



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP YEHIEL CURRY

Dear friends in Christ,

As Lutherans, we are set free to love our neighbors and seek justice. In Colossians 2, we read: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving" (6-7).

I am abounding in thankfulness for you, church. You are an integral part of this mission as we envision a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. The ministries of congregations including yours, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together today and every day so more people may know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. From providing food to people experiencing hunger, to helping train the next generation of leaders that will lead this church, your support is at work here at home and around the world.

Your generosity to each of the three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has made it possible for us to do this work

together. Your financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices are so valued.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to continue to walk in Christ, remembering you are rooted and established in faith, and free to love and serve your neighbors. Thank you, church, for the ways you connect with and support our siblings across the ELCA and in our communities.

In Christ,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yehiel Curry".

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

—Colossians 2:6-7

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Bethesda Lutheran Church

Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda

Sunday, January 25, 2026

- I. Call to Order Mif Grotnes, President
- II. Opening Devotions and Prayer Bryan Simmons, Lead Pastor
- III. Approval of Agenda Mif Grotnes
- IV. Approval of Minutes from Annual Meeting (1/26/25) Mif Grotnes
- V. Presentation of Ballot (Term is 1/25/2026–1/31/2029) Mif Grotnes, President
President-elect ... Dennis Warth
Treasurer Daryl Vegge (three-year term)
Council Member-at-Large ... Cameron Aisenbrey (three-year term)
- VI. Election
- VII. Old Business
 - a. Lead Pastor report Pastor Bryan Simmons
 - b. Associate Pastor report Pastor Jesse Hershberger
 - c. President report Mif Grotnes
 - d. Treasurer report Tony Woodcock
 - e. Board reports
 - f. Five-Year Strategic Plan Progress Update Pastor Bryan Simmons
- VIII. New Business
 - a. Presentation and Approval of 2026 Budget Tony Woodcock
 - b. Congregational approval of Bylaw changes Larry Otteman
 - c. Congregational approval of changes in Constitution Larry Otteman
- IX. Announcements Mif Grotnes, President
- X. Adjournment Mif Grotnes, President
- XI. Closing Prayer Donna Scherr, Incoming President

Bethesda Congregational Annual Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2025

Attendance: A quorum requires 50 members. A total of 93 were present in person or online.

President Chelsey Aisenbrey **called the meeting to order at 10:45 AM**

Opening devotions by Pastor Simmons with the responsive reading on page 35.

The **Agenda** was seconded by Council member Sara Nelson and approved as published.

Pastor Bryan and Jim Stewart motioned to forego reading of the **minutes**. Approved unanimously. Minutes of the last annual meeting on January 28th, 2024, were amended to reflect that Chelsey offered the closing prayer. Steve Peters and Daryle Vegge moved to approve the minutes as amended and approval was unanimous.

President Aisenbrey presided over **election of Council members** with presentation of the published ballot. There were no additional nominations from the floor for the Council seats or the empty Board chairs. Jeanne Stewart and Glen Rippke moved to proceed to election of the listed members with a unanimous voice vote. This passed.

Old Business

Lead Pastor Simmons submitted his letter in the annual report.

Interim Pastor Cowan submitted her letter in the annual report.

President Aisenbrey presented her annual report.

Treasurer Woodcock presented the annual financials as published on pages 29 and 30. Tony pointed out the new Commons sound system as result of having money available from our endowments. Sharon Axland came forward to explain that the electronic sign, landscaping and large letters “Bethesda Lutheran” placed on the south end of the sanctuary were paid for without using general funds. She thanked Donna Scherr and Harold Pike for their assistance in this project. She thanked Tess Hanson, Communications Director, for her masterful management of the messaging. Steve Peters and Jim Stewart moved to receive the Treasurer’s report. Passed by unanimous voice vote.

Board reports were published for review on pages 16-28. No questions were raised from the congregation.

New Business

Treasurer Woodcock presented the proposed 2025 budget on page 31. He highlighted the valuable input the Council received from both Pastor Simmons and Cliff McDonald, our Accounting Manager. The income is forecast to be very similar to 2024 and thus the budget is likewise very similar. A question was asked about ASIP and AIRA monies and Pastor Simmons responded. Sharon Axland seconded the Council's approval of the budget, and it was approved by a majority per voice vote.

Tony Woodcock and Chris Brakke reviewed the information they collected as a task force to explore placement and cost of installing solar panels. Questions were answered. The Council did not foresee funding for this without a capital campaign or donations. The pay back for this project is affected by the lack of a net metering program in Ames with break-even cost reached after 14 years (panels have a 30-year warranty).

Pastor Simmons and Dennis and Marnette Warth presented the five-year strategic plan which was recommended by the Congregation Council in November 2024. Pastor Simmons reviewed the timeline. A congregation-wide survey was completed in March with 182 respondents followed by eight separate listening sessions led by Dennis and Marnette. Several questions were addressed. Bryan thanked Dennis and Marnette for their leadership and Dennis pointed out that the "heavy work" of writing the plan fell to Pastor Simmons. A second to approve the plan was made by Tom Walsh Jr. A majority of those present voted to approve the plan as presented.

Daryle Vegge presented information on the two Bethesda Endowment Funds. He also reviewed the ease of establishing a legacy fund through the Story County Community Foundation. Larry Otteman shared that he and his wife had discussed with their children the idea of devoting 10% of their final estate to such a legacy fund. He encouraged everyone to consider such an approach.

President Aisenbrey asked for any announcements that individuals would like to make to the congregation. Pastor Cowan expressed special appreciation for the tireless work of Lynn Anderson, Administrative Specialist, and Randy and Nancy Ewing who exemplify members who are willing to donate time and talent.

President Aisenbrey then adjourned the meeting after a motion by Steve Peters and with approval on a voice vote at 12:20 PM.

Incoming President Mif Grotnes offered the closing prayer.

Submitted by Larry Otteman, Congregation Council Secretary

Congregation Council Minutes February 18, 2025

Attending: Pastor Simmons, Pastor Chris Cowan, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth, and Tony Woodcock.

Absent:

Opening Prayer by Pastor Bryan

Call to Order at 6:35 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2025, was moved by Chelsey and seconded Sara by and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – time has been consumed with deciding how to respond to a new Washington administration and its impact on USAID organizations like LSA and Global Refuge as well as churches no longer being considered “sensitive areas” by ICE.
- **President's Report** – refer to his article written for the Wellspring.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in January 2025 was \$126,245. Five- and ten-year averages for January are \$93,620 and \$85,056. \$36,043.93 was redeemed from our Endowment funds. A motion to receive the reports was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care - Sandi again reiterated the need for more volunteer help with meal preparation. See below. Upcoming events needing volunteers included the Easter breakfast. The Egg Hunt is being organized.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Saving Suds still has no leadership, but Kim and Lynn Burnett continue to handout quarters. It is again fully funded with donations, per Tony .

Worship, Music, and Arts -No report.

Stewardship - No report.

Christian Education and Youth -No meeting in January. We remain critically short of volunteers. This board has committed to serving Lenten supper on March 26th and Café Bethesda on April 5th.

Administration and Finance - No report.

There was a discussion of how best to inform Board leadership and membership as to how their Board should function and their responsibilities. Late March is targeted as a time to convene Board chairs along with Council members for education.

Mif would like efforts to increase volunteer engagement to be a top priority for the Council this year. Past efforts like a Time and Talent survey, recognition of volunteers, holding a “job fair” to highlight opportunities to serve, a pastor or others led presentation of a “Volunteer 101” were tossed out as ideas to pursue. Further discussion will continue.

Old Business

- Associate Pastor Vacancy - Call committee continues its work per Mif. No active candidates at this time.
- Pastor Bryan's annual performance evaluation will start with his response within the next three weeks and then Council review and response to be shared with him by the Executive Committee.
- The new structure for governance is ready for feedback from members and will start with the Board and Council retreat in late March. Latest iteration included in the Board's online folder.

New Business

- 5-year Strategic Plan as revised by Pastor Bryan was approved at the annual meeting on January 26th. Implementation plans now need to be formulated. Pastor Bryan has asked to be on an Implementation Task Force. Marnette has agreed to participate from the Council. Representation outside the Council will be sought with emphasis on Education, Family and Youth. The plan will be formatted with a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities.
- Council members will provide Lenten soup supper on March 12. Sandi will bring potato soup; Donna will bring chili soup. Desserts and setup and clean-up will be determined via signup
- Discussion of how to handle the appearance of federal, state or local law enforcement took place. Information from Reverend Minn Bothwell (Capitol Lutheran Church) and from the webinar conducted by the Dentons law firm was used in the discussion. Education of staff and volunteers especially in the Food Pantry and Clothing Closet is critical. Pastor Cowan stressed the need to inform the entire congregation on the changes in enforcement and what steps are being taken in response. Protection of the personal information of members is a top priority. We are not a sanctuary church and will not harbor undocumented people. A motion to disregard the earlier motion passed by e-vote was made by Pastor Bryan and seconded by Larry. All agreed. A new motion to post "Private Property" signs on offices was moved by Pastor Bryan and seconded by Larry. Trace moved and Tony seconded a friendly amendment to include the need for education of staff and volunteers. Both the amendment and amended motion were agreed to by all.

Announcements

- Lutheran Campus Ministry at ISU- information item. Gretchen Moser and Jan Melby from Bethesda are on a task force headed by Pastor Sonja Gerstenberger with input from the three Iowa Lutheran synods. Cameron Aisenbrey served on this board for several years and Chelsey stated he would be happy to share his insights.
- The River Ministry team (focused on students and young adults) will be informed of this effort.
- Reports are expected by the weekend prior to Council meeting to allow everyone to digest the information.
- Google Drive is working well.

Adjournment moved by Chelsey and approved at 8:18 PM

Closing prayer – Lord's Prayer

Addendum to Minutes of the Congregation Council

Meeting of February 18, 2025

On February 19th, Larry sent the following email to the Council. My apologies, I need to rewrite the lease for Prairie Flower which takes effect on April 1. I proposed a rate increase to them at our last meeting in January. They said they were having financial difficulties and hoped for no increase. I checked with Paul Livingston about an increase from \$10.50 to 10.84 per square foot per month. He felt this was reasonable with the current Ames rental market. I told Prairie Flower I would get Council's input, but I forgot to place it on the agenda last night. I propose that we split the difference to 10.65 per square foot and make that a motion for an e-vote.

Trace seconded the motion, and all agreed with no vote recorded from Mif at the time of this posting

Congregation Council Minutes March 24, 2025

Attending: Pastor Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth, and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Sara Nelson

Guests: Diane Pierce and Russ Melby who co-chair the Bethesda Immigrant and Refugee Ministry Team spoke at the start of the meeting. Other members of the team include Randi Peters and Pam Sargent from Bethesda, David and Jean Hansen for the Quaker group and the Floras from UCC. Russ reviewed finances of the team with sufficient money to meet the expected needs of the asylum-seeking Venezuelan family for 2025. This is approximately \$20,000. They asked permission to mail a letter to all members soliciting additional money for unanticipated needs and into 2026 which is the tentative date of their asylum hearing. Russ will deliver temple talks on May 10 and 11 prior to the letter going out. A second request was to place a sign in the front lawn of the church stating "Standing Together. All Are Welcome". A motion to support both requests was made by Larry and seconded by Chelsey and approved by all.

Opening Prayer by Pastor Simmons

Call to Order at 6:35 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from February 18, 2025, was moved by Donna and seconded by Sandi and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** - Easter is late this year so that it will be a busy time at the end of the program year in mid-May. Lynn Anderson will retire from her position as church Administrative Specialist on July 31, 2025. Pastor Bryan suggested that the current Personnel Ministry Team of Jeanne Stewart, Marty Swanson and Maynard Hogberg be asked to review the current office structure and determine what positions best fit the operations of the church administration.
- **President's Report** - A lengthy discussion was led by Mif with regard to increasing involvement of members in the work of the church as volunteers. He reported that his prior church, Holy Trinity in Ankeny, has decided to hire staff to lead programs in the absence of volunteers. The two unfilled board chairs remain for CSMO and Admin and Finance. The formation of small groups that may be interested in taking on focused tasks or ministries was offered as an approach. The Alpha education program was praised and naturally leads to small group formation. A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Pastor Bryan to form a Volunteer Task Force to review the current membership and identify individuals who will receive a personal invitation to volunteer for various ministries and tasks. The motion was approved by all. Mif will select members for this Task Force with Trace, Donna and Sandi agreeing to serve from the Council. Broad representation of different ages and interests will be needed for the Task Force to function properly.
- **Treasurer's Report** - Tony presented a summary of giving in February 2025 which was \$115,828. Five- and ten-year averages for February are \$72,008 and \$67,661. \$36,043.93 was redeemed from our Endowment funds in January 2025. A motion to receive the reports was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Sandi reported the Council-provided Lenten Soup Supper on March 19th led to \$134 donation. A motion was made by Donna with a second by Trace to add this to the money going to the Ames School District lunch program to cover unfunded meals. All voted in support. Sandi reported that the Sunday meal small group has evolved into the Bethesda Buddies which is focused on conversation and sharing.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Saving Suds still has no leadership, but Kim and Lynn Burnett continue to handout out quarters. It is again fully funded with donations, per Tony.

Worship, Music, and Arts – Trace. No report but they will begin meeting monthly on the fourth Tuesday evening.

Stewardship – Mif. No report. No activity.

Christian Education and Youth – Trace. No meeting in February. We remain short of volunteers for the education ministry. This board will serve Lenten supper on March 26th and Café Bethesda on April 5th.

Administration and Finance – Tony. No report.

There was again a discussion of how best to inform Board leadership and membership as to how their Board should function and their responsibilities. Late April is targeted as a time to convene Board chairs, leaders of tasks and ministry teams along with Council members for education.

Old Business

- Associate Pastor Vacancy- Call committee continues its work per Mif. No active candidates at this time. Pastor Bryan mentioned that suggestions from church members are welcome. Some churches have hired special recruiters to fill positions.
- Pastor Bryan's annual performance evaluation has started with his responses received yesterday. Council review and response will take place at the April Council meeting to be shared with him by the Executive Committee at a later date.
- The new structure for governance is ready for feedback from more members and will start with the Board, Leadership and Council retreat in late April.

New Business

- 5-year Strategic Plan as revised by Pastor Bryan was approved at the annual meeting on January 26th. Further steps and plans will be formulated by a Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield. The plan will be formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities

Announcements – none.

