1,000
World Hunger	5,250	H.O.M.E.	920
Lutheran Social Services	4,500	Refugee Assistance	800
Hudson Food Shelf	3,600	Miscellaneous Benevolence	1,220
Turning Point	3,200		

Total MISSION & BENEVOLENCE 207,093

2024 BUDGETED MINISTRY EXPENSES

This is Bethel's 2024 Budgeted Ministry Expenses including \$50K estimated giving through other funds



YEARLY COMPARISON
GENERAL FUND PROPOSED 2024 BUDGET

Statement of Activities	2022 Budget	2023 Actual	2023 Budget	2024 Budget	% Increase or Decrease from 2023 Budget
Income					
Offerings	1,562,000	1,586,868	1,610,000	1,658,300	3.0%
Programs	112,330	84,590	98,840	131,700	33.2%
Other	84,200	96,506	102,360	96,300	-5.9%
Income from Activities Subtotal	1,758,530	1,767,964	1,811,200	1,886,300	4.1%
Expense					
MISSION & BENEVOLENCE	147,440	141,451	162,000	165,000	1.9%
Compensation					
PASTORAL MINISTRY	404,490	346,709	410,000	451,000	10.0%
STAFF COMPENSATION	695,350	720,413	776,300	777,000	0.1%
CONTINUING EDUCATION	9,500	6,990	8,100	10,000	23.5%
Compensation Subtotal	1,109,340	1,074,112	1,194,400	1,238,000	3.7%
Programming					
YOUTH&FAMILY MINISTRY EXP	123,350	125,938	125,250	143,000	14.2%
ADULT EVENTS & EDUCATION	44,500	29,613	40,500	59,000	45.7%
Programming Subtotal	167,850	155,551	165,750	202,000	21.9%
Operating					
WORSHIP & OFFICE SUPPLIES	61,100	62,097	64,000	64,000	0.0%
COMMUNICATIONS	9,060	7,243	9,500	10,000	5.3%
IT, NETWORK & PHONES	54,600	64,037	66,000	69,000	4.5%
MUSIC	17,750	19,523	19,000	19,000	0.0%
Operating Subtotal	142,510	152,900	158,500	162,000	2.2%
Property					
UTILITIES	57,100	57,635	73,000	65,000	-11.0%
FACILITY	105,100	130,895	107,000	132,000	23.4%
INSURANCE & MISC	29,500	51,390	34,500	61,000	76.8%
PROJECTS	13,000	57,680	15,800	-	-100.0%
BUS & VAN	2,100	5,244	6,050	7,000	15.7%
Property Subtotal	206,800	302,844	236,350	265,000	12.1%
Expense from Activities Subtotals	1,773,940	1,826,858	1,917,000	2,032,000	6.0%
Operating Gain (Loss) from Activities	(15,410)	(58,894)	(105,800)	(145,700)	37.7%
Other non-Operating Income	34,410	97,303	105,800	30,000	-71.6%
Less: Other non-Operating Expense	19,000	41,461	-	-	
Total Income Gain (Loss)	-	(3,052)	-	(115,700)	
Restated in New Format for 2024 Budget Approval					

Bethel’s Finance Committee monitors financial activity each month and conducts necessary reviews of internal controls to ensure compliance; in addition, the Audit Committee independently samples transactions from the general ledger and reviews financial statements for reasonableness.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION MINUTES

From last year’s meeting on January 29, 2023

Call to Order – Council President, Jeff Maki

Opening Devotion – Interim Pastor Randy Fett

Appointment of the Parliamentarian (Lowell Enerson) – Jeff

Appointment of Head Teller (Marshall Agrey) – Jeff

Approval of the Minutes from the 2022 meeting – Koreen Theisen

STATE OF THE CHURCH

President Jeff Maki summarized our top priorities for the upcoming year are to call a Lead Pastor and make sure our committees and finances meet the needs of the church. He noted that we have a very giving congregation, in time, money and talent! We have many committees and volunteers that make this church work. President Maki reflected back to 2022 - we provided funds for Afghan refugees and Lutheran World Relief for Ukraine. We had over \$60,000 in benevolence giving to these efforts. Also in 2022, we set up a committee for the 150th Anniversary, hired a new preschool director, continued many ministries including strong kid’s ministries, the Scandinavian Food Fest, Befriender ministry, Columbarium Committee, HR, Endowment, Property Committee (new Security System) and many more.

As we discern our needs related to a future pastor, we will determine our vision and mission that will be used as input to the new pastor job description. Thank you to the Transition Team and those that attended the round table sessions to provide input. Once this process is complete, a Call Committee will be created to interview candidates and make recommendations to the Council and the Congregation. If you’d like to volunteer to join a committee, talk to anyone on the Church Council or the staff. We can help you find a place that suits your skills/interests.

Intentional Interim Pastor Update - Pastor Randy shared the importance of interim ministry being a time of intentional work to determine a vision. He shared the interim ministry timeline.

Adult Ministries Update - Pastor Kris Kurzejeski highlighted page seven of the Annual Report where the 2022 Adult ministry details can be found. If you have ideas for future adult ministries or bible studies, contact Pastor Kris.

