

CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT

Year Ending December 2023

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SAINT JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Congregational Council And Appointed Positions

Name	2023 Position	Term Expires
JoEllen Poll	President	January 2025 (2nd term)
Daniel Braet	Vice President	January 2025 (2nd term)
Jo Ernst	Treasurer	January 2025 (2nd term)
Joannie Kilburg	Council Member	January 2024 (1st term)
Shannon Abbott	Council Member	January 2024 (1st term)
Terry Dempewolf	Council Member	January 2024 (2nd term)

Pastoral Leadership & Staff

The Reverend Paul Gammelin	Pastor
Ann Skoff	Office Administrator
Kathy Ohlert	Church Custodian
Jessica Bormann	Retreat Center Lodge Custodian

Mission Statement

Growing and Responding Every Day as Disciples of Jesus

OPENING LITANY

Responses

P: Pastor C: All

P: The peace of the Lord be with you.

C: hear our prayer

P: Let us pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that it will remain united as one in proclaiming the good news of God's unconditional love and forgiveness for all people. Gracious God,

C: hear our prayer

P: Let us pray for this congregation that it continue to be passionate in following the teachings of Jesus Christ. Continue to bless this congregation with devoted members and participating partners who are committed to growing in their faith and supporting the mission and ministries of this church.

C: hear our prayer

P: Let us pray for God to provide a clear vision for our congregation and give us wisdom to discern what is right for our future. Gracious God,

C: hear our prayer

P: Let us pray that guided by the Holy Spirit our church will continue to foster an openness of inclusiveness that welcomes and accepts all people. Gracious God,

C: hear our prayer

P: Good and loving God, bless us with your presence as we begin the vital work on behalf of Saint John Lutheran and its ministry with this community. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

C. Amen.

AGENDA FOR ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

JANUARY 28, 2024

Needed for a Quorum: 16 voting members (10% of eligible Voting Members per the constitution. A voting member is defined as a confirmed member with a record of giving and having communion at least once withing the year.)

Call To Order

Opening Litany - led by Pastor Paul

Acceptance of Agenda

Approval of Minutes

- 1) Annual Meeting - January 29, 2023
- 2) Special Congregational Meeting— June 25, 2023

Acceptance of Financial Reports

Acceptance of Financial Secretary's Report

Acceptance of Reports

- 1) Pastor's
- 2) President's
- 3) Ministry Teams'

Old Business

- 1) Repair and Resurface the Front Outside Steps to the Church

New Business

- 1) Recommendation 1: Selection of Council Members
- 2) Recommendation 2: Selection of Nominating Committee for 2024
- 3) Recommendation 3: Selection of Synod Assembly Representatives for 2024
- 4) Recommendation 4: Approval of Improvements & Repairs to the Parsonage
- 5) Recommendation 5: Approval of Caring for Our Neighbors
- 6) Recommendation 6: Approval of the Closing of the Designated - Television Fund
- 7) Recommendation 7: Approval of Mission Support to the Synod for 2024
- 8) Recommendation 8: Approval of 2024 Mission Budget
- 9) Recommendation 9: Approval of Covering Possible Deficit in General Expenses - 2024
- 10) Recommendation 10: Approval of Cemetery Committee Members
- 11) Recommendation 11: Approval of Cemetery Plot Fees
- 12) Recommendation 12: Approval of the 2024 Cemetery Budget

Recognitions and Thank You

Adjournment

Closing Prayer and Lord's Prayer

MINUTES OF ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

JANUARY 29, 2023

Meeting called to order at 11:35 am with 32 voting members present.

Opening Devotion led by Pastor Paul Gammelin.

Agenda—MSC to approve.

Approval of Minutes—Motion made, Seconded, and Carried (MSC) to approve the Annual Congregational Meeting minutes of January 30, 2022.

Acceptance of Reports -

MSC to accept the Financial Reports.

MSC to accept the Financial Secretary's Report.

MSC to accept the Pastor's Report and Congregational Profile Report.

MSC to accept the President's Report and Ministry Teams' Reports.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation 1: Council Members

To affirm the calling of Daniel Braet, Jo Ernst, and JoEllen Poll to serve on the church council for a two-year term beginning February 2023 through the end of the annual meeting in January 2025.

Recommendation 2: Selection of Nomination Committee

MSC to approve the following members to serve on the 2023 Nominating Team: Mykel Mickelson, Laural Ploessl, and Linda Nudd.

Recommendation 3: Selection of Synod Assembly Representatives

MSC to approve Lucy Zeimet and Marty Ploessl to serve as our voting delegates for the 2023 Synod Assembly, which will be held online on Monday, May 15 and Tuesday, May 16.

Recommendation 4: Repair & Resurface the Front Outside Steps to Church

MSC by unanimous vote to approve the expenditure up to \$7,000 for the repairing and resurfacing of our front outside steps to the church. Funding for this expenditure will come from any designated gifts or from the undesignated fund within the Saint John Trust.

Recommendation 5: Mission Support to the Synod

MSC to approve for 2023 our Mission Support to the synod of ten (10%) of our general offerings; and that in the following years we continue to be a tithing congregation.

Recommendation 6: 2023 Mission Budget

MSC to approve the 2023 Proposed Mission Budget as printed in this report for the year beginning January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

Recommendation 7: Covering the Possible Deficit in General Expenses

MSC by unanimous vote to give the authority to the council to direct the release of funds, as needed, from the Reserve Fund in the Designated Funds Account, and if additional amount is needed from the Saint John Trust - Un-designated Fund so that the general operating expenses that were approved within the 2023 Mission Budget may be paid in a timely manner; and that the total amount authorized is not to exceed \$6,000 for the year.

Recommendation 8: Cemetery Committee

MSC to approve Todd Giesemann, Lorrie Both, Karen Osar, Mark Guenther, Marty Ploessl, and Jim Eggers to serve on the Cemetery Committee for 2023.

Recommendation 9: 2023 Cemetery Budget

MSC to approve the 2023 Cemetery Budget as printed in this report for the year beginning January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. A question was raised regarding a group of D.A.R. volunteers willing to clean the old stones; and if the cost could be covered by the cemetery. This will be discussed by the Cemetery Committee at a future meeting. It was also brought up that the tombstones are not the responsibility of the Cemetery Committee.

Cemetery Annexation Discussion

Abbey Skrivseth, from the city, was present to discuss the proposed annexation and to answer questions. MSC to allow the church council to make the final decision on the annexation.

Meeting adjourned at 12:53 pm. Closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Skoff
Council Secretary

The meeting was attended by the following 32 voting members:

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Kathy Ohlert | Linda M. Ries | Beth Rogge |
| Ann Skoff | Janell Daugherty | Mark Rogge |
| Karen Osar | Diane Norpel | Mike Dempewolf |
| Gary Feuerbach | Carol Hager | Terry Dempewolf |
| Fran Feuerbach | Laural Ploessl | Diane Carson |
| Jo Ernst | Marty Ploessl | Pastor Paul Gammelin |
| JoEllen Poll | Lucy Zeimet | Joannie Kilburg |
| Julie Kirk | Diane Dempewolf | Shannon Abbott |
| Linda Nudd | Sara Guenther | Daniel Braet |
| Sue Bevan | Krisy Dempewolf | Gloria Sagers |
| Barry Nudd | Mykel Mickelson | |

**SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JUNE 25, 2023**

Purpose of Meeting – To approve the following recommendation from the Saint John Council:
The church council recommends the voting members to approve the expenditure up to \$14,000 to replace the flooring in 6 upstairs rooms and hallway. The funding of the purchase is to come from the Saint John Trust – Nondesignated Fund. MSC to approve by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Skoff,
Council Secretary

FINANCIAL REPORTS

GENERAL FUND

Beginning Balance—January 1, 2023	\$15,887.68
Total Receipts	\$186,186.06
Total Disbursements	- <u>188,412.51</u>
Ending Balance—December 31, 2023	\$13,661.23

Budgeted Receipts

General Offerings.....	\$148,066.77
Eucharisteo Grant	4,500.00
Perpetual Offering Fund	1,200.00
Farmland Rent	12,000.00
Lodge Rentals	1,450.00
Gifts Received.....	150.00
Funerals	900.00
Weddings	100.00
Building Use.....	105.00
Interest Earned & Misc.....	87.59
Cemetery Custodial.....	6,000.00
World Hunger/Disaster Relief.....	626.70
Transferred from Designated.....	<u>11,000.00</u>
Total Receipts	\$186,186.06

Budgeted Disbursements

Building & Property Ministry	\$22,209.26
ELCA Mission Ministry.....	15,883.38
Parish Admin. Ministry.....	58,408.26
Pastoral Ministry.....	83,721.76
Retreat Center Ministry.....	5,858.13
Worship & Music Ministry	<u>2,331.72</u>
Total Disbursements.....	\$188,412.51

(Detailed breakdown of budgeted disbursements can be found within the proposed budget on pgs. 34 & 35.

