



BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

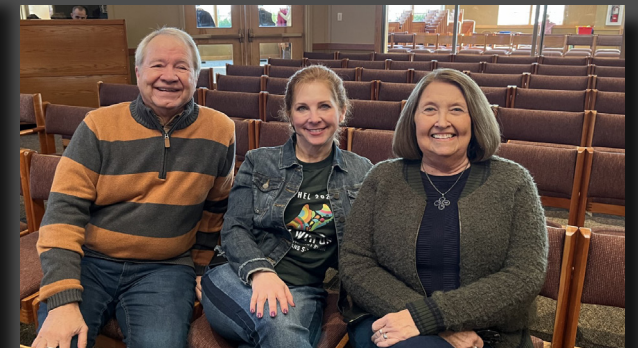




TABLE OF CONTENTS

MINUTES

2024 Annual Celebration Minutes 3

MISSION

Connect, Grow, Serve At a Glance 4-5

ANNUAL REPORTS

Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg 2024 Report 6

Pastor Kris Kurzejeski 2024 Report 7

Bethel Highlands Preschool 2024 Report 8

Mission & Justice Committee 2024 Report 9

Women of Bethel 2024 Report 10

Endowment Fund 2024 Report 10

Property Committee 2024 Report 11

Music & Worship 2024 Report 12

Children, Youth & Family Ministries Report 13

Memorial Garden 2024 Report 13

Outreach Committee 2024 Report 14

Scout Troop 140 2024 Report 14

CONGREGATIONAL STATS

Worship/Pastoral/Membership 2024 15

FINANCIALS

2024 Treasurer's Report 16

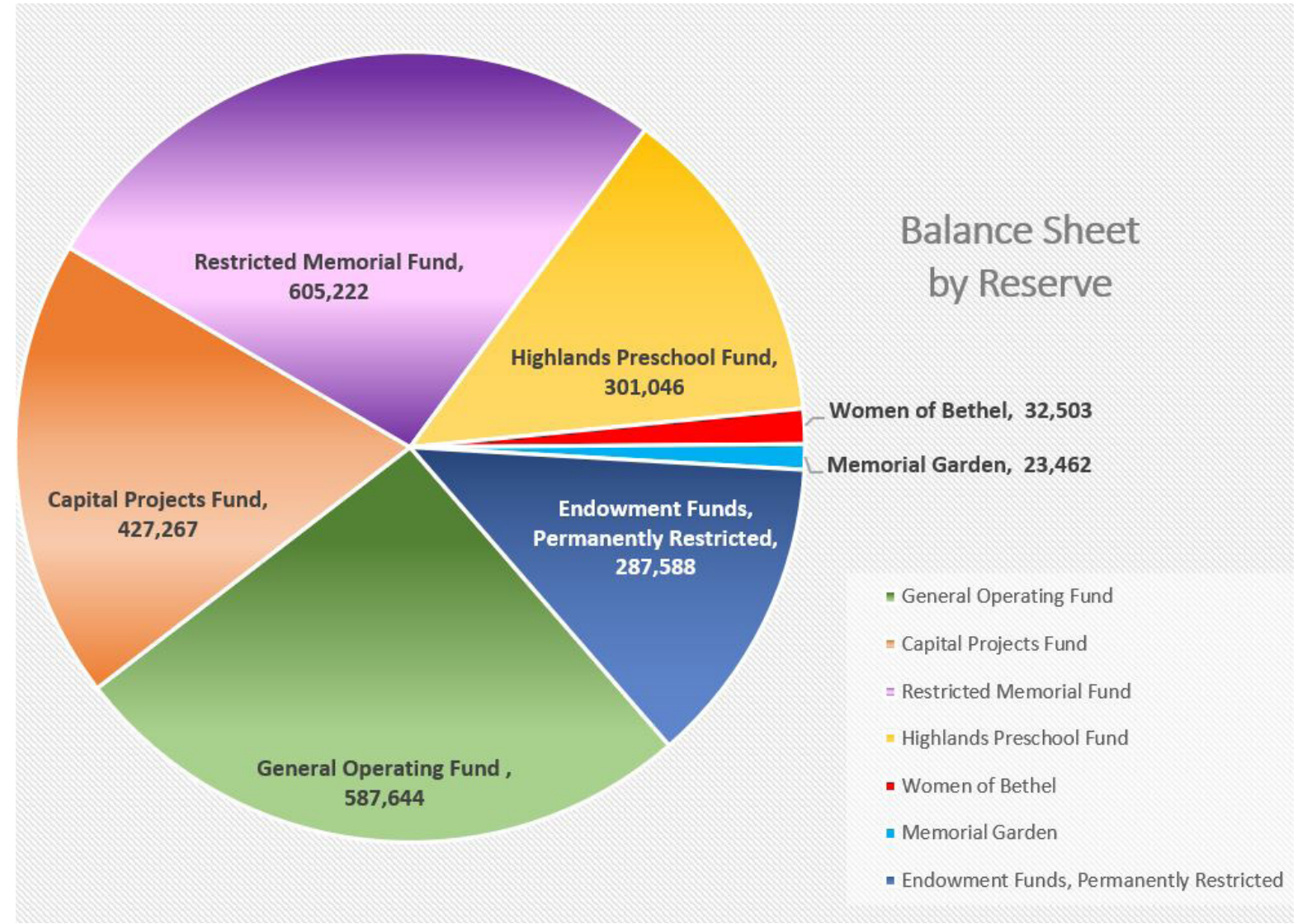
2024 Mission & Benevolence Gifts 17

General Fund Proposed 2025 Budget 18

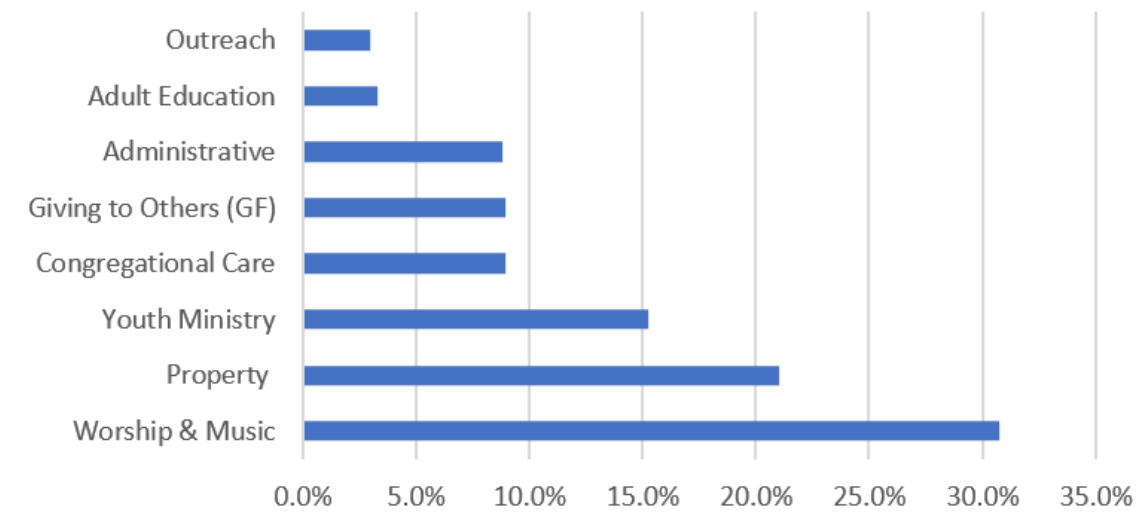
2024 Balance Sheet By Fund 19

BALANCE SHEET BY FUND

Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2024
 Total Cash & Investments: \$2,264,732
 Total Liabilities & Equity: \$2,264,732



General Fund 2025 Budgeted Ministry Expenses



GENERAL FUND PROPOSED 2025 BUDGET

Annual Celebration General Fund Operating Budget 2025

| Statement of Activities | 2023 Budget | 2024 Actual | 2024 Budget | 2025 Budget | % Increase or Decrease from 2024 Actuals |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Income | | | | | |
| Offerings | 1,610,000 | 1,633,799 | 1,658,300 | 1,601,875 | -2.0% |
| Programs | 107,640 | 101,658 | 131,700 | 105,864 | 4.1% |
| Other | 93,560 | 77,990 | 96,300 | 78,200 | 0.3% |
| Income from Activities Subtotal | 1,811,200 | 1,813,447 | 1,886,300 | 1,785,939 | -1.5% |
| Expense | | | | | |
| MISSION & BENEVOLENCE | 162,000 | 133,662 | 165,000 | 160,188 | 19.8% |
| Compensation | | | | | |
| PASTORAL MINISTRY | 410,000 | 263,487 | 451,000 | 322,235 | 22.3% |
| STAFF COMPENSATION | 776,300 | 713,823 | 777,000 | 745,000 | 4.4% |
| CONTINUING EDUCATION | 8,100 | 4,262 | 10,000 | 6,500 | 52.5% |
| Compensation Subtotal | 1,194,400 | 981,572 | 1,238,000 | 1,073,735 | 9.4% |
| Programming | | | | | |
| YOUTH&FAMILY MINISTRY EXP | 125,250 | 87,624 | 143,000 | 103,800 | 18.5% |
| ADULT EVENTS & EDUCATION | 40,500 | 28,929 | 59,000 | 30,950 | 7.0% |
| Programming Subtotal | 165,750 | 116,553 | 202,000 | 134,750 | 15.6% |