Youth and Family Pastor Update - Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg introduced the Youth Ministry Team and highlighted 2022 programming including VBS participation and volunteers, Wednesday night classes, High School Youth Group, and upcoming Tanzania trip. He shared that the Creation Care Team was formed and are excited to support sustainability at Bethel!

Presentation of the New Church Council Candidates - Susan Richards introduced three new Church Council candidates: Nicole Lato, Kevin Carrier, and Lisa Wilt.

Proposed 2023 Budget and Ballot - Gwen Cossin reviewed the proposed 2023 budget.

Building Committee Update - Dawn Arnevik gave an update on the future building plans, no updates are expected until we have a new Senior Pastor.

Endowment Fund Update - Anne Wasmund gave an update on the status of this fund.

Benevolent Giving - Linda Williams-Tuenge gave an update. Benevolent giving was up; in 2022 benevolent giving totaled \$211,980.

Bethel Highlands Preschool - Missy Austreng shared details of accomplishments and 2023 goals including a new nature learning program where students will spend 30% of their day outside.

Results of Elections - Marshall Agrey shared the ballot results of a unanimous vote to accept new council members and unanimous vote to accept the 2023 budget.

Recognition of Service - Outgoing council members were recognized for their service: Linda Williams-Tuenge, Andrea Herzan, and Tim Rutten

A drawing was held for prizes.

Skip James and Tracey Jenkinson led us in the closing hymn.

President Jeff Maki ended the meeting with a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Koreen Theisen



CONNECT

WORSHIP

- Weekly Worship
- Sunday | 9am & 10:30am
 - Youth Led Worship
 - Radio Broadcasts
 - Cable TV Broadcast
 - Livestreaming of the 9am & 10:30am services on Bethel's Facebook page, YouTube Channel, and Website

- Special Worship
- CCH Worship
 - Martin Luther King, Jr with Jearlynn Steele
 - Lenten Services
 - Holy Week Services
 - Easter Services
 - Outdoor Worship services
 - Blessing of the Backpacks
 - All Saints Cemetery Service
 - Thanksgiving Eve Service
 - Christmas Eve Services
 - Christmas Day Service
 - New Year's Eve Service

MUSIC & DRAMA

- Skit Guys dramas for Wednesdays in Lent
- Skits for Stewardship

EVENTS

- Annual Celebration
- Scandinavian Food Fest
- Senior Adult Luncheons
- Great Bethel Get Together
- Advent Happenings

CLUBS/GATHERINGS

- Book Club
- Quilting
- Hardanger
- Men's Fellowship Breakfast
- Bethel, Brews and Bros.
- Women of Bethel
- Pastries with Parents

PRAYER

- Lenten Devotional
- Weekly Prayer Group

BIBLE STUDIES

- Pastor Bible Studies
- Sunday Adult Bible Study
- Men's Saturday Bible Study
- Women's Gatherings

PERSONAL GROWTH

- New Disciples Classes
- Christian Women's Retreat
- Climate Change Presentation
- Adult Education
- Global Leadership Summit
- Earth Day Stations

SACRAMENTS

- First Communion Teaching
- First Communion Services
- Baptisms

YOUTH

- Bethel Highlands Preschool
- Faith Milestones
- Sunday School
- 6th & 7th Grade Faith Formation
- 8th & 9th Grade Confirmation
- High School Youth Group (grades 9-12)
- High School Bible Study
- Vacation Bible School
- Christmas Program
- Bethel sponsored Boy Scouts
- Sunday Childcare
- Summer Camp
- College Aged Ministry

GROW

FROM THE TREASURER - 2023 REPORT

Bethel continues to use six funds to account for its transactions:

- General Fund – The main operating account for all regular giving and expenses
- Capital Fund – All capital appeal giving goes to this fund. Fund expenses include gifts designated as current facility projects, future building projects, capital appeal fundraising costs, and investments in certain long-life capital items
- Restricted Memorial Fund - Tracks giving intended for specific non-budgeted purposes such as memorials or special fundraising for missions
- Preschool Fund - Used exclusively for fees and expenses related to Bethel Highlands Preschool
- Memorial Garden Fund – Tracks donations, revenue, liabilities, and costs related to Bethel's Columbarium, Memorial Wall, and Garden, located at the Highlands campus
- Women of Bethel Fund – Tracks revenue from the Scandinavian Food Fest, Circle donations, and WOB benevolence payments

Bethel prepares its financial statements on an accrual basis in order to appropriately match revenue and expenses. Reserve accounts are used to commit and identify funds designated for a specific purpose.

2023 Financial Statements

In 2023, the congregation once again showed their generosity in supporting the many ministries of Bethel through continued growth in offerings. Total offerings increased by 3% over 2022, which exceeded last year's growth of 2%. As a church council we want to extend our sincere gratitude for your continued financial support!

Bethel did realize an operating deficit in 2023 of \$58,900 (difference between operating income and operating expenses); however, this was less than the budgeted shortfall of \$97,000. While 2023 operational expenses did exceed offerings & programming income, the interest generated from our mutual funds of \$55,800 offset the majority of this deficit.