DESIGNATED FUNDS

Beginning Balance—January 1, 2023	\$109,737.08
Total Receipts	20,974.95
Total Disbursements	- <u>39,194.56</u>
Ending Balance—December 31, 2023	\$91,517.47

<u>Building Improvements</u>	\$1,959.48
Receipts	\$20.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$1,643.82</u>
Current Balance	\$335.66

<u>Christmas Star</u>	\$1,134.47
Receipts	\$195.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$363.75</u>
Current Balance	\$965.72

<u>Donations Beyond Us</u>	\$1,377.00
Receipts	\$459.14
Disbursements	<u>-\$700.00</u>
Current Balance	\$1,136.14

<u>Education Ministry</u>	\$2,637.80
Receipts	\$255.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$878.26</u>
Current Balance	\$2,014.54

<u>EWALU Scholarships</u>	\$1,673.39
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$1,673.39

<u>Flower Fund</u>	\$676.05
Receipts	\$60.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$316.80</u>
Current Balance	\$419.25

<u>Funeral/Kitchen Fund</u>	\$9,982.03
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$103.75</u>
Current Balance	\$9,878.28

<u>Good Samaritan Fund</u>	\$539.39
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$130.00</u>
Current Balance	\$409.39

\$9,347.05 from Blitgen Estate

<u>Lodge/Retreat Center</u>	\$10,521.38
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$500.00</u>
Current Balance	\$10,021.38

<u>Memorials - Nondesignated</u>	\$7,347.40
Receipts	\$50.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$7,397.40

<u>Men's Group</u>	\$749.05
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$749.05

<u>Music & Chimes</u>	\$1,328.70
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$1,328.70

<u>Office Equipment</u>	\$10,888.58
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$344.47</u>
Current Balance	\$10,544.11

<u>Payroll Taxes</u>	\$1,500.00
Receipts:	\$9,757.11
Disbursements	<u>-\$9,757.11</u>
Current Balance:	\$1,500.00

\$18,000 From Wagner Estate

<u>Prayer Shawl Ministry</u>	\$301.23
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$175.34</u>
Current Balance	\$125.89

<u>Reserve Fund</u>	\$33,829.50
Receipts	\$6,319.70
Disbursements	<u>-\$20,941.42</u>
Current Balance	\$19,207.78

Scholarship - Kate Bowman	\$0.00
Receipts	\$670.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$670.00

Scholarship - Bud Knake	\$692.55
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$692.55

Scholarship - Memorial Fund	\$1,151.51
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$1,151.51

Scholarship - Wallace	\$972.00
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	\$0.00
Current Balance	\$972.00

Senior Quilts	\$1,057.83
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$416.94</u>
Current Balance	\$640.89

TV/Worship Technology	\$13,112.43
Receipts	\$0.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$257.22</u>
Current Balance	\$12,855.21

\$10,000 from Wagner Estate

Thanksgiving Dinner	\$1,264.78
Receipts	\$1,197.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$1,848.24</u>
Current Balance	\$613.54

Thrivent Choice Receipts	\$1,825.07
Receipts	\$688.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$250.00</u>
Current Balance	\$2,263.07

Vacation Bible School	\$2,109.29
Receipts	\$289.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$367.54</u>
Current Balance	\$2,030.75

Youth Bible Fund	\$1,106.17
Receipts	\$1,015.00
Disbursements	<u>-\$199.90</u>
Current Balance	\$1,921.27

BREAKDOWN OF DESIGNATED FUNDS FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS:

Checking Account:

Bellevue State Bank \$19,534.16 (0.15% interest)

Certificates of Deposit:

#2778 20,133.51 *Matures 11/30/24 (4.77% interest)*
 #3210 25,520.17 *Matures 7/19/24 (4.25% interest)*
 #3211 25,532.71 *Matures 4/19/25 (4.3% interest)*

Investments:

Concourse Financial 796.92

TOTAL: \$91,517.47

CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Submitted by Lorrie Both

CHECKING ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance —January 1, 2023	\$25,321.02
Total Receipts	\$10,818.93
Total Disbursements	- <u>19,754.16</u>
Ending Balance—December 31, 2023	\$16,385.79

Receipts

General Fund

Lot Sales	\$950.00
Registration Fees.....	800.00
Interest & Dividends	
BSB Checking Account.....	9.60
BSB Stock Dividends	7,725.00
Soo Green Project	210.29
Grinnell Insurance Equipment	
Loss Proceeds	<u>1,124.04</u>
Total Receipts	\$10,818.93

Disbursements

Custodial Care	\$6,459.00
Bank Fees.....	20.00
Repairs & Maintenance	708.00
Supplies	420.16
Equip. Purchased	
Chain Saw	270.00
Riding Mower.....	<u>11,877.00</u>
Total Disbursements	\$19,754.16

SUMMARY OF CEMETERY FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

Checking Account\$16,385.79

Certificates of Deposit

Bellevue State Bank—#1829	\$14,540.14
Bellevue State Bank—#2379	24,358.11
Bellevue State Bank—#2380	2,673.87
Bellevue State Bank—#2588	<u>2,926.11</u>
Total Certificates of Deposit	44,498.23

Shares of Stock

15 shares Bellevue State Bank Stock @ \$9,104.00 136,560.00

Total Value of Accounts s as of 12/31/23**\$197,444.02**

Total Value of Accounts as of 12/31/22.....\$196,685.22

The total gain in Accounts for 2024 was..... \$758.80

WOMEN OF SAINT JOHN

SUBMITTED BY ROSIE WILLIAMS

Beginning Balance—January 1, 2023	\$1,431.08
Total Receipts	\$0.00
Total Disbursements	- <u>423.00</u>
Ending Balance—December 31, 2023	\$1,008.08

Receipts

Total Receipts..... \$0.00

Disbursements

Lutheran World Relief

 Supplies \$113.00

 Cash for Driver to deliver quilts and school kits 60.00

 Donations to Lutheran World Relief..... 100.00

Christmas Gifts for Pastor and Ann..... 150.00

Total Disbursements..... \$423.00

SAINT JOHN YOUTH MINISTRY ACCOUNT

Bellevue State Bank
Submitted by: Pastor Paul

Checking Account

Beginning Balance - January 1, 2023	\$9,847.97
Receipts	\$2,301.38
Less Disbursements	- <u>\$1,937.48</u>
Ending Balance - December 31, 2023	\$10,211.87

Checking: Income

Pizza Suppers	
From Students	562.13
Donations	695.00
Lenten Soup Suppers	
Toward Mission Trips.....	710.75
Toward World Hunger.....	78.50
Omelet Breakfast.....	.00
Mission Trip	
Student Registration Fees	250.00
Youth Ministries	
Donations	5.00
Saint John Trust -	
Mission Trip Support.....	.00
CD - Travel Support.....	.00
Other00

Total Receipts **\$2,301.38**

Checking: Disbursements

Mission Trip	
Registration Fee (2023)*	500.00
Registration Fee (2024)	500.00
Van Rental.....	.00
Gas.....	.00
T-shirts00
Omelet Breakfast.....	.00
Lenten Soup Suppers	
milk, & misc. supplies	25.50
Reimbursement for soup.....	20.00
ELCA World Hunger (from Lenten Soup Suppers).....	78.50
Rite of Confirmation	
Banquet, Pictures	48.89
Pizza Suppers	
(Ingredients needed to make	
the pizzas and pop)	764.59
Other00

Total Disbursements..... **\$1,937.48**

*** Next Step Ministry Credit from 2023 Cancelled Trip** **\$500.00**

Will be applied toward 2024 Mission Trip

SAINT JOHN TRUST REPORT

Brief History:

In 2004 the members of Saint John voted to establish the "Saint John Lutheran Trust" with investment monies that came from several estates, including the Shipper estate. The purpose of this Trust was to provide a better vehicle and discipline for managing our investment monies. Any disbursements from the Trust or changes to the Trust directives require a 'super majority'(75%) approval of the voting members present at a congregational meeting

The Saint John Trust does allow for additional gifts to be directed to all for "sub funds". These "sub funds" may be established upon the approval of the church council with consideration given to the donor's designation or upon the affirmative vote (super majority) of the congregation to a redistribution on the Trust assets.