| Operating | | | | | |
| WORSHIP & OFFICE SUPPLIES | 64,000 | 61,312 | 64,000 | 73,510 | 19.9% |
| COMMUNICATIONS | 9,500 | 9,223 | 10,000 | 8,906 | -3.4% |
| IT, NETWORK & PHONES | 66,000 | 60,822 | 69,000 | 75,200 | 23.6% |
| MUSIC | 19,000 | 15,444 | 19,000 | 10,750 | -30.4% |
| Operating Subtotal | 158,500 | 146,801 | 162,000 | 168,366 | 14.7% |
| Property | | | | | |
| UTILITIES | 73,000 | 52,375 | 65,000 | 64,950 | 24.0% |
| FACILITY | 107,000 | 113,947 | 132,000 | 119,900 | 5.2% |
| INSURANCE & MISC | 34,500 | 62,899 | 61,000 | 60,150 | -4.4% |
| PROJECTS | 15,800 | - | - | - | - |
| BUS & VAN | 6,050 | 5,177 | 7,000 | 3,900 | -24.7% |
| Property Subtotal | 236,350 | 234,398 | 265,000 | 248,900 | 6.2% |
| Expense from Activities Subtotals | 1,917,000 | 1,612,986 | 2,032,000 | 1,785,939 | 10.7% |
| Operating Gain (Loss) from Activities | (105,800) | 200,461 | (145,700) | - | |
| Non-Operating Income | | | | | |
| Interest Income | 8,800 | 43,472 | 30,000 | 36,000 | -17.2% |
| Insurance Proceeds | | 198,934 | | | |
| Use of Emergent or ERTC Funds | 97,000 | | | | |
| Less: Other non-Operating Expense | | 198,934 | - | - | |
| 2024 Total Income Gain (Loss) | - | 243,933 | (115,700) | 36,000 | -85.2% |

Restated in New Format for 2025 Budget Approval

Bethel's Finance Committee monitors financial activity each month and conducts necessary reviews of internal controls and separation of duties to ensure compliance; in addition, the Audit Committee determines the scope and frequency of independent reviews to sample transactions from the general ledger, and lastly, the combined Finance & Audit Committee members review the financial statements for reasonableness.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION MINUTES

From last year's meeting on January 28, 2024

Call to Order – Council President, Jeff Maki
 Opening Devotion – Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg
 Appointment of the Parliamentarian - Lowell Enerson
 Appointment of Head Teller – Nick Jepperson
 Approval of the Minutes from the 2023 meeting – Koreen Theisen

STATE OF THE CHURCH

Pastor Kris Kurzejeski and Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg reported 2023 accomplishments including Bethel's 150th Anniversary, By-law minor wording changes, new Committees created, adult Bible studies, Preschool, VBS, various youth activities and events, Scandinavian Food Fest, Women's retreat, and many more.

