

# **2023 Annual Report United Lutheran Church Oak Park, Illinois**

Annual Congregation Meeting  
Sunday, January 28, 2024  
11:00 a.m.



**United Lutheran Church**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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## **Agenda**

1. Call to Order
2. Opening Prayer
3. Expanded Missions
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Financial Report
6. Adoption of 2024 Budget
7. Nominating Committee Report
8. Elections
9. Other Business
10. Closing Prayer
11. Adjournment

## **President's Report**

If I were to choose a word of the year for United for 2023, it would be possibility – keeping an open mind to the vast potential of the future, exploring different paths and opportunities, and believing in the potential for change and growth.

The year started with the ordination of our new Pastor, Ole Schenk. United hosted a joyous celebration and service in February for Pastor Ole's ordination. The following Sunday, a memorial service was held for Pastor Dennis Bushkofsky, who passed away on February 2, 2023. In November during All Saints Sunday, we installed and dedicated a plaque in honor of Pastor Dennis. We also recognized the service of Pastor Jon Dumpys and installed a plaque for the years he served at United.

A decision was made by the council, with input from Pastor Ole, to form different teams, in lieu of committees, for directing the spiritual, worship and ministry of United. Three teams were formed – the Mission team, Worship team and the Mutual Ministry team. The Mission team focuses on the monthly missions for United as well as the greater outreach to the surrounding community. In 2023, United continued to support A House in Austin, Housing Forward and Beyond Hunger as an ongoing ministry partner in addition to the missions of the month. In April, the committee hosted an Evening of Story and Song where ULC members and community members gathered for refreshments and entertainment. All proceeds from this event went to Housing Forward and everyone had a great time.

The worship team was instrumental in helping bring some elements back to worship that were lost during Covid. They also provided guidance for themes in worship, the liturgy, and the spiritual life of the congregation. Under the guidance of this team, adult Bible studies that met during the week were formed.

The Mutual Ministry team provided guidance and wisdom for Pastor Ole as a new pastor.

During the Lenten season, United returned to in person worship with soup suppers shared by members before the weekly Wednesday services. Holy Week services were observed on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The Easter Vigil was a lively event attended by all generations.

In April, we began congregational forums to talk about the possibility of selling the parsonage. The congregation took a vote in late May and voted to proceed with the process. A committee was formed to begin interviewing and selecting realtors. Members of United joined in to prepare the parsonage for sale. The property was listed in mid-October and a buyer has not yet been found.

United welcomed 5 new members/families to our church in 2024. Attendance numbers have been growing under the leadership of Pastor Ole.

In September, United members again assembled school supply kits, hygiene kits and infant supply kits for Lutheran World Relief. In addition, several quilts were made and donated through the quilt ministry.

One of the biggest events of 2023 globally and locally was the arrival of asylum seekers from the southern border. United's building was able to be used to provide a temporary shelter for 42 asylum seekers of all ages. While it was a big undertaking and a step of faith, we were able to demonstrate our faith in action by housing the migrants for 4 evenings until a better solution was found. In December, a celebration of the season was held where the migrants were able to come back to use our space again – specifically the fellowship hall, lounge and kitchen – to enjoy an evening of cuisine from their culture and showcase their many talents. It was a fun festive evening and United was featured on several television stations and in local newspapers.

The Cookie Walk was back in full force and was a huge success. For the first time in many years, there was not a single cookie left over for coffee hour the following day. There was a record number of customers, and everything was sold before the official end time of the event. The Community of Congregation's Holiday Food and Gift Basket once again used our space during the Cookie Walk as a gathering and distribution location for providing gifts and food for needy families in the area.

As we look to 2024 and beyond, United is poised to expand its ministry and outreach even more. Earlier this year, I attended an event where the speaker told a story about a pastor who challenged his congregation with the words: "If our doors closed tomorrow, would anyone notice or care." Looking back this past year at how this small but mighty community of faithful believers has had an impact, I would answer that question affirmatively. "Let us not become

weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”  
Galatians 6:9 Tammy Fuhrman Dianovsky

## **Pastor’s Report**

*“Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30*

I often come to think of this Scripture when I see the large portrait of Jesus standing with his arms outstretched in the sanctuary at United. That painting faces the worshippers when you come forward for communion. It also tells us a message about what worshippers from long decades past held in their hearts at United. But I do think the portrait and the Scripture can speak to us about our values and our way of following Christ at United over the year 2023 and beyond.

I remember in particular a service in Lent last year. I’d used in my sermon that day a story about a thirty-year old woman, newly married, who was suddenly abandoned by her husband. In her disorientation, she began to find new meaning and value in her congregation, and how their accompaniment supported and encouraged her in ways that went beyond words. I thought of stories of heartache that so many of you at United carry. Cacie and I hadn’t planned this or exchanged notes, but the hymn we sang right after my sermon had a chorus that went “ashes falling, new life rising” (“When It Seems the Day Will End” ACS #1034). It seemed to perfectly carry the message forward. I remember Tammy’s voice soaring out through our space and many of you singing, and then how your body language began to shift. I could sense and see a tenderness as something powerful happened that went beyond my sermon or the music, something that the Holy Spirit was doing among the people of United: we’d taken up “the yoke” of our regular worship routine at United, our regular volunteering and our regular way of following our scripted bulletins, but then we’d received an *unscripted* gift of rest in Christ’s presence through our worship, a good gift beyond any of our planning that helped confirm again who we are as church.

We also didn’t plan ahead last year that our church building would provide a space of rest for forty-two (or more) Venezuelan migrants. It’s very likely that our basement rooms and our furnace those four nights helped save the lives of at least some of the children, who might not have made it when the temperatures precipitously dropped in November. But we opened our doors. It wasn’t easy. I don’t want to make light of how much work it proved to be for myself and so many of you. We did rise to the occasion and those days and nights in 2023 have now become part of the story of United Lutheran Church in Oak Park, a story that goes back to our founding.