At the 2014 annual meeting, the members approved the current designations for our Funds along with sub funds under the Fund.

Summary of Activity in 2023:

At the 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting, the voting members decided to have the council oversee the Trust Fund instead of a financial committee. Further discussion was held at the annual meeting regarding investing some of the monies with Thrivent Financial.

In July 2022 and 2023, a total of \$160,000 was invested with Thrivent Financial; to be viewed as a long term investment (endowment) that would provide annual earnings for four of the Restricted Trust Funds of: Education, Wallace Scholarship, Knake Scholarship, and Perpetual Offering, and from a portion of the designated Mission Trip Support. At the end of 2023, this investment grew to \$169,927.93, which is a lifetime return of 7%.

The Trust Fund CD's were all converted into CD's that are earning a much higher interest rate. The Money Market account is now receiving a higher rate as well.

Per the 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting, \$21,000 was moved from the Non-designated Funds (\$14,000 for floor replacement, and \$7,000 for front exterior steps repair). The new floors were installed in October. The repairs to the steps have not been completed yet.

Saint John Trust Fund

Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023		\$542,185.02
New Gifts or Additions.....	0.00	
Interest Earned from CDs & Money Market.....	2,605.86	
Investment Gains/Losses*	13,921.85	
Funds drawn for New Flooring.....	- 16,133.87	
Funds drawn from Thrivent Financial.....	<u>- 1,200.00</u>	
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023		\$541,378.86
<i>*Increase in value of Thrivent Financial Investment</i>		

LISTING OF TRUST ASSETS

CHECKING/SAVINGS

Fidelity - Checking.....		2,834.22
Fidelity – Money Market (2.23%)		<u>70,169.12</u>
Total Checking/Savings		\$73,003.34

CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT

Fidelity CD – 389 (Matures 9/16/25 at .2.77%)		155,545.81
Fidelity CD – 325 (Matures 9/16/25 at 2.77%)		15,234.85
BSB CD – 2899 (Matures 1/18/24 at 2.9%).....		57,212.44
ELCA Mission Fund CD – 8199 (Mat. 7/21/27 at 4.184%)		<u>32,726.49</u>
Total Certificate of Deposit		\$260,719.59

STOCKS & OTHER INVESTMENTS

Thrivent Financial.....		169,927.93
[Original 2022 Investments = \$155,000.00 Additional 2023 investment = 5,000.00]		
Riverview Development.....		<u>37,728.00</u>
[32 shares @ \$1,179.00]		
Total Stocks & Other		\$207,655.93

TOTAL VALUE OF TRUST ASSETS **\$541,378.86**

In 2023, the Saint John Trust Fund decreased in value by \$806.16.

The change in value in 2023 was due to the floor replacement cost in the church offices; which was offset by increases in the value of the Money Market account, various CD's, and the Thrivent Investment account.

LISTING OF THE TRUST FUNDS and SUB-FUNDS

RESTRICTED FUNDS: The principal of the sub-funds with this Restricted fund must remain invested. Interest earned is to be distributed for the purpose designated. The principle may be added to by additional gifts.

Total Restricted Funds \$154,465.32

RESTRICTED – Brinker/McClearn Education Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$19,636.79
<i>(Includes historic gift total of \$15,000)</i>	
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	1,740.23
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$21,377.02

Money invested with Thrivent Financial

The interest earned from Brinker/McClearn Education Fund is to support the educational ministries such as ARK and Confirmation. The interest earned will be paid out to the Education Fund of the Designated Funds Account. Withdrawals from this fund cannot be taken if the value of the fund is less than \$15,000.

RESTRICTED – Wallace Scholarship Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$29,469.16
<i>(Includes historic gift total of \$30,000)</i>	
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	2,610.35
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$32,079.51

Money invested with Thrivent Financial

The interest earned from Wallace Scholarship Fund is to support the awarding of a scholarship to an individual who applies and meets the qualifications for this scholarship. The pastor will recommend, and the council will approve, the recipient. The award will be sent directly to the institution. Withdrawals from this fund cannot be taken if the value of the fund is less than \$30,000.

RESTRICTED – Bud Knake Scholarship Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$27,497.09
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	2,436.32
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$29,933.41

Money invested with Thrivent Financial

The interest earned from Bud Knake Scholarship Fund is to support the awarding of a scholarship to individuals who are attending a trade school. Recipients must apply and meet the qualifications for this scholarship. The pastor will recommend, and the council will approve, the recipients. The award will be sent directly to the institution. Withdrawals from this fund cannot be taken if the value of the fund is less than \$28,000.

RESTRICTED – Perpetual Offering Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$36,329.46
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	3,219.43
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 1,200.00*</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$38,348.89

Money invested with Thrivent Financial

The interest earned from Endowed Offering Fund is to support the expenses of the Mission Budget of the General Account. Withdrawals from this fund cannot be taken if the value of the fund is less than \$37,000.

**2023 withdrawal from Thrivent Financial Earnings.*

RESTRICTED – ELCA Mission Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$33,188.38
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	- 461.89
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$32,726.49

The interest earned from ELCA Mission Fund is to support requests from non-profit organizations, benefits for individuals, or special projects that aid others within the Bellevue community or our synod. The interest earned will be paid out to the Donations Beyond Us Fund of the Designated Funds Account. The balance of this fund should not be less than \$30,000.

RESERVED FUNDS: The monies allocated to these sub-funds have been approved for specific projects and available upon completion of the project and the directive of the council to release the approved amount to the General Fund for payment.

Total Reserved Funds..... \$54,760.61

RESERVED – Parsonage Maintenance/Improvement Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$47,760.61
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$47,760.61

RESERVED – Front Exterior Church Steps	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$0.00
Funds from Trust 'Non-Designated' Account	7,000.00
Funds Allocated for Use	0.00
Funds Returned to 'Non-Designated' Account	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$7,000.00

In 2023 Congregation approved spending, up to \$7,000, for covering front exterior church steps.

RESERVED – Flooring Replacement (upstairs of church)	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023.....	\$0.00
Funds from Trust 'Non-Designated' Account	14,000.00
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 14,000.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$0.00

In 2023 Congregation approved spending, up to \$14,000, for flooring replacement.

DESIGNATED FUNDS: The monies allocated to these sub-funds have been approved for specific projects and available upon completion of the project and the directive of the council to release the approved amount to the General Fund for payment.

Total Designated Funds..... \$154,916.69

DESIGNATED – Mission Trip Support Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1,2023.....	\$44,273.58
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Investment Gains/Losses	3,915.52
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$48,189.10

Money invested with Thrivent Financial

The purpose of this sub-fund is to aid the mission trips taken by the youth. Interest earned from this sub-fund would be paid out to the Saint John Youth checking account.

DESIGNATED – Retreat Center Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1,2023.....	\$100,587.24
New Gifts or Additions	0.00
Interest Earned	+ 1,140.35
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$101,727.59

The gifts received were designated by the donor for the sole purpose of the maintenance and improvements needed at Saint John Retreat Center. Distribution of approved monies from this fund cannot exceed \$5,000 in any given year unless the expenditure was approved by the congregation with a super majority vote.