President Jeff Maki highlighted that Bethel is financially healthy and debt free and thanks everyone for their generosity and support.

Walker Stutzman proposed the minor By-Law updates and approval. Jeff recognized the outgoing Council Members: Susan Richards, Dan Roeglin, Jon Hilding, Lori Head, and Nick Jepperson

Vice President Nicole Lato presented the Nominating Committee Candidates: Tim Rutten, Jon Berglund, and Kelle Anderson. Verbal voting approved.

Proposed 2024 Budget – Gwen highlighted the proposed 2024 budget.

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

Benevolent Giving – Curt Larson gave an update on giving and the two Ukraine couples Bethel supports.

Call Committee - Rob Brown gave an update on the search for Bethel's Lead Pastor. Many questions were asked by Bethel members during this update on the process with the Synod and job description. Rob shares that 55 candidates are being considered and the Call Committee continues to work until the members have a unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Bethel Highlands Preschool – Director Michelle Webb highlighted that there are 92 children in the BHP school with 30 new families from the community.

Voting for new council members and 2024 budget was held via paper ballots. A video montage of 2023 was viewed while votes were being taken. Nick Jepperson reported the results of the vote, with the budget being approved and all council members elected. Those in attendance welcomed Lindsay Woodward, Marshall Agrey, Noah Pruzek, David Datt, and Sheila Johnson.

Skip James and Tracey Jenkinson led us in the closing hymn. Vice President Nicole Lato ended the meeting with a closing prayer. President Jeff Maki adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Koreen Theisen, January 28, 2024.



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
- Lenten Services
- Holy Week Services
- Easter Services
- Outdoor Worship services
- Blessing of the Backpacks
- Thanksgiving Eve Service
- Christmas Eve Services
- Christmas Day Service

MUSIC & DRAMA

- Skit Guys dramas for Wednesdays in Lent
- Interviews 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
- Adult Education
- Global Leadership Summit
- Earth Day Stations

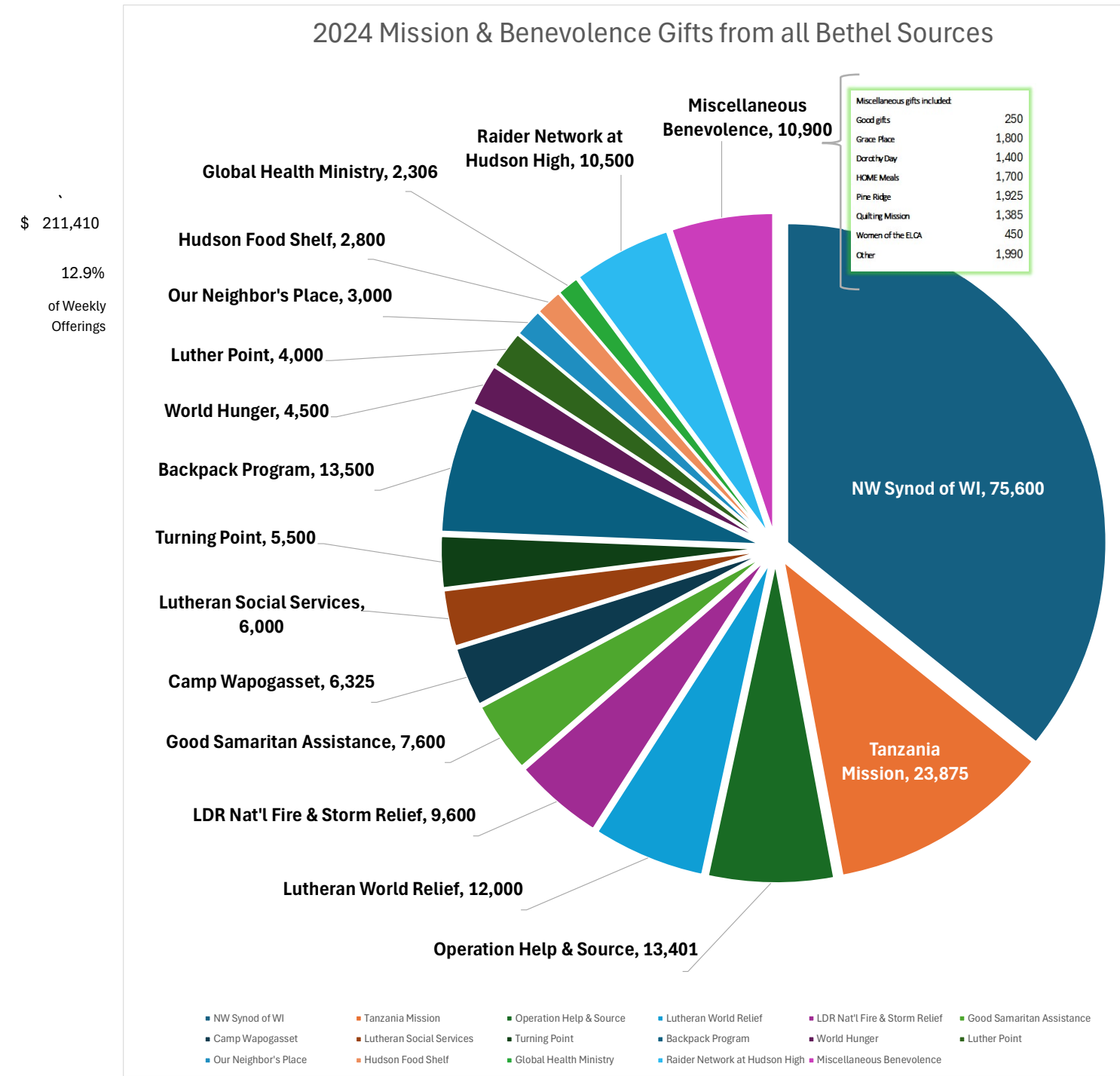
SACRAMENTS

- First Communion Teaching
- First Communion Services
- Baptisms



2024 MISSION & BENEVOLENCE GIFTS

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.