I want to share with you another memory of 2023. When the migrants started coming in the Greenfield doors with their bags, one of the white women volunteers from Oak Park who'd been desperately trying to find them a place came in as well. She couldn't hold back her wave of emotions of relief. Tears came down her face and she sobbed. One of our faithful regular United members was there with me and that United member sprang into action and opened her arms to embrace the volunteer and helped absorb the intensity of the burden she had been carrying. I believe that any of you in that position would have done the same. At that moment I saw United in a new way. God's word became flesh and embodied through United how we could help carry a burden and how the gift of rest that Christ promises went out to others through us: "Make us your building / sheltering others, walls made of living stone," is more than a line from "Christ Be Our Light," #715 in the hymnbook.

It's not only what we gave, but also what we received in the gift of all the neighbor volunteers from our community pouring into our building to help support our effort. Again, this wouldn't have been possible without the faithfulness of our property committee and all of you who help care for our building around the year so that it could be a sheltering gift and rallying point for so many in our community the way it did. Just like with how you faithfully keep our worship tradition, the way United members make patient acts of fixing problems and maintaining the space behind the scenes, paying the bills – it becomes more than just a routine, it becomes discipleship in the way that our faithful acts become taken up and used by God in *unscripted* ways we can't foresee. That's my main summary for this 2023 year.

I also can't express enough my thanks for the many beautiful moments of ministry shared with all of you this year: the Children and Youth night in August where we painted our feet and placed them on the "Following Jesus" banner, the baptism of Chris O'Meara and the way he knew his lines by heart, the conversations with each of our new members that have enlivened my hopes for us, the spiritually enriching and encouraging Bible studies on the Psalms and Philippians. We said goodbye to Dianne Cravens who had served diligently behind the scenes for years, and now we're welcoming Maribel Garcia with her upbeat demeanor. I am telling the truth when I say I enjoy serving as your pastor and I know that God is calling us to follow into our future years and Christ will give us the rest and renewal we need.

Pastor Ole Schenk

## **Director of Music Report**

With care for balance between in-person worship and practicing safety around health, I am grateful that this has been a year full of robust assembly songs at United Lutheran. Singing our songs of faith together continues to be of utmost importance in our life, whether we sing well-loved hymns, songs of praise during the children's message, or newer songs of faith from the "All Creation Sings" supplement to our hymnal, it is always a joy for me to hear us come

together in song. The work of our cantors has been a great help to those worshipping online, as well as giving us confidence in singing together.

2023 saw a return of the Jubilate Singers, who offered an anthem during worship in Advent. It was wonderful to see a mixture of seasoned members and newer singers, and I hope that 2024 continues to offer us opportunities to incorporate more choral singing!

This year we welcomed several visiting musicians, most recently a string quartet of area professionals who accompanied Tammy Dianovsky on Christmas Eve. They reported feeling welcome at United and enjoyed being part of our Christmas Eve worship. Visiting oboist Steven Stamer felt similarly appreciated, and hopes to return to United in the Spring, to play with us in worship and give an oboe recital with our organ and piano. Details on this will be announced for those interested in attending.

As your music director, I am so grateful for all those who volunteer their time, express their love for our musical life, and who sing through sorrow, with joy, or in contemplation. It is my hope that all aspects of our journeys are expressed as we music together.

In peace,

Cacie Miller, DMA

## **Membership Report**

**Voting Members\* January 1, 2023:** 59

**Voting Members received during 2023:** 5 + 1 one staff change to member

Chris Galaviz

Joe Kosirowski

Elli Purtell (Zinnia, Gloria)

Heather Stokes Avramovic (Stefan, Srba, Alexandra)

Patrick O'Meara (Chris) who transferred from confirmed member to voting member

and Ole Schenk who transferred from staff to voting member at ordination

**Members removed during 2023:** 0

**Voting Members December 31, 2023:** 65

**All members\*\* December 31, 2023:** 85

\* Voting members are actively participating and attending members, according to our constitution and according to the classification on Realm. Pastor Ole has been referring to United's Church Management Platform, Onrealm.org or "Realm," to keep track of membership

records since Pastor Dennis Bushkofsky left. Council reviewed and approved our member list according to Onrealm.org to check its accuracy during the summer of 2023. United welcomed three new members in person during worship on Sunday Oct 15<sup>th</sup> and two more we've welcomed but haven't yet recognized their new membership during worship.

\*\*This is the number for United according to Onrealm.org when all the membership classes are grouped together: voting members, baptized members, confirmed members and associate members. If the class "former members" are also added the total comes closer to 200.

Pastor Ole Schenk

## **Stewardship Committee Report**

Thank you to everyone who submitted a pledge card and is supporting the mission of United Lutheran Church. This year we called Pastor Ole Schenk, who is and has been the "right pastor at the right time" for United. He has led us and walked with us in new and exciting ways of ministry.

A stewardship appeal letter with a pledge card for 2024 was sent to members this past fall. Thank you to everyone who submitted a pledge card. If you did not submit a pledge card, it is not too late to do so.

**2024 Giving** – Twenty-one pledge cards have been received reflecting anticipated giving of \$90,696 for 2024. This compares to \$90,434 pledged for 2023, \$83,100 for 2022, and \$84,560 pledged for 2021. For 2024, a number of pledging units have *increased their annual giving amount over last year*, which has increased the median giving figure.

**2023 Giving** - The 2023 actual giving total was \$114,227.32, which is more than the \$90,434 pledged for this past year, but less than the \$125,000 budgeted giving figure for 2023.