Adjournment moved by Larry and approved by all at 8:28 PM

Closing prayer – Lord's Prayer

Congregation Council Minutes April 15, 2025

Attending: Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth, and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Pastor Bryan Simmons

Opening Prayer by Chelsey

Call to Order at 6:30 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2025, was moved by Marnette and seconded by Trace and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – Absent but he updated the work of two task forces and two expense items.
- **President's Report** – Nothing to add to the multiple items detailed below.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in March 2025 which was \$79,665. Five- and ten-year averages for March are \$67,667 and \$71,915. A motion to receive the reports was made by Larry with a second by Sara and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Sandi shared minutes received from Joyce O'Donnell.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Nothing new to add. Saving Suds still has no leadership, but Kim and Lynn Burnett continue to handout out quarters. It is again fully funded with donations, per Tony.

Worship, Music, and Arts – Ushers will be reintroduced at Sunday services primarily to guide communion traffic. Free will offering will be collected only at the Christmas and Easter services.

Stewardship – Mif. No report. No activity.

Christian Education and Youth – Kristina Greenfield will be stepping down at chair of this very active board in June 2025. No replacement has been found. It was noted that the Living Water Wednesday has never been listed on our website as a worship opportunity. There are four families unable to attend Wednesday evening and their children have no education opportunities on Sunday.

Administration and Finance – Tony. No report.

Old Business

- Associate Pastor Vacancy – Mif reported that the Call Committee has no candidates. Pastor Bryan mentioned that suggestions from church members are welcome. Mif will contact Pastor Kuckuck for an update and will also inquire into the availability of full-time interim associate pastors if needed. It was suggested that an email go out to all members seeking names for candidates after Mif reports back to the Council.
- The new structure for governance is ready for feedback from more members and will continue with the Council/Board/Ministry Team Leadership retreat on April 27th at 11:30. Trace shared her experience that the Christian Education board is overwhelmed, and the new governance may not address those concerns.
- Volunteer task force – Trace reported that Karen Nettleton, Shelly Meinhard, Donna, Sandi and she will begin combing ShelbyNext for people who will be contacted about volunteering. Mif suggested adding one of the retired pastors or an active deacon to this Task Force.
- 5-year Strategic Plan as revised by Pastor Bryan was approved at the annual meeting on January 26th. The task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield has begun to meet. The plan will be formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities
- Lead Pastor review – As per the suggestion of the SEIA Synod, the Council continued its annual mutual review of Pastor Simmons. The Council review will be sent to all Council members and discussed with Pastor Simmons

via the Executive

Committee. Chelsey will lead the review. Going into a closed meeting was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Larry and coming out of the closed meeting was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Tony. Both motions were approved by all.

New Business

- **Security camera proposal** – The Council has deferred approval of the placement of cameras pending a new cost estimate (original proposal is from October 2024 from Astra Security at cost of \$8981.50 with a monthly service charge of \$46. 50). Several members also requested an opinion from the Ames Police Department on our overall security and the proposal by Astra Security). Finally, the incidences of unauthorized entry into the Food Pantry and Clothing Closet may lead to a change in locks for those two locations. An e-mail vote may be possible if this work is completed before the next Council meeting.
- **Concrete repair** – Pastor Bryan has arranged for a short-term solution of grinding down areas that pose a risk of tripping and falling. The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The Council has asked Tony to arrange a meeting with Chris Brakke (a concrete expert for DOT) and Pastor Bryan to review the proposal from Harold Pike Construction. There is no ready source of money for the estimated cost of \$165,000.

Announcements – none.

Congregation Council Minutes May 20, 2025

Attending: Pastor Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Larry Otteman, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth (via Zoom) and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Sandi Philips, Sara Nelson

Guest: Lindsey Harris for Prairie Flower Children's Center

Opening Prayer by Pastor Bryan Simmons

Call to Order at 6:31 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from April 15, 2025, was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Tony and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report**
- **President's Report** – Nothing beyond the agenda items and his recent Wellspring article summarizing Council actions.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in April 2025 which was \$53,827. Five- and ten-year averages for April are \$66,497 and \$64,666. We collected over \$3000 at the Easter service. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Trace and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Larry appended an email from Donna Grooms regarding the latest Food Pantry statistics. Forwarded by Joyce O'Donnell.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Nothing new to add. Saving Suds still has no leadership, but Kim and Lynn Burnett continue to handout out quarters.

Worship, Music, and Arts – Pastor Simmons reported an anonymous donation to cover the full cost of two tympani.

Stewardship – Mif. No report. No activity. Mif will contact Ellen Janke regarding her interest in continuing to lead this ministry team.

Christian Education and Youth – Feedback has been received from families with children on Wednesday evening events. Generally positive comments about the meals and education program with tweaks to timing of Living Water Wednesday suggested.

Administration and Finance – An anonymous donor has paid professional services (Country Landscaping) for Spring and Fall care of the exterior plants and shrubs.

Old Business

• **Security camera proposal** – A new cost estimate from Astra Security of \$9639.10 with a monthly service charge of \$46. 50 was reviewed. Donna summarized a favorable opinion from the Ames Police Department on our overall security and the proposal by Astra Security. We will request a 30-day period for image storage. Chelsey moved and Larry second a motion to proceed with the purchase of a security camera system as outlined with funding from current endowment money. All agreed.

• **Concrete Repair** – Pastor Bryan arranged for a short-term solution of grinding down areas that pose a risk of tripping and falling at a cost of \$2750. The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The Council has asked Chris Brakke (a concrete expert for DOT) to review the proposal from Harold Pike Construction and prioritize the work to be done.

There is no ready source of money for the estimated cost of \$165,000 for 7500 sq. ft. of replacement. The Council suggested contacting the Gifts and Memorials Ministry Team for available funds, the use of endowment money and a capital campaign using a map of the project with cardboard cars to indicate a chance to donate.

• **The new structure for governance** – Introduced at the Council/Board/Ministry Team Leadership retreat on April 27th. There were questions about the exact organizational workflow and responsibilities. There was a widely supported suggestion

that we reinstitute a regularly scheduled working meeting for all leadership to allow questions and answers and cross-communication. The second Tuesday of the month was suggested. It was suggested that Council leadership for each Committee may be divided unevenly depending upon the work required. It was also suggested that the Congregation Council continue to meet every even month for the first year of the new organization implementation. The Church leadership meeting would occur on every odd month. No further feedback was received beyond the meeting. Larry offered to create a new diagram for the organization and to lead churchwide listening forums before the annual meeting in January 2026 when adoption could occur.

- **Council has not reassigned Council members as liaisons with existing Boards.** Marnette would like to liaison with Congregational Life and Care. Mif will speak to Sandi about serving as liaison with Christian Education and Youth. Donna will liaison with Stewardship Ministry Team in her role as President-elect.

- **Lead Pastor Annual Review**– The review cycle was completed with the Executive Committee meeting with Pastor Simmons prior to this Congregation Council meeting. Gratitude for his ministry and appreciation of the extraordinary workload falling on Pastor Simmons was highlighted.

New Business

- **5-year Strategic Plan as revised by Pastor Bryan** was approved at the annual meeting on January 26th. The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield presented the implementation steps formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities. A lengthy discussion followed with an agreement with the task force that the goals of the plan are aspirational and ongoing. They will serve as a guide for all committees and subcommittees. Clarification and simplification of specific actions was suggested by those with experience in presenting implementation plans. The task force will continue its work and return to the Council for further feedback

- **Administrative Assistant Job Description Approval and Hiring** – Larry moved and Donna seconded a motion to accept the amended job description. All agreed except for Pastor Simmons who abstained since it involved a position he will supervise.

- **The Wellspring Quarterly Magazine** – This issue of the cost versus value of the quarterly Wellspring publication was raised by Larry. It was moved by Larry and seconded to cease publication of the Wellspring and all agreed.

- **Estate Planning Workshop Offer** – Merlaine Mosley Esq offered to lead a free estate planning workshop. We reviewed our previous interactions with representatives of the ELCA Foundation and the Story County Community Foundation. We do not see a need for another workshop and declined the kind offer.

Prairie Flower Children's Center Yard Sign – Prairie Flower Children's Center request for a yard sign was motioned by Larry and seconded by Chelsey. This will allow placement of the sign along Northwestern Avenue for the months of June, July and August of this year. All agreed. There was general approval of a similar sized sign being placed at the entrance on the West side but no motion to this effect was made.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Simmons, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have reviewed membership rolls for people who could be contacted about volunteering. We have 700 active members. The task force identified individuals who already volunteer heavily and those unable to do so. The remainder are potential volunteers. The task force is collecting information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Interaction to share with potential volunteers.

- **Associate Pastor Vacancy** – Mif reported that the Call Committee has no candidates.

- **Food Pantry Theft Update** – It was a communication misunderstanding and has been resolved. The new security camera installation will be instrumental in monitoring this.

- **Children's Church Coordinator Update** – Elsa Page has completed her time with us and the Council approves continuation of this position per Kristina Greenfield's input.

Adjournment moved by Tony and approved by all at 9:15 PM

Closing prayer – Lord's Prayer

Congregation Council Minutes June 17, 2025

Attending: Pastor Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Opening Prayer by Pastor Bryan Simmons

Call to Order at 6:31 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from May 20,2025 was moved by Sara and seconded by Tony and approved by all except Pastor Simmons who abstained not having had the chance to review them in detail.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – Pastor Bryan interviewed candidates for Administrative Assistant and Part-time SPLASH Children's Church Coordinator. He recommended and moved the hiring of Heather Holcomb and Elizabeth Matthies respectively. Both were approved by all of the Council members in email votes prior to this meeting.
- **President's Report** – Nothing beyond the agenda items. He has submitted his summary of Council activity for the semiannual report..
- **Treasurer's Report** –Tony presented a summary of giving in May 2025 which was \$42,213. Five- and ten-year averages for May are \$64,669 and \$63,916. Our year-to-date offering is \$352,353. Five- and ten-year May YTD averages are \$364,460 and \$353,214. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all. .

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – No meeting.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – No meeting. Kim and Lynn Burnett continue to handout quarters for Saving Suds.

Worship, Music, and Arts – No meeting. Sara heard from two individuals that a sing along of the *Messiah* open to the community would be nice. The longtime offering by St. Andrews of this opportunity was noted. Joint promotion and support for their effort by Bethesda was thought to be the best approach going forward.

Stewardship – Mif reported that Ellen Janke wishes to continue to lead this ministry team and Mif is recruiting team members. Plans are to hold our Stewardship meal at Ames Golf and Country Club on the first Wednesday in October.

Christian Education and Youth –VBS underway on June 22nd. 30+ children have been registered and several more are expected to sign up on the first evening. Kristina Greenfield has asked to step down as board chair and the Council asked Pastor Bryan to express its appreciation for all the work she has done for this vital component of our mission and approved the end of her term of service. There is no one identified to take over the leadership.

Administration and Finance –No meeting. Mif noted the overgrowth of weeds.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The total estimated cost is \$165,000 for 7500 sq. ft. of replacement. cost of \$2750. HPC has proposed priority repairs as follows: replacement of 300 sf of concrete paving of the circle drive, caulking cracks and grinding tripping hazards for \$11,500 and replacement of 200 sf of concrete sidewalk along the south side of the circle drive, caulking cracks and grinding tripping hazards for \$6,500. There is no ready source of money. Endowment money has been spent or committed to other projects. The transition growth fund is partially available depending upon year end costs. A fundraising campaign using a congregation wide letter and a map of the project with cardboardcars to indicate a chance to donate will be explored. Formation of a working group of Sara and Chelsey with involvement by the staff, Tess, was moved by Larry and seconded by Donna with all voting in favor.
- **The new structure for governance** – Introduced at the Council/Board/Ministry Team Leadership retreat on April 27th. A working meeting for all leadership to allow questions and answers and cross-communication will take place every odd month. The second Tuesday of the month was suggested. Council leadership for each Committee will be divided unevenly

depending upon the work required. The Congregation Council will meet every even month. Larry circulated a diagram for the organization, proposed changes in the Continuing Resolutions to reflect the new organization and offered to lead churchwide listening forums before the annual meeting in January 2026 when adoption could occur. Those listening sessions will occur after services on September 20th and 21st.

- • **5-year Strategic Plan** as revised by Pastor Bryan was approved at the annual meeting on January 26th. The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield presented the implementation steps formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities. No further work took place this last month due to administrative responsibilities.

New Business

- **Wartburg Seminary Collaborative Learning Program** – Pastor Bryan discussed participating in the Wartburg Seminary Collaborative Learning Program with the application due the end of July. Possible Bethesda assignment of a current student was identified. Chelsey moved and Trace seconded to proceed with application to this program. All voted in favor and Pastor Bryan will make the application.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Simmons, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have reviewed membership rolls for people who could be contacted about volunteering. We have 700 active members. The task force identified individuals who already volunteer heavily and those unable to do so. The remainder are potential volunteers. The task force has collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers. The members of the task force were thanked for their excellent work. Recruitment will begin in existing social groups.
- **Associate Pastor Vacancy** – Mif reported that the Call Committee has no candidates.
- **Prairie Flowers Playscape** – Larry shared updated plans for the playscape of Prairie Flower Children's Center. DHS requires woodchips spread beneath each element with a risk of falling and a fence placed at the east end to prevent children from running into possible traffic. Raised garden beds will be placed in two parking spots along the playscape with an arch added as a formal entry point. The members of the Council expressed a hope that the fence would be nonobstructive of the view. Larry will pass this request along to Deb Kumar (board chair) and Monica Marcomb (director).

Adjournment moved by moved by Tony and approved by all at 8:14 PM

Special Congregation Council meeting to consider the call of Ms. Jesse Marie Hershberger July 23, 2025

Attending: Pastor Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Sara Nelson

Call to Order at 6:02 PM by Mif

A unanimous recommendation was received from the Call Committee for Associate Pastor to call Ms. Jesse Marie Hershberger. References from Rev. Mary "JJ" Simpson-Keelan and Rev. Michael Schmidt were presented by Mif and Pastor Bryan. The staff, Pastor Bryan and Marnette have met the candidate in addition to the call committee with a very positive response. This is the first call for the candidate. Her Rostered Minister Profile was reviewed by all members of the Council, and all questions were addressed.

Discussion began as to how best to introduce the candidate to the two distinct worship services at Bethesda and the different families of worshipers. She will be invited to the August 2nd Saturday night modern worship to coincide with the first of the month meal. She can meet members before and after the service. Likewise, she will be invited to meet worshipers after the traditional Sunday morning service on August 3rd. Finally, a special congregation meeting will be held on August 6th at 6:00 PM for a vote to call her to Bethesda Lutheran as our Associate Pastor.