GROW

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

FROM THE TREASURER - 2024 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
- Permanently Restricted Endowment Fund - Established as a permanent resource for sustaining the work of Bethel Lutheran Church

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.

2024 Financial Statement

Although 2024 started with much uncertainty with passing an unbalanced budget, through the help of our amazing congregation, we were able to stay pace with last year's offerings. As a church and council we'd like to thank you for your continued financial support so that we were able to support the many ministries of Bethel.

Another major challenge Bethel faced with the unbalanced budget is trying to be fiscally responsible with our offerings. Bethel ran 2024 with a short staff both in our ministry and in our office staff. With the hard work of our wonderful staff and two exceptional Pastors, Bethel was able to trim costs and come well under budget.

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. With a strong balance sheet, Bethel is positioned to move ahead in many ministry areas. We have also continued to grow passive income until our reserves are needed. This past year our interest income contributed more than \$40K to our bottom line.

Once again in 2024, we'd like to thank the Bethel congregation for its continued support and we look forward to another amazing year in 2025.

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,
Marshall Agrey, Treasurer

SERVE

CHURCH

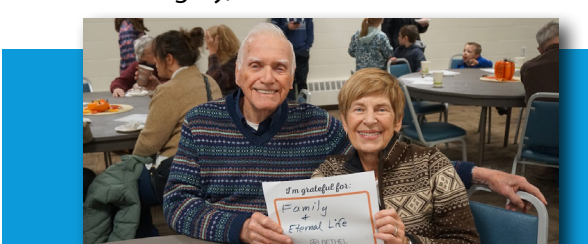
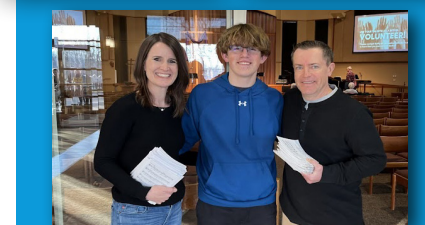
- Helping Hands
- Worship Support Volunteer
- Altar Care
- Decorating Team
- Congregational Life
- Transportation for Senior Citizens to Worship
- Handbells
- New Song Band
- Bethel Youth / Adult Musicians
- Visiting Guest Musicians
- Sunday School and Wednesday Night Small Group and Large Group Leaders
- 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
- Prairie Restoration Project at Bethel Highlands Campus

LOCAL

- Columbarium
- Dorothy Day
- Grace Place
- Operation Help
- 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
- School Supply Collection

GLOBAL

- Mission Trips (Pine Ridge Reservation and Tanzania)
- High School Mission Trips
- Middle School Mission Trip
- Feed My Starving Children
- LWR Health Kits
- LWR Quilting
- LWR / LDR Giving
- School Supply Collections
- Walk With Us Shoe Drive



PASTOR LADD SONNENBERG 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

It is hard to believe that I have been in the role of Lead Pastor for 9 months. In this position, I have learned and been reminded of so many things about myself and about Bethel including: to be a great leader, you need to have even greater people around you. Proverbs 15:22 phrases it this way: "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." I know the truth of this wisdom because of how we have moved forward through a time of transition with great success. None of it would have been possible if Bethel did not have the strong leadership of the council, staff, and you, the congregation. It is for this reason I want to say thank you to each of our staff, council, committee, and congregation members who have stepped up to help us continue to move forward as a church and ultimately live out our mission of Connecting, Growing and Serving.

One of the ways we have been able to continue to live out our mission this past year is through our theme, "Passing on the Faith: From Generation to Generation." Our work has been intentional in adopting this theme by finding ways for people to continue to pass on their faith through conversation and service. Many of the opportunities that we have offered were not new, such as the Lenten Worship Services and Meals, the All-Church Camping Trip, Vacation Bible School, The Great Bethel Get Together, Trunk or Treating with the Bethel Highlands Preschool, Trick or Treating on Third Street, Thanksgiving Eve Worship Service and Pie, Advent Happenings, Christmas Caroling, Wednesday Night Youth Programing, Adult Education Classes, Feed My Starving Children, and that is just to name a few. In all these events we had people from across the congregation coming together to grow and share our faith journeys across all ages and stages. We look forward to planning more opportunities in the future when we can celebrate our community through meaningful connections. So please ensure you watch for the new programming and events in store at Bethel in 2025 for you, your friends, and family.

Another way we have been intentional in passing on the faith in 2024 is through strategizing about what we need

to do presently in order to create a solid foundation for the church to move forward in the future. One of the exciting things we did was to create a new call committee that is presently tasked with calling a Pastor of Faith Formation. As we know, there are fewer and fewer pastors serving in the ELCA, which makes this process harder. We appreciate the time and energy that each of the call committee members have given. The second thing we as a congregation, council, and staff did in May was kick off the 90-Day Initiative, which allowed us to ask three questions related to Bethel's strengths and areas we need to improve. The responses and findings from this initiative were passed onto different committees to review and create an action plan on how to address them. Our responsiveness to the areas of strengths and needed improvement at Bethel will enable us to strengthen our foundation for future growth.

We have been working on strengthening our foundation by spending time reviewing all of our policies and procedures and seeing which ones need to be updated and which ones need to be created. I cannot thank enough all the committees and especially the Governance Committee that has been diligently working on this over the past nine months.

These are just a few of the things that we have been focusing on over the past year, in order to be known as a congregation that "Passes on the Faith" from generation to generation. It is through the guidance and wisdom of our church council and staff that continues to help us look towards the future. It is my hope that as we enter into 2025 we will begin discussing where Bethel will be in the next 3-5 years and create a strategic plan to move forward into that future.