DESIGNATED – Television Fund	
Beginning Balance – January 1,2023.....	\$5,000.00
New Gifts of Additions	0.00
Funds Allocated for Use	<u>- 0.00</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023.....	\$5,000.00

This sub-fund was established when the city was contemplating having us help with upgrading some of the cable equipment. We were never asked to pay for any upgrading.

NON-DESIGNATED FUND: The monies within this fund have not been designated for any specific project or ministries of the church. Distribution of this fund cannot exceed \$5,000.00 in any given year to cover the deficit in the approved Mission Budget for the operating expenses of the church.

Total Non-Designated Fund \$177,236.24

NON-DESIGNATED FUND	
Beginning Balance – January 1, 2023	\$198,442.61
Interest Earned.....	+ 1,927.00
Funds Allocated for Use.....	<u>- 23,133.37*</u>
Ending Balance – December 31, 2023	\$177,236.24

**\$7,000 transferred to the ‘Reserved – Church Steps’. \$14,000 transferred to ‘Reserved – Flooring Replacement. \$2,133.37 paid for the additional expense for the flooring replacement.*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Offerings	2023	2022	2021
General Offerings	148,066.77	\$143,953.54	\$163,971.52
World Hunger/Disaster Relief	<u>626.70</u>	<u>\$619.81</u>	<u>\$320.10</u>
Total	\$148,693.47	\$144,573.35	\$164,291.62

General Fund Recorded Contributions

Weekly Giving	Yearly Giving	2023 Confirmed Members	2022 Confirmed Members	2021 Confirmed Members
70.01 and above	\$3,641 and above	13	14	10
60.01—70.00	\$3,121 – \$3,640	2	2	6
50.01—60.00	\$2,601—\$3,120	9	3	7
40.01—50.00	\$2,081—\$2,600	6	9	9
35.01—40.00	\$1,821—\$2,080	7	9	8
30.01—35.00	\$1,561—\$1,820	9	8	10
25.01—30.00	\$1,301—\$1,560	3	6	4
20.01—25.00	\$1,041—\$1,300	16	19	23
15.01—20.00	\$781—\$1,040	9	9	5
10.01—15.00	\$521—\$780	17	13	17
5.01—10.01	\$261—\$520	24	25	16
2.01—5.00	\$105—\$260	18	14	19
.01—2.00	\$1—\$104	27	35	26
0.00	0.00	210	230	217
Total Confirmed Members		370	396	377

Of the 210 confirmed members who do not have a record of giving, 65 (31%), are age 25 or younger, 10 (5%) do not live in Bellevue but retain their membership at Saint John; and 8 (4%) are shut-ins.

PASTOR'S REPORT

THE REVEREND PAUL W. GAMMELIN

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

I once heard that a "Pastor's Report" could be presented to the members of the congregation as the *Pastoral State of the Congregation* message in which the pastor shares his/her assessment of the congregation and presents a vision or agenda for the congregation. So, I offer this "2024 – *Pastoral State of the Congregation*."

On October 20, 2023, I started my 25th year of serving Saint John Lutheran – Bellevue as your pastor. It is hard to believe that I have been in one place for that many years. Perhaps what is even more difficult to believe is that I am still serving as a pastor at the age of 74 (soon to be 75 in July), especially when I never envisioned myself as being a pastor. As I look back over the years, all I can say is that I have been blessed in many ways and I'm so grateful for these twenty-four years with you.

As I reflect over my 34 years of being an ordained minister in the ELCA, I can say with certainty that ministry has changed within the Church. We can point to the pandemic of 2020 that caused congregations to suspend in-person worship for nearly a year. Even after churches resumed in-person worship, the numbers of people attending has not rebounded to the level before Covid19. This decline in worship participation has many congregations wondering about their future as they struggle financially.

Besides the effects of the recent pandemic, the church at large (ELCA) is dealing with a shortage on men and women to serve as pastors. With the retirement of many pastors, congregations have found themselves in the position of waiting and wondering when their pastoral vacancy will be filled. What once took months to call a pastor has turned into years of waiting and hopefully finding enough weekend supply pastors to meet their needs. For many of the smaller and rural congregations, the shortage of pastors has presented a change from having their own pastor to sharing one with other parishes. In our own backyard, Saint John (Saint Donatus) and Saint Paul (LaMotte) who have been yoked together as a two-point parish has recently joined together with Salem (Andrew) to form the Trinity Parish. One can only wonder what the future will hold for Saint John - Bellevue when that day comes for me to retire. Perhaps this congregation needs to explore this question: How will this congregation begin preparing to make the transition from Pastor Paul?

The Church has had to adjust to changes within our society over many decades. When I first entered the ministry in 1989, the church was experiencing changes. I remember going to a conference entitled, "A Changing Church in a Changing World". A brief history of the changes within the church were:

- The years of the baby boomers (1946-64): Congregations dealt with the increased growth of people attending worship and participating in the church programs. Many churches were forced to build new and bigger buildings to accommodate this growth.
- In the mid-seventies: Congregations began to experience a decline in the participation of its members who were seeking something new and exciting. Traditional worship style was deemed 'boring' to the young families and the sermons did not relate to them. They wanted an upbeat worship with a message that made them feel good. Hence, the "Church Growth Movement" appeared to be the answer – lively worship with bands, projection screens, and pastors who were charismatic. The "Church Growth" movement forced leaders to examine their worship style. Worship appeared to be moving toward entertaining to the masses.
- In the early 90's, churches had to compete with the change in our society as stores began to be open on Sunday. Sundays were no longer a day of worship and relaxing with family.

- Youth Club/Travel Teams: Another societal change that has had a significant impact on worship is the introduction of Club/Travel athletic teams for youth. No longer was Sunday morning sacred.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the Church is an attitude of apathy and mistrust in the organized religion by the younger generation. No longer is the church a place that is needed. Weddings within the church have declined and asking the pastor to officiate has been replaced by the couples asking a friend who went on-line to become 'official.' But is it not only a younger generation that is causing concern with the Church. It is the absence of many once faithful and active participants who once valued being a part of the community of faith and now have moved toward valuing their own self-centered interests.

The good news is that even amid all these societal changes, our God remains faithful and unchanged. Hebrews 13:8 reminds of this, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Now that is the good news for a changing world and a changing church. We might not know what the future will hold for us and for the church, but I am confident that our God will continue to hold us and lead us in the ways that is best for all.

Yes, over the 24 years, we have seen many changes here at Saint John – some that were well received and some reluctant. Even though our worship attendance has not rebounded to pre-covid numbers, I am excited about our participation in worship. Unlike many struggling churches, Saint John continues to welcome new families with children who are faithful in worship. Some will say, "The children are the future of our church." This is true, but I believe that the children are the church of today and tomorrow.

Our educational ministry with youth continues to be a strong part of our church. Making the move from Sunday morning Sunday School to Friday after school ARK was perhaps one of our best changes. In the early stages of ARK, we had nearly 75 youth participating from all parts of the community. This was truly a remarkable outreaching ministry. This elementary educational ministry provides a smooth transition into our confirmation ministry that has attracted many non-church going youth.

Another sign of a stable and growing congregation is the generous support of the members and participating partners. We truly have been blessed over the years, especially during the time of the pandemic when we did not have in-person worship. We have been blessed with individuals who have remembered their beloved church in the estate planning. It would be my hope that more of us would follow their lead.

Our congregation continues to reach out to those who are in need through the various ministries like: Christmas Star, Quilt Tying, Thanksgiving Dinner, World Hunger Quarters & gifts. I wonder how much more we could do.

As I commented earlier, I have been blessed to be a partner of this church that has been, is, and will be a blessing for the Bellevue community and beyond. The future of Saint John looks bright like a beacon shining in a church world.

I want to thank Ann Skoff for her valuable partnership in serving this church as our Office Administrator. I also want to thank the members of the council for their leadership. And I want to thank all the faithful members who participate and support the mission and ministries of Saint John. Together, 2023 has been a good year of shared ministry.