Bethel continues to operate without a mortgage, see improvements & growth for our memorial garden, benefit from special gifts out of the generosity of our Endowment and Women of Bethel, and fund needed maintenance, repairs and upgrades at both facilities.

Again, we are so grateful for your support in 2023 and look forward to the congregation's continued commitment in 2024.

Church Community Builder software is used to track member contributions. QuickBooks software is used for financial reporting purposes. Bethel maintains an "open book" policy relating to its finances such that any member is welcome to view financial detail upon request. Please feel free to contact me or members of Bethel's office staff.

Respectfully submitted,
Nick Jepperson, Treasurer



CONGREGATION STATS 2023

WORSHIP STATS

SUNDAYS, IN-PERSON SERVICES 2023
146 services (includes outdoors & inside)


16,723

SPECIAL, IN-PERSON SERVICES
31 services (includes outdoors & inside)

6,384

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP
AS OF 12/31/23

2,502



BAPTISMS

18

CONFIRMATION

41

FUNERALS

11

NEW MEMBERS

54

MARRIAGES

1*

*At a Bethel Campus

TOTAL FACEBOOK REACH

31,071

TOTAL INSTAGRAM REACH

713

TOTAL FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

1,999

TOTAL INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

319

PASTORAL & MEMBERSHIP STATS

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

SERVE

CHURCH

- Helping Hands
- Worship Support Volunteer
- Altar Care
- Decorating Team
- Congregational Life
- Transportation for Senior Citizens to Worship
- Handbells
- New Song Band
- Bethel Youth / Adult Musicians
- Visiting Guest Musicians
- Sunday School and Wednesday Night Small Group and Large Group Leaders
- Adult Education Leaders and Small Group Leaders
- H.O.M.E. (Hudson Outreach Meals for Everyone)
- College Care Packages
- Hospital Visits
- Pastor Visits
- Youth Summer Mission Trips

REGIONAL

- Columbarium
- Dorothy Day
- Grace Place
- Operation Help
- Pine Ridge Reservation Mission Work
- Giving Tree Campaign
- Essentials Campaign
- Hudson Backpack Program
- Raider Network
- Habitat for Humanity
- Food Shelf
- Hosting American Red Cross Blood Drives
- Endowment Fund Grant Disbursement
- Women of Bethel Grant Disbursement
- Hudson Star Observer
- Pastor's Viewpoint Articles
- High School Mission Trip
- Middle School Mission Trip
- School Supply Collection
- Kids Impact Day

GLOBAL

- Tanzania Mission Experience Trip
- Feed My Starving Children
- LWR Health Kits
- LWR Quilting
- LWR / LDR Giving



BETHEL HIGHLANDS PRESCHOOL
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

As a ministry of Bethel, we serve and support families of the greater Hudson community. We provide a safe and loving environment with an excellent educational program that nurtures the spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of the unique, God-given gifts of each child.

Our mission and values hold steadfast in all we do at BHP – particularly in spurring one another toward love, or in another word: community. We take community – on all different levels - quite seriously here at BHP. There’s the BHP family community, the Bethel church community, the Hudson School District community, and the greater Hudson community.

BHP has impacted and grown our community in many activities, partnerships, and curriculum over 2023.

- BHP Wins:
- Team – Our high-quality program is due to the commitment and passions of Angie Haider, Alyssa Edholm, Cindy Smith, Emily Hawkins, Sally Holter, Teri Odegard, Erica Carlson, Michelle Webb, Missy Austreng.
 - Enrollment – 92 students in 9 classes
 - Board of Directors – this leadership guides conversations and decisions that impact our whole community. Thanks to our board: Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg, Carrie Betker, Ashley Zwier, Lindsey Weiler, Andrew Ryan, Michelle Webb, Rachel Wahlberg, Anne Wasmund, Lori Head, and Lois Duerst.
 - Community Events –Trunk or Treat, Spaghetti Feed, Color Fun Run, and BHP Open House events welcomed hundreds of families through our doors to learn about our program, to bring the community together, and to be touched with the love of Jesus.
 - Fundraisers – Three new fundraisers not only benefitted our funds but brought the community together. Thanks to our whole church’s participation in the Gerten’s Plant Sale, the Spaghetti Feed, and the Color Fun Run.
 - Collections – BHP families helped our greater Hudson community by donating a truckload of preferred grocery items for the Hudson Backpack Program for one of their busiest times – summer.
 - Little Free Library – BHP was excited to open our Little Free Library to offer gently used books to families in our community.
 - Specials – Our community of experts help teach specials each week: resident musicians, teachers, artists, Spanish teachers all add to our rich curriculum for exposure and global experience.
 - Biblical Affirmations - The monthly chapel point / affirmation is part of our social/emotional and mental health focus and taps the talents of Pastor Ladd, Pastor Kris, and Miss Carole for teachings.
 - Collaborative Programs with Bethel – Pastries with Parents, Chapel, and Lunch Bunch.
 - Partnership with Hudson School District with 4K program.

It takes a community to do the work we are called to do. Thank you for your part in expanding our community reach and helping us spur one another toward love and good deeds – within BHP, Bethel, and the greater Hudson community.