Larry made a motion that was seconded by Chelsey to hold the three meetings on those dates with electronic access to the special congregation meeting on August 6th. Mif felt that the Wednesday date and time will reduce the ability and number of people to attend. The vote was all other members present "yes" and Mif "no."

Chelsey made a motion that was seconded by Donna that the Congregation Council accept the recommendation of the Call Committee for Associate Pastor. The Council recommends to the congregation that Ms. Jesse Marie Hershberger be called as Associate Pastor of Bethesda Lutheran.

Tony moved to adjourn, and the vote was unanimous with the meeting ending at 6:40 PM.

Submitted by Larry Otteman, Secretary

Special Congregation Meeting to call an Associate Pastor

August 13, 2025

Pastor Bryan opened the meeting with a prayer

President Mif Grotnes called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

President Grotnes outlined the single item on the agenda, the need for a quorum of at least 50 members and of a two-thirds vote in favor of the motion.

A total of 97 members were present with an additional 17 people present online.

President Grotnes presented the motion on behalf of the Congregation Council to call Jesse Marie Hershberger as Associate Pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Church.

30 minutes of questions and concerns were addressed by President Grotnes in his role as Chair of the Call Committee, Pastor Bryan and several members of the Call Committee.

Those in favor of the motion by a show of hands (in person and online) were clearly more than 76 and the motion was passed. Five people voted no.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Submitted by Larry Otteman, Secretary

Congregation Council Minutes August 19, 2025

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger

Opening Prayer by Pastor Bryan Simmons

Call to Order at 6:31 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from the regular Congregation Council meeting of June 17,2025 and special Council meeting of July 23,2025 was moved by Trace and seconded by Sara and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – Pastor Bryan suggested that a leave taking ceremony & thank you cards (multicolored index cards) for Pastor Chris Cowan be planned and everyone agreed. He also reported on the delay in Pastor Jesse's ordination that would allow her to officiate over communions and baptisms. Bishop Current must perform the ceremony, and she is on sabbatical until October 1st.
- **President's Report** – Nothing to add to the successful call of Pastor Jesse.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in June and July 2025 which was \$70,244 and \$77,068. Five- and ten-year averages for June and July are \$60,192-\$61,418 and \$64,478-\$64,483. Our year-to-date offering is \$565,090. Five- and ten-year July YTD averages are \$489,130 and \$479,115. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Marnette reported a successful OWLS honoring of those 80 years plus (fifty people attended). The BBQ/ ice cream social was successful. This board will participate in Rally Sunday and a potluck to honor volunteers.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – No meeting.

Worship, Music, and Arts – Christmas eve services will be held at 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM.

Stewardship – Mif reported that Ellen Janke continues to lead this ministry team which now includes Deb Fennelly, Paul Hinderacker, Donna Scherr, and Jocelyn Kovarik. Plans are to hold the Stewardship meal at Ames Golf and Country Club on October 1st with Ed Kaiser's band for music and Dan Johnson as the speaker. The theme is "Grateful Living, Faithful Giving." Temple talks are planned by Deb Fennelly, Tony Woodcock and Pastor Bryan.

Christian Education and Youth – Kristina Greenfield will remain chair until the end of the year. Trunk or Treat has been converted to an indoor Halloween Carnival with OASIS leading. Discussion was held about how best to attract volunteers for Living Water Wednesday Children's Church.

Administration and Finance – No meeting. Manscape has been hired and paid for to remove and control weeds.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The total estimated cost is \$165,000 for 7500 sq. ft. of replacement. There is no ready source of money. The transition growth fund is partially available depending upon year end costs. A fund-raising campaign using a congregation wide letter and a map of the project with cardboard cars to indicate a chance to donate was suggested but will need to await completion of the stewardship drive. Pastor Bryan has arranged with HPC to fill the largest holes to ameliorate a safety hazard for now.
- **Goverance Restructure** – Larry will lead churchwide listening forums after services on October 18 and 19 to gain more input.
- **5-Year Strategic Plan** – The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield presented the implementation steps formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities.

No further work took place this last month due to administrative responsibilities.

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger

Opening Prayer by Pastor Bryan Simmons

Call to Order at 6:31 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from the regular Congregation Council meeting of June 17,2025 and special Council meeting of July 23,2025 was moved by Trace and seconded by Sara and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – Pastor Bryan suggested that a leave taking ceremony & thank you cards (multicolored index cards) for Pastor Chris Cowan be planned and everyone agreed. He also reported on the delay in Pastor Jesse's ordination that would allow her to officiate over communions and baptisms. Bishop Current must perform the ceremony, and she is on sabbatical until October 1st.
- **President's Report** – Nothing to add to the successful call of Pastor Jesse.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in June and July 2025 which was \$70,244 and \$77,068. Five- and ten-year averages for June and July are \$60,192-\$61,418 and \$64,478-\$64,483. Our year-to-date offering is \$565,090. Five- and ten-year July YTD averages are \$489,130 and \$479,115. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Marnette reported a successful OWLS honoring of those 80 years plus (fifty people attended). The BBQ/ ice cream social was successful. This board will participate in Rally Sunday and a potluck to honor volunteers.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – No meeting.

Worship, Music, and Arts – Christmas eve services will be held at 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM.

Stewardship – Mif reported that Ellen Janke continues to lead this ministry team which now includes Deb Fennelly, Paul Hinderacker, Donna Scherr, and Jocelyn Kovarik. Plans are to hold the Stewardship meal at Ames Golf and Country Club on October 1st with Ed Kaiser's band for music and Dan Johnson as the speaker. The theme is "Grateful Living, Faithful Giving." Temple talks are planned by Deb Fennelly, Tony Woodcock and Pastor Bryan.

Christian Education and Youth – Kristina Greenfield will remain chair until the end of the year. Trunk or Treat has been converted to an indoor Halloween Carnival with OASIS leading. Discussion was held about how best to attract volunteers for Living Water Wednesday Children's Church.

Administration and Finance – No meeting. Manscape has been hired and paid for to remove and control weeds.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The total estimated cost is \$165,000 for 7500 sq. ft. of replacement. There is no ready source of money. The transition growth fund is partially available depending upon year end costs. A fund-raising campaign using a congregation wide letter and a map of the project with cardboard cars to indicate a chance to donate was suggested but will need to await completion of the stewardship drive. Pastor Bryan has arranged with HPC to fill the largest holes to ameliorate a safety hazard for now.
- **Goverance Restructure** – Larry will lead churchwide listening forums after services on October 18 and 19 to gain more input.

- **5-Year Strategic Plan** – The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield presented the implementation steps formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities.

New Business

- **Wartburg Seminary Collaborative Learning Program** – Wartburg Seminary Collaborative Learning Program application has been submitted. Levi Faas is almost certain to be assigned to Bethesda. This is a three-year commitment. A salary and benefit proposal was presented by Pastor. There are sufficient extra funds allotted to the position of Associate Pastor in 2025 to cover this cost. A motion to approve the proposed salary and benefit package was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Trace. All approved. It is our intention to use endowment funds to cover the costs in 2026 and 2027.
- **Prairie Flowers Using Digital Sign** – Larry gave an update on the playscape and the reason for delays. The Council asked that he submit an update to the weekly newsletter with the same explanation. The proposed sign has been reviewed by Tess Hanson (appended). A suggestion was made to unify the capitalization. Our digital sign may be fully used for Bethesda announcements, and, in that case, the Prairie Flower sign would not be displayed for a time. Chelsey moved and Sara seconded that we allow use of our digital sign with the submitted design with the understanding regarding space limitations. All approved. Larry will communicate this to Prairie Flowers.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Simmons, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have reviewed membership rolls for people who could be contacted about volunteering. We have 700 active members. The task force identified individuals who already volunteer heavily and those unable to do so. The remainder are potential volunteers. The task force has collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers.
- **Ministry Fair** – A Ministry Fair will be an important part of Rally Sunday, and groups have been contacted and display boards made available for individual decoration. There is also a suggestion that a Ministry Team be formed to oversee and contribute to our presence on social media and our website.

Congregation Council Minutes September 16, 2025

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes Larry Otteman, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Sara Nelson, Sandi Philips,

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger, Wartburg Seminary Collaborative Learning student Levi Faas

Opening Prayer by Larry

Call to Order at 6:34 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from the Congregation Council meeting of August 19,2025 was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Trace and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report** – Pastor Bryan reported that Rally Sunday and Ministry Fair were a success. He reported that our Shigatini Parish visitors very much enjoyed their time in Ames which included a visit to the ISU Creamery. Pastor indicated there is interest by Lori Woodcock in organizing a return trip to Shigatini.
- **Associate Pastor Report**
- **President's Report** – Noted all the items on the agenda.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in August 2025 which was \$52,336. Five- and ten-year averages for August are \$57,795 and \$61,756. Our year-to-date offering is \$617,426. Five- and ten-year August YTD averages are \$546,924 and \$540,871. A motion to receive the report was made by Chelsey with a second by Marnette and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – This board is recruiting volunteers for Wednesday meals and a potluck to honor volunteers.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – No meeting. Saving Suds ministry garnered two more volunteers from the Ministry Fair. A new laundromat has opened in west Ames. It is named Spin City and uses credit cards for payment. Volunteers at the recent Saving Suds quarters handout, surveyed people and the new location is accessible and acceptable to them. Bethesda will likely switch to the new location per Kim Burnett. St. Andrew's has not yet decided.

Worship, Music, and Arts – August 26th meeting minutes available online.

Stewardship – Plans are completed to hold the Stewardship meal at Ames Golf and Country Club on October 1st with Ed Kaiser's band for music and Dan Johnson as the speaker. The theme is "Grateful Living, Faithful Giving." Temple talks are planned by Deb Fennelly, Tony Woodcock and Pastor Bryan. Kristin Pates was suggested as a speaker next year. She directs the giving program of Story County United Way.

Christian Education and Youth – Pastor Bryan reported that Kristina Greenfield and the other Board members have asked to step down from this obligation. Their work and input during a difficult time of transition was essential in maintaining and growing this vital ministry. With the increase in professional staff, planning will become a staff responsibility. The indoor Halloween Carnival planning is underway with OASIS students and parents leading. Discussion was held about some of the time changes for Living Water Wednesday Children's Church. The worship period is shorter and focused on children & parents.

Administration and Finance –No meeting.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The cost for replacement concrete is \$22 per square foot. The total estimated cost is \$165,000 for 7500 sq. ft. of replacement. There is no ready source of money. Pastor Bryan arranged with HPC to fill the largest holes to ameliorate a safety hazard. The cost was \$3800. Chelsey and Shelly Meinhard have designed a fund-raising campaign with a flyer and a map of the project with parking spots filled with car silhouettes to indicate a donation. "Pave the Way" will be the slogan and

Pastor Bryan suggested also using "It's a Lot". With the immediate paving problems addressed and paid for, it was decided that this is a good time to revisit the scope of the project. The task force of Tony, Chris Brakke and Brian Manful from HPC will meet.

- **Governance Structure** – Larry will lead churchwide listening forums after services on October 18 and 19 to gain more input. Scandinavian Coffee is also October 18th, but a later date conflicts with an ISU football home game.
- **5-Year Strategic Plan** – The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, Donna and Kristina Greenfield presented the implementation steps formatted on a spread sheet to include goals, timeline, and responsibilities. No further work took place this last month due to administrative responsibilities.
- **Kitchen Stove** – Pastor Bryan reported on the status of the kitchen stove. It needs replacement due to failure of a safety switch that cannot be replaced. Gifts and Memorials report \$5352 in a kitchen fund and the possibility of up to \$9000 available. It was suggested that Mark Weber, Elaine Edwards and Sharon Axland form a task force to investigate variations on stove tops and ovens with cost estimates. Pastor Bryan will contact them.

New Business

- **Bethesda Spiritwear** – Bethesda Spirit Wear has been designed with the help of Karla Mortenson's company and is now available with payment online or in person.
- **HVAC Controller Replacement** – Woodman HVAC bid for controller replacement- Pastor Bryan presented the bid for HVAC controller replacement with an estimated cost of \$18,184. The problem has been addressed for now with replacement of a switch. Due to licensing restrictions, a competitive bid is not possible.
- **Crossroads Hallway Coverings** – Pastor Bryan reported that some groups using the Crossroads asked for movable coverings of the hallway windows. This will increase privacy and decrease distractions. He suggested we ask Shelly Meinhard for her thoughts as she was instrumental in designing Crossroads. The Council approves this change in the facility pending a proposal.
- **Repair Budget** – A general discussion was had about the lack of a planned budget for repair or replacement of various anticipated needs. This has largely been due to the tight budgets over the last several years in which current expenses are just being met. Tony will shortly call for a meeting of the Budget Ministry Team. The Council asked him to incorporate funding for a contingency fund into the annual budget.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Simmons, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have reviewed membership rolls for people who could be contacted about volunteering. We have 700 active members. The task force identified individuals who already volunteer heavily and those unable to do so. The remainder are potential volunteers. The task force has collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers.
- **Ministry Fair** – Donna reported that the Ministry Fair which was part of Rally Sunday resulted in 40 time and talent interest surveys with 75 activities checked. Leaders of teams will be given the names and asked to make contact.

Congregation Council Minutes October 21, 2025

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Sara Nelson

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger

Opening Prayer by Larry

Call to Order at 6:34 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from the Congregation Council meeting of September 16, 2025, with corrections was moved by Donna and seconded by Marnette and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report**
- **Associate Pastor Report**
- **President's Report** – Noted all the items on the agenda.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in September 2025 which was \$47,659. Five- and ten-year averages for September are \$58,011 and \$57,956. Our year-to-date offering is \$665,085. Five- and ten-year September YTD averages are \$604,936 and \$598,827. Year to date additional income (facility use, other income and dividend/interest income) is \$25,044. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Board members continue to recruit volunteers for Living Water Wednesday meals. A catered meal to honor volunteers is scheduled for October 26th.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – No meeting. Saving Suds ministry attracted more volunteers and is on firm financial footing thanks to generous donations. Spin City laundromat uses credit cards for payment. Bethesda will likely switch to the new location per Kim Burnett.

Worship, Music, and Arts

Stewardship – Follow-up meeting with thank you notes is to be scheduled. Fewer people attended but several members of Council were out of town. Food was excellent and table decorations lovely. So far 101 pledges have totaled \$457,474. Vicki Sivesind is handling the pledges this year.

Christian Education and Youth – Pastor Bryan reported that Kristina Greenfield and the other Board members have asked to step down from this obligation. The indoor Halloween Carnival planning is underway with OASIS students and parents leading. Discussion was held about some of the time changes for Living Water Wednesday Children's Church. Chelsey suggested that the time period for Splash could be shortened to thirty minutes to better fit the attention span of little ones. This would leave time for group music for this group. Pastor Bryan informed the Council that the work of the Education Coordinator was accomplished in less than 10 hours per week and recruitment of volunteers could be added to their job description.