**Ways to Give** - Many find it convenient to make a one-time gift or recurring gift with a credit card (click on "Give") on United's website. You can also set up weekly or monthly giving via direct bank transfer to the church. It is always an option to use the United envelopes in the pew racks and place your envelope in the offering plate. Your gift to support United is important so please continue to give to support the mission of our church. Below is a comparison of pledging and giving for 2015 to 2024.

Zan Lofgren

(See next page for pledge chart)



Year	# of Pledges	Anticipated Giving	Range & Median	Total Actual Giving
2024	22 pledges	\$90,696	\$260 to \$12,000 (median = \$3,650)	???
2023	22 pledges	\$90,434	\$260 to \$12,000 (median = \$3,250)	\$114,227
2022	20 pledges	\$83,100	\$260 to \$12,000 (median = \$2650)	\$114,935
2021	18 pledges	\$84,560	\$260 to \$12,000 (median = \$2,990)	\$127,242
2020	20 pledges	\$104,880	\$260 to \$15,000 (median = \$4,680)	\$125,592
2019	27 pledges	\$125,704	\$60 to \$13,000 (median = \$3,230)	\$134,603
2018	23 pledges	\$107,016	\$260 to \$18,000 (median \$3,120)	\$156,382
2017	25 pledges	\$127,694	\$260 to \$18,000 (median \$3,726)	\$150,678
2016	25 pledges	\$121,108	\$208 to \$15,000 (median = \$3,042)	\$147,996
2015	25 pledges	\$120,736	\$208 to \$13,000 (median = \$3,120)	\$146,547

## Mission Committee

The Mission Committee was busy last year. The committee organized events that supported Housing Forward, Beyond Hunger, and Lutheran World Relief. Rick Dianovsky (and friends and family) hosted an evening of music and the spoken word benefiting Housing Forward. Dawn Jensen organized a food distribution day for Beyond Hunger. Sandy Williams organized the annual Lutheran World Relief school supplies, personal hygiene kits, and layettes Sunday. Darlene Hug restarted quilt making for LWR. Mary Berg collected calendars for Housing Forward clients. Pastor Ole worked with the Opioid Task Force and the group will be using space at United for meetings and training.

The committee also approved the protocol for identifying new missions to support.

Church members continued to donate to the Missions of the Month. This program broadens the choices for donations beyond the three organizations the committee has chosen to support. A total of \$4,727.00 was collected.

Ruth Prescott, committee chair

<b>Jan – Lutheran Refugee and Immigration Services</b>	190.00
<b>Feb - Beyond Hunger</b>	320.00
<b>Mar - New Moms</b>	60.00
<b>Apr - A House in Austin</b>	285.00
<b>May- Lutheran Social Services of IL</b>	315.00
<b>Jun - Housing Forward</b>	737.00
<b>Jul - Lutheran Day Nursery</b>	240.00
<b>Aug -Vital Bridges</b>	190.00

<b>Sep - LWR Quilt &amp; Kit Fund</b>	565.00
<b>Oct - Holiday Food &amp; Gift Basket</b>	465.00
<b>Nov - Companions Journeying Together</b>	70.00
<b>Dec - ELCA World Hunger</b>	1,290.00

**Property Committee Report**

An older building, such as United Lutheran Church (ULC), continues to require substantial maintenance. 2023 was the sixth year of full space use by Chicago Church of Christ (CCC). A special thanks is extended to **Kurt Roskopf** as a primary contact with CCC and their volunteer contributions of time and material to ULC over the past year. We are pleased that CCC has agreed to extend its space use agreement thru 12/31/26.

In accord with its charge to maintain, manage, and improve the church property, and with limited resources, work was undertaken by the committee and volunteers in the following areas:

**Physical Plant Repairs / Maintenance / Upgrades**

During 2023, a number of required repairs and upgrades were made to the physical plant of ULC. This includes several major projects started and completed.

\* We have continued to address a number of concerns with the heating system, and while our heat supply is currently stable for our present needs, several problems persist. With the increased use of the building, the heating system is running constantly and both boilers are functioning. **Ethan Kwas** continues to spend many hours repairing and adjusting the system. At some point significant replacements to major components of the system will be required. Several flow valves need to be replaced. Fortunately, several of these valves are stuck in the open position.

\* Roof leaks in the sanctuary area due to clogged gutters and downspouts, ice dams and / or heavy rains continue to be monitored. We have obtained estimates from Mortenson Roofing based on a drone survey that was done in November. Given the overall cost of \$103,620, it was suggested that the work could be phased in the following manner:

- Transept Gutters and Flashings: \$34,900
- Alley Gutter/South Roof Area/General Repairs: \$21,470
- Flashing Repairs and Resealing Throughout: \$47,250

\* A water leak into the youth room along the west wall, related to the defective alley gutter and gaps in the flashing, required several repair attempts and was eventually fixed.

\* Ongoing repairs to multiple restrooms, kitchen sinks, etc. continued throughout the year.

\* A deep clean of the Sanctuary area was not completed in 2023; however, it is planned for 2024.

\* A total of over 190 new (used) chairs were obtained for free or at a reduced cost from the Lutheran School of Theology in Hyde Park. They will be used in the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall.

\* New round tables (15) along with a storage cart were purchased for use in the fellowship hall and lounge. These will replace some of the older, heavy rectangular tables.

\* The office A/C system was checked per the maintenance agreement. The fire alarm system received an annual inspection and testing. All the exit signs were tested, and batteries replaced as necessary. All the fire extinguishers were taken in for inspection and re-charged or replaced as necessary.

\* There were three Saturday morning work sessions (May 27, Aug 26 and Oct 7) during which time multiple tasks were completed...cleaning out storage areas, cabinets and closets, re-positioning chairs and tables, lawn and grounds clean up, parsonage basement clean-out, parsonage yard clean-up,

\* Starting in 2022, in coordination with CCC and the church office, updated posted guidelines were developed for space use by all groups. This should help to maintain cleanliness and security of the building.