Missy Austreng, Director
Michelle Webb, Interim Director
Bethel Highlands Preschool



NORTHWEST SYNOD BISHOP
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, It is time for your congregation’s annual meeting! This is a great opportunity to reflect on the past year of faithful ministry. Now is the time to ask the BIG questions! How were we faithful in in ministry? How were we faithful in participating in God’s simple mission to love our neighbor? Now is the time to celebrate how God’s Spirit has inspired your ministry! Give thanks to God and celebrate for the good that your congregation has accomplished!

Now is also the time to tell the truth about your ministry. How has your congregation fallen short and not been faithful to God’s will? Lacked energy, a sense of purpose or mission? Now is the time to humbly tell the truth if your congregation has lost its focus or has little energy for God’s work.

We all need to take an honest look in the rear view mirror of the last year and ask how have we been faithful and how have we failed to be faithful to our baptismal promises. Then we can boldly move into the New Year 2024 asking how we can with God’s help do better.

The Church of England took a long look into the rear view mirror and with much prayer has discerned that moving forward they will strive to be a Simpler, Humbler and Bolder Church in the future. The Church of England described their vision for the future in this way:

Simpler, humbler, bolder are virtues we believe God is calling from us at this point in our history. They run through the vision and shape all we do and all that we are.

- Simpler because we are not as big a church as we used to be
- Humbler because we are facing our failures, and this is not easy.
- Bolder because the love of Christ compels us. We have a gospel to proclaim, and we live and minister in a world of much pain and confusion.

I believe these three virtues could also help us in the coming year. I invite your councils and leaders to lean into these questions in 2024:

1. Simpler: How can we simplify our structure so more time and energy can be spent on loving our neighbors and joining in God’s mission in our community? How can we focus on what is really important and let go of the trivial or unnecessary?
2. Humbler: What isn’t working? How have we fallen short? We can’t do everything we use to do so what ONE thing can we do for Jesus? How can we work with other churches, denominations in our community?
3. Bolder: How can your congregation be braver and bolder in sharing the good news about Jesus in a hurting world? In prophetic witness to justice issues in our world? In working for right relationships with our neighbors and all of creation?

Friends, I am truly grateful for your partnership in the gospel and all the ways you are faithful in ministry. I invite you to move joyfully, simply, humbly and boldly into God’s future in 2024.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Philippians 2 Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God... emptied himself ...he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.



I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:3-6

BOY SCOUT TROOP 140

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

On October 19, 2023 Scout Troop 140, co-sponsored by Bethel and Mt Zion Lutheran Churches, completed 94 years of continuous service to the youth of Hudson, while the Scouting of America celebrated their 113th year. Troop 140 currently has 7 youth registered as Scouts and 7 adult leaders registered for support. We currently have two youth registered in our new Cub Scout pack.

Troop 140 supports a year-round program which includes camping, service projects, council and district event participation, and a high adventure program all organized to allow Scouts to learn and grow in life skills and leadership, and have fun in the process. The Troop works to instill leadership skills, personal faith, self-esteem, service and respect for the community. These values, expressed in the Scout Oath and Law, are fundamental to this process: Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent.

The Troop had six Scouts and three adult leaders attend the one week camp at Tomahawk Scout Camp. Scouts attended several sessions throughout the year to work on various merit badges. The Troop met 48 Monday evenings in 2023.

The Troop had its 57th annual Christmas wreath sale fund-raiser in November through December. Troop wreath sales typically finances most of its programs and activities for the year and allows the Scouts to earn their way to Camp and other activities. The Troop gave service to the Memorial Day Flag ceremony, the Great Bethel Get-together, Hudson Golden Rule Picnic. Additional community service was given through various projects and many individual Scout interests. We supported the Spirit of St Croix Art Festival, served hot chocolate and cookies at both the Light Up Hudson, and Santa and His Critters events. We have a great relationship with the Hudson Chamber of Commerce (HCOC) and we earn HCOC donations for our services as well as the opportunity to scout recruitment and earn tips. The Troop’s trailer (parked outside of the Bethel Church) is used for hauling equipment and gear for camping and activities. It was purchased 22 years ago with some of the funds that the Scouts raised over the prior three years.

Some of Troop 140 adult Leaders are members the Northern Star Council President’s Cabinet and one is a member of the Board of Directors. Registered adult leaders have met B.S.A. training requirements for leadership and youth protection. There are 4 assistant Scoutmasters. Longtime Scout leaders include Bethel members Charles Huntley, David Mienke, and Holly Tremble and Mt. Zion member Carl Meincke, who along with the Troop Committee also work with the youth. Troop 140 goals for 2024 are:

- Encourage Scouts to advance to Eagle Scout rank;
- Attend One week of Summer Camp, Scout District and Council sponsored events;
- Mentor Scouts through their next rank advancement;
- Provide Service to Bethel and Mt. Zion Churches and the Hudson area community;
- Register Scouts for our new Cub Scout Pack and continue Pack Monthly meetings.