Administration and Finance – No meeting.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The immediate concerns have been addressed. Asphalt topping is not a cost-effective solution. The task force of Tony, Chris Brakke and Brian Manful from HPC will meet with a recommendation for future repairs.
- **Governance Restructure** – Larry reported on churchwide listening forums after services on October 18 and 19. A second listening forum is scheduled during Café Bethesda on November 1st and after services on November 2nd. Overall, the plan of eliminating elected Board chairs and placing our ministry teams under the three committees of Gather, Grow and Go with Congregation Council participation was well received. There was also an open reception to asking ministry teams to meet on the third Tuesday evening at 6:30 PM every odd month and the Congregation Council meeting at 6:30 PM on even months.

Suggestions were made to increase the Council members to two people on the Go Committee, to relabel "Women's Ministry" as "Ministry" and move some ministry teams to other committees to avoid suggesting that men were not invited to participate in some teams. More input from the members of Women's Ministry is needed.

- **5-Year Strategic Plan** – The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, and Donna have met and are working towards a November release.
- **Kitchen Stove Replacement** – Pastor Bryan reported on plans to replace the kitchen stove. The task force of Mark Weber, Elaine Edwards and Darlene Schmidt is close to recommending new purchases with more ovens and few stove top burners to reflect current usage
- **Crossroads Window Coverings** – Pastor Bryan presented the cost and plans for installation of blocking window treatments for the Crossroads windows along the hallway. They will be used only when privacy is an important component for a group meeting. Thanks to Shelly and Matt Meinhard for their assistance. Trace moved and Chelsey seconded a motion to proceed with the plan. All voted their approval.

New Business

- **Bylaw Changes** – Larry moved a change in the Bylaws to reflect the new governance structure to be voted on at the Annual meeting of the congregation on January 25, 2026. Valuable input was offered to leave in place principles for Committees, Subcommittees and Ministry Teams with a review at the next Council meeting in November. This will still meet the requirement to vote 60 days before the annual meeting.
- **Prairie Flowers** – Sandi and Larry reported on the quarterly meeting with Prairie Flower Children's Center representatives. The Council asks that the storage shed be white to match the two garages and that the city code be consulted about ground cover inside the shed (concrete slab versus gravel or mulch). The Council also discussed the advisability of a written document added to the lease regarding expectations regarding the playscape especially if Prairie Flower leaves Bethesda. Larry and Bryan will work on this. The Council is open to upgrading the electrical capability of the Prairie Flower classrooms with final approval pending a cost estimate. Alteration in the bathroom accessories is not a high priority although moving the soap dispenser can proceed if easily accomplished. The Council is very supportive of the upcoming temple talk by Monica Marcomb, Director. Finally, they have asked for an update on the required fence. Pastor Bryan reported an incident in which a father and child were told they could not use the playscape on a Saturday afternoon. That is incorrect. Prairie Flower had planned a sign indicating the time for their use of the space and the notice it is open to the public at all other times. Larry will follow up with Monica on these issues.
- **Duplex Repairs** – Larry reported on repairs to the 1464 duplex apartment. Kathy Harris shared with Larry that the roof was inspected at the time of the extensive renovation and replacement was recommended. Larry will obtain an estimate from TMJ. Larry also shared several information items shared by Kelli Excell from Triplett Property Management: rental property is overbuilt in Ames affecting rental increases, almost all renters request allowing a pet and higher amperage for devices. The Council prefers that pets (excluding service animals) not be allowed and Larry will share that with Kelli. Addendum 10/25/2025- a majority, 8-0-2, approved by e-vote to proceed with installation of new shingles for the duplex. The option of using Legacy shingles which have a twenty-year warranty was approved. The estimated cost is \$15,855.68. (estimate placed in supporting documents) LAO

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Simmons, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have reviewed membership rolls for people who could be contacted about volunteering. We have 700 active members. The task force identified individuals who already volunteer heavily and those unable to do so. The remainder are potential volunteers. The task force has collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers.
- **Parking Lot Fundraising Task Force (Chelsea and Sara)** – Any further planning pending feedback from the paving task force
- **Council Position Replacements** – Chelsey as Immediate Past President asked for suggestions for replacement of current Council positions. Tony will complete his three years as Treasurer and will look for a replacement. Marnette has agreed to extend her time from one to a total of three years. We will put out a call for anyone interested in the position of President-Elect.

- Mif shared his experience of watching services online for many weeks this year. He is concerned about the appearance of a near empty church due to the camera angle. He also shared his years of experience of lay leadership and the absolute priority of going beyond church attendance to create bonds among members. Finally, attracting new members remains a priority for the health of the church. Pastor Bryan suggested a survey asking members how they prefer to worship- Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday or online. Pastor Bryan also raised the possibility of again offering a course open to the public regarding faith and religion such as Alpha. Mif asked everyone on Council to spend time thinking about these issues with further discussion at the next Council meeting.

Adjournment moved by moved by Tony and approved by all at 9:08 PM

Congregation Council Minutes November 18, 2025

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Chelsey Aisenbrey, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Marnette Warth

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger

Opening Prayer by Pastor Jesse

Call to Order at 6:30 PM by Donna

Approval of Minutes from the Congregation Council meeting of October 21, 2025, with the addition of the approval of TMJ for reroofing the duplex was moved by Chelsey and seconded by Sara and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report**
- **Associate Pastor Report**
- **President's Report** – Noted all the items on the agenda.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in October 2025 which was \$66,514. Five- and ten-year averages for October are \$61,477 and \$61,390. Our year-to-date offering is \$731,599. Five- and ten-year October YTD averages are \$666,413 and \$660,217. Year to date additional income (facility use, other income and dividend/interest income) is \$28,810. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Chelsey and approved by all. Tony also reported on the Budget Ministry Team which met on November 11 with a salary increase of 3%. The second Budget Team meeting is December 9th. Tony plans to send out a letter the first week of December to remind people to fulfill their 2025 pledges and the blessing of two fulltime rostered staff and a seminary student that requires our support.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – No report

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Saving Suds ministry attracted more volunteers and is on firm financial footing thanks to generous donations. Spin City laundromat uses credit cards for payment. Bethesda will switch to the new location per Kim Burnett if logistics can be worked out with the owner and clients.

Worship, Music, and Arts

Stewardship – To date, 181 pledges for 2026 have totaled \$\$734,227 compared to 179 pledges totaling \$673,117 in 2025. Sara commented that she and her husband found it difficult to pledge online. She would like a form similar to the printed card. Pastor Bryan, Vicki and Heather will look into this. The team will consider scheduling the event on a Sunday afternoon to avoid nighttime driving.

Christian Education and Youth – Pastor Bryan guesstimated that 80 people attended the indoor Halloween Carnival. The period for class time is 6:35-7:15 PM. Sandi is asking people to help with meal preparation for Living Water Wednesday. The failure of people to respond to email requests is frustrating. Bryan last month informed the Council that the work of the Education Coordinator was accomplished in less than 10 hours per week with the contract paying for 15 hours per week. He will assemble the Personnel Committee to consider adding tasks to the job description.

Administration and Finance – No meeting.

Old Business

- **Concrete Repair** – The immediate concerns have been addressed. Asphalt topping is not a cost-effective solution. The task force of Tony, Chris Brakke and Brian Manful from HPC have not yet met to recommend future repairs.
- **Governance Restructure** – Larry reported on four churchwide listening forums. Written input from the Bethesda Women's Board was reviewed. Overall, the plan of eliminating elected Board chairs and placing our ministry teams under the three committees of Gather, Grow and Go with Congregation Council participation was well received. The schedule of

ministry teams meeting on the third Tuesday at 6:30 PM every odd month and the Congregation Council meeting the third Tuesday at 6:30 PM on even months continues to be the plan if the new governance is adopted. Larry moved and Sara seconded to change the Bylaws (found on page 31) to reflect the new governance structure, all voted in favor.

This will be presented for a vote at the Annual meeting of the congregation on January 25, 2026. Larry will bring forward a reworked Continuing Resolution VI to reflect the new governance structure at the next meeting.

- **5-year strategic plan** – The Task Force for Implementation consisting of Pastor Bryan, Marnette, and Donna did not meet.
- **Kitchen Stove Replacement** – Pastor Bryan reported on plans to replace the kitchen stove. The task force of Mark Weber, Elaine Edwards and Darlene Schmidt is close to recommending new purchases with more ovens and few stove top burners to reflect current usage
- Mif resumed the discussion on increasing participation of members with the following ideas offered by Council members:

1. Remove three back pews on the baptismal side to create a more functional space for families with young children. The nursery will remain open. Pastor Jesse will survey families who attend the Sunday service.
2. Seat people around tables for food and worship on First Saturday.
3. Promote paper name tags the first weekend of each month.
4. Mirror the discussion time built into Living Water Wednesday worship, by doing the same for the first weekend each month. Pastor Bryan and Jesse will consider how this would best work.
5. Continue ongoing activities with multiple book and study groups.

New Business

- **Prairie Flower Children's Center** – Larry highlighted pertinent lease terms Prairie Flower Children's Center playscape. Larry moved and Sara seconded the addition of the paragraph dealing with disposition of the playscape equipment if the lease with Ames Waldorf Association Inc. ends. The Council asked for an update on the required fence, signage indicating use of the playscape and whether any member of Bethesda volunteered to be on the Board of Prairie Flower Children's Center. Larry and Sandi will forward this information to the Prairie Flower Board. The lease is due for an update and signature in April 2026.

- **Property Damage Insurance Update** – Pastor Bryan presented an update for Property Damage insurance. A new bid from Guideone now separates out the Hail/Wind damage deductible from the general deductible of \$10,000 for other property damage for all structures. This Hail/Wind deductible pertains only to the Education, Commons and Sanctuary building. This deductible is 1% of the value of the building which the insurer estimates at \$12 million or \$120,000. Guideone offers secondary insurance to cover this deductible. The overall cost of the new policy is reduced by \$4000 because of the large deductible for Hail/Wind. The cost of secondary insurance is \$4396.37 per year to lower the deductible from \$120,000 to \$50,000. Self-insurance (using money in the General Endowment Fund) and reducing the deductible to \$10,000 at a cost of approximately \$7500 per year were discussed as well. Donna moved and Sara seconded the decision to buy secondary insurance to reduce our Hail/Wind damage deductible to \$50,000. All approved.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Bryan, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Joyce O'Donnell, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have contacted nearly all the people who expressed interest at the Ministry Fair. The task force has also collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers.
- **Council Position Replacements** – Chelsey as Immediate Past President asked for suggestions for replacement of current Council positions. Tony will complete his three years as Treasurer and will look for a replacement. Marnette has agreed to extend her time from one to a total of three years. We will put out a call for anyone interested in the position of President-Elect.

- **Duplex Reshingling** – Larry reported the roof of the duplex was reshingled by TMJ on October 25th at the estimated cost of \$15,885.70. A designated gift has covered the cost.
- **Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness** – Pastor Bryan encouraged all Council members to attend the Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness discussion on November 20th. Bethesda is serving as a beta test for AMOS.

Adjournment moved by moved by Tony and approved by all at 8:25 PM

Closing prayer – Lord's Prayer

Chapter 13.

CONGREGATION COMMITTEES, BOARDS SUBCOMMITTEES AND MINISTRY TEAMS

C13.01. The officers of this congregation and a lead pastor shall constitute the *Executive Committee*.

C13.05. When a vacancy occurs in a position for which this congregation calls a rostered minister, a **Call Committee**, as defined in the Bylaws or Continuing Resolutions, shall be elected by this congregation upon the recommendation of the Congregation Council. Term of office will end upon installation of the newly called rostered minister or as determined in the Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions.

C13.06. Other Committees of this Congregation may be formed, as the need arises, by decision of the Congregation Council.

C13.06.01 The congregation is organized for ministry and mission utilizing ~~three~~ five coordinating boards ~~committees~~ of ministry teams empowered to carry out the mission of the church

1. ~~Worship, Music and the Arts~~
2. ~~Christian Service, Mission and Outreach~~
3. ~~Congregational Life and Care~~
4. ~~Christian Education and Youth~~
5. ~~Administration and Finance. The administration of the congregation will be supported by the Administration and Finance Board and its Ministry Teams as outlined in the Continuing Resolutions. Financial oversight is provided by the Financial Oversight Ministry Team composed of three members elected by the congregation to staggered three-year terms.~~

1. **Gather Committee**
2. **Grow Committee**
3. **Go Committee**

C13.06.02 ~~Board Committee and subcommittee~~ responsibilities

1. Develop a vision for the ~~Board's Committee's and Subcommittee's~~ ministry
2. Provide leadership and guidance in the formation of ministry teams.
3. Communicate the congregation's mission, vision, and values to the teams as guiding principles
4. Communicate regularly with the **Congregation** Council on progress on mission and ministry initiatives
5. Manage the ~~Board's Committee's~~ budget
6. Provide spiritual and other support for ministry team leaders

C13.06.03 ~~1. The Board Chair is called and elected by the congregation to serve a three-year term, renewable once:~~

- a. ~~The Chair's responsibility is providing vision and leadership for the Board~~
- b. ~~The Chair shall facilitate the formation of ministry teams~~
- c. ~~The Chair, in consultation with the staff advisor, identifies and appoints the Board Secretary~~

- d. The Chair, together with the staff advisor, shall serve as spiritual and leadership mentor for the ministry team leaders within the network
 - e. The Chair shall communicate regularly with other Board chairs regarding progress on mission and ministry initiatives and areas in which they might work cooperatively
 - f. The Chair, in conjunction with other board members, is responsible for preparing and submitting to the Budget Ministry Team an annual budget as requested.
- 2. The Board Secretary is called and appointed by the Board Chair, in consultation with the Staff Advisor, to a term concurrent with that of the Chair. The Board Secretary's primary responsibilities include ensuring that solid communication with the board ministry teams, so that the teams are fully aware of the Board's goals and objectives, as well as the over mission of the congregation. This includes taking minutes at each board meeting and distributing minutes to the ministry teams

C13.06.04 Council Liaison:

- a. An at-large, elected member or officer of the Council will be appointed annually to each Board

C13.06.03 Ministry Teams

- 1. Ministry teams are chartered under the guidance of a specific Board Committee with generally one focus
- 2. They are formed around various congregation functions or as people's passions lead them into a specific ministry
- 3. Membership is voluntary but entered into with a sense of commitment for the team's overall purpose.
- 4. Ministry teams may be short-term or long-term depending on function and/or ministry. Ministry teams may also work on mutual projects with ministry teams from other boards committees
- 5. Funding for ministry teams may come from a variety of sources including but not limited to, the Board Committee budget.
- 6. The appropriate Board Committee, working with the other Committees Boards and Congregation Council, will help facilitate the formation of new ministry teams.