### **Apartment**

Miscellaneous plumbing and other maintenance issues were addressed in the apartment.

In early 2023 the lease for the apartment tenant (Ariel Vincent) was renewed for one year and as of Feb 1, 2024, Ariel will be moving out and the apartment will be vacant. At that time, the Committee will inspect the apartment and determine the extent of maintenance and repairs necessary. Future use will need to be determined.

### **Parsonage**

Following the departure of Pastor Dennis and family in mid-June 2022, the parsonage has been vacant, except for the temporary emergency occupation by Cheryl Pinter and family. Following Dennis's departure, a significant amount of cleaning and unused item removal was undertaken.

In mid-2023 the church Council recommended that the parsonage be sold, and the church membership agreed by vote at a congregational meeting.

While it was unoccupied, a new water heater and stove hood were installed as was a new basement door and a newer / used gas stove was made available. In addition to a several maintenance items, a significant amount of interior painting to the basement, first and second floors was completed. Electrical work and lighting were installed in the attic and the replacement of damaged and missing window blinds completed. Further clean-up of the back yard and landscape areas were completed in the Fall.

A small task force was organized, and several realtors were shown the property and interviewed. One was selected, and the house went on the market in late fall. As of now, there has been no interest in the property and the contract with the realtor will conclude in January.

### **Facilities Usage**

During 2023, the Property Committee continued to work with the church office and Council to oversee space sharing by community groups. The intent is to provide a service to the community at reasonable and affordable rates and to add monetary resources to the congregational budget (in most cases).

Building use applications were received from a variety of groups, organizations and individuals. Evaluation and processing of these applications was conducted by the church office, including determination of the appropriateness of the request, fit with the mission of United, and existing schedules. Some were appropriate to consider, while others were not in line with our mission. The Fee Schedule for Space Use continues to evolve. It is clear that each use request comes with its own special set of needs and one set fee is not always the most appropriate. However, the Schedule provides a framework to negotiate fees with groups ranging from member-based events to non-member based groups.

Two major space use events occurred in early November and late December.

- For four nights, ULC provided shelter for ~40 Venezuelan migrants in the Oak Park area who were between longer term housing options. Working with other churches and volunteer groups, ULC provided the needed space in the youth room and nursery.
- In late December, ULC provided space for a Migrant party (about 180) for some of the migrants and the volunteers that helped them during their transition. They used the kitchen, fellowship hall and lounge areas.

Going forward, the addition of any new space usage will be more limited to individual events that would not conflict with ULC and CCC programming. Regular, predictable income from Verizon and CCC provides ULC with relative budget stability.

Examples of outside space sharing in 2023 (all or part year), involving an agreement included:

- Chicago Church of Christ (renewed thru 2026)
- Verizon (not space, but contract involved)\*\*
- Apartment (Agreement ends 1/31/24)
- Secular Jewish Committee (9/16 & 9/24)
- Impact Basketball (ongoing)
- Holiday Food and Gift Basket (no charge, 12/04 – 09)

- Cub Scouts Pack 39 (Agreement ended 5/31/23)
- Templars Jerusalem, convocation (10/6 & 7/23)
- Westside Heroin/Opioid Task Force, training event (8/23)
- Ray of Living Hope Church, funeral (6/27)
- Dance group (Kathi Schmitt) (1/12 & 3/2)

Examples of outside space sharing in 2023 (all or part year), not involving an agreement, included:

- Al-Anon
- Sleeping Bag Project (no charge)
- Venezuelan Migrants (11/3 –7, 45 sheltering in the ULC basement rooms)
- Venezuelan Migrants Holiday Party (12/20 – 12/22, prep and event)
- Use of basement lounge room for supply storage for migrants (10 & 11 / 23)

\*\*Note – RE the space use / income source – Verizon Wireless tower –

Starting in mid-2003, contractors working with Verizon started to contact ULC with a proposal to re-negotiate the terms of their use agreement with ULC to supposedly solidify a longer-term usage period. However, since this proposal appears to be optional at this time, ULC was not inclined to accept such an offer which would result in lower monthly income.

### **Grounds Maintenance and Garden**

During 2023, in addition to regular lawn and grounds maintenance by **Peter Finn** Landscaping, the grounds received constant special attention by **Annette Finn** with assistance from **Helen Schmucker**. Special mention should also be given to **Sharon Stadtwald** for maintaining the flower garden at the west end of the south lawn and to **Rich Liefer** for initiating the clearing of brush on the south side of the building. Hoy Landscaping was contracted for enhanced clearing on the south side.

A special thanks is extended to so many who helped with cleanup of the parsonage and church grounds on the workdays. In addition to regular lawn maintenance by Peter Finn, Peter was contracted to trim the Redbud tree on the north side and to transport away much of the debris from the grounds cleanup at both the church and the parsonage.

### **Committee Member & Other Volunteer Involvement**

For the Property committee members, a majority of business was handled via email and phone calls among committee members, church staff, and other volunteers. Many committee members and volunteers contributed substantially to numerous tasks and projects. Special recognition is given to the following:

**Sandy Williams** - for her multi-task involvement and time in almost all areas from plumbing and electrical issues to misc repairs.

**Peter Weismantle** – for his input and management of architectural-related issues and expertise related to the bids for roof repairs and maintenance.

**Tom Guenther** – for his ongoing attention to the mechanical issues of the physical plant, especially the heating system, and plumbing issues in the parsonage.

**Ethan Kwas** – for his in-depth knowledge, skills and time related to overall facility maintenance.

**Annette Finn, Helen Schmucker, Sharon Stadtwald and Rich Liefer** – for work on exterior landscaping, garden needs and brush clearing on the south side.

**Rich Liefer** – for his assistance spring and fall with garden hose maintenance

**Kurt Roskopf** – as primary contact for CCC and coordinator of the video, phone and Wi-Fi upgrades to the church and other projects.