Troop 140 has been part of Bethel and Mt Zion Lutheran Churches’ service to youth for many years. In order to foster our partnership in service to Hudson area youth, Troop 140 requests that we are included as one of its’ supported youth programs in any church public relations brochures and to work toward coordinating both troop and other church sponsored youth programs schedules to enable and encourage our youth to participate in both programs.

Troop 140 sincerely thanks Bethel and Mt. Zion Churches for their sponsorship of Troop 140 and to Bethel Church for the use of their facilities for its program.

Best Regards,

David Mienke, Chartered Organization Representative Carl Meincke, Assistant Scoutmaster

Charles Huntley, Assistant Scoutmaster

Holly Tremble, Activities Coordinator and Assistant Scoutmaster Sam Platson, Senior Patrol Leader

BETHEL MUSIC & WORSHIP

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Traditional Music Report
Another great year of music-making took place at traditional services during 2023. Hymns for congregational singing were transposed so that the range of the melody would be comfortable for men’s voices, something that is almost unheard of in other churches. There were five premiers of new musical compositions by Layton James, including choral, instrumental, and hymns, both tune and text. The Bethel Quartet, Megan Wagner, Margaret Jane Wray, Obed Floan, and Alex Ritchie performed twice a month, and also as soloists. A resurgent Bethel Chorale choir was formed, including high-school youth. Hymn-sings led by Tracey Jenkinson and Skip were popular as ‘preludes’ to services every other week. In addition to these resident groups, there were many guest artists. Among the vocalists were Amy Scheffer-Western and Jodi Mealey, Keegan Foster and Angela Grunstad.

There were many instrumentalists as well: violinists Mike Sobieski, Sarah Bertsch and Max Vitullo; cellists Daryl Skobba, Scott Lykins and Ken Miller, and violist Susan Janda. Wind players too: trumpeters Mel Olson and Chris Tank, hornist Denny McGinn, and trombonist Rich Gaynor, who played at Bethel three times in 2023. Then there were the five pairs of volunteer singers presenting Marty Haugen’s “Holden Evening Prayer” during Lenten services. The guest artists appeared not only in worship, but in special events and “Senior Adult Luncheons”.

As the song lyric says: “It was a very good year”.

Blessings, Skip James
Director of Traditional Music

Contemporary Music Report
2023 was another great year for the New Song band. Week in and week out, the band provided consistent music leadership at the 9:00 Sunday services, offering a mix of familiar tunes while introducing new music along the way. Dedicated musicians like Paul Gavic, Sam Chapman, and Tracey Jenkinson are our “musical warriors” who were with us almost every week of the year. We also continued to be blessed with the flexibility of having a fantastic crew of musicians who played or sang on rotating basis. These musicians included Calla Jenkinson, Katie Possehl, Heidi Selander, Nancy Long, Steve Jerlow, Mike Brueske, and Chris Boston.

Again in 2023, the highlight of the year was providing musical worship leadership at the outdoor services. New Song also enjoyed supporting various kids choirs, playing at the Rite of Confirmation service, and providing musical support for the annual video. I look forward to another strong year in 2024. As the song says “all things are possible!”

Craig Koehnen
Director of Contemporary Music

Bethel Bell Choir Report
The Bethel Bell Choir serves to provide monthly special music during worship services at both the Highlands and Downtown locations, September through May. Also in 2023, bell choir members participated in a Bell Fest event in March, the Bethel anniversary celebration in April, All Saints’ service at Willow River Cemetery and Anthornis events in November. The group consists of 13 members and rehearses weekly at Highlands. Thanks to the bell ringers and congregational support for this ministry of music.

Sonja McGill
Bethel Bell Choir Director



WOMEN OF BETHEL 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Women of Bethel again hosted the Scandinavian Food Fest in full force. Thank you everyone who made this a success. We cleared around \$16,700.00 this year. We distributed funds to various causes, more than we took in as we had extra monies in our fund.

Here is where we gave our monies to: Matt Aubart, Youth Program Equipment fund \$1100.00, Missy Austreng, BHP Teacher training \$1200.00, Sonja McGill Bethel Bells \$750.00, Pastor Kris/Koreen Theisen, \$2600.00 cocktail tables for Highlands, retreat fund and retreat musicians, Janet Wilson, Our Neighbors Place \$1500.00, \$500.00 GHM –to purchase misc. items needed for Hospice Kits, Bethel Quilters \$2000.00, Operation Help/Source \$1500.00, Hudson Area Senior Center \$500.00, Pastor Ladd \$2000.00 summer intern, Backpack Program \$1500.00, Turning Point \$1500.00, Grace Place \$1500.00, Vicki Datt \$500.00 spay/neuter clinic Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Hannah Cobian \$500.00 Bethel apparel for staff/volunteers, Carole DeJardin \$900.00 Advent Happenings for 2024, Pastor Ladd Youth scholarships \$2000.00, Tanzania \$2000.00. These grants total \$24,050.00.

The Bethel Quilters were able to donate 60 quilts to LWR along with 20 Fabric kits (Mary Gathering), 42 Personal Care kits (Dorcas Gathering) and 100 School kits (Ruth Gathering). The Naomi Gathering sent 100 Hospice kits plus \$1000 to purchase additional supplies and \$556.50 for shipping of those kits to GHM. Also, the Bethel Quilters gave 66 quilts to Operation Help, 12 quilts to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and 2 quilts to BHP Auction 2024.