C13.06.07 If no one is elected at the annual meeting, or there is a vacancy mid-term, the Council President shall appoint someone to fill that position for the remainder of the term, with confirmation by the Council

C13.06.04 All meetings of groups, defined in the governing documents or by virtue of a Ministry Team Charter (except the Staff Support Ministry Team, for reasons of confidentiality) shall be open to all voting members of the congregation.

C13.07. Duties of organizational units of this congregation shall be specified in the bylaws and continuing resolutions. They are accountable to the mission, vision and core values of the congregation and shall be assessed at least annually on this basis by the Council.

**2025 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENTS TO THE
MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR CONGREGATIONS OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA®**

[WITH RATIONALES]

Prepared by the Office of the Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
August 2025

Following are amendments to the *Model Constitution for Congregations* that were approved by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Additions are underlined; deletions are ~~struck through~~; all changes are highlighted.

Chapter 1.

NAME AND INCORPORATION

C1.02. For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws [and continuing resolutions], the congregation of (insert full legal name) is hereinafter designated as “this congregation.”

Chapter 5.

POWERS OF THE CONGREGATION

***C5.04.** This congregation or the Congregation Council shall elect from among its the voting members of the congregation laypersons to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as persons to represent it at meetings of any conference, cluster, coalition, or other area subdivision of which it is a member. The number of persons to be elected by this congregation and other qualifications shall be as prescribed in guidelines established by the (insert name of synod) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Rationale: This change allows for lay voting members of the Synod Assembly to be elected either by the congregation or by the Congregation Council. Current language requires election by the congregation.

Chapter 7.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

***C7.03.** If the voting members of this congregation present at a legally called and conducted special meeting of this congregation vote to relate transfer to another Lutheran church body, title to property shall continue to reside in this congregation, provided the process for termination of relationship in *C6.05. has been followed. Before this congregation takes action to relate transfer to another Lutheran church body, it shall consult with representatives of the (insert name of synod).

Rationale: Consistency with 9.71.d. of the ELCA Constitution.

Chapter 9.

ROSTERED MINISTER

***C9.02.** Only This congregation may call as a pastor only:

- a. a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or
- b. a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament who has been recommended for this congregation by the synod bishop, **may be called as a pastor of this congregation.**

*C9.03. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:

- 8. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, **proclaiming God's love for the world**, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations.

Rationale: A number of amendments were made by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly to this bylaw and to its parallels throughout the constitutions.

*C9.06. At a time of pastoral vacancy, an interim pastor **shall may** be appointed by the bishop of the synod with the consent of this congregation or the Congregation Council.

Rationale: It is not always possible for a synod bishop to appoint an interim pastor for every congregation.

*C9.15. Under special circumstances, subject to the approval of the synod bishop and the concurrence of this congregation, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America officially has established a relationship of full communion may serve temporarily as pastor of this congregation under a contract between this congregation and the pastor in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by this congregation.

Rationale: Provision is being changed to "required." With the increasing use of exchangeability of rostered ministers with full communion partners, it is advisable that all congregations make allowance for that possibility.

*C9.22. **Only This congregation may call as a deacon only.**

- a. a member of the roster of Ministers of Word and Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or
- b. a candidate for the roster of Ministers of Word and Service who has been recommended for this congregation by the synod bishop, **may be called as a deacon of this congregation.**

*C9.23. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall:

- c. Speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, **proclaiming God's love for the world**, advocating dignity, justice, and equity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, caring for the marginalized, and embracing and welcoming racially and ethnically diverse populations;

Rationale: A number of amendments were made by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly to this bylaw and to its parallels throughout the constitutions.

Chapter 15.

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS AND ADJUDICATION

***C15.01.** Persistent and public denial of the Christian faith, willful or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, continual and intentional interference with the ministry of this congregation, or willful and repeated harassment or defamation of member(s) of this congregation is sufficient cause for discipline of a member. Prior to disciplinary action, reconciliation and repentance will be attempted following Matthew 18:15–17, proceeding through these successive steps, as necessary:

- a) private counsel and admonition by the pastor,
- b) censure and admonition by the pastor in the presence of two or three witnesses,
- c) written referral of the matter by the Congregation Council to the vice president of the synod, who will refer it to a consultation panel drawn from the Consultation Committee of the synod, and
- d) written referral of the matter by the consultation panel to the Committee on Discipline of the synod.

If, for any reason, the pastor is unable to administer the admonitions required by ~~paragraphs~~ a. and b. hereof, those steps may be performed by another pastor chosen by the Executive Committee of the Congregation Council.

Rationale: Formatting correction and consistency of constitutional language.

***C15.11.** When there is disagreement between or among factions within this congregation on a substantive issue which cannot be resolved by the parties, members of this congregation may petition the synod bishop for consultation after informing the president [vice president] of this congregation of their intent to do so. The synod bishop shall seek a timely resolution of the dispute. If the issue relates directly to the pastor, the bishop may begin the process in ~~§S14.18~~ ~~*C9.05~~.d. In all other matters, if the bishop's consultation fails to resolve the issue, the bishop shall refer the matter to the Consultation Committee of the synod, which shall undertake efforts to find an appropriate solution. If the Consultation Committee's efforts fail to resolve the dispute, the entire matter shall be referred to the Synod Council for adjudication by whatever process the Council deems necessary. The Synod Council's decision shall be final.

Rationale: It is more logical to cross-reference within the Model Constitution, rather than to make reference to the synod constitution.

Chapter 16. **AMENDMENTS**

***C16.02.** An amendment to this constitution, proposed under *C16.01., shall:

- a. be approved at any legally called meeting of this congregation by a majority vote of those voting members present and voting; and
- b. be ratified ~~without change~~ unchanged at the next regular meeting of this congregation by a two-thirds vote of those voting members present and voting.

Rationale: Consistency of constitutional language.

Congregation Council Minutes December 16, 2025

Attending: Pastor Bryan Simmons, Trace Houge Brakke, Mif Grotnes, Sara Nelson, Larry Otteman, Sandi Philips, Donna Scherr, Marnette Warth, and Tony Woodcock.

Absent: Chelsey Aisenbrey,

Also attending: Pastor Jesse Hershberger

Opening Prayer by Pastor Jesse

Call to Order at 6:35 PM by Mif

Approval of Minutes from the Congregation Council meeting of November 18, 2025, was moved by Donna and seconded by Trace and approved by all.

Monthly Reports

- **Lead Pastor's Report**
- **Associate Pastor Report**
- **President's Report** – Noted all the items on the agenda.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Tony presented a summary of giving in November 2025 which was \$47,688. Five- and ten-year averages for November are \$84,395 and \$76,798. Our year-to-date offering is \$779,287. Five- and ten-year October YTD averages are \$666,413 and \$660,217. Year to date additional income (facility use, other income and dividend/interest income) is \$37,148. A motion to receive the report was made by Larry with a second by Sara and approved by all.

Board Reports

Congregational Life and Care – Marnette reported that the frequency of O.W.L.S. will decrease due to volunteer burnout and reduced attendance. Activities will resume in February going forward with main effort scheduling Lenten soup suppers. The Council committed to serving the meal on March 4th.

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach – Saving Suds ministry is on firm financial footing thanks to generous donations. Spin City laundromat uses credit cards for payment. Bethesda will switch to the new location in February 2026 per Kim Burnett. Quarters will no longer need to be handed out.

Worship, Music, and Arts

Stewardship – No meeting

Christian Education and Youth – Lenten soup suppers were discussed with six meals planned to begin on Ash Wednesday.

Administration and Finance – No meeting.

Election Ministry Team – Dennis Warth has agreed to stand for President-elect. Cameron Aisenbrey would be willing to serve as member-at-large. Tony will accept a second three-year term for Treasurer if needed. Several names were offered including Darryl Vegge, Sarah Lundvall and Sharon or Dave Anderson and those people will be contacted.

Old Business

- **Governance Restructure** – Larry offered a reworked Continuing Resolution VI to reflect the new governance structure. After a brief discussion, Larry moved to accept this rewrite and Marnette seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Upgrading Electrical Connections** – Larry circulated the plans offered by Prairie Flower Children's Center to upgrade the electrical connections in rooms 201, 203A and 205. The estimated cost of \$1600 will be borne by Bethesda. Council members asked that we specify that a licensed and bonded commercial electrician do the work (as planned) and the use of a hot plate in a classroom with children is compliant with City of Ames regulations. Larry moved and Sandi seconded the motion with specifications and all approved.
- **Prairie Flowers Lease Update** – Larry updated the Council on unanswered questions regarding the rewriting the lease to reflect the disposition of the playscape at the time the lease ends. Sandi and Larry will schedule a meeting in January with the Director and President of Prairie Flower Children's Center.

New Business

- **Income for 2026** – Tony also reported on the Budget Ministry Team which met again on December 9th. The estimated income for 2026 is \$985,000 which represents a 6.2% increase and is based on a 9% increase in pledged income. Tony mailed out a letter the first week of December to remind people to fulfill their 2025 pledges and end the year with a positive balance. Trace moved and Sandi seconded a motion to present the budget outlined tonight. All approved the motion.
- **Annual Meeting Agenda** – Donna presented the agenda for the 2026 annual meeting, and it is ready pending candidate(s) for Treasurer.
- **Changes to the Constitution Model** – Larry presented ELCA required changes to the Model Constitution which impacts the Bethesda Lutheran Congregation Constitution. It was decided to continue to indicate the 25 voting members are required to call for a special congregational meeting. Larry moved to recommend these required changes for a vote at the annual meeting. Sara seconded the motion and all approved the motion.

Announcements

- **Volunteer Task Force** – Pastor Bryan, Trace, Donna, Sandi, Joyce O'Donnell, Karen Nettleton and Shelly Meinhard have contacted nearly all the people who expressed interest at the Ministry Fair. The task force has also collected information on each activity or ministry team under the new organizational structure of Gather, Grow and Go plus Social Groups (book clubs and others) to share with potential volunteers.
- **Council Position Replacements** – Chelsey as Immediate Past President asked for suggestions for replacement of current Council positions. Tony will complete his three years as Treasurer and will look for a replacement. Marnette has agreed to extend her time from one to a total of three years. We will put out a call for anyone interested in the position of President-Elect.
- **Duplex Reshingling** – Larry reported the roof of the duplex was reshingled by TMJ on October 25th at the estimated cost of \$15,885.70. A designated gift has covered the cost.
- **Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness** – Pastor Bryan encouraged all Council members to attend the Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness discussion on November 20th. Bethesda is serving as a beta test for AMOS.

Adjournment moved by moved by Tony and approved by all at 8:10 PM

Closing prayer – Lord's Prayer

Election 2026

Here is the slate of nominees for elected positions that Bethesda Council is presenting to the congregation at the January 25, 2026 annual meeting. Nominations from the floor also can be made on the day of the meeting if the nominee is present and has agreed to serve if elected.

Dennis Warth, Council President-elect, three-year term

 Born and raised in Burlington, Iowa, Dennis Warth attended and graduated from Iowa State University where he met my wife, Marnette. Dennis and Marnette have three adult children and five grandchildren and have lived in Ames since 1989 and have been members of Bethesda since 1994.

Currently, Dennis serves on the O.W.L.s Ministry Team and Congregational Care Board helping with the chili cookoff, Café Bethesda and other congregational events. He has also helped prepare and serve meals for some of Living Water Wednesday dinners and is a Saturday night worship volunteer often greeting or serving communion.

A faithful volunteer, Dennis has co-chaired the 5-year strategic planning process, volunteered at the Bethesda Food Pantry, taught Sunday school and has served on various other boards.

Cameron Aisenbrey, Council Member-at-Large, three-year term

 Cameron Aisenbrey has called Bethesda home since 2009. His wife, Chelsey, has led as church council president, and together they are raising three energetic kids: Emerson, 14, Luca, 10, and Creighton, 5. Saturday nights often find the whole family gathered at church, a tradition they cherish. Cameron's journey began in the small town of Freeman, South Dakota, and continued with college years in South Dakota and Minnesota. After marrying Chelsey, they moved to Nevada, Iowa, exploring several churches before discovering a true sense of belonging at Bethesda.

Now living in Huxley, the Aisenbreys still make the weekly journey up the interstate to Bethesda, a testament to their deep connection with the church. All three children were baptized at Bethesda and eagerly join the Wednesday evening Splash services, where Cameron guides the 3rd-5th graders as a shepherd. The family's hands-on spirit shines through their roles as Saturday worship hosts, Cafe Bethesda hosts, and enthusiastic helpers at events like Trunk or Treat. Through Bible studies and fellowship, I have found joy in learning, growing, and stretching my faith alongside the Bethesda community.

Cameron hopes to serve on the church council, believing his perspective as a parent navigating confirmation and children's programs, along with his active volunteer work, can bring meaningful value to Bethesda.

Daryl Vegge, Treasurer, three-year term

 Daryle and Joyce Vegge moved from Sioux City to Ames 49 years ago and have loved living here. Their two sons were raised here but now live with their families in Kansas City, Kansas and Provo, Utah. Daryl and Joyce have been members of Bethesda for about eight years. Prior to that they were long time members of St. Andrews. After working at Danfoss for 38 years, Daryl retired 10 years ago, but full time retirement was not meant for him so in the summer he mows grass at the Ames Country Club and throughout the year works part-time for the Story County Community Foundation.

Daryl's involvement so far with Bethesda has been to chair the Stewardship committee for three years. Daryl looks forward to serving as Treasurer.