### **Custodian & Cleaning**

We would like to acknowledge the continued work of our building custodian, **Cheryl Pinter**, whose hard work and dedication to keeping our building functional and clean is appreciated. Thank you, Cheryl for your service over many years. To supplement Cheryl's regular weekly service, a "deep clean" by an outside commercial cleaning service is proposed for 2024.

### **Office Assistance**

We acknowledge the special, cheerful and always prompt help of **Dianne Cravens**, the church administrative assistant, for most of 2023, on numerous property related issues (contacting repair services, making check payments available in a timely fashion, filing records, and providing budget printouts promptly). Dianne retired in late 2003 and we welcomed a new office assistant, **Maribel Garcia**.

### **Goals / Projects for 2024 (budget permitting)**

Commence roofing, flashing and gutter repair work in phases, as funding permits, as outlined above.

- Refinish the Ridgeland side oak entry doors and frame.
- Repairs and painting of the Apartment as required, following Aerial's departure.
- Deep clean by commercial service of Sanctuary and other areas
- Routine plumbing, electrical, heating, etc. needs – TBD
- Continued repairs and upgrades of boiler and heating system
- Installation of appropriate water filters on the kitchen faucets
- Consider options for Memory Garden location and layout
- Consider extending fire alarm system to 3<sup>rd</sup> floor area
- Additional kitchen work re dishwasher, counter and floor
- Replacement of doors in stairwells, as appropriate, top to bottom, to comply w/ fire safety standards.
- Estimates of work needed on sanctuary south wall (interior) to clean and repair
- Installation of missing "fixings" on Greenfield and Ridgeland doors
- Attention to Increased security of building as facilities usage increases w/ more people

- Development of a User’s Notebook re the mechanicals and suggested vendors for building repairs.
- Continued identification of grants or other income sources services, which could potentially save on our maintenance costs.

Members of the 2023 Property Committee included **Annette Finn, Tom Guenther, Ethan Kwas, Phil Lofgren, Helen Schmucker, Peter Weismantle, and Sandy Williams.**

The P&M Committee invites other interested members of the congregation to join us as we continue working to keep the facility operational and inviting. You may be able to provide some needed expertise in a given area, or time to “be available” if necessary. Contact any member of the committee to let them know of your interest.

Submitted by Phil Lofgren, Chair, January 2024

## **A House in Austin**

A House in Austin (AHIA) is a non-profit located at 533 Pine Ave whose mission is to provide onsite parent support and early childcare education services for residents of the Austin neighborhood and Chicago’s West Side. United supported AHIA during 2023 through financial giving as part of our Cookie Walk and our missions of the month. We also continued our program of regularly collecting groceries for “My Fresh Table,” which is AHIA’s cooking and nutrition class for parents and children.

Pastor Ole worked to build connections with other organizations to spread out the labor. At the end of 2022, Alex Yates organized the Scout Pack 39 to collect groceries as a service project during their stay at United which ended in May 2023. Pastors Troy Medlin of Grace Lutheran Church of River Forest and Pastor Anthony Testa of Chicago Church of Christ also led collections, in January and in June of 2023 respectively.

AHIA suffered setbacks and property damage during the flash flooding that occurred in July 2023, but the wide network of community support for AHIA helped them replace damaged furniture and finance building repairs.

At Arlene’s suggestion, we welcomed a few AHIA families together with leadership from Janelle King of the CCC to a special cookie baking event in December. We look forward in 2024 to welcoming more again at our Mardi Gras Fun Fair.

Although it can feel like our actions in purchasing vegetables and meat are small in scale, these acts help build trust and goodwill with our neighbors across the Austin boulevard diving line. Our collections serve as a concrete way in which we follow Christ’s command to love our neighbor, and I invite us to do so in a spirit of faith: we don’t yet know how the relationship could grow or develop in the future.

Pastor Ole Schenk



## **Lutheran World Relief**

Our congregation has participated in this annual program for many years. We collected materials and assembled 57 Personal Care Kits, 70 School Kits and 7 Baby Care Kits. This was a record! This is a whole congregation project. From the donation of all the materials needed, for assembly of the kits, for blessing kits at the altar, to delivery to Good Shepard Church in Naperville. The world needs our help more than ever. Thanks to Zan Lofgren for obtaining a \$250 contribution from Thrivent. We were able to purchase items to finish many kits.

A special thank-you to Marie Kruse, Mary Berg, and the mystery knitter of the beautiful baby sweaters and hats.

Sandy Williams

## **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

Thanks to Joyce Schiffert, Ruth Reko and Sandy Williams the prayer shawl ministry continues. This ministry was started by Linda Post Bushkofsky during her time at United Lutheran. Prayer shawls and prayer squares are available to anyone needing some love during a difficult time in their lives.

If you are a knitter or crochet, please consider adding to our numbers!

Sandy Williams

## **Sunshine Committee**

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their participation this year: Mary Berg, Ngozi Enyia, Darlene Hug, Joyce Immartino, Bebsie Jensen, Jeanne Koeller, Marie Kruse, Cyd Kuck, Terri Meyer, Arlene O'Meara, Lynda Prishman, Joyce Schiffer, Kathi Schmitt, Helen Schmucker and Laverne Schwartz and Annette Finn, (the founder of the Sunshine Committee who will be retiring).

A few members like the idea of having two people covering each month. That way, you are only responsible for two weeks instead of four. Please let me know if you would like to add an additional person to your month. Arlene made a suggestion to have a list of people from the congregation who would like to cook a meal when someone is ill or has lost a loved one.

Pastor Ole Schenk was in the hospital at the end of April and beginning of May. Earl and Jeanne made a visit to Rush University Medical Center for a short visit. The Koeller's supplied several meals while Pastor Ole was recuperating at home. Personally, I felt United Lutheran Church members could have provided more support. Pastor Ole depended on his family and friends for assistance.

