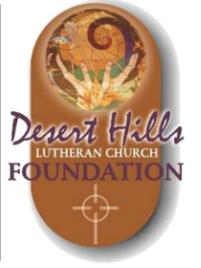


DHLC Compass

The Story of the Desert Hills Lutheran Church Foundation



How a Vision Became a Legacy

A Vision That Outlives a Lifetime

Every congregation eventually asks two important questions:

- How do we serve faithfully today?
- And how will that ministry continue tomorrow?

For Desert Hills Lutheran Church, the answer was the creation of the Desert Hills Lutheran Church Foundation – a permanent endowment ministry designed to sustain and strengthen the church for generations to come.

Born from faith and guided by prudence, the Foundation exists to ensure that today’s generosity becomes tomorrow’s opportunity.

Why a Foundation?

More than 30 years ago, DHLC member Don Duensing realized that as the church grew, weekly offerings, while vital, may not alone secure long-term stability. Economic cycles change. Membership shifts. Ministry needs evolve. So, he established a 501(c)3 corporation to initiate his vision. At the time, he was with Thrivent, and it matched all employee donations to charities. The first contributions were from Don and matching funds from Thrivent. A foundation is a permanent fund in which the principal is preserved and invested. A portion of earnings is distributed annually to support the ministry, ensuring long-term sustainability.

So, he and other church leaders established the Foundation to:

- Build permanent endowment funds
- Provide long-term financial stability
- Support ministries beyond the annual operating budget

It was never about accumulation – it was about mission.

The Early Years Building with Integrity

In its formative years, the Foundation focused on structure, transparency, and trust. Dedicated volunteers developed:

- Formal bylaws and governance policies
- Investment guidelines emphasizing preservation of principal
- Clear distribution policies to balance present and future needs

Early gifts came through memorials and designated endowment contributions. Each gift – large or small – became part of a lasting legacy.

Founding Visionaries

The Foundation’s founding leaders shared a common conviction: ministry must extend beyond a single generation. These individuals laid the groundwork by drafting policies, educating members about legacy giving, and modeling faithful stewardship. Their leadership created the firm foundation upon which all future growth has been built.

Faithful Financial Stewards

Throughout the years, board members with backgrounds in finance, law, business, and nonprofit leadership have served with distinction.

Their responsibilities include:

- Investment oversight
- Distribution approval
- Long-range financial planning
- Donor communication

Their service reflects a blend of professional skills and spiritual commitment.

Ministry in Action

Through disciplined stewardship and prudent investments, the Foundation has supported:

- Facility improvements and capital enhancements

- Youth and education initiatives
- Outreach ministries in the Green Valley community
- Scholarships to ELCA Seminary students
- Special ministry initiatives beyond the operating budget

Since 2025, because of our generosity, the Foundation has grown to \$1.4 million and has gifted more than \$450,000. This includes more than \$175,000 to local and regional charities and \$275,000 to fund scholarships for ELCA Seminary students.

In seasons of uncertainty, it provides stability. In seasons of growth, it enables opportunity.

Donors: The Quiet Architects of the Future

Some of the most impactful leaders are those who serve quietly through planned giving. By including the church in their estate plans – through wills, trusts, beneficiary designations, or charitable gift arrangements – members ensure that their faith continues to bear fruit. Their generosity speaks long after words are gone.

A Living Legacy

The Desert Hills Lutheran Church Foundation stands today not merely as a financial entity, but as a spiritual promise:

- To preserve resources entrusted to it
- To strengthen the ministry
- To serve future generations
- To proclaim Christ faithfully in every season

The story of the Foundation is still being written – by each one of us who chooses to participate in this lasting legacy.

Four Divinity Scholarship Recipients



Allegra Reiber
(Colorado)
Wartburg Seminary
(In Honor of Rev. Michael Sager)
"I am a 1st yr Mdiv student, having recently completed grad work at Notre Dame. I am thankful for my DHLC tuition scholarship."



Josh Elias
(St. Paul, Minnesota)
Luther Seminary
(In Honor of Rev. Craig Larson)
"I attended UofA and was active in the ELCA church. Currently, I am pursuing a Master of Divinity degree – 2nd yr. Thank you for your support – it really helps."



Anne Emile Tjorholm
(Dawson, Minnesota)
Luther Seminary
(In Honor of Rev Dr Martin Overson)
"I'm an Arizona native who has traveled the world with Lutheran Ministries. In 2026, I am completing my pastoral internship. Thank you for your support."



Tatianna Heinrich
(Las Vegas)
Luther Seminary
(In Honor of DHLC Foundation)
"I live in Las Vegas with my wife and 2-year-old daughter. I am starting an internship in 2027. I thank DHLC for all the support I have received."