Sample Ballot

Leadership Position	Nominee	Term Ends
Church Council		
President-Elect	Dennis Warth	2029
Member-at-Large	Cameron Aisenbrey	2029
Treasurer	Daryl Vegge	2029

Membership Statistics

	2025	2024	2023
Average weekend worship attendance in person.....	176	194	974*
Average weekend worship attendance online.....	1021	1192	n/a
Average Living Water Wednesday attendance	40	40	n/a
Average mid-week Lenten worship attendance	69	100	112
Number of child and youth baptisms	7	3	9
Number of adult baptisms.....	0	0	1
Number of new member transfers.....	14	18	28
Number of adult confirmations.....	0	0	0
Number of youth First Communion.....	3	2	9
Number of youth confirmations	5	5	3
Number of marriages.....	2	2	1
Number of funerals.....	7	18	19
Number of youth registered in Sunday school (3 yrs through 5th grade).....	23	23	12
Average Children's Church attendance	18	10	10
Number of youth registered for Vacation Bible School	36	47	32
Number of youth registered for confirmation classes (6th-8th)	11	16	15
Number of family units in the congregation	463	464	472
Number of baptized members.....	1,157	1,144	1,147
Number of confirmed members	1,009	1,000	1,001
Number individuals transfer out.....	2	7	9
Number families transfer out.....	2	4	3

**Attendance reflects both in-person and online participation.*

Letter From The President

Dear Members and Friends of Bethesda Lutheran Church,

It's hard to believe how quickly the year went! As we reflect on the many goals we set at the beginning of the year, I wanted to take a moment to update you on where we stand and what's on the horizon.

Associate Pastor Search

This year, hiring an Associate Pastor was one of the major goals for our church. At the time of my semi-annual report a candidate that we thought was a good fit for Bethesda Lutheran Church had not been found. That changed shortly after the semi-annual meeting when we interviewed Jesse Hershberger. Jesse began as our Associate Pastor on 8/18/25 and is a great addition to our clergy staff.

Five Year Plan

The Five-Year Plan has been completed and implementation is well underway. We've already seen encouraging results from several sections, and we are excited about what's still to come. Thank you for your prayers and support as we continue to move forward.

Church Council Special Actions

The Council has appointed a committee to review the parking lot and devise a plan to prioritize the areas with the most significant needs. While repairs have been made to the worst areas already, the Committee is also developing a plan for what needs to be done to meet our parking needs for the next 5 years. This study will also seek solutions for how to pay for such repairs.

Church Organizational Structure

We have also been looking at ways to engage our members in the life of the church. Our belief is rooted in the idea that the most thriving congregations are those in which members take an active role in shaping the direction and ministry of their church. To that end, we've held retreats and special learning opportunities to gather input and foster involvement. We will be discussing this topic later in our next meeting.

While there is still much work to be done, I'm confident that- with the dedication of our members and leadership- we are moving in the right direction. Please continue to keep our church and its ministries in your prayers. Thank you for your continued faith, encouragement, and commitment to our shared mission. It has been an honor

*Mif Grotnes
Council President*

Lead Pastor Report

Dear Beloved in Christ,

In Matthew 11, John the Baptist, the one who prepared the way for Jesus, found himself confused. Like John, we too often long for a Messiah of strength, of conquest, of vengeance, a God who will destroy our enemies and put us in the winner's circle. But Jesus doesn't come as a war hero. He doesn't storm the palace. Instead, he walks into Jerusalem not to take power, but to lay it down. He is executed by the state. And somehow, in that defeat, the power of God is magnified through a love that neither cross nor grave could silence. This love, dear friends, is what we proclaim. A love that comforts the afflicted and unsettles the powerful. A love that lifts the lowly and calls us to see God in unexpected places. A love that wins in the end, not through force, but through faithfulness of God's love, and this love can never be defeated.

This past year, we have seen that love at work in many ways across our shared ministry at Bethesda. We gave thanks for the retirement of Lynn Anderson, who served faithfully for 18 years. Her commitment shaped so much of the day-to-day life of this congregation. We welcomed Heather Holcomb as our new Administrative Specialist. Heather plugged right in and has brought fresh energy to our team. We welcomed Elizabeth Matthies as our SPLASH Children's Church Coordinator. Elizabeth has done a fantastic job continuing the momentum of this new Wednesday night offering for our children. We also welcomed Levi Faas as a Collaborative Learning Student from Wartburg Seminary. Levi's presence is helping to bridge academic formation and congregational ministry, and we are grateful to be part of his pastoral journey.

This year also marked the arrival of Pastor Jesse Hershberger as our new Associate Pastor. Though she's only been with us five months, it already feels like we've been in ministry together for much longer. Her gifts for preaching, presence, and pastoral care have been a powerful complement to our team.

I give thanks, too, for the ongoing work of the Volunteer Ministry Task Force, which is reinvigorating how we connect people to meaningful service through Bethesda. Our ministries flourish because of the generosity and dedication of volunteers, and I am encouraged by how this work is bearing fruit. Heather's new "Group Finder" tool in our database will help connect even more people to ministries that match their gifts and interests.

All of this fits within the clear vision we cast together in our 5-Year Strategic Plan. As a congregation, we are committed to being a place of welcome and meaning for children, youth, and families, making God's love known to the wider community through our service to others, and being present within the community and actively inviting others into our ministry. As we look to the future, I am especially hopeful about how our new governance restructuring will help us live into this mission more effectively, reinvigorating volunteer leadership, streamlining decision-making, and helping us Gather, Grow, and Go in faithful service. It is a joy to partner with all of you for the sake of the Gospel. In a world that still yearns for power and quick fixes, may we remain faithful to the way of Jesus, the way of love that cannot be destroyed.

Yours in Christ,

*Bryan Simmons
Lead Pastor*

Associate Pastor Report

If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. ~ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Dear Beloved in Christ,

Just a few months ago, I was called as your pastor. I am incredibly grateful for the ways you have welcomed me into this community of faith. Calling a new pastor is always an exercise of faith. It has been a blessing to have been received at Bethesda with such care. Thank you for trusting me as a partner in ministry.

As I reflect on what we have accomplished together over my time at Bethesda, I keep returning to these verses from 1 Corinthians. Written to a community discerning what it meant to be a people of faith amidst varied practices and beliefs, it is a reminder to center our decisions in love. It is this rootedness in love that I have witnessed since I arrived for my first interview here at Bethesda and one of the reasons I felt called to this specific community. It is a joy to partner with you in living out faith rooted in love together. I see this in so many ways--the love poured into making sure that our ministries prioritize serving in ways that respect the dignity of all who participate. The love shared in community through groups and Bible studies, pouring into one another and carrying one another's burdens. Love for our youngest members shown by embracing their presence in worship and supporting Living Water Wednesdays. Love shown through generous sharing of all of our unique gifts, pointing towards a faith that is not lived out as a clanging cymbal but as the basis for all we do.

One of the transitions of my role has been overseeing more of the visitation ministry at Bethesda. If you have a pastoral care need and would like a visit or would just like to grab a cup of coffee and catch up, please do not hesitate to reach out. Pastor Bryan, Levi, and I value the time and connections we build through our visitation ministry and are always available to listen, pray, and offer our support. We celebrate that the body of Christ at Bethesda is not just made up of those who gather in the building for worship, but of believers in many places who join in our mission. The pastoral staff partners with volunteers from Bethesda to bring communion and community to those who are not able to join in-person worship. If you would like to become more involved, with receiving a visit or visiting others, please let me know and I will help you get connected.

After just a few months together, I look towards the future of Bethesda with hope and excitement. Rooted in God's love for us, I cannot wait to see how we Gather, Grow, and Go into this new year.

In Christ,

*Jesse Hershberger
Associate Pastor*

Bethesda's Collaborative Learning Program Partnership as Told by Levi Faas

The Collaborative Learning (CL) program through Wartburg Theological Seminary is a model of theological education that integrates academic coursework with ongoing, supervised ministry in a local congregation. In other words, it is a way of learning ministry by actually doing ministry, while simultaneously taking a full load of seminary coursework. Rather than treating “school” and “church” as separate worlds, the CL model intentionally holds them together. The program is structured around competency-based formation and sustained partnership between the student, the congregation, the supervising pastor, and the seminary.

Here at Bethesda, my half-time role as a CL student is sustained through regular supervision with Pastor Bryan and accountability to the Ministry Site Committee, which is comprised of members from our congregation. My responsibilities are aligned with seminary learning goals and focus on developing skills in preaching, worship leadership, pastoral care, teaching, and congregational leadership.

A significant portion of my time is devoted to preaching, worship, and teaching. This includes sermon preparation and delivery, assisting in worship, and occasionally facilitating discussion for our adult forums or Bible studies. I also engage in pastoral care through home visits, scheduled or informal meetings with congregation members, and just a lot of sitting with folks and listening (usually with coffee involved).

Additionally, I help with the leadership of our youth ministries, particularly with our high school group, Flood. Here, I assist with leading the group, planning and scheduling the programming, and generally being present with the students in a pastoral capacity. This work contributes to my formation in teaching, relational ministry, and age-appropriate faith development.

Beyond these primary areas, I attend staff meetings, collaborate with staff and other ministry leaders, and complete any required documentation and reflection for the CL program. My hours are intentionally divided between direct ministry, preparation, supervision, and academic integration. In other words: some time in the pulpit, some time in living rooms and meeting rooms, some time at a desk with my laptop, and a LOT of time reflecting on why it all matters.

I continue to be grateful for my placement at Bethesda and for the congregation’s investment in the Collaborative Learning program. Serving here allows me to do the daily, ordinary work of ministry while learning what it actually means to be a pastor in a real congregation. I look forward to continuing this shared work in the coming year as my formation moves toward internship and the next stages of ministry.

Levi Faas
Collaborative Learning Student

Administration and Finance

The Administration and Finance Board is looking for a chairman.

- Votes stacked up thanks to Bethesda members and friends . . . we have been chosen the Best Place of Worship in Story County for the EIGHTH year in a row!

Why does this matter? Because of what we do in Story County and globally—**God's work. Our hands.**
With your helping hands, and donations of goods and funds, we work for:

- Food & Clothing Security
- Immigration & Refugees
- LGBTQIA+
- Race Relations
- Worship of our One True God

Respectfully submitted,

Bethesda Staff



Financial Oversight Committee

The Financial Oversight Committee met and discussed the following:

- 2025 financial reports
- 2026 annual budget
- 2026 capital projects
 - Partking lot
 - Geothermal heating system
- 2027 balance sheet audit
- 2026 endowment funds
- Recommmendations from our auditors regarding fixed asset replacement reserve (depreciation).

Respectfully submitted,

John Greenlee

Chairperson

Christian Education and Youth Ministries

The Christian, Education, and Youth Ministries board saw significant changes in 2025. A highlight includes hiring of the new SPLASH Children's Church Coordinator, Elizabeth Matthies. Elizabeth, along with other staff members and the former Christian Education and Youth Ministries board, revitalized the youth programming and brought a fresh energy to Wednesday night activities.

Elizabeth is looking forward to helping the SPLASH Children's Church Program grow even more. In 2025, SPLASH Children's Church served 30 children (3 years old through 5th grade) in September and December. In December, Bethesda held its first Christmas program in a number of years, which was well attended and met with a warm reception. After the Christmas program (and a visit from Santa Claus), performers and spectators had the opportunity to mingle, color, play games, and decorate cookies.



We could not have this youth programming each Wednesday night without all of our wonderful volunteers. Currently, we have six Shepherds in total across the three age groups, and we have had a total of nine adults serve as Workshop Leaders. If you are interested in volunteering for SPLASH Children's Church learning events in 2026, connect with Elizabeth Matthies at ematthies@bethesdaames.org. SPLASH Children's Church will always welcome volunteers!



Vacation Bible School 2025



Vacation Bible School's theme this past year was Magnified and VBS was held Sunday, June 22 – June 26, 2025. We had around 30 children ages pre-school through fifth grade every night, with 50 people coming together for a meal before our opening worship rallies began each night. Over 40 volunteers throughout the week and numerous behind-the-scenes helpers and numerous donations from congregation members helped make VBS unforgettable for parents, volunteers, and kids alike.

Vacation Bible School 2025

We shared a wonderfully HOT and RAINY week of Bible stories, songs, crafts, games and A LOT of community building and fellowship. We learned about the joy of giving by filling our offering basket with canned goods, back to school supplies and over \$88 of coins!!!



OASIS Confirmation

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OASIS students continued to eagerly take part in the Head-to-Heart program with Faith Inkubators, diving into a mix of Learning, Service, and Fellowship Events. Pastor Bryan and Pastor Jesse guided the Learning Events, while small group leaders Nancy Ewing, Scott Smyth, James Harriman, Gretchen Mosher, and Becky Gray brought energy and care to the Service and Fellowship Events.



February brought heartfelt visits as small groups surprised Bethesda members with Valentine gift bags. In April, over 20 youth gathered for an unforgettable lock-in with Lutheran Lakeside, filling the night with laughter and friendship. The next morning, they spread joy by hiding Easter Eggs for the annual hunt and lending a hand with Easter breakfast.

The first weekend in May was a milestone, as five students celebrated their confirmation. September marked a fresh start for OASIS Confirmation students stepping into another year of acolyte service. October buzzed with excitement as students and parents teamed up to launch our first Halloween carnival and students helped with Scandinavian Coffee set-up. As the 2025 OASIS Confirmation program wrapped up, our middle schoolers joined SPLASH Children's Church in the Christmas Program,



FLOOD High School Youth Group

From Pastor Bryan: Flood surged forward into early 2025. Despite a few weather setbacks, we still found time for axe-throwing adventures and weekly church games like Traffic Jam, What If?, Trash Can of Doom, and the always-thrilling Death Ball!



While the games bring plenty of laughter, the real highlight is watching relationships deepen and faith grow. Every week, High Schoolers open up about their highs and lows, and together we dive into scripture, discovering how faith shapes our choices, friendships, and view of the world. Their thoughtful engagement continues to inspire me.

We wrapped up the year with outdoor games and gathered around a crackling fire pit, roasting s'mores and hot dogs under the open sky.

From Levi: My time with Flood this year has been shaped first and foremost by the relationships I have formed with the students. Spending time with this group week after week has been such a gift. Flood has become a place where every student can be known by name, where questions are welcomed, and where faith is explored with honesty and care rather than pressure or expectation.



Alongside this relational work, Flood has also been an essential part of my collaborative learning role at Bethesda. Walking with these students for the past 6 months has helped me grow in attentiveness, patience, and humility—not to mention my ping pong skills! More than anything, this ministry has reminded me that faith is often formed through simple, faithful presence, and that showing up consistently for one another is where real, lasting community takes place.



My spouse, Kate, has played a vital role in this journey. Since October, she has joined Flood as our “Games Guru,” bringing years of experience with high school and college students. Her energy, warmth, and playful spirit light up the group, and the students clearly appreciate her presence. Alongside Pastors Bryan and Jesse, we are committed to making Flood a place where young people feel free to be themselves and know they truly belong.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Bryan Simmons and Collaborative Learning Student Levi Fass

Christian Service, Mission, and Outreach

Saving Suds made a difference for 327 families, touching the lives of 807 people in our community. Over the year, we handed out \$7,091 in quarters, averaging \$591 each month. Our dedicated volunteers—Lynn and Kim Burnett, Pam Sargent, Bruce Johnson, and five more caring individuals—kept the mission going strong. If you feel inspired to join our team, we would love to welcome you. Every event unfolded at Squeaky Clean Laundromat, where your support helped us turn small acts into big change. Thank you for believing in this mission.