We had many members ill during the year, especially with Covid. We hope the Sunshine Committee helped you feel better during your recuperation. Thanks to all who helped.

A special thank you to ULC members who remembered Earl by calling, sending cards and talking to Jeanne after service. Pastor Ole visited Earl in the hospital after his surgery in

October. We truly appreciated Helen, Laverne, Cyd, Arlene and Ruth who delivered home cooked meals. We will remember all of you for your thoughtfulness.

Helen, Terri and Cyd came to the rescue by covering the month of October. Darlene, Mary Berg and Jeanne covered November when Ngozi Enyia was on vacation. Thanks for your ability to cover with little notice.

As Chairperson, I have happily assisted in covering 5 months this year. Can you please consider helping in the future? I would enjoy sharing my month of September (perhaps with one of our newer ULC members).

I plan to have an informational meeting in 2024. This will be open to all members of our congregation. Please bring your comments, questions and a true willingness to help.

Jeanne Koeller, Chairperson

## **Deaconess Board**

This year the Deaconess Board continued to distribute the altar flowers to the purchaser and chosen recipient. The members of the Deaconess Board are Kathi Schmitt, LaVerne Schwartz, Linda Liefer, Terri Meyer, and Jane McCole. Our goal for 2024 is to continue this service and to encourage church members to sign up to purchase flowers. We would also like to encourage anyone who is interested to join us and become a member of the board!

A special thank you to Jane McCole for all of her years of dedicated service as head of the Deaconess Board!

Regards, Terri Meyer

## **Women's Book Group**

The Women's Book Group meets monthly, usually from September through May, with one combined Nov.-Dec. Meeting. Unless stated differently, we meet the 4th Thursday evening of the month. We have about 9 women on our mailing list and average attendance is about six. Men, if interested, are also welcome! Look for our monthly updates on the Bulletin Board or on Midweek Moments. Our most recent selection is "Tom Lake" by Ann Patchett.

Linda Liefer

## **Bread Bakers**

The Bread Bakers take turns making the communion bread from September through May. (In the summer, we go to wafers). There are currently 6 bakers: Earl Koeller, Linda Liefer, Jane McCole, LaVerne Schwartz, Kurt Stadtwald, and Sandy Williams. We all use the same easy communion bread recipe, with a few tweaks over the years. After Pastor Ole's ordination last February the synod asked for the recipe!

Linda Liefer

## **Cookie Walk**

### 31st Annual Cookie Walk

This year members of United Lutheran Church and the Chicago Church of Christ combined to bake and sell cookies at the 31st Annual Cookie Walk. Within 45 minutes the cookies were gone and we had one of the largest totals in recent memory.

Between the Cookie Sale and raffle drawing, more than \$3,000.00 was raised and we requested distributions of \$1,100.00 each to New Moms, A House in Austin and the Skyline/Sparks Academy.

Thanks go to all the bakers and helpers, including the bakers from A House in Austin who came to United to bake cookies, facilitated by Janel King from Chicago Church of Christ.

This annual event is the second Saturday of December so we will make plans for the next Cookie Walk on December 14, 2024.

Arlene O'Meara Mennenga

## **Nominating Committee Report**

### **For Congregation Council**

*Three-year term. Vote for two:*

- Zan Lofgren
- Sandy Williams

### **For Nominating Committee**

*The committee will prepare the slate of candidates for the January 2025 annual meeting of the congregation. One-year term. Vote for two:*

- Marie Kruse
- Kathi Schmitt

### **For Voting Members at the 2024 Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly**

*Exact date, time, and place to be determined. One-year term. Vote for two:*

- Ruth Prescott
- Lynda Prischman

Submitted by Kurt and Sharon Stadtwald

## **Minutes of Previous Congregational Meeting**

Annual Congregation Meeting January 29, 2023

### **Call to Order**

Ruth Prescott, Council President called the meeting to order at 10:40 AM.

### **Opening Prayer**

Minister Ole Schenk gave the opening prayer.

### **President Report**

The congregation said a silent prayer for Pastor Dennis Bushkofsky. Thanking Minister Ole Schenk for his work with A House in Austin, Harvest Fair and personally greeting members, non- members and children. Ruth Prescott thanking the Property Committee for their help during the year. A thank you to Earl and Jeanne Koeller for their work with Community projects and hospitality.

### **Minister Ole Schenk Report**

Mission – Leadership of the congregation: A House in Austin - thanking ULC members for their help (buying groceries and assisting with cooking classes). Three areas for Mission: 1. Housing Forward 2. Beyond Hunger, packing groceries for Food Pantry 3. Quilt Making. The annual Lutheran World Relief in September 2023. Collect supplies for adults, school supplies for children and layettes for infants.

### **Approval of Minutes**

M/S/C to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2022 annual meeting.

### **Financial Report**

Mark Johnson reviewed the 2022 financial reports and answered questions. Contributions and Income totaled \$269,046. Members contributing \$114,000. United Lutheran Church has income from Hephzibah, Horizon tower, Chicago Church of Christ, Impact Basketball, apartment rental and other partners. Total Financial inflow \$326,364 and includes \$75,000 for air conditioning. The total inflow shows a \$25,000 transfer to the Property Reserve account at Thrivent. \$5,000 budgeted for Publicity to pay for brochures. Under budget by 10,000 for gas, actual cost \$25,443. Total Financial inflow was \$326,989 and outflow \$313,202. Year-end net of \$13,787. Capital Improvement is \$86,908 for the total cost of the air conditioning project. General maintenance repairs were budgeted at \$15,000 and expenses totaled \$6,235. Expenses to Minister and staff is lower than budgeted due to Pastor Dennis Bushkofsky moving out of Illinois. Expenses for staff are higher than budgeted. This includes Minister Ole Schenk's compensation and United Lutheran Church three employees.