May God continue to bless Saint John Lutheran
and all its members and participating partners!
May God bless the Church on earth and unite us as one in Christ!

PASTORAL ACTS & RITES

BAPTISMS

Layla Jo Schlecht.....	January 16
Ellie Grace Pitts	April 16
Sawyer Ann Baker.....	April 22
Amara Ann Malone.....	April 29
Makray Atoka Reistroffer	April 30
Hayes Anton Haan.....	April 30
Sawyer Marie Ruggeberg	June 3
Auden Lucille Feller	June 10
Lilly Sue Sieverding	September 9
Haddey Marie Giesemann	September 16

RITE OF CONFIRMATION: OCTOBER 29, 2023

Savannah Jo Edwards
Jack Jeremy Kirk
Koleson Stephen Merrick

Carter Joseph Michels
Miley Rose Irene Peters
Dylan Thomas Portz

MARRIAGES

Alex Sieverding and Miranda Straw	September 23
Cohl Kueter and Jillian Jacobsen.....	October 21

FUNERALS

Gary Lee Giesemann (<i>died 2/13/23</i>)	March 18
Kathleen "Kate" Ann Bowman (<i>died 3/12/23</i>)	March 20
Janice Barker (<i>died 6/2/23</i>)	June 6
Debbie K. (Ernst) Schwager (<i>died 8/19/23</i>)	August 24
Robert A.L. Both (<i>died 9/11/23</i>).....	September 14
Lorraine L. (Marburger) Kuhl (<i>died 9/18/23</i>)	September 25
Roger Louis Schladetzky (<i>died 11/5/23</i>).....	November 11
Stanley Dale Pataska (<i>died 11/15/23</i>).....	November 21

CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
Membership, January 1, 2023	558	396
Changes to Membership during 2023		
Received by baptism	10	
Received by affirmation of faith or transfer	6	3
Baptized youth confirmed in 2023		6
Removed by death	-5	-5
Removed by transfer	-29	-7
Placed on "Inactive" List	-23	-23
Statistical adjustment		
Membership, end of 2023	517	370

Average Worship Attendance not including Easter

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Combined Weekly	87	89	77	Before Covid-19 = 109 After Resuming In-Person = 45	119	113
Saturday Only	31	31	27	Before Covid-19 = 44 After Resuming In-Person = 18	42	41
Sunday Only	59	63	53	Before Covid-19 = 65 After Resuming In-Person = 20	77	73

2020 - In-person worship was suspended due to Covid-19 on March 22. In-person worship resumed on May 30 with Covid-19 restriction of mask wearing and physical distancing and continued through end of year. There were 10 weeks without in-person worship which included Easter Sunday.

2021 - Covid-19 was still active and in-person restrictions of mask wearing and physical distancing within the pews continued through May. There were no Midweek Lenten services, but we did have Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thurs. and Good Friday along with the Sunrise Service outside at the Retreat Center and the Festival inside at the church with restrictions. On Christmas Eve we had our normal three services with no restrictions.

Members Received by Affirmation or Transfer

Jane Patterson
Jason, Samantha, Jackson*, Camdon* and Landry* Van Gorp

Members Removed or Transferred

Douglas & Kannon* Still
Jacob, Catherine, Mabel*, Walter*, & Nellie* Ohlert
Fletcher*, Everly* and Tanna* Schwartz
Kyle, Raquel, & Keeley* Clausen
Zoey* & Maxwell* Klein
Benjamin* & Evie* Daugherty
Julian* & Vivienne* Quijano

Isabelle* Brenny
Sydney* Hachmann
Greyson* & Hudson* Masnica
Eli* Nemmers
Triston* & Tessa* Sprout
Kelsey* Jess
Linda Mangler
Nicole (Giesemann) Warehime

Members Placed on Inactive List

Janet Carrier
Harold Chambers
Cheryl Chambers
Hayley Norpel Coffas
Madison Hachmann
Diane Hitchcock
Chris Iosbaker
Kaytie Jess
Darlene Johnson
Kathryn Johnson
Sara Johnson
Kaitlin Kucera

Chris Prichard
Dawn Prichard
Demi Prichard
Cole Prichard
Sam Rogis
Rikki Santiago
Michele Sieverding
Jack Sieverding
Joshua Sieverding
Hannah Tennant
Laura Thoms

* baptized member

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Another year to be grateful for what the Lord has given us, especially Saint John Lutheran Church, my church and yours. Our church to me is a place where I can: feel safe, say thanks to our Lord beyond my daily prayers, engage with other church family, watch younger children learn the Lord's way, ask for forgiveness, say extra prayers for those in need, and be with a community that has the same beliefs. I encourage everyone that has been absent on Saturday or Sunday worship to commit yourself 1x per month to attend in person, if able. It's great way to end the week or start a new one.

Thank you to all who continue to take lead and volunteer in the church family growth, along with our ministry teams which included building & property, educational, retreat center, various social concerns, and worship. It also does not go unnoticed the commitment of our members that continue to be active in the church, whether it's attending church, allowing children to attend ARK and confirmation, serving as ushers, video, communion stewards/assistants, bread making, candle filling, assistant minister and lecturing. The number of families with younger children is great, along with new visitors, and with our normal attendees. If anyone would be interested in volunteering, please let us know.

I also want to thank our custodian Kathy, our office administrator Ann, and our council members: Daniel, Shannon, Jo, Terry, Joannie; and Paster Paul. Financially our church started out strong, with the improvements to the church flooring in the office area, updates to the outside of the lodge, etc. However, by the last half of the year, funds had to be moved to ensure bills were paid on time. Hopefully 2024 offerings will stay steady and increase, so the council can replenish the balance of the funds borrowed.

2023 the council was blessed on the return of all prior year council members. With the new 2024 year, Terry will end his term on the council. I want to thank Terry for his commitment, contributions to the council, and his ability to read my facial expressions when I needed input. His dedication is amazing. With Terry's term ending, it means we will be welcoming a new member to the council for 2024.

As I continue to be a proud member of the council and church family, I look forward to serving another year on the council.

JoEllen Poll

Council President



MINISTRY TEAMS REPORTS

BUILDING & PROPERTY

In 2023, we had hoped to complete the approved project of repairing and resurfacing the outside front steps to the church. We were not able to complete this project due to several contractors who expressed interest but did not follow through. We will hopefully complete this project in 2024.

The other approved project of replacing the flooring in the church offices, library, back classroom, and flower/communion prep room was completed. We want to thank Beth Rogge for overseeing this project and working with Feller Flooring.

In 2021, the Building & Property team did a walk-through of the parsonage and determined that there is substantial updating/repairs needed.

- The flooring in the kitchen and bathrooms, along with the carpeting, all need to be replaced.
- The kitchen cabinets need attention.
- The ceiling of the parsonage office also needs attention as well as painting
- The walls in the eating area and kitchen need to be addressed.
- The dishwasher needs to be replaced.

In 2023, Beth Rogge took the lead to get bids. The council reviewed the bids and plans, and will be presenting a recommendation to begin work in 2024 upon the congregation's approval.

These are some of the projects within the church that need to be addressed:

- New lighting in the library, back classroom and flower/communion prep room. In 2022, we upgraded the lighting in the offices and the back hallway.
- New lighting in the kitchen
- Repairing and repainting the large and small gathering room under the church proper.

The Building and Property team oversees the maintenance and improvements of the church building and property, excluding the Saint John Retreat Center and the cemetery. Those who are currently serving on this team are Mark Guenther, Terry Dempewolf, Beth Rogge, and Pastor Paul. If anyone is interested in working with us to keep our facility in good working order, please let a member of the team know.

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

ARK Ministry is our Christian education for elementary youth (Kindergarten through 5th grade) that meets after school on Friday. ARK began in September of 2010 because of the declining numbers of elementary youth participating in our educational ministry on Sunday morning.