*Kim Burnett
\$aving Suds*



Saving Suds

1st Thursday each month Choose one of two shifts: **3:45-5:15 OR 5:15-7:00 pm**

Give out quarters and soap pods

SIGN-UP TO VOLUNTEER!
tinyurl.com/savingsudsvolunteer



Congregational Life and Care

In faith we are called into relationship with God in Christ and with one another as a community of faith.

The Congregational Life and Care (CLC) Board plans family activities, hosts social gatherings, and encourages fellowship within our congregation. Some of the activities include:

- * Sunday morning coffee fellowship after worship
- * Cafe Bethesda on the first Saturday evening of every month, beginning at 5:00 PM
- * Ladies Lunch Bunch on the second Thursday of every month
- * Friday Wind Down
- * Sunday Supper Club

We also coordinate the Older Wiser Lutherans (O.W.L.s) group on the second Thursday of every month, and soon O.W.L.s will transition to O.W.L.s Café, a coffee hour of sorts, from 10 AM – 12 PM in the Commons. During the program year, we find volunteers to host and serve the Living Water Wednesday meals. In January or February (the Sunday before the Super Bowl), we host White Elephant Bingo. In March, we host the Chili Cookoff. This year, we collaborated with Torrent Brewing Company to host the event and raised over \$1,500 to help the Ames schools pay for student lunches.

In May, we celebrated the end of the program year with the School's Out Celebration meal and combined worship service. We also have regular Soup Suppers on Wednesdays during Lent, where we gather for a bowl of delicious soup, bread, and desserts before attending the Lenten Service. July brought the BBQ Cook Off and Ice Cream Social. Proceeds went to the Mary Greeley Compassionate Care Program.

In July, our OWLS group held a luncheon to honor our 80+ members. This Fall, we helped with Rally Sunday and the Ministry Fair in September. In October, we hosted the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon and encouraged the congregation to show our pastors the appreciation they so deserve. November brought the Pie Social on the weekend before Thanksgiving and our first annual Jigsaw Puzzle Competition.

All these special events, while entertaining, help us get to know one another better and bond as a faith community. We welcome all in the community to attend these events to experience why Bethesda Lutheran Church is such a special place (and the Best Place to Worship in Ames!).

*Joyce O'Donnell
Chairperson*

2025 Stewardship Committee Report

Committee Members: Ellen Janke (Chair), Donna Scherr, Jocelyn Kovarik, Deb Fennelly, Paul Hinderaker, Pastor Bryan, and Pastor Jesse

This year's stewardship campaign theme was Grateful Living/Faithful Giving. We kicked off the campaign with communications by mail, email, and bulletin articles. In addition, Levi Faas and Deb Fennelly gave temple talks focused on our theme, and a budget narrative by Tony Woodcock highlighted how our financial giving supports the many missions and ministries of our congregation.



On October 1, a Celebration of Giving was held at the Ames Golf and Country Club with 78 in attendance. The Ed Kaiser band provided pre-dinner entertainment starting at 5:30. Seating for a delicious fried chicken dinner began at 6:15, followed by our guest

speaker for the evening, Dan Johnson, CEO of State Bank & Trust located in Nevada, Iowa. Dan shared with us the various ways this bank has been inspired to serve its community under his leadership.



Some pretty nice door prizes were awarded to the lucky people who turned in pledge cards before or during the event. In all, we had 181 pledges totaling \$734,227.00, up 9% from last year.



I want to thank all who participated in the 2025 stewardship campaign and those who made pledges, helping make this year's event a success and an enjoyable experience.

Thank you!

*Ellen Janke
Chairperson*



Worship, Music and Arts

It has been a very busy year for the Worship, Music and Arts Board! The church runs successfully because of all the dedicated members who volunteer their time and talents. We continue to have people serve as greeters, communion assistants, set up coffee, bake communion bread, run the AV system, play and sing in the choirs, change the altar paraments, decorate the sanctuary, lead worship through scripture readings and leading the prayers. Their contributions are immeasurable!

We've been blessed to have monies donated to Worship, Music, and Arts for which we have purchased new paraments for the Commons. We have had the opportunity to improve the sound system in the sanctuary. We've purchased a new digital keyboard. Due to the generosity from Diane Lande, we were the recipient of two timpani drums. A grand piano was wonderfully donated, and placed in the music room, by Dan and Sharon Krieger!

Throughout the year we have had many great opportunities to worship together. We continued to have our combined services on Rally Sunday and Year End festival. We reintroduced the Christ the King service to celebrate the end of the church year. New styles of communion were implemented at both services.

Bethesda Choirs participated in the Good Neighbor Concert, which brought in record breaking donations! We had the wonderful opportunity to bring in Joel Raney, acclaimed pianist, to hold a workshop for our choirs. With generous donations from Kathy Slocum, the choirs participated in learning from Joel. They put on a beautiful performance and a free will offering was collected.

Harold Pike Construction installed hand rails at the back of the altar and one to assist getting into the pulpit.

We always welcome new volunteers! We're happy to provide training and support until you feel comfortable in your role. Remember, many hands make light work!

*Lise McKillop
Chairman*

Bethesda Community Food Pantry

In 2025 the Food Pantry served 21,324 individuals and distributed 106,176 pounds of food. Most food was sourced from the Food Bank of Iowa, with additional produce provided by the Reiman Gardens Produce Donation Program. This year, the pantry began receiving short-dated items from the Ames Dollar General twice weekly, providing our clients with Hostess treats and refrigerated items like juice, lunchmeats and milk. Clients continued to receive \$5 vouchers for milk or fresh produce at local Hy-Vee and Fareway stores.

Over the year, many clubs and groups provided us with food from “food drives”. Organizations that completed food drives were:

- Ames Golden K Kiwanis
- Ames Golf and Country Club
- Ames Office of D.O.T.
- Fredrikson and Byron P.A.
- ISU Women’s Basketball Team
- Lutheran Church of Hope
- Stonebrook Church Youth Group
- St. Paul Lutheran Church
- United Way of Story County

Bethesda held a Reverse Advent Calendar food drive in December which was a fun way to involve the congregation.

Many individuals also donate monetarily to the food pantry regularly. Financial giving was strong throughout the year with 26.6% of annual funding coming from Bethesda members, 41.6% coming from non-church Members and 31.8% coming from community organizations including:

- Ames Laboratories
- Ames Optimists Chapter
- Ames Alternative Gift Market
- Ames Golden K Kiwanis
- Bethesda Women’s Ministries
- Burke Family Foundation
- Byron Food Drive
- Central State Bank
- Church World Services
- Memorial Lutheran Church
- Northminster Presbyterian Church
- St. John Lutheran Church
- St. Paul Lutheran Church
- Roosevelt Drive
- TTT Chapter DK
- United Way of Story County

During the holiday season, 310 gift cards valued at \$30 each were distributed to registered households for use at Fareway, excluding alcohol, tobacco, and lottery purchases. Downtown Ames Fareway donated 150 turkey breasts in November and 120 hams in December. Additionally, 74 Christmas stockings for children were provided by the Bethesda Many Hands group to give out the week before Christmas.

The pantry is supported by a dedicated committee, including new volunteers assuming co-chair, treasurer, and volunteer coordinator roles. Each month, a total of 35 volunteers manage food orders, inventory, distribution, data reporting, and many other administrative tasks, with friendly and helpful assistance given from church office and custodial staff.

*Donna Grooms and Kendra Gustafson
Food Pantry Co-chairs*

Bethesda Community Clothing Closet

The Clothing Closet is open four shifts Tuesday through Thursday. We have 27 volunteers working throughout the month. In 2025, we served 2,450 families from Ames and surrounding towns and counties.

In December, Gilbert 5th Graders donated winter coats and other winter items from their clothing drive.

If you would like to volunteer to work a shift, please call the office.



*Kathy Harris
Chairperson*

Bethesda Women's Ministries

BOARD MEMBERS:

President Lindsay Peters
 Vice President Elaine Edwards
 Secretary Gretchen Mosher
 Treasurer Janice Ballantyne
 Members at Large Carolyn Ahlstrom, Darlene Wolters



SCANDINAVIAN COFFEE: In 2025, Our annual Scandinavian Coffee event's total income was \$13,085.99, expenses of \$1,592.95 for a gross profit of \$11,493.04. Below is a breakdown of the recipients in the benevolence fund and the amount they each received.

RECIPIENT	AMOUNT	CATEGORY
The Bridge Home	\$1,000.00	Community Related Ministry
Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance	\$2,500.00	Community Related Ministry
YSS	\$200.00	Community Related Ministry
AMOS	\$200.00	Community Related Ministry
Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support (ACCESS)	\$500.00	Community Related Ministry
Bethesda - Venezuelan Family	\$1,700.00	Bethesda Ministry
Bethesda - Tanzanian Ministry	\$200.00	Bethesda Ministry
Bethesda - Tanzania Student	\$500.00	Bethesda Ministry
Bethesda - \$aving Suds	\$600.00	Bethesda Ministry
Bethesda Food Pantry	\$2,500.00	Bethesda Ministry
ELCA World Hunger	\$100.00	ELCA Ministry
Lutheran Services in Iowa	\$150.00	ELCA Ministry
Boy Scout Troop #140	\$200.00	Bethesda Charter Troop
Ames Children's Choirs	\$100.00	Community Related Ministry
Prairie Flower Children's Center	\$250.00	Community Related Ministry
Anchored Hope	\$300.00	Community Related Ministry
TOTAL	\$11,00.00	

BETHESDA WOMEN FINANCIAL REPORT 2024			
	Beginning Balance		\$4,331.65
INCOME			
	Scandinavian Coffee	\$13,085.99	
	Gather and Cream Tea Offerings	\$518.11	
	Soup Supper	\$325.00	
	ThankOffering 2025	\$301.81	
	Interest Income	\$2.88	
	TOTAL		\$14,233.79
EXPENSES			
	Scandinavian Coffee	\$1,592.95	
	Spring Tea - Crafts & Food	\$289.00	
	Benevolent Funding 2025	11,000.00	
	Subscriptions	\$60.00	
	Cluster Offering	\$100.00	
	SEIA Conference Registration	\$80.00	
	LWR Shipping of Quilts	\$163.20	
	Gift cards for salad and casserole socials	\$100.00	
	Prairie Flower Children's Center	\$250.00	
	ELCA Good Gifts (Christmas)	\$125.00	
	WELCA - Where it is needed most	\$100.00	
	Kitchen Appliances	\$325.93	
	Women of the ELCA - 50% Gathering Offering from 2025	\$259.00	
	ThankOffering for 2025	\$301.81.	
	TOTAL		\$14,746.89
	Ending Balance		\$3,818.55

*Lindsay Peters
Chairperson*

Bethesda Tanzania Ministry Team

The Bethesda Tanzania Ministry Team welcomed two guests from our companion parish, Shighatini Lutheran Parish, in August for a three-and-a-half-week visit. This was Reverend George Martin Mfinangas's first visit to the United States, and Harison Miraji Mwamtemi's second. Harrison renewed many friendships, and Reverend George and Harrison made many new friends. A complete trip report from our visitors is available upon request from the Tanzania Ministry Team.



The Tanzania Ministry Team is continuing to provide scholarships for Shighatini students pursuing advanced education in healthcare, and this year, we added a scholarship for an industrial electrical technician.

Scholarship recipient, Vida Nathaniel Silla, has started her third year of studies in the Nursing and Midwifery program at Machame Health Training Institute. This is a 3-year program, and the ministry team has committed to supporting her throughout this program. The cost of this program is about \$1500 per year, which includes her tuition, books, room and board, and uniforms. We also supplied a laptop to aid in her studies. Vida is grateful for Bethesda's support, and we are excited to help her continue her education.

Winn Vasco Sadik is also a scholarship recipient, starting her second year of study to become an industrial electrical technician, and will return to Shighatini to work at the milk processing plant. Winn was recommended for this scholarship by the Milk Processing Committee and started classes at Don Bosco Training Institute in Dodoma. The two-year program started on January 15, 2025.

Udamelongcy Jorojickis is a new scholarship recipient pursuing a nursing degree. Classes began on October 1, 2025. Udamelongcy Jorojickis was volunteering at Shighatini Health Center as an attendant. Uda has been volunteering for nine months, and she comes from a very poor family. Uda passed her exams, but her family couldn't support the college fees. She decided to volunteer to save money for future studies.

We are supporting Rahel Aza (Rachel) for a full secretarial service scholarship for one year. Rahel has been volunteering at the Shighatini library for two years now, and after this course, she will work at the milk plant as a secretary. This was the special request from the milk plant committee.

In Tanzania, children need to have uniforms to attend school. These uniforms cost about \$16, and many families cannot afford them, so their children do not go to school. Or if the child does have a uniform, it has most likely been passed down from child to child, and the uniforms are in rough shape.

The first time we collected donations was in 2017, and we sent \$1,200 to the Shighatini Women's Group. This group of women identified the neediest children, measured them, and sewed about 100 uniforms in one month.

They are an amazing group of women, and we want to stress that they are the ones doing all the work in this partnership. In January of this year, we wired money to this group for the 4th time. In November, the ministry team sent another \$ 1,200 so more uniforms could be made for the school term starting in January. 100 children received parts of an entire uniform before the school year started in July. We can safely estimate that the Shighatini parish has helped at least 400 children attend school in Shighatini, including not only Christian children but also Muslim children and those practicing traditional beliefs. And it's probably more since these uniforms will most likely be passed down to other children.

This past year, the Shighatini Women's Group conducted a survey of uniforms and concluded that sweaters were needed. Before, they concentrated on the shirts, pants, and shorts for the uniforms. The sweaters are optional daily parts of the uniforms. The Shighatini women did all the work to make the sweaters and distribute the sweaters to the neediest students.

The Shighatini women are now considering school uniforms for Shighatini students attending secondary school. There are now more public secondary schools, so more students are continuing their education, but there is a need for uniforms, as there is in primary school.

On behalf of Vida, Winn, Udamelongcy, the schoolchildren, and the entire Shighatini parish, we want to say Asante Sana to all of you for this gift of education.