Goals: to identify groups to use our space during the week. Provide a brochure and space for weddings.

Possibly a commercial kitchen and new dishwasher.

### **Treasurer Report**

Zan Lofgren reported that member giving has decreased. Minister Ole Schenk is not moving into the Parsonage. He will be given a housing allowance. Three employees at ULC will receive a 3 ½% increase for salaries. \$15,000 expense for repairs. Air conditioning was a Capital expense from Thrivent Account. A deep cleaning service to be used before Minister Ole's Ordination. Peter Weismantle will touch up walls and place new brass plates in Fellowship Hall.

Publicity - \$5,000 to use for new brochures.

The Property Committee will decide on a cleaning service to come on a regular basis. The Parsonage cannot be rented. Currently this is a bad time to sell. Suggestions from members are: Marie Kruse - get a Real Estate agent to determine the appraised value. Darlene Hug – use the parsonage as a temporary shelter (emergency place to stay). John Halvorson – check into solar energy. M/S/C to pass the proposed budget.

### **Nominating Committee Report and Elections**

M/S/C to approve Kurt Stadtwald and Sharon Stadtwald for a one-year term on the Nominating Committee.

M/S/C to approve Cynde Kuck and Lynda Prischman for a one-year term to the 2023 Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly.

A ballot vote for the three Congregation Council Members: Chidi Enyia, Patti Olson and Tammy Dianovsky.

M/S/C to approve Chidi Enyia and Tammy Dianovsky as the two, three-year term members.

### **Other Business**

Minister Ole Schenk will hire a caterer for his Ordination on February 18, 2023. We will be having the following committees: Finance, Evangelism and Worship. Please consider being on one of these committees. Consider regenerating the Mutual Ministry Committee.

### **Closing Prayer**

Minister Ole led the closing prayer.

### **Adjournment**

M/S/C to adjourn the Annual Meeting at 11:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Jeanne Koeller, Council Secretary

## **2023 Financial Report**

Income from Member donations (General Fund, Flowers, Memorials, Special projects) for 2023 was \$117,460. Income from outside organizations for property use and grants (Chicago Church of Christ, Verizon, Thrivent, various community groups) was \$154,899. As approved by the congregation at the 2023 Annual Meeting, payments were made to the Endowment Fund (\$10,000) and the Property Reserve Set Aside Fund (\$15,000), which are invested with Thrivent Financial. There was also a transfer of \$11,099 as investment income from our Thrivent accounts. The net income for 2023 was **\$259,690**.

Total expenses during 2023 were **\$245,323**, with a net income of **\$14,367**. Expenses for Salaries and Wages, Staff Expenses, Office Expenses, Utilities, Program Expenditures, and Vision Beyond Home were at or below budget. Expenses for General Maintenance did exceed budget, due mainly to building repairs and improvements to the parsonage in preparation for listing of the property for sale.

### Investment Fund balances (as of 12-31-2023)

Endowment Fund: **\$247,274**

Property Reserve Set Aside: **\$73,397**

## **2024 Budget**

The budgeted net income from all sources for 2024 is **\$265,936**, including Regular Donations, Property Use, Investment income, as well as payments to the Endowment Fund and Property Reserve Set Aside Fund. Projected expenses are **\$265,600**, with a net income of **\$336**.

Notable differences in the 2024 budget, compared to 2023 include:

- Full year salary, housing allowance, and pension/insurance benefits for Pastor Ole
- Cost-of-living increases in staff salaries
- Increased costs of building utilities, specifically gas expenses
- Increased Financial Services costs, including hiring professional bookkeeper
- Higher transfer from Investment accounts to cover additional expenses

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## 2023 Profit & Loss vs 2023 Annual Budget

January - December 2023

	Actual 2023 Total	Adopted 2023 Budget	over Budget
<b>Income</b>			
<b>4000 Contributions &amp; Income</b>			
<b>4005 General Fund</b>			
4010 Regular & Loose Offerings	112,227	125,000	(12,773)
4012 Thrivent Donations	651		651
4015 Flowers	1,201		1,201
4020 Landscaping	500		500
4040 Property Use-outside groups	154,899	148,200	6,699
4060 Memorials	3,532	0	3,532
<b>Total 4005 General Fund</b>	<b>273,009</b>	<b>273,200</b>	<b>(191)</b>
<b>Total 4000 Contributions &amp; Income</b>	<b>273,009</b>	<b>273,200</b>	<b>(191)</b>
4210 Endowment Loan Repayment	(10,000)	(10,000)	
4220 Property Reserve Set Aside	(15,000)	(15,000)	
7620 Transfer from Endowment	11,099		11,099
Unapplied Cash Payment Income	582		582
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>259,690</b>	<b>248,200</b>	<b>11,490</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>5000 Salaries &amp; Wages</b>			
<b>5009 Minister Compensation</b>			
5010 Salaries Taxable	31,282	38,244	(6,962)
5012 Minister Hsing Allow	14,172	17,007	(2,835)
<b>Total 5009 Minister Compensation</b>	<b>45,454</b>	<b>55,251</b>	<b>(9,797)</b>
5015 Salaries - Staff	51,290	47,500	3,790
<b>5025 Independent Contractors</b>			
5027 Ind Contractors-Spcl Events	100		100
5030 Ind Contractors-Pulpit Supply	925	800	125
5035 Ind Contractors-Musicians	1,055	700	355
5040 Ind Contractors-Nursery	100		100
<b>Total 5025 Independent Contractors</b>	<b>2,180</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>680</b>
<b>Total 5000 Salaries &amp; Wages</b>	<b>98,924</b>	<b>104,251</b>	<b>(5,327)</b>
<b>5100 Staff Expense</b>			
5110 Books & Continuing Ed. - Pastor	(190)	750	(940)
5115 Auto Exp. - Pastor	88	450	(362)
5117 Utilities-Parsonage		1,800	(1,800)
5120 Pension & Med. Ins. - Pastor	11,617	15,222	(3,604)
5129 Minister of Music Expense	333	200	133
5130 Payroll Taxes	5,829	3,650	2,179
<b>Total 5100 Staff Expense</b>	<b>17,677</b>	<b>22,071</b>	<b>(4,394)</b>
<b>5200 Office Expense</b>			
5210 Office Supplies	836	800	36