Submitted by Gail Nolan WOB Facilitator

MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Memorial Garden Committee oversees the Memorial Garden (the grounds, flower boxes, and containers filled with flowers in the summer and greens during the winter), the columbarium(s), and the Memorial Wall. The main highlight of 2023 was the construction and installation of the new Columbarium Tower. All went well with the installation. Six niches and one Memorial Wall plaque were ordered.

Ice cream was served at the garden on June 4th after the first outdoor service of the summer. Bethel members were able to check out the garden, the new columbarium, and ask questions of committee members. Ice cream treats were handed out again on September 10th as part of the Great Bethel Get Together celebration.

The garden will undergo a mulch refresh in the spring. A new large flower box will be constructed as the current planter is beyond repair. A big THANK YOU to our volunteers that keep our plants and flowers watered and maintained during the summer.

Expenses exceeded funds coming in, so please support our Memorial Garden in 2024!

The Memorial Garden Committee

Patti Thacker, Chairperson

Committee members: Gwen Cossin, Steve Wilcox, Cindy Stensgaard, Stacy Baehman, and Dan Roeglin

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

It is safe to say that we have a lot to celebrate again this year. Throughout 2023 we have been blown away by all the ways that you have “Walked With Us” as we connect, grow, and serve our Children, Youth, and Families.

This past year there have been so many great and powerful ministries that have helped our children, youth, and families Connect with others through retreats, lock-ins, Pastries with the Preschool Parents, and Bethel’s Parents and Preschoolers Play Dates to name a few.

We have also seen our youth Growing in their faith through attending our Wednesday Night Programing for 6th-12th grades, Sunday School (3yr old – 5th grade), and VBS. We continue to have record number of youth Serving those in need by going on our High School Mission Trip, Middle School Mission Trip, as well as taking part in our elementary Kids Impact Day.

All these ministries have been made possible because of your continued prayer, financial generosity, as well as the encouragement you have shown to our students. As always, we couldn’t do this ministry without our small group leaders. I know I lift them up every year in the annual report, but it is the small group leaders in Sunday School, Middle School, and High School programing that make a difference as mentors and role models for our youth. It is such a blessing for the youth staff to be able to work alongside of each of these individuals.

As many of you know this past summer, Cindy Halunen decided to step down as the Middle School Director after 15 years. Since then, Cindy has stayed on with us alongside Matt Aubart to oversee our programing until we can find a permanent replacement. In addition, we are both excited, yet sad to share that our High School Director, Jake Summerville will be stepping down, after five years to start a seminary internship in preparation for becoming a rostered deacon in the ELCA. We appreciate the impactful work from both Jake and Cindy at Bethel during their time serving with us. It’s impossible to detail here all they have done to help Bethel live out our mission and grow our ministries. We are so thankful for all those who have and continue to step up in service so that we can continue to have a powerful Children, Youth, and Family Ministry.

As always, the Children, Youth, and Family Ministries team thanks all our volunteers, small group leaders, parents, youth, congregation, as well as our spouses and significant others for their patience and flexibility as we continue to maneuver through these evolving times of ministry.

In Service to Him,
Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg
Pastor of Children, Youth, and Families



ADULT EDUCATION
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

- Nineteen sessions of pastor led studies were held this year.
- We studied the Biblical books of Ruth and Daniel and did a book study on Barbara Brown Taylor’s book, “Learning to Walk in the Dark.”
- The Women’s 2023 Retreat was held at the Bethel Highlands Campus on April 22nd, with our theme coming from Proverbs 17:22, “A cheerful heart is good medicine.” The featured speaker was Lisa Riggs, a cardiovascular specialty nurse, and our retreat musicians were Tracey and Calla Jenkinson.
- Bible Study Preparation Sessions continued for the leaders of the Women of Bethel Bible study gatherings, which meet monthly.
- BeFriender Ministry meets monthly, as does the leadership team, and has provided a caring and supportive presence to many this year during difficult times. The BeFrienders have taken an active role in visiting shut-ins this year, as we have been without a visitation pastor.
- Four Adult Luncheons were held: In January, our state of the church address led by the pastors, business administrator and council president, among others, with Skip James providing the music. In May, we hosted comedian and former pastor, Bill Chadwick as our speaker and Skip James provided the music. In August, we hosted Professor Timothee Davi and his wife, Abby, who is the granddaughter of Jim and Roberta Harper. Professor Davi spoke about Christian virtues and both Timothee and Abby spoke about their upcoming missionary work in Cameroon. Music was provided by Accent Duets. In October, we had an off-site luncheon and cruised via ship down the St. Croix River.

Respectfully submitted by Pastor Kris Kurzejeski

BETHEL ENDOWMENT FUND
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Endowment Committee’s purpose is to fulfill the mission of Bethel by educating the congregation on how they can support this ministry, assisting donors in their giving, distribution of grant requests and administering fund procedures and policies of the Bethel Endowment Funds. The endowment funds are a permanent resource for sustaining the work of Bethel Lutheran Church.