*Glen Rippke
Chairperson*

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH

Balance Sheet as at December 31, 2025

	ASSETS	Current Year	Previous Year
		December 31, 2025	December 31, 2024
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash in Banks	\$ 485,007	\$ 384,185	
Accounts Receivable	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600	
Prepaid Expense	\$ 19,059	\$ -	
Endowment Funds Committed to Projects	\$ -	\$ 28,899	
Total Current Assets	\$ 505,666	\$ 414,684	
 PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT			
Land	\$ 44,400	\$ 44,400	
Building	\$ 2,102,753	\$ 2,102,753	
Furniture & Equipment	\$ 2,060,179	\$ 2,060,179	
Duplex House & Land	\$ 74,190	\$ 74,190	
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 4,281,522	\$ 4,281,522	
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	\$ 2,384,242	\$ 2,384,242	
Net Property & Equipment	\$ 1,897,280	\$ 1,897,280	
 OTHER ASSETS			
Beneficial interest in the endowment funds of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines	\$ 933,444	\$ 796,027	
 Total Assets	\$ 3,336,390	\$ 3,107,991	
 LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS			
LIABILITIES			
Mortgage Payable	\$ 605,217	\$ 653,129	
Deferred Revenue - Prepaid Pledges	\$ 94,676	\$ 42,177	
Total Payables: Suppliers & Payroll	\$ 239	\$ 19,519	
Total Liabilities	\$ 700,132	\$ 714,825	
 NET ASSETS			
Undesignated/Restricted	\$ 182,724	\$ 139,261	
Temporarily Restricted (Memorials & Gifts)	\$ 36,046	\$ 14,440	
Operating Fund (Cash)	\$ 266,237	\$ 230,484	
Total Cash in Banks	\$ 485,007	\$ 384,185	
 Designated by Council (Endowment Fund)	\$ 933,444	\$ 796,027	
 Revaluation of Fixed Assets	\$ 1,217,807	\$ 1,212,954	
Total Net Assets	\$ 2,636,258	\$ 2,393,166	
 Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 3,336,390	\$ 3,107,991	

Note 1

UNDESIGNATED FUNDS/RESTRICTED			
Christian Service & Mission Funds (Tanzania Fund)	\$ 2,051	\$ 8,389	
Christian Service & Mission Funds: (Food Pantry)	\$ 79,702	\$ 48,396	
Growth Transition Fund	\$ 51,427	\$ 51,427	
ASIP & AIRA Funds	\$ 49,544	\$ 31,049	
Total Undesignated Funds/Restricted	\$ 182,724	\$ 139,261	

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH

Revenue & Expense 12-Months December 31, 2025

	Dec. 31, 2025	2025	% of
	Actual	Budget	Budget
INCOME:			
Offering Income	\$ 890,084	\$ 892,000	100%
Other Receipts	\$ 38,831	\$ 35,500	109%
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$ 928,915	\$ 927,500	100%
 EXPENSES:			
Christian Education and Youth	\$ 7,414	\$ 12,950	57%
Christian Service, Mission	\$ 80,354	\$ 65,196	123%
Savings Suds Note 2	\$ (18,076)	\$ -	0%
Congregational Life and Care	\$ 2,199	\$ 2,900	76%
Stewardship	\$ 8,356	\$ 7,940	105%
Worship, Music & Arts	\$ 8,062	\$ 11,100	73%
Administrative Support:	\$ 100,401	\$ 99,700	101%
Facilities Management	\$ 170,466	\$ 145,300	117%
Mortgage Payments	\$ 66,831	\$ 65,400	102%
Personnel	\$ 507,547	\$ 556,659	91%
Total Expenses	\$ 933,554	\$ 967,145	97%
Net Congregation Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ (4,639)	\$ (39,645)	
 Tanzania Mission: Receipts	\$ 12,384	\$ -	
Tanzania Mission: Spending	\$ (16,483)	\$ -	
Tanzania Reserve Funds Inflow (Outflow)	\$ (4,099)	\$ -	
 5% Endowment Funds Received in 2025.	\$ 39,587	\$ -	
Congregation Contributions received in 2025.	\$ 50,000	\$ -	
Endowment Funds Invested & Spent in 2025.	\$ (89,587)	\$ -	
Endowment Funds Inflow (Outflow)	\$ -	\$ -	
 ASIP & ARIA Funds Received from Congregation	\$ 51,366	\$ -	
ASIP & ARIA Funds Spent	\$ (32,871)	\$ -	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 18,495	\$ -	
 Food Pantry Cash Receipts	\$ 94,133	\$ -	
Food Pantry Food Expense	\$ (62,828)	\$ -	
Food Panty Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 31,305	\$ -	
 Memorials & Gifts Receipts	\$ 24,928	\$ -	
Memorials & Gifts Expense	\$ (1,662)	\$ -	
Memorials & Gifts Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 23,266	\$ -	
 Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 64,328	\$ (39,645)	Note 1

Note 1: \$26,906. of Growth Transition Fund to offset, balance from Operating Fund.
\$12,739. from 2024 Surplus carry-over.

Note 2: \$18,076. of Savings Suds is unspent at Dec. 31, 2025.

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH

Congregation Recommended Budget for 2026

	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget
Income:				
Offering Receipts:				
Offering Income	\$ 876,761	\$ 873,237	\$ 875,890	\$ 940,000
Loose Offerings	\$ 4,582	\$ 6,439	\$ 5,605	\$ 4,000
Festival Offerings	\$ 8,050	\$ 9,375	\$ 8,589	\$ 8,000
Total Offerings	\$ 889,393	\$ 889,051	\$ 890,084	\$ 952,000
Non-Offering Receipts:				
Facility Use Income	\$ 22,312	\$ 20,199	\$ 18,920	\$ 20,000
Interest Income	\$ 5,320	\$ 14,572	\$ 15,269	\$ 12,000
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 3,252	\$ 1,397	\$ 4,642	\$ 1,000
Total Non-Offering Receipts	\$ 30,884	\$ 36,168	\$ 38,831	\$ 33,000
Grand Total Income:	\$ 920,277	\$ 925,219	\$ 928,915	\$ 985,000
Expenses:				
Christian Education and Youth	\$ 12,731	\$ 14,934	\$ 7,414	\$ 12,950
Christian Service, Mission	\$ 62,270	\$ 60,616	\$ 62,278	\$ 65,196
Congregational Life and Care	\$ 1,592	\$ 624	\$ 2,199	\$ 3,150
Stewardship	\$ 7,411	\$ 7,105	\$ 8,356	\$ 8,540
Worship, Music & Arts	\$ 9,087	\$ 3,966	\$ 8,062	\$ 12,200
Administrative Support	\$ 103,133	\$ 98,093	\$ 100,401	\$ 92,700
Facilities Management	\$ 131,472	\$ 126,622	\$ 170,466	\$ 166,550
Mortgage: Principal & Interest	\$ 65,460	\$ 65,460	\$ 66,831	\$ 65,400
Personnel	\$ 521,668	\$ 535,060	\$ 507,547	\$ 591,642
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$ 914,824	\$ 912,480	\$ 933,554	\$ 1,018,328
Net Increase (Decrease) in General Fund	\$ 5,453	\$ 12,739	\$ (4,639)	\$ (33,328)
Funds used to balance the Budget				
<i>Growth Transition Funds used in 2025</i>			\$ 4,639	\$ -
<i>Growth Transition Funds used in 2026</i>			- \$	\$ 33,328
Total			4,639	\$ 33,328
OTHER CONGREGATION ACTIVITIES				
Food Pantry Cash Receipts	\$ 51,147	\$ 57,965	\$ 94,133	
Food Pantry Food Expense	\$ (61,544)	\$ (71,607)	\$ (62,828)	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ (10,397)	\$ (13,642)	\$ 31,305	
Memorials & Gifts Cash Receipts	\$ 18,687	\$ 18,764	\$ 24,928	
Memorials & Gifts Cash Payments	\$ -	\$ (38,590)	\$ (1,662)	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 18,687	\$ (19,826)	\$ 23,266	
Tanzania Mission Cash Receipts	\$ 5,960	\$ 4,800	\$ 12,384	
Tanzania Mission Cash Payments	\$ (7,097)	\$ (4,800)	\$ (16,483)	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ (1,137)	\$ -	\$ (4,099)	
Ames Sanctuary & Interfaith Partners Donations	\$ 57,052	\$ 26,324	\$ 50,966	
Ames Sanctuary & Interfaith Partners Spent	\$ (18,393)	\$ (43,653)	\$ (31,371)	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 38,659	\$ (17,329)	\$ 19,595	
Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance Donations	\$ 20,032	\$ 300	\$ 400	
Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance Spent	\$ (8,158)	\$ (2,455)	\$ (1,500)	
Net Cash Inflow (Outflow)	\$ 11,874	\$ (2,155)	\$ (1,100)	

Financial Support for Venezuelan Family

Revenue & Expense 12-Months December 31, 2025

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH
FINANCIAL SUPPORT for VENEZUELAN FAMILY
beginning 2023 and projected to June 30, 2026

REVENUE	TOTAL
Donations by BLC Families	\$ 118,342
Donations by ASIP	\$ 11,000
ELCA Grant	\$ 5,000
Total	<u>\$ 134,342</u>

EXPENSES	
Lease Payments	\$ 38,887
Utility Payments	\$ 3,807
Medical & Misc. Payments	\$ 23,778
Legal Fees	\$ 21,370
Other Payments	\$ 5,575
Total	<u>\$ 93,417</u>
BALANCE	\$ 40,925

FUTURE EXPENSES	
Lease payments	\$ 9,905
Utility payments	\$ 1,500
Medical & Misc. expenses	\$ 17,000
Legal Fees	\$ 8,000
Total	<u>\$ 36,405</u>

ESTIMATED CASH AVAILABLE	\$ 4,520

Christian Service, Mission & Outreach

December 31, 2025

BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH
 CHRISTIAN SERVICE & MISSION REPORT
 for the Year January 1 to December 31, 2025

	Prescribed BUDGET %	2025 BUDGET \$'s	2025 ACTUAL \$'S	2026 BUDGET \$'S	2026 BUDGET %
SE Iowa Synod Mission Support - Iowa City	55.0%	\$ 35,363	\$ 35,363	\$ 35,362	54.2%
Benevolence Discretionary Fund - per Council	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,000	\$ 900	1.4%
<i>ELCA PARTNERS</i>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Bethesda/Tanzania Ministry	7.0%	\$ 4,501	\$ 4,501	\$ 6,101	9.4%
Iowa Lutheran Camp - EWALU	3.0%	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	3.0%
Iowa Lutheran Camp - Lakeside	3.0%	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	3.0%
Lutheran Services of Iowa - Ames & Waverly	3.0%	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	3.0%
Reconciling Works	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	2.0%
<i>LOCAL & ECUMENICAL PARTNERS</i>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance	0.5%	\$ 321	\$ 321	\$ 321	0.5%
Lutheran Sanctuary Interfaith Partners	0.5%	\$ 321	\$ 321	\$ 321	0.5%
AMOS	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	2.0%
Bethany Life	1.0%	\$ 643	\$ 643	\$ 643	1.0%
Center for Creative Justice - Ames	1.0%	\$ 643	\$ 643	\$ 643	1.0%
Friendship Ark Homes - Ames	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	2.0%
Good Neighbor Emergency	3.0%	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	3.0%
Hope in Christ Backpacks	1.0%	\$ 643	\$ 643	\$ 643	1.0%
Martha's House of Hope	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,286	2.0%
NAACP	2.0%	\$ 1,286	\$ 1,261	\$ 1,286	2.0%
The Bridge Home - Ames	2.0%	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	\$ 1,929	3.0%
Wings of Refuge	1.0%	\$ 643	\$ 643	\$ 643	1.0%
Youth Service (YSS)	1.0%	\$ 643	\$ 643	\$ 643	1.0%
Pastors Discretionary Fund	5.0%	\$ 3,215	\$ 970	\$ 1,615	2.5%
<i>Local Outreach Fund (csm d-102)</i>	1.0%	\$ 900	\$ 538	\$ 1,286	2.0%
TOTAL	100%	\$ 65,197	\$ 62,279	\$ 65,196	100%
 TOTAL OFFERINGS		\$ 892,000	\$ 890,084	\$ 952,000	
 % of Offerings		7.3%	7.0%	6.85%	

Bethesda Lutheran Church Endowment Fund

"As we reflect on our charitable giving to the endowment funds of Bethesda Lutheran Church, this is our legacy. It will stand the test of time for generations. These charitable dollars will leave a mark on the church and its members". - Anonymous donor.

Bethesda's Endowment continues to be a meaningful blessing for ministry today and for generations to come. Each year, we receive a 5% distribution based on the endowment's year-end balance, allowing us to invest in ministry while preserving the endowment's long-term strength.

In 2025, the endowment provided a distribution of \$39,587. These funds were used in three important ways. First, they supported college scholarships for Bethesda young adults attending Lutheran colleges, helping them pursue their education while staying connected to their faith. Second, the distribution allowed us to complete our security project, including the addition of new cameras, enhancing safety and peace of mind for all who gather at Bethesda. Finally, endowment funds helped us finish the Commons sound system improvements, strengthening our ability to gather, communicate, and build community in that shared space.

Among other things, our endowment fund distribution for 2026 will support our Collaborative Learning Student, Levi Faas, as he continues his education through Wartburg Seminary while serving Bethesda. What a gift it is to be able to support the future church like this!

We are deeply grateful for those who have given to the Endowment and for those planning to give in the future. Your generosity leaves a lasting legacy to bear fruit, strengthening our facilities, enhancing ministries that serve both present needs and future mission, and supporting future generations in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Previous projects funded with endowment money:

- Sanctuary lighting improvement
- Milk processing plant in Tanzania
- Remodeling of the duplex for immigrants and refugees
- Payment of long-term debt
- Improved security with electronic locks
- Support of our youth in attending the National Youth Gathering

*Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Bryan Simmons*



Donate Candy for the Easter Egg Hunt

As we prepare for the Community Easter Egg Hunt, please consider donating small, easily packable candy to Bethesda for the event. If you have candy to drop off, stop by the church office.

Please be mindful of those with allergies to peanuts when donating candy.



O.W.L.s Café Coming in February!

February 12th 10 AM – 11:30 AM
in the Commons.

Join us to catch up with friends and make new ones! We'll also have an option book and jigsaw puzzle exchange. Bring one you'd like to exchange!



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks ...

God, we praise you and give you thanks.
You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.
We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.
We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.

We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.

We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.

We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift
and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,
that the world may know you and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voic - es,
2 Oh, may this boun - teous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Fa - ther now be giv - en,

who won - drous things has done, in whom this world re - joic - es;
with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spir - it blest, who reign in high - est heav - en,

who, from our moth - ers' arms, has blest us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when per - plexed,
the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heav'n a - dore;

with count - less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586-1649; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878
Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Bethesda Lutheran Church
GATHER...GROW...GO