Last April, we ended ARK with an average weekly attendance of 47 youth participating from Jan-April. September 2023 we began our 14th year of ARK. Since Covid19 we have experienced a decline in the number of youth participating. There were several years we had 75 youth attending, but this past fall (Sept-Dec) our average weekly attendance was 53.

This fall, we were fortunate and very grateful that there were enough adults stepping up and volunteering to cover each of our groups. We are also fortunate to have several Middle school youth who have assisted. With our numbers being lower, our group size isn't as large as in the past. Ideally, the group size should be 6-8 youth in a group to allow for meaningful learning/group discussions.

As we look toward the future of ARK, we need to have someone step up and take on the responsibility of leading (being the “Director”of) this exciting ministry. We cannot continue to rely on the pastor to be responsible for the leadership and implementation of this ministry.

Confirmation Ministry is the next level of our youth education ministry for middle school youth (6th - 8th grade). As with ARK, we welcome all youth to participate with us on Wednesday evening.

In September 2023, we welcomed three 6th graders. This 6th grade group has grown to 7 by December. On a typical Wednesday evening, we will have approximately 28 youth attending. This year our group leaders are: 8th grade - Krisy Dempewolf, 7th grade - Adrienne Presley, and 6th grade - no one. With 7th grade being so large (17 youth), we have been splitting the 6th and 7th boys and girls. We need to find at least one or two more leaders.

Last year we had to cancel our mission trip due to lack of students wanting to participate. In 2024, we are hoping to have a better interest in participating on our week long mission trip in July.

On Reformation Sunday, October 29, we celebrated the Rite of Confirmation for six (6) youth. Those who were confirmed were: Savannah Edwards, Jack Kirk, Koleson Merrick, Carter Michels, Miley Peters, and Dylan Portz. We want to thank JoEllen Poll for serving as the class group leader and mentor.

We also want to thank the many who have donated toward our pizza meals and mission trips. We want to have a ‘shout out’ for Kathy Ohlert who has been faithfully making our pizza for so many years. Many of the youth will say that her pizza is the best in Bellevue and some have even commented that they wish they could return to confirmation for her pizza.

Presentation of Youth Bibles

This fall, our 6th grade confirmation youth received the Lutheran Student Bible –“Collaborate.” This Bible also includes Luther’s Small Catechism.

We also gave the “Spark Story Bible” book to kindergartners. This story Bible book contains 150 of the most popular bible stories. It is our hope that this gift will help our young children to learn the stories of God’s love for all people.

The gift of these Bibles is made possible by the generous donations that have been designated to the “Youth Bible Fund.” If you would like to give a gift to this fund, place your gift in an envelope and mark it “Youth Bible Fund.”

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Over the past several summers we have not had our traditional summer VBS. However, this year, under the direction Krisy Dempewolf, we were able to have our elementary youth participate in VBS. This year, we met from 5-8 pm on Monday through Thursday with a brief program on Thursday. Hopefully, we will be offering VBS in 2024.

RETREAT CENTER MINISTRY

Brief History: January 2000, the ownership of the Rickert farm was officially deeded over to Saint John Lutheran Church by Isabelle Rickert and Mary (Rickert) Wiegert. In 2001, a plan for a lodge was submitted to the congregation and the approval given to build when 50% of the total estimated cost was raised through gifts and pledges. Within 4 months, the goal of \$85,000 was exceeded and in late October of 2001, the construction of the Rickert Lodge began. The community gathered on June 9, 2002 for the dedication service.

Prior to Saint John receiving the property, Isabelle and Mary placed the land into a Conservation Easement with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). The INHF is a statewide nonprofit conservation organization that works to protect and restore Iowa's land, water, and wildlife. Once the land was placed in an easement, this easement remains enforced regardless of ownership.

Over the years, Saint John Retreat Center and Rickert Lodge has been a place where we have gathered to worship for our Easter Sunrise services and for services throughout the summer. Many families have enjoyed using the lodge for family gatherings and graduation parties. Those who gather at our Retreat Center/Lodge are very impressed with this wonderful gift entrusted to us.

Review of 2023: Virgil Kilburg continues to rent and farm the 50 tillable acres. The planting of these acres follows a crop rotation plan that was approved by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation who oversees the conservation easement.

Our rentals for the lodge were similar to 2022. As far as utilizing the Lodge for Worship, we gathered as in the past on Easter for the sunrise service. There were 79 in attendance which is about our average attendance. It is our intention to schedule at least one Saturday and Sunday service each month (June-August) along with a Saturday worship/chili supper in late Sept. This year we only had 3 Saturday and one Sunday service for a total of 132 or an average of 33 per service.

Our income from the farmland rental and from the lodge rentals continues to cover the expenses of operating the Retreat Center/Lodge, as well as providing financial support to the church's general operating expenses. A breakdown of income and expenses are listed below.

2023 Financial Summary

Farmland Rental	\$12,000.00
Lodge Rentals	<u>\$1,450.00</u>
Total Income.....	\$13,450.00

2023 Expenses*(\$5,858.13)

2023 Support to General Fund..... **\$7,591.87**

* includes 10% Tithe of Farmland Income given to World Hunger

SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRY

Christmas Star Ministry

This year, the Christmas Star ministry provided 33 children with a clothing gift and a toy. These 33 children represented 15 families. In addition to the gifts of clothing and toys, 16 children received a quilt made by the quilt tyers. Each year we give a quilt to those children who are new to our ministry. We also provide to all families a box of food that will hopefully help them in having a Christmas dinner.

The committee thanks the church and community for their generous support of this ministry. We also want to acknowledge the support that came through the Thrivent Financial Action Team dollars.

Committee members are Gloria Sagers, Jo Ernst, and Eunice Schladetzky.

Community Thanksgiving Dinner

2023 marked our eighteenth (18th) year of providing a free Thanksgiving meal for those in our community who were home alone or who were unable to prepare a meal.

This year, we served 135 meals which was our fourth highest number of meals served. Of the 135 meals, 57 were delivered, 40 were picked up, and 38 people ate at the church. These 135 meals represented 58 households.

Even though this meal is intended to be free, we have received generous donations from many of those who received the meals. It has been our policy to use the donations to cover the costs, and the balance is given to ELCA World Hunger. Those who were fed are feeding those who are hungry. This year, we were able to send \$225 to ELCA World Hunger.

There have been many people involved in providing this meal over the years from peeling potatoes, making the dressing and salad, cooking the turkeys, providing pies and delivering the meals. This year we had 36 individuals who had a hand in making this outreaching ministry a success.

Quilt Tying Ministry

In 2023, 77 quilts and 32 school kits were sent to Lutheran World Relief in October. In addition, 16 quilts were given to children in the Christmas Star Ministry, 8 quilts to graduating seniors, and 1 to the Christina (Hipschen) Hinke benefit auction.

We are grateful to all those who have donated fabric, sheets, thread, and school supplies. We also thank Thrivent Financial for the action cards used to purchase batting and fabric.

We want to recognize Eunice Schladetzky, Peg Thoms, and Deb Hutchcroft for creating the quilt tops. In addition to these individuals, we want to recognize the following women who meet weekly to assemble the quilts: Sue Bevan, Karen Brown, Janell Daugherty, Arlene Keil, Mary Puls, Karen Osar, and Jo Roling.

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Worship Attendance: Our total number of individuals worshipping in 2023 increased by 119 (2.2%) over last year. The following table shows a comparison of 2023 with 2022 and 2019 (before covid).

	2024	2022	2019
Saturday AWA	31	31	40
Sunday AWA	58	62	77
Total AWA	87	89	119
Yearly Total	5554	5435	7202

AWA = Average Weekly Attendance

Music and Musician: In 2023, we did not have Julie Busch, who had been playing for our Sunday service twice a month. She returned to play fulltime at Saint Donatus where her family worships. With no musician, we continued to utilize the recorded liturgy on Saturday and Sunday. Occasionally, we would sing a hymn by using the organ that has pre-recorded hymns. Once again our choir was inactive throughout the year.

Lent and Easter: Once again we gathered for our midweek Lenten services at 4:00 and 6:15. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we gathered at 6:15. For Easter we gathered at 7:00 for the Sunrise Service at the Lodge and 10:00 for the Easter Festival Service at the church.