	Actual 2023 Total	Adopted 2023 Budget	over Budget
5215 Financial Expenses	1,515	3,000	(1,485)
5220 Computer Costs	1,128	1,000	128
5225 Postage	315	300	15
5230 Telephone & Internet	3,570	3,500	70
5235 Photocopier Service Contract	2,325	2,600	(275)
<b>Total 5200 Office Expense</b>	<b>9,688</b>	<b>11,200</b>	<b>(1,512)</b>
<b>5300 General Maintenance</b>			
5305 Capital Improvements	9,065	0	9,065
5310 Repairs	18,957	15,000	3,957
5311 Fire Alarm-Service Contracts	744	1,600	(856)
5313 Cleaning Service	1,900	5,000	(3,100)
5315 Maintenance Supplies	3,137	1,700	1,437
5320 Lawn Maintenance/Snow Removal	8,513	5,300	3,213
5330 Equipment Maintenance Contracts	169	246	(77)
<b>Total 5300 General Maintenance</b>	<b>42,485</b>	<b>28,846</b>	<b>13,639</b>
<b>5400 Utilities</b>			
5410 Gas	23,040	22,600	440
5415 Electricity	7,786	8,500	(714)
5420 Water & Refuse	3,106	3,500	(394)
<b>Total 5400 Utilities</b>	<b>33,931</b>	<b>34,600</b>	<b>(669)</b>
<b>5500 Other General Expenditures</b>			
5510 Insurance	20,892	21,000	(108)
5520 Contingency	400	500	(100)
<b>Total 5500 Other General Expenditures</b>	<b>21,292</b>	<b>21,500</b>	<b>(208)</b>
<b>5600 Program Expenditures</b>			
5610 Worship & Devotional Supplies	1,489	1,500	(11)
5620 Flowers	1,388		1,388
5630 Publicity	2,100	5,000	(2,900)
5640 Sheet Music	333	100	233
5645 Tuning and Repair-Instruments	540	2,500	(1,960)
5650 Seasonal Decorations	400	200	200
5660 Evangelism & The Lutheran		200	(200)
5670 Stewardship Supplies	104	600	(496)
5675 Congregational Meals	483	2,000	(1,517)
5700 Synod Assembly	597	225	372
5760 Education	46	200	(154)
<b>Total 5600 Program Expenditures</b>	<b>7,480</b>	<b>12,525</b>	<b>(5,045)</b>
<b>5900 Vision Beyond Home</b>			
5910 Metropolitan Chicago Synod	12,500	12,500	(0)
5920 OP-RF Community Congregations	300	300	0
<b>Total 5900 Vision Beyond Home</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>(0)</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>244,278</b>	<b>247,794</b>	<b>(3,516)</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>15,412</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>15,006</b>

## Proposed 2024 Budget

	2023 Actual	Adopted 2023 Budget	Proposed 2024 Budget
<b>Income</b>			
<b>4005 General Fund</b>			
4010 Regular & Loose Offerings	112,227	125,000	125,000
4012 Thrivent Donations	651		
4015 Flowers	1,201		
4020 Landscaping	500		
4040 Property Use-outside groups	154,899	148,200	150,000
4060 Memorials	3,532		
<b>Total 4005 General Fund</b>	<b>273,009</b>	<b>273,200</b>	<b>275,000</b>
4210 Endowment Loan Repayment	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000
4220 Property Reserve Set Aside	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000
7620 Transfer from Endowment	11,099		15,936
Unapplied Cash Payment Income	582		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>259,690</b>	<b>248,200</b>	<b>265,936</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
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5015 Salaries - Staff	<b>51,290</b>	<b>47,500</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>5025 Independent Contractors</b>			
5027 Ind Contractors-Spcl Events	100		
5030 Ind Contractors-Pulpit Supply	925	800	800
5035 Ind Contractors-Musicians	1,055	700	1,200
5040 Ind Contractors-Nursery	100		0
<b>Total 5025 Independent Contractors</b>	<b>2,180</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Total 5000 Salaries &amp; Wages</b>	<b>98,924</b>	<b>104,251</b>	<b>110,500</b>
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<b>Total 5300 General Maintenance</b>	<b>42,485</b>	<b>28,846</b>	<b>30,850</b>
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5415 Electricity	7,786	8,500	9,000
5420 Water & Refuse	3,106	3,500	3,500
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<b>5600 Program Expenditures</b>			
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5630 Publicity	2,100	5,000	5,000
5640 Sheet Music	333	100	100
5645 Tuning and Repair-Instruments	540	2,500	2,500
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5670 Stewardship Supplies	104	600	300
5675 Congregational Meals	483	2,000	1,500
5700 Synod Assembly	597	225	600
5760 Education	46	200	200
<b>Total 5600 Program Expenditures</b>	<b>7,480</b>	<b>12,525</b>	<b>12,100</b>
<b>5900 Vision Beyond Home</b>			
5910 Metropolitan Chicago Synod	12,500	12,500	12,500
5920 OP-RF Community Congregations	300	300	300
<b>Total 5900 Vision Beyond Home</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>12,800</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>244,278</b>	<b>247,794</b>	<b>265,600</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>15,412</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>336</b>

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