In closing I want to thank each one of you again for the support you have shown for Pastor Kris, me, and the whole staff. God is doing amazing things here at Bethel, and I am excited to journey with you this New Year.

Submitted by, Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg

CONGREGATION STATS 2024

WORSHIP STATS

SUNDAYS, IN-PERSON SERVICES 2024
104 services (includes outdoors & inside)

17,426

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

6,550

SUNDAYS & SPECIAL SERVICES LIVESTREAMS 2024
(Using raw data drawn from YouTube and Facebook)

14,942



PASTORAL & MEMBERSHIP STATS

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP

2486

BAPTISMS

24

CONFIRMATION

32

FUNERALS

28

NEW MEMBERS

28

MARRIAGES

5



OUTREACH COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Outreach Committee members: Andrea Jorgenson – Chair, Koreen Theisen - Council Representative, Deb Green, Scott Swanberg, Marla Valentine-Wiste, Matt Aubart, and Pastor Kris Kurzejeski.

Thank you to the Outreach Committee members for their dedication and service. They put in many hours of meeting, dreaming, and planning. The Outreach Committee is responsible for promoting the spiritual growth and life of the congregation by sharing God's love and the Good News. The long time members have served this faithfully. At the end of 2024 we will have some transition. We will be saying a sorrowful good-bye to Andrea, and Scott. We wish them well in their endeavors and we know we will see them at some of the traditions that they have created.

2024 Outreach Activities:

Scandinavian Food Fest: Provided volunteer support, Birthday Cards: Sent monthly to senior Bethel members, BINGO, Re-evaluated by-laws and Strategic Planned for 2025, Next Chapter: Planned and hosted social events for adults in the next stages of life, Bikes and Brews, Rustic Roots, Bethel Befriender Ministry – Highlights

Bethel Befriender Ministry kicked off the year recruiting a number of new befriender candidates into the program. Potential candidates attended an information meeting in January to explore program details and expected commitment. Eight Bethel members stepped forward and successfully completed twenty hours of training over five weekend sessions in March and April. The training included topics on the attitude of befriending, listening skills, conducting visits, honoring confidentiality and understanding grief, to name a few. Pastor Kris introduced Matt Aubart in May as the new coordinator of the program, as a part of staff restructuring. Under the direction of Matt, a total of nine befrienders and four program leaders are continuing to serve Bethel members that are in need of pastoral support in difficult and transitional situations. We believe in continual training and have had guest speakers, along with practicing the skills learned in our training.

Submitted by Matt Aubart

SCOUT TROOP 140 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

On October 19, 2024 Scout Troop 140, co-sponsored by Bethel and Mt Zion Lutheran Churches, completed 95 years of continuous service to the youth of Hudson, while the Scouting of America celebrated their 114th year. Troop 140 currently has 6 youth registered as Scouts and 6 adult leaders registered for support. We currently have three youth registered in our new Cub Scout pack. 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 2024.

The Troop had its 58th annual Christmas wreath sale fund-raiser in November through December. Troop wreath sales typically finance 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 Booyah Festival. 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 for 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 23 years ago with some of the funds that the Scouts raised over the prior three years.

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
Holly Tremble, Scoutmaster and Cubmaster
Charles Huntley, Assistant Scoutmaster

Carl Meincke, Assistant Scoutmaster
Robert Slanger, Advancement Chair
Peggy Larkin, Den Leader
Mack Slanger, Senior Patrol Leader

PASTOR KRIS KURZEJESKI 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

This year at Bethel has brought much change. One of the bigger changes we are undertaking is the implementation of a new website. Our Communications Director, Hannah Cobian, will be instrumental in this process. A group of staff members with a vested interest in the website design have been meeting regularly to lay out our priorities and also to discuss ideas and implementation with the company we are using. This is a large project and we are hopeful to have it completed sometime in spring 2025.

Our worship committee has met regularly and continues to work with us in making recommendations to enhance worship. One of their first recommendations was to cement the worship times that we have had for the past year. They considered attendance, verbal and written feedback, volunteer availability, Sunday school and many other variables in making the difficult decision to retain worship times at 9 am at Highlands and 10:30 Downtown. Another change made at the 9 am service was delivering our announcements by video prior to worship starting, saving us time and setting a more worshipful tone for the beginning of the service. This year we had 24 baptisms and 28 funerals.

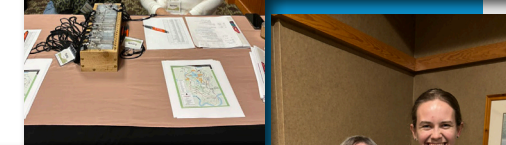
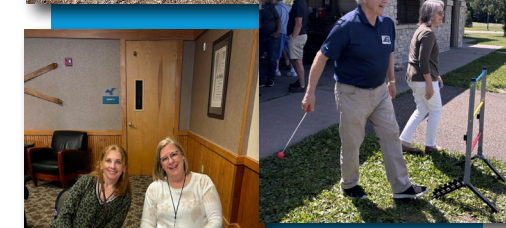
The women's retreat was held this year at what was formerly known as Heartwood Resort in Trego, Wisconsin. Close to sixty people enjoyed idyllic weather, a great time together, and a wonderful message of spiritual renewal. Our speaker was, "The Blissful Hiker," also known as Alison Young. Tracey and Calla Jenkinson provided our music for the event. Jody Eisch provided a moving testimony.

This year four adult luncheons were held: the state of the church in January with special music by Skip James; in May, Jon Jorgenson shared his experience from walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain and special music was provided by Craig Koehnen; in August, we held a picnic with games and giveaways at Weitkamp Park; and in October Missy Lien spoke to us about the Bethel Prairie Restoration Project, with music provided by Trish Sisson and Craig Koehnen.

Several staff vacancies have been filled including Paul Deziel as the Middle School Ministry Director, Matt Aubart as the High School Ministry Director and Care Ministry Coordinator, Michelle Webb as Bethel Highlands Preschool Director, Leah Knutson as Bethel Highlands Preschool Assistant Director and Pastor Kris and Pastor Ladd assumed their new roles of Executive and Lead Pastor, respectively.