Ten grants totaling \$12,100 were awarded from the Bethel Endowment Funds in 2023. Grant monies helped fund: Hudson Area Backpack Program, Operation Help, Our Neighbor’s Place, Bethel Highlands Preschool, Bethel Women’s Retreat, Bethel Lenten Special Musicians, Bethel Staff Appreciation Lunch, Bethel Pipe & Drape Backdrop, Bethel Global Leadership Summit, and Bethel Creation Care Team.

Bethel partners with Thrivent Charitable to manage the Endowment Funds. The Funds are divided into two categories - the Outreach Fund that supports those in need outside of Bethel Lutheran Church and the General Fund that supports the needs inside the Bethel community. As of the end of Q3 2023, the fund balances totaled: Outreach Fund: \$32,801.15 and General Fund: \$214,791.12. The amount available for grant distribution is based on the fund’s 10-year average rate of return (4.9%).

Committee members include Pastor Kris Kurzejeski, Lois Durst (council representative), Anne Wasmund, Ron Johnson, Adam Wilt, Dave Benson, Gerald Bauer, and Galina Powers. A brochure that outlines how you can help support this ministry in your giving, will or estate planning, is available at the Church Office.

Anne Wasmund
Endowment Fund Chairperson



MISSION & JUSTICE COMMITTEE
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Mission and Justice Committee has been busy during 2023 with additional service activities and opportunities for new members to join the committee. We are currently waiting for available 20 income totals. As these come in, we will work on 2024 disbursement allocations.

In 2022, Northwest Wisconsin Synod challenged Bethel to develop a new ministry related to caring for the environment which is called Creation Care. The focus of Creation Care is promoting ideas and activities the community can carry out to help serve and care for God’s creation. Members involved in Creation Care have participated in many activities and will continue to expand on those activities in 2024. New members and helping hands are always welcome.

Bethel offered an intergenerational mission trip to Tanzania for 14 individuals June 24-July 9, 2023. The trip offered an extension to serve people outside of Bethel’s walls.

Moving ahead to 2024, look for updates in the Mission & Justice calendar and areas in the Mission & Justice Activities Booklet available to share your talents. The committee is also planning to spotlight monthly in The Connections Newsletter the efforts of many other Bethel groups who are carrying out mission and justice activities.

Thank you to everyone for all of your good work and for partnering with the Mission & Justice Committee.

Committee members: Pastor Ladd, Koreen Theisen, Shane Loy, Curt Larson, Walker Stutzman, Tracy Berglund, Linda Williams-Tuenge

Submitted by Linda Williams-Tuenge

OUTREACH COMMITTEE
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Outreach Committee members: Andrea Jorgenson - Chair, Susan Richards - Council Representative, Deb Green, Scott Swanberg, Marla Valentine-Wiste, Amy Bartels, Matt Aubart, and Pastor Kris Kurzejeski.

The Outreach Committee is responsible for promoting the spiritual growth and life of the congregation by sharing God’s love and the Good News.

- 2023 Outreach Activities:
- Scandinavian Food Fest: Provided volunteer support
 - Birthday Cards: Sent monthly to senior Bethel members
 - Befrienders Program: Trained Befrienders provided one-on-one outreach to members in need of confidential listening support. Extended visitations to shut-ins.
 - Sunday Social: Sponsored a coffee/treat social after downtown worship service.
 - Next Chapter: Planned and hosted social events for adults in the middle stages of life
 - Escape Room/Murder Mystery
 - Bike and Brew
 - Rustic Roots Winery
 - Burgers and Bowling at the Nook

Submitted by Andrea Jorgenson



ACTING CO-PASTORS 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

"For we walk by faith and not by sight," 2 Corinthians 5:7

When we chose this scripture as our theme for the year, it spoke to us in more than one way. Certainly, we are always people who walk by faith, but that is especially true during times of transition when none of us know what lies ahead, and yet we must keep pressing forward, trusting that God will be with us in all times and places, during all changes and uncertainties. We want to thank you for trusting us to help guide Bethel through this long and trying process. It has been our humble privilege to walk beside you in ministry.

Although there is much we currently don't know, we do know that Bethel has continued to connect, grow, serve, celebrate, plan, strategize, vision, and work together in all things. This particular year has been one of celebration for us. It was Bethel's sesquicentennial – the 150th Anniversary of Bethel's formation as a church! Bethel's 150th committee hosted a celebration in April as we shared and acknowledged a history and a growth to be proud of, dedicated a lovingly made quilt which hangs in our downtown sanctuary, invited former pastors back to help us celebrate, and laughed and shared food and fellowship together. This was a special time in the history of our congregation and a milestone that we can be proud to have reached.

Over the past year, the council worked on revising our constitutional by-laws and new committees were formed including Worship, Nominating, Stewardship, and Finance/Audit. The Worship Committee has begun to evaluate our services for quality, quantity, and the times we offer for worship opportunities. A transitional task force was formed that studied Bethel's setting and needs, which led to the formation of a call committee, whose work continues to identify additional pastoral leadership for Bethel. Our staffing has remained relatively stable during turbulent times. Fifty-four new members were received over the past year, and growth has continued in our Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, mission trips

and thirty-eight youth were confirmed this fall at Bethel.