Summer Worship at the Retreat Center/Lodge: It was our intent that we would gather twice a month (once on Saturday and once on Sunday) for worship at our Retreat Center. However, we only gathered three Saturdays and one Sunday. All the services were held inside and on Saturdays we had a potluck following the service.

Christmas: We had three services (4:00, 7:00, and 10:00). The total attendance was 294 and was 112 less than in 2019.

Christmas Eve	2023	2022	2019
4:00	163	143	245
7:00	88	94	78
10:00	43	43	83
Total	294	280	406

We continue to utilize our cable channel and our YouTube channel to bring the worship service to those who choose not to be present in-person.

2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Council Members

Recommendation: To affirm the calling of Shannon Abbott, Joannie Kilburg, and Marla Mootz to serve on the church council for a two-year term beginning February 2024 through the end of the annual meeting in January 2026.

[The council recognizes that the voting members have the option to place additional names of voting members on the ballot. Those added need to be present at the congregational meeting and have consented to have their name placed on the ballot. Should there be additional names, a written ballot will be cast. If there are no additional names offered, the above recommendation will be voted on.]

Whereas: The members of the congregation affirmed Mykel Mickelson, Linda Nudd, and Laurie Ploessl at the 2023 Annual Meeting to serve on the Nominating Committee for 2023,

Whereas: The constitution of Saint John directs the nominating committee to be “responsible for identifying and securing the approval of one faithful and participating voting member for each vacancy to serve on the Congregation Council. This team shall submit their recommendation to the Congregation Council by the December council meeting.” (C13.02), and

Whereas: Shannon Abbott, Joannie Kilburg, and Marla Mootz were identified and have indicated their willingness to serve on the council beginning February 2024 for two years and have received the approval of the council,

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Selection of Nomination Committee

Recommendation: To identify and affirm three voting members from those attending the annual meeting to serve on the 2024 Nominating Team. If we are unable to identify all three members at the annual meeting, the council will be given the authority to appoint as many individuals as needed.

Whereas: Our constitution (c13.02) calls for three voting members to serve on the Nominating Committee who have not served on the past year’s nominating team,

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Selection of Synod Assembly Representatives

Recommendation: To identify and affirm two voting members (one male and one female) who will serve as our voting delegates for the 2024 Synod Assembly to be held on Friday, May 17 through Saturday, May 18 at Coralville, Iowa. The expenses of the registration and lodging will be paid by the congregation. If we are unable to identify two volunteers at the annual meeting, the council will be given the authority to appoint our voting delegates for 2024.

Whereas: Our congregation is accorded two lay voting delegates (one male and one female) at the annual synod assembly,

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 4: Improvements and Repairs to the Parsonage

Recommendation: To approve the expenditure up to \$30,000 for improvements and repairs to the parsonage. The funding for this expenditure will come from the Saint John Trust: Reserved – Parsonage Maintenance/Improvement Fund or any designated gifts.

Whereas: The parsonage needs improvements within the kitchen and breakfast eating area that would include new flooring, countertops, upgrading electrical, adding the laundry/pantry to the breakfast eating area, upgrading the walls and ceiling in the breakfast eating area, painting and installing backsplash above counters, and new outside doors

Whereas: The downstairs bathroom flooring needs to be replaced along with the main entrance flooring, and

Whereas: We have quotes for material and labor and with a safety factor for unforeseen overages, the Building and Property recommends the council to approve the expenditure up to \$30,000 to cover these improvements and repairs.

Whereas: The Saint John Trust: Reserved – Parsonage Maintenance/Improvement Fund has previously approved funds of \$7,760.61 that have not been used, and an additional \$40,000 that was allocated to this fund but no congregational approval was given toward specific project,

Whereas: The Building Committee believes these improvements should be addressed now and asks the approval of the council and the voting members to approve the expenditure up to \$30,000 for the abovementioned projects. [This would leave \$10,000 of the \$40,000 that was allocated to the Reserve Fund for future parsonage improvements that will need to be approved by the congregation as needed.

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 5: Caring for our Neighbors

Recommendation: To have the church council establish a ministry team known as “Local and Global Outreach” that would be responsible for advocating for the local and ELCA programs that meet the needs of the poor; and to provide a yearly financial support for the local food programs (Bellevue Bread Basket and Community Cupboard). This support to support the needs of hungry will come from 10% of the income we receive from the farm rental at Saint John Retreat Center. The 10% will be allocated – 60% to ELCA World Hunger and 40% to local food programs.

Whereas: We are called by Christ to have compassion and to care for our neighbors, especially those who are in need,

Whereas: Saint John, along with the other two parishes in Bellevue, were instrumental in establishing the Bellevue Bread Basket whose mission was to provide food and other products to help those people in need in our community, and

Whereas: For years, we have had volunteers who have served in the distribution at the Bread Basket, and

Whereas: For years, our congregation has not had any formal yearly appeals that would invite our members to support the Bread Basket through individual donations of monetary gifts or donation of products needed, and

Whereas: Ten percent (10%) of the farm rental income has been given to the ELCA World Hunger to help feed the hungry throughout the world, and in the future a portion could be allocated to support local food programs, and

Whereas: It would be good to have a congregation team whose focus would be on reaching out and caring for our neighbors both locally and globally; and this team would support the on-going ministry teams that are currently serving the needs of our neighbors locally and globally.

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation

Recommendation 6: Closing of the Designated – Television Fund

Recommendation: To approve the closing of the Designated - Television Fund in the Saint John Trust and transferring the balance of that fund to the Non-Designated Fund within the Trust.

Whereas: The congregation in 2007 approved the establishment of the Designated - Television Fund with the funds of \$5,000 to help the city with upgrading on the cable equipment we would need to have our access channel, and

Whereas: The upgrading was completed by city, we were never sent a bill, and

Whereas: We have kept this fund open just in case and now 16 years later we believe it is not necessary to keep this fund active. Hence the council is asking the voting members to approve the closing of this fund and transfer the balance to the Non-designated fund within the Saint John Trust.

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: Mission Support to the Synod

Recommendation: To approve that we continue to be a tithing congregation that gives 10% of its general offerings to the Southeastern Iowa Synod as our 2024 Mission Support offering.

Whereas: The congregation in 2004 approved being a tithing congregation that gives 10% of its general offerings to the Southeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA; and

Whereas: The congregation has continued to strive to give a tithe (10%) of our general offering since 2004, even in times when the economic conditions resulted in cutting back our Mission support and freezing the compensation of our staff; and

Whereas: Our congregation approved an increase to 10% of our giving to the synod for 2019 and agreed that we should strive to remain at 10% - a tithe for the following years and have accomplished this goal,

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: 2024 Mission Budget

Recommendation: To approve the 2024 Proposed Mission Budget as printed in this report for the year beginning January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024.

Whereas: The council has followed the directive of the members to present a Mission Budget for the general expenses of the church, and has reviewed the proposed expenditures for 2024, the projected giving based on the 2024 Estimate of Giving cards returned by the members, along with the past history of recorded giving by those who did not return a commitment card for 2024 and the projected income from other sources beyond the general giving, and

Whereas: the council is presenting a deficit budget that they believe would be manageable. Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 9: Covering the Possible Deficit in General Expenses

Recommendation: To give the authority to the council to direct the release of funds, as needed, from the Reserve Fund in the Designated Fund Account, and if additional amount is needed from the Saint John Trust - Non-designated Fund so that the general operating expenses that were approved within the 2024 Mission Budget may be paid in a timely manner; and that the total amount authorized is not to exceed \$8,000 for the year.

Whereas: The council does not expect any deficit, but wants to be prepared in case the projected income does not flow in as anticipated, and

Whereas: The council does not want the congregation to assume any future debt by taking out a loan to pay the approved general expenses for the coming year.

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 10: Cemetery Committee

Recommendation: To affirm that Todd Giesemann, Mark Guenther, Lorrie Both, Karen Osar, Marty Ploessl and Jim Eggers to serve on the Cemetery Committee for 2024, along with any other person who has expressed a desire to serve on this committee and appointed by the council.