Bible studies have been offered by Chaplain Matt and Pastor Kris, including Joshua, Job, 1st and 2nd Timothy, and 1st and 2nd Peter.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Kris Kurzejeski
Executive Pastor



BETHEL HIGHLANDS PRESCHOOL 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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

This past year we have supported families, and we continually improve our program through so many ways.

- We have a stellar team of teachers and staff that are committed to teaching the next generation. Thanks to these amazing teachers: Angie Haider, Alyssa Edholm, Cindy Smith, Emily Hawkins, Erica Carlson, Sally Holter, Teri Odegard, Ashley Richardson, Leah Knutson, Michelle Webb
- 2024-2025 enrollment – 90 students in 9 classes
- Board of Directors- their leadership guides conversations and decisions that impact our whole community. Thanks to our board: Pastor Ladd, Carrie Betker, Ashley Zwier, Lindsey Weiler, Andrew Ryan, Dean Eisold, Rachel Wahlberg, Anne Wasmund, Ali Rohde, Shelia Johnson.
- 2024 community events: Trunk-or-Treat, Spaghetti Feed, Parents Night Out
- Giving back-BHP students collected over 350 items for the local backpack program
- Fundraising has brought in additional funds for classroom materials. Thanks to our congregation's participation in the Gertens plant sale, Spaghetti feed and Scholastic book fair.
- Specials-each week the students have the opportunity to learn about a variety of subjects taught by our staff, volunteers, outside community business, and non-profits. This year we worked with a couple non-profits. The Hudson Hot Air Affair brought in a Hot Air Balloon pilot that demonstrated how to inflate a hot air balloon. The Hudson Lions Club came in and offered free eye screening for all our students. Specials have included learning about other countries, speaking Spanish, and playing musical instruments all taught by members of our congregation.
- Collaborative programs with Bethel Lutheran Church: Pastries with Parents, Chapel, and lunch bunch.
- Chapel is taught each week by Pastor Ladd, Pastor Kris, and Carole DeJardin, Bethel's Children's Ministry Director. We are so appreciative of their time they give to the preschool.
- Partnership with the Hudson School District with the 4K program
- Our students and teachers were so excited for the installation of our new playground and rubber surface this Fall!

It takes a village to do what we do, thank you for your part in supporting our school and helping our program succeed so we can continue to impact future generations far beyond our wall her at Bethel.

Michelle Webb, Director
Leah Knutson, Assistant Director
Bethel Highlands Preschool



CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

This past year Bethel's Youth Ministry has continued to live out Bethel's mission to Connect, Grow, and Serve amidst continuing programs, new events and leadership changes. Families continued to prioritize faith for their children among all the other school and extracurricular opportunities ensuring that we are passing on the faith to the next generation.

Perhaps the highlight of Bethel's inter-generational experience was once again VBS. There were nearly 200 kids and over 100 volunteers from age 12 through 90+ diving into friendship with God through our Scuba theme! This is truly one of the greatest opportunities we have to share Jesus love with all ages through a fun, engaging and memorable experience.

Throughout the year, Bethel's youth programming and classes provide continued opportunities for students to Connect - have you heard the giggles and pattering of feet on Sundays and Wednesdays?

Grow – students learned of Jesus love and the Bible through weekly lessons and faith milestones

Serve – each grade has service projects as part of the curriculum plus over 60 elementary, middle and high school students participated in mission trips

Behind the scenes of this active youth ministry, there were some staffing changes in 2024. Jake Summerville left his role as the High School Youth Director to continue his ELCA Deacon education and complete his internship. Matt Aubart has stepped into the role of HS Youth Director continuing the program and initiating some new fundraisers for mission trips (Raise Right and Parent's Night Out). Cindy Halunen graciously continued to help lead Middle School Ministry despite a new career while we waited for God to provide the right person and he certainly did! This summer, Paul Deziel joined the Youth Team as the Middle School Director with years of youth ministry and education experience ensuring that the program has continued to grow and thrive.

MEMORIAL GARDEN COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The Memorial Garden Committee oversees the columbarium, the memorial wall, and the surrounding garden and plantings. Highlights from the past year include;

The in ground irrigation system was inspected and repaired, a new planter was built and installed (thank you to Bethel member David Datt), and the entire garden was refreshed with mulch.

The committee is working on a plan to replace the existing benches with engraved maintenance free benches. We are hoping to install new benches in the spring. A plan is also in the works for cement and lighting repair/ replacement.

During 2024, 3 niches and 1 memorial wall plaque were purchased.

Thank you to the volunteers who maintain the garden, plant the flowers, water, weed, and deadhead. Because of your good work, the garden continues to be a peaceful, beautiful place.

The Memorial Garden Committee:
Patti Thacker, Gwen Cossin, Steve Wilcox, Cindy Stensgaard,
Lois Duerst, Stacy Baehman



BETHEL MUSIC & WORSHIP 2024 ANNUAL REPORTS

Traditional Music Report

2024 has been a momentous year for Traditional Music at Bethel. Bethel received a welcome gift of a Yamaha C7 grand piano from Mel Olson to replace the faithful Baldwin that had served for so many years in the downtown sanctuary. The older piano now lives in the second floor lounge, where it serves the monthly meetings of the St. Croix Valley Music Teachers Association, and where Sarah Bertsch teaches violin lessons. The new piano has already been used for three piano recitals, drawing townsfolk to our acoustically excellent downtown sanctuary.

There have been several changes in the Bethel Quartet: the withdrawal of Margaret Jane Wray for medical reasons, the replacement of baritone Alex Ritchie with baritone Karl Buttermann, and the most recent addition, soprano Sydney Kakuk. For much of the year, the singers performed as a trio, and I was happy to select and rearrange suitable 4-part music for only three voices. My job is a little easier now that the Quartet has four singers again.