What is your Legacy?

Matthew 7: 24-29

Have you thought about what you will leave behind for the next generation and beyond? Most of us have our possessions all figured out, but what about our values and passions? How good are we at passing on what we truly value and what gives our lives meaning? Research tells us that those who have a sense of purpose live healthier and more fulfilled lives. We are created to have a purpose in life.

Legacy Giving: A Gift That Lasts Beyond a Lifetime

At Desert Hills Lutheran Church Foundation, we are blessed by the generosity and faithfulness of our congregation. Every gift – whether it’s time, talent, or treasure – helps us live out our mission of sharing Christ’s love with our community and the world. One special way members can ensure that the mission continues for generations to come is through Legacy Giving.

What Is Legacy Giving?

Legacy giving, also known as planned giving, is a way to support the ministry of Desert Hills Lutheran Church through gifts made in your will, trust, or estate plan. It allows you to make a lasting impact beyond your lifetime, ensuring that your faith continues to bless others well into the future.

Common types of legacy gifts to the Foundation include:

- Requests in your will or trust
- Beneficiary designations on retirement accounts, life insurance, or bank accounts
- Charitable gift annuities or trusts that provide income during your lifetime
- Gifts of appreciated assets, such as stocks or real estate

Why Leave a Legacy Gift?

Legacy giving is an act of faith and gratitude – a way to return to God a portion of the blessings you’ve received.

It’s a reflection of your values and a tangible expression of your love for the church family that has nurtured your spiritual life.

It is important to note that a legacy gift is an intent or a plan to give based on current circumstances. It is not a commitment. Over time, circumstances can change, and plans may be adjusted to adapt to those changing circumstances.

By including Desert Hills Lutheran Church in your estate plan, you help:

- Provide scholarships to ELCA Seminarians
- Maintain our beautiful church campus for future generations
- Support Christian Education in the Region

Getting Started

Legacy giving doesn’t have to be complicated. Even a small percentage of your estate can make a meaningful difference. You can:

- Speak with your financial planner or attorney about how to include the church in your plans.
- Contact the church office to discuss your intentions confidentially.
- Contact Lisa Higgenbotham, ELCA Regional Gift Planner, to get additional information.



- Lisa has a wealth of knowledge of maximizing the tax benefits of this type of planning, and her services are complimentary. She can be reached by phone at 805-910-5048 or email at lisa.higginbotham@elca.org.

Legacy Giving Thus Far

The Foundation Board established a goal last year to have a total of \$3 million in Legacy Intention Gifts by 2030. To date, there is \$1.4 million, and thanks to your generosity, the Foundation is well on its way to hitting the goal.

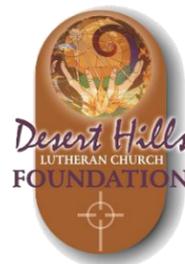


Legacy Society

To recognize those who have made a Legacy Gift, the Council has approved establishing a Legacy Society. Members are recognized on a plaque hanging in the Narthex.

A Legacy of Faith, Hope, and Love

Our faith teaches us that everything we have is a gift from God. Through Legacy Giving, we have the opportunity to give back in a way that will continue to serve others long after we are gone. It is truly a way to make our faith live on – building up the body of Christ for generations to come.



2026 DHLC Foundation Board of Directors

All members of Desert Hills Lutheran Church are members of the Foundation. The Foundation is managed by a Board of Directors elected by the congregation at its annual meeting. Board responsibilities include investment oversight, distribution approval, long-range financial planning, and donor communication.

2026 Foundation Board of Directors members are (from left to right): Back Row – Jon Fogg – Council Liaison, Steve Sorenson, John Stearman, John Westrich, Dan Carlson, Pastor Mike Sager, Bill Oldread, Carol Bates-Smith – Secretary, Reed Olson – Vice Chair, Bruce Rader, Dick Gardner – Treasurer. Front Row – Jane Brunckhorst – Chair, Karla Neumann, Karin Ramige – Pastor’s Representative.

Three Pillars of DHLC Foundation Generosity

DHLC Seminarian Scholarships

There are currently 3,000 ELCA churches without pastors. The Foundation has awarded thirty scholarships totaling over \$275,000 to support seminarians and fill the vacant pulpits.

Fund Unplanned Capital Improvements at DHLC

Over the years, the Foundation has helped fund the new piano and organ, the COVID-mandated air filtration system, the new sound system, and other unbudgeted but necessary improvements to maintain the quality of worship.

Support Christian Education in the Region

RISE Scholastic Achievements, Lutheran Campus Ministries, San Juan Bautista Lutheran Church, and others have had financial needs to support their ministries. The Foundation has donated more than \$140,000 to help these organizations spread the gospel.