Whereas: The constitution states that the members of the cemetery committee are to be approved by the voting members at the annual meeting, and

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 11: Cemetery: Plot Fees

Recommendation: To approve the increase of the price for a cemetery plot beginning February 1, 2024, from \$650 to \$700 for members/participating partners and \$950 to \$1,000; along with increasing the administrative fees from \$100 to \$125.

Whereas: The Cemetery Committee is responsible for overseeing and maintaining Saint John Cemetery, and

Whereas: The one-time cost of a cemetery plot is to cover the perpetual care of that plot, and

Whereas: The only source of income to support the cemetery comes from cost of selling new plots, donations/gifts, and the interest received from the investments, and

Whereas: The interest from the investments and the cost of a plot has not kept up with increasing expenses, the Cemetery Committee deems it necessary to increase its fees in order to provide the proper maintenance for our cemetery and asks the council and voting members of Saint John to approve the increase of the price of a cemetery plot beginning February 1, 2024, from \$650 to \$700 for members/participating partners and \$950 to \$1,000; along with increasing the administrative fees from \$100 to \$125.

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

Recommendation 12: 2024 Cemetery Budget

Recommendation: To approve the 2024 Cemetery Budget as printed in this report for the year beginning January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Whereas: The Saint John Lutheran Cemetery is owned by this congregation, and
Whereas: The members of the Cemetery Committee are approved by the voting members at the annual meeting.

Whereas: By-law 13.06.01 states:

“This committee shall maintain a budget and financial accounts that are separate from those of this congregation. A full financial report shall be made to the congregation at the congregation’s annual meeting.

a. A proposed yearly cemetery budget shall be presented in the Annual Report for the approval at the annual meeting by the voting members.”

Therefore, the council makes a motion to approve the acceptance of this recommendation.

2024 Cemetery Budget

Expenditures	2023 Proposed Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget
Custodial	\$6,500.00	\$6,459.00	\$6,500.00
Administrative (Bank Fees)	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Equipment Maintenance	\$150.00	\$708.00	\$700.00
Lawn Treatment	\$875.00	\$0.00	\$875.00
Supplies	\$600.00	\$420.16	\$600.00
Equipment Purchase	\$350.00	\$12,147.00	\$350.00
Total Expenditures	\$8,495.00	\$19,754.00	\$9,045.00

PROPOSED MISSION BUDGET FOR 2024

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference
Building & Property Ministry				
Church Custodial	\$5,408.00	\$5,408.00	\$5,408.00	\$0.00
Church Maint/Supplies	\$1,400.00	\$666.05	\$1,000.00	-\$400.00
Elevator Maintenance	\$1,500.00	\$1,570.60	\$1,600.00	\$100.00
Lawn Care	\$250.00	\$217.61	\$250.00	\$0.00
Snow Removal	\$1,800.00	\$88.79	\$500.00	-\$1,300.00
Utilities - Church	\$14,000.00	\$14,258.21	\$12,250.00	-\$1,750.00 [a]
Total Building & Property	\$24,358.00	\$22,209.26	\$21,008.00	-\$3,350.00

[a] Black Hills monthly payment lowered by \$156 per month

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference
ELCA Mission Support				
Southeast IA Synod / Offerings	\$14,870.00	\$14,806.68	\$14,800.00	-\$70.00 [b]
Southeast IA Synod / Eucharisteo	\$400.00	\$450.00	\$450.00	
ELCA World Hunger/Disaster Response	\$400.00	\$626.70	\$400.00	\$0.00 [c]
Total ELCA Mission	\$15,670.00	\$15,883.38	\$15,650.00	-\$20.00

[b] 10% of projected total offerings (projection: \$148,000)

[c] budgeted amount is an estimate of donations to be received

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference
Parish Administration Ministry				
Cemetery Custodial	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00 [d]
Copier Maintenance	\$1,400.00	\$1,228.23	\$1,250.00	-\$150.00
Insurance	\$7,200.00	\$7,200.00	\$11,200.00	\$4,000.00
Newsletter	\$1,400.00	\$1,398.06	\$1,400.00	\$0.00
Office Administrator				
Wages	\$31,200.00	\$31,200.00	\$32,136.00	\$936.00 [e]
IRA Contribution	\$2,949.00	\$2,949.00	\$3,165.00	\$216.00 [f]
Vacation/Sick Days 18				
Payroll Consultant Fee	\$1,000.00	\$1,109.15	\$1,200.00	\$200.00
Payroll Taxes	\$2,800.00	\$3,051.47	\$3,000.00	\$200.00
Postage	\$400.00	\$421.44	\$425.00	\$25.00
Stewardship - Fall Appeal	\$275.00	\$277.42	\$275.00	\$0.00
Stewardship - Offering Envelopes	\$200.00	\$222.13	\$220.00	\$20.00
Supplies	\$1,100.00	\$989.44	\$1,000.00	-\$100.00
Synod Assembly	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$400.00	\$400.00
Telephone/Internet	\$2,100.00	\$2,261.92	\$2,460.00	\$360.00
Total Parish Administration	\$58,024.00	\$58,408.26	\$64,131.00	\$6,107.00

[d] Cemetery Committee reimburses the General Fund for custodial pay

[e] based on \$20.60/hr for 30 hours a week; (3%)

[f] based on 1.5 % for 24 years of service

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference	
Pastoral Ministry					
Auto Allowance	\$3,400.00	\$3,400.00	\$3,400.00	\$0.00	
Education Allowance	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	
Equity Allow.	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$0.00	
Fall Conference	\$350.00	\$0.00	\$350.00	\$0.00	
Pastoral Salary	\$54,831.00	\$54,831.00	\$54,831.00	\$0.00	[g]
Vacation Days 4 weeks & 4 Sundays					[h]
Pastor's Social Security Allowance	\$5,150.00	\$5,150.00	\$5,150.00	\$0.00	
Pension & Insurance	\$15,100.00	\$14,840.76	\$15,100.00	\$0.00	
Utilities Allowance	\$4,100.00	\$4,100.00	\$4,100.00	\$0.00	
Total Pastoral	\$84,531.00	\$83,721.76	\$84,531.00	\$0.00	

[g] salary remains the same per pastor's request; should be \$66,717 based on synod minimum guidelines

[h] based on letter of call

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference	
Retreat Center Ministry					
Farm Maintenance	\$300.00	\$363.80	\$500.00	\$200.00	
Farmland Rental Tithe to World Hunger	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	[i]
Lodge Maintenance	\$950.00	\$856.50	\$900.00	-\$50.00	
Property Taxes	\$450.00	\$438.25	\$450.00	\$0.00	
Rickert Lodge Custodial	\$800.00	\$380.00	\$600.00	-\$200.00	[j]
Snow Removal	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	
Utilities - Farm	\$2,400.00	\$2,619.58	\$2,600.00	\$200.00	
Total Retreat Center	\$6,300.00	\$5,858.13	\$6,450.00	\$150.00	

[i] 10% of Farm Rental Given to ELCA World Hunger

[j] based on \$20.00 per hour for approx 2 hrs per cleaning per rental (approx 15 rentals/usages in a year)

	2023 Approved Budget	2023 Actual Expenses	2024 Proposed Budget	Difference	
Worship & Music Ministry					
Choir Director - Wages	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Organ/ Piano Maintenance	\$325.00	\$0.00	\$325.00	\$0.00	
Organist Wages	\$1,800.00	\$165.00	\$1,800.00	\$0.00	[k]
Pulpit Supply	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$600.00	\$0.00	[l]
Worship Supplies	\$2,300.00	\$2,166.72	\$2,300.00	\$0.00	
Total Worship & Music	\$5,025.00	\$2,331.72	\$5,025.00	\$0.00	

[k] based on 2 services per month plus 8 additional @ \$55.00 per service

[l] based on \$100 per 1 service & \$50 for second service (lay member)

(Synod guidelines for Supply pastor is min. \$200 for one service & \$50 for additional; plus mileage)