Many instrumentalists and vocalists have graced worship services this past year. Sarah Bertsch and Michal Sobieski, violin; Susan Janda, viola; Rick Gaynor, trombone; Laurie Wyland, flute; Daryl Skobba, Scott Lykins and Ken Miller, cello; Mel Olson, cornet; and Grace Cross, harp. Amy Scheffer-Western, mezzo-soprano, Alex Ritchie, baritone, Jodi Mealey and Bobbi Pominville, sopranos. And the Bethel Handbell Choir, under the direction of Sonja McGill, is always a treat to hear.

One of the most beloved aspects of traditional worship services have been the hymn-sings led by Tracey Jenkinson, where members of the congregation call out numbers from the table of contents for my Great Awakening Hymnal, and the texts of those old familiar hymns are flashed almost instantly on screens for everyone to sing. Tracey is not always available, but when she is, her excellent voice and welcoming personality make these pre-service hymn-sings a joy for everyone.

This Fall, in lieu of a choir, I have instituted Songsters, a group of enthusiastic singers who meet before worship to learn the hymns for the day, and who sit in the front pew and turn toward the congregation during the service to lead the singing. They are all capable of being song/worship leaders behind a microphone. They take turns at this task.

Layton James
Traditional Music Director



Contemporary Music Report

2024 was another good year for the New Song band. The group continued to provide inspirational music leadership for the 9:00 Sunday services. Our great crew of musicians including Paul Gavic, Sam Chapman, Tracey Jenkinson, Calla Jenkinson, Katie Possehl, Heidi Selander, Nancy Long, Steve Jerlow, Mike Brueske, and Chris Boston were all outstanding. In addition, Ross Jenkins joined the group to share his guitar playing talent. Like in previous years, New Song members provided musical worship leadership at the outdoor services and partook in other important church events. Tracey and Calla sang at the Bethel Women's Retreat in Trego WI in April, and Trish Sisson joined me to perform at a senior luncheon. The band looks forward to 2025 as we continue to enhance worship and programming at Bethel.

Craig Koehnen
Director of Contemporary Music

Bethel Bell Choir Report

The Bethel Bell Choir provides monthly special music during worship services at both the Highlands and Downtown locations September through May. The group consists of 13 members and rehearses weekly at Highlands. In March of 2024, bell choir members participated in a larger community event entitled Bell Fest. This was a massed ringing event led by a guest clinician concluding with a concert for the public at North Heights Lutheran Church in Arden Hills, MN. A smaller group attended a workshop in January sponsored by Twin Cities Bronze. New members are always welcome. Contact Sonja McGill at 651-325-7074. Thanks to the bell ringers and the congregation for its support of this ministry of music.

Sonja McGill
Handbell Director

MISSION & JUSTICE COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Throughout scripture we learn we are to care for others and for creation. Bethel has continued to do just that as we live out our mission to serve others and creation in powerful ways. Over the past year we have sent dozens of quilts and kits, that were so beautifully made and donated by members of Bethel, to Lutheran World Relief for those in need. As a congregation we have once again stepped up in providing Christmas gifts and essentials for 43 kids in Hudson through the Giving Tree and Essentials drive in connection with Operation Help. We have also collected school supplies both for students here in Hudson as well as the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This past summer the High School Youth Group was able to take 49 students and adults on a mission trip to Memphis, TN to work alongside Praying Pelican Missions. Our Middle School Youth Group took its third mission trip this past summer with 9 youth and 2 adults to Milwaukee, WI in partnership with Youthworks.

In 2025, we look forward to offering a new mission trip opportunity for our middle schoolers, which will happen in Hudson and the Twin Cities. And our high schoolers will be heading to Colorado Springs. This summer there will be a group of adults heading to Tanzania to meet up with our sister churches in Iringa. We will also continue to offer mission trips throughout the year for adults through the Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders and Praying Pelican Missions.

Bethel also continues to partner with other organizations throughout the year such as the HOME Meal, Habitat For Humanity, Grace Place, Operation Help, Feed My Starving Children, and The Dorothy Day Center. Bethel has also supported these ministries and others through generous financial gifts. Please see the 2024 Benevolence Financial Report to find a full list of organizations with which we have financially partnered.

This past year the Bethel Creation Care Team has been extremely active in bringing composting to Bethel. As you may have seen at many of the meals we serve, we use compostable plates, napkins, coffee cups and recyclable cups. The Creation Care Team has also recently partnered with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and Kinnikinnick chapter of Pheasants Forever to help restore the prairie lands on the south and southeast part of the Highlands campus.

Thank you so much for your willingness to use your own God-given time, talents, and treasures to bless others. Because of your generosity, we are able to make a difference in the world for Christ!

Respectfully Submitted by Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg





WOMEN OF BETHEL 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The Women of Bethel again hosted the Scandinavian Food Fest for the 33rd year. Thank you everyone who made this a success. We cleared \$19,000.00 this year. Each year we have grant requests that we answer. This year is as follows: Hudson Area Senior Center \$500.00, Pastor Kris/Koreen Theisen for Women's Retreat Speaker \$1000.00, Pastor Kris for Staff Appreciation Luncheon \$500.00, Pastor Kris/ Koreen Theisen for Women's Retreat Musicians \$250.00, Our Neighbor's Place \$1000.00, HOME Meal for reuseable trays and new kitchen faucet \$680.00, Hannah Cobian \$1000.00 to recreate Bethel's website, Missy Lein, Creation Care Team \$300.00 for signs, Gwen Cossin \$900.00 to update payroll processing, Operation Help \$1500.00, Hudson Area Backpack Program \$1500.00, Turning Point \$1500.00, Grace Place \$1500.00, Tanzania Scholarship \$2000.00, Bethel Handbells \$950.00, Bethel Highlands Preschool \$1000.00, LWR Shipping \$500.00, GHM Shipping \$500.00 and our dues to ELCA \$450.00. For a total of \$17,530.00.