Service is at the heart of who we are as a congregation. Bethel embarked on a mission trip to Tanzania this year. Ten people from Bethel joined Pastor Ladd as connections were made, bonds were formed, and ministry was shared with our partner congregation overseas. We continue to host the Home Meal twice a month at our downtown location and actively engage with mission partners locally, nationally, and globally.

This year we hosted our annual women's retreat for 107 women at our Bethel Highlands location. This continues to be an amazing outreach and uplifting inspiration for women from Bethel and beyond to grow in faith and connect with others.

Perhaps one of the reasons Bethel has been able to remain faithfully grounded during a transitional period has to do with our grounding in the Bible, which helps us grow in faith and knowledge of the Lord. Through numerous Bible Studies, to Biblically based preaching, and children and youth programming that aims for educational and experiential growth, Bethel has remained true to what is most important in all times and places – finding our center and our value in the Creator of all life and love.

God has truly blessed us at Bethel. We are excited to continue to share those blessings throughout the upcoming year with all we encounter. Please join us in this important mission as we walk forward in faith together!

Submitted by Pastors
Kris Kurzejeski and Ladd Sonnenberg



BETHEL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE, 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

As our Bethel Highlands facility ages, we are having increased issues with equipment wearing out resulting in many failures or repair needs. One of the largest projects was reroofing both facilities after the 2022 hailstorm. Fortunately, the cost was covered by insurance. Below is a listing of some of the projects and repairs done this year.

- Reroof both campuses and dealt with insurance coverage – Cost was approximately \$500,000 which was covered by insurance.
- Sold the blue bus and are using our second van and rent more if needed.
- Updated the A/V system in the Highlands Children's Theater as the existing system failed.
- Highlands fire alarm system – Replaced the fire alarm system panel that was defective and added some better grounding for surge protection.
- Highlands fire protection sprinkler system – This has been another major issue this year. The sprinkler piping has developed leaks from corrosion and resulted in damaged equipment. Insurance has covered the damaged equipment, but we still had to replace the sprinkler piping in the sanctuary. We still have some leaks in other areas that will be addressed in 2024, plus adding a nitrogen purge system to prevent future corrosion of piping.
- On a rotational basis of replacing chairs Downtown.
- Handicap bars added in Downtown bathroom by the kitchen.
- Gas stove replacement at Highlands prework – Working on replacing the gas stoves with electric stoves. There is a problem with the pilot lights in that they stop working after 5+ years in addition to they use a lot of natural gas. This will end up being an energy saving project.
- Continue to define storage needs for a new storage facility.
- New copier was leased for the Downtown offices.
- HVAC motor repair at Highlands – Will be a continuing issue as the HVAC units age and fail including heat exchanger failures, motor failures, and other issues resulting in eventual need to replace some of these units.
- Restroom fans tied to light switch at Highlands – This is another energy saving program so the bathroom fans only run when there is someone in there and not 24/7.
- Define and quotes for new lift for Highlands – The current lift is difficult to use and takes up a lot of space in the storage area. Will purchase a replacement one and sell the current one when funds are available.
- Shades at Highlands - Defining needs and getting quotes to replace. Some of the current shades in the sanctuary have stopped working and replacement parts are not available. Defining actual needs for shades and will be getting quotes for new shade systems in 2024.

- Painted Highlands preschool rooms – Painted four classrooms and added shelving to two storage rooms.
- Lawn care vendor selection and monitored.
- A/V issues at Highlands – Continued issues with failures of A/V equipment in addition to upgrade needs at Highlands. Equipment is on order for replacement in early 2024. Evaluating future needs for this area of worship support. Had failures and had to find work-arounds.
- Highlands maintenance contract vendor evaluation – Currently have Ahern as our maintenance contractor. Have had issues with them and are working these issues out.
- Lawn sprinkler maintenance and future needs – Highlands lawn sprinklers need work and are looking at vendors to do the work. Looking at needs of Downtown lawn sprinklers, evaluating if needed, as 2023 was a dry year and we did not use the system and the lawn was fine.
- Mowed Highlands outlying areas twice – We mow the outlying areas to prevent the grassy areas from becoming overgrown with invasive species.
- Janitorial staff evaluation – Evaluated existing staff and contract janitorial support and are leaving as is.
- Mulched the Highlands preschool playground.
- Changed insurance companies and did insurance evaluation – Past insurance company is dropping all coverages in the Hudson area, so we had to find another insurance company which resulted in an evaluation of current insurance coverage and deductibles.
- WiFi system evaluation for both campuses – Current systems at both campuses are a result of add-ons as time went on. Need to reconfigure both campuses to insure better WiFi coverage throughout the facilities.

2024 Projects

- Highlands fire protection sprinklers continued work
- A/V system maintenance/evaluation at Highlands
- HVAC systems as they fail at Highlands
- Shades evaluation and operation at Highlands
- Parking lot repair at Highlands

Respectfully submitted by
Roger Pavlis, Committee Chairperson