The Bethel Quilters were able to donate 63 quilts to LWR along with 21 Fabric kits (Mary Gathering), 46 Personal Care Kits (Dorcas Gathering) and 90 School Kits (Ruth Gathering). The Naomi Gathering sent 100 Hospice kits plus \$1000.00 to purchase additional supplies and \$500.00 for shipping of those kits to GHM. Also the Bethel Quilters gave 70 Quilts to Operation Help, 16 quilts to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and 5 quilts to We Do Feet.

Submitted by Gail Nolan WOB Facilitator



BETHEL ENDOWMENT FUND 2024 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 to be a permanent resource for sustaining the work of Bethel Lutheran Church. Bethel partners with Thrivent Charitable to manage the two Funds: the Outreach Fund and the General Fund. At the end of Q3 2024, the fund balances totaled - Outreach Fund: \$40,201; General Fund: \$249,298.

Twelve grants totaling \$14,950 were awarded from the Bethel Endowment Funds in 2024. Grants were awarded to: Hudson Area Backpack Program, Operation Help, the Huruma Orphanage in Tanzania, Our Neighbor's Place, Bethel Highlands Preschool, Bethel Women's Retreat Speaker, Bethel Women's Retreat Musicians, Bethel Lenten Special Guest Musicians, Bethel Website Redesign Project, Media Recording Technology for the Bethel Downtown Sanctuary, Staff Attendance at the Bethel Global Leadership Summit, and the Bethel Creation Care Team.

Committee members include Pastor Kris Kurzejeski, Lois Durst, Anne Wasmund, Ron Johnson, Adam Wilt, Dave Benson, Gerald Bauer, and Galina Powers. A brochure that outlines how the funds work and how you can help support this wonderful ministry in your giving, will or estate planning, is available at the Welcome Desk or the church office.

Anne Wasmund
Endowment Fund Chairperson



PROPERTY COMMITTEE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

As our Bethel facilities age, we have continued issues with equipment wearing out resulting in many failures or repair needs. There are a lot of various projects because of these issues as well as new needs. Below is a summary of some of the projects and repairs done this year.

Developed an A/V future plan – Developed a 3-year plan for A/V upgrades including replacement of out-of-date Highlands A/V control system interface in 2025, Highlands sanctuary audio and lighting in 2026, and Downtown sanctuary lighting update in 2027.

Shuttle bus lift repair – Wheelchair lift mounts on the shuttle bus rusted out and needed repair. We were able to get it welded, repaired, and certified for minimal cost.

Wi-Fi system evaluation for both campuses – Current systems at both campuses were a result of add-ons as time went on. Did evaluation of current system and added equipment to improve availability and eliminate dead zones in both campuses.

Continue to define storage needs for new storage facility. Initiated a preliminary specification and are getting prices for the work. Will require fund raising project to do this.

Computer evaluation – Did a computer evaluation and moved some computers and purchased some new ones.

In addition to many maintenance related items negotiated contracts for lawn care and snow removal vendors and monitored there performance.

Downtown elevator – Have done some minor modifications to the existing controls, as elevator has stopped several times. Getting multiple quotes for controls upgrade which are estimated to be in the \$125,000 range.

Piano reduction – It was determined that we have more pianos than we need. Gave away one piano, but still have a grand piano that needs a new home.

Roof leak in Downtown east wing – Hired roofing contractor to complete warranty work on roof leaks.

Paint Downtown exterior – Painted the exterior areas above the windows in the east wing.

Repair Downtown Pew – Added better anchoring for the overflow pew front panel that was loose from the floor.

Highlands fire protection sprinkler system – This has been a continuing issue this year. The sprinkler piping has developed leaks from corrosion and resulted in damage to the facility. We still have some repaired leaks that were only temporarily repaired and need permanent repair. We have purchased and installed a nitrogen system that will stop the corrosion issue, but all leaks need to be repaired before it can be turned on. Will implement in early 2025.

Gas stove replacement at Highlands – Replaced the gas stove with an electric stove. There was a problem with the

pilot lights in the gas stove in that they stop working after 5+ years in addition to they used a lot of natural gas. This was an energy saving project.

Shades at Highlands - Defining needs and getting quotes to replace. Some of the current shades in the sanctuary and children's theater have stopped working and replacement parts are not available. Working with shade company to get proposals for replacement options including some powered and some manual shade replacements.

We have a maintenance contract with Ahern company. We have had issues with procedures when they visit our facility for maintenance and repair. Established a procedure with sign off by Cory every time they work at our facilities.

HVAC repairs 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.

Met with Ahern to get predictive maintenance information on Highlands replacement/repair of HVAC units as they are approaching 20 years old. From this we will develop a plan for HVAC unit replacement in the future.

Lawn sprinkler maintenance – Highlands lawn sprinklers needed work after years of use. Hired a sprinkler contractor to upgrade the system which was completed.

Added playground equipment and new surface in west end of Preschool playground.

Wild prairie grass area at Highlands – Worked with group to convert the area east and in front of the church into a wild prairie grass area. Started with removing trees and spraying current weeds and grass with planting next year. See Creation Care team for more details.

Parking lot pot hole repair – Repaired pot holes in Highlands parking lot and did crack sealing in the rest of the parking lot. To do seal coating and stripping next year.

Memorial Garden lighting – Some of the lights in the Memorial gardens do not work. Doing an evaluation of lighting needs including removal of lights in the ground and adding above ground lighting.

Mowed Highlands outlying areas twice – We mow the outlying areas to prevent the grassy areas from becoming overgrown with invasive species.

Members of the 2024 Property Management committee are Roger Pavlis (chair), Sean Hanner (vice chair), Jon Berglund, Gwen Cossin, David Datt, Will Jeska, Jeff Maki, Pat Nolan, Randy Stensgaard, Roger Ware, Patrick Willson, Cory Wong, Pastor Ladd Sonnenberg, and Pastor Kris Kurzejeski. We were saddened to lose a long-time member of the committee, Roger Ware. He has contributed so many things to this committee over the years and we will certainly miss him. Jon Berglund filled his position.

Submitted by Roger Pavlis