



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

All around us, we see signs of God's love and goodness. A person who has stepped away from church for many years steps back into a congregation, feeling the call of the Holy Spirit. Young adults feeling isolated in a digital-first world start gathering in person in a small group, enjoying the warmth of a hug and a new friend asking about their week. A mother plants a garden, and it yields fruits and vegetables, giving her nutritious food for her kids and extra produce to sell at the local market. Everywhere we look, we see signs of Christ's love. In Psalm 93, we read: "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore" (4-5).

God's love is a majestic thing, and it moves us to share it in word and deed. The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, across our country and around the world.

I am so grateful for you, dear church. Your generosity to each of these three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has bolstered the church's ability to share the message of God's love to people who are longing for it. Through your

“More majestic than the thunders
of mighty waters, more majestic
than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is the Lord!
Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house, O
Lord, forevermore.”

—Psalm 93:4-5

financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices, you've helped carry this message of God's majestic love. Thank you, dear church. As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to stand steadfast in God's promises, sure of God's love and goodness.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

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

God, we praise you and give you thanks.

You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.

We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.

We praise you for freedom.

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

We bless you for your justice and mercy.

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

We praise you for his death and resurrection.

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

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

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift

and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

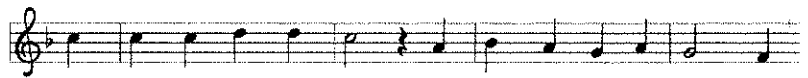
Send us in your love and mercy,

that the world may know you and praise you.

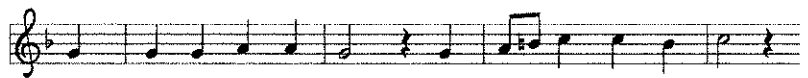
Now Thank We All Our God



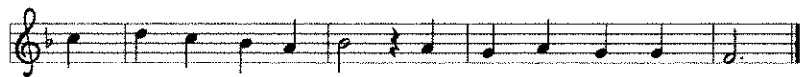
1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
2 Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,



who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in highest heaven,



who, from our mothers' arms, has blest us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed,
the one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore;



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

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840

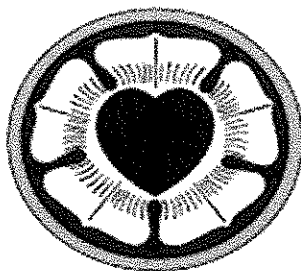
Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586-1649; tr. Cathering Winkworth, 1827-1878

Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

Let us pray.

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

Amen.



AUGSBURG LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT

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AUGSBURG LUTHERAN CHURCH
NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT for 2025
FOR CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND POSITIONS
NOVEMBER COUNGREGATIONAL MEETING

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL: - 3-year term, max 2 consecutive terms

Term Ends	Until Dec. 2025	Until Dec. 2026	Until Dec. 2027
Jim Babcock	Caroline Ward	Debra Gruzosky	Keith Gesse
Jim Fant	Travis Dunlap	Janice Holguin	Jessica Townley
Brian Gustafson	Maria Sisco	Judy Beschinski	Lori Rizer

AUDIT COMMITTEE: - 3-year term

Term Ends	Until Dec. 2025	Until Dec. 2026	Until Dec. 2027
Shirley Freese	Debra Gruzosky	Jim Fant	Shirley Freese

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE: - 2-year term, max 3 consecutive terms

Term Ends	Until Dec. 2025	Until Dec. 2026
Mara Becking	Lorene Schaudt	Brian Gustafson
Heidi Babcock	Jim Fant	Matt Wesley
_____	Barb Miller	Heidi Babcock

CEMETERY COMMITTEE: - 2-year term, max 3 consecutive terms

Term Ends	Until Dec. 2025	Until Dec. 2026
Mel Bigger	Jim Babcock	Keith Gesse
_____	Don Freese	Brian Gustafson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: - 2-year term, 1 outgoing CC member

Term Ends	Until Dec. 2025	Until Dec. 2026
Travis Dunlap	Jennifer Dimitroff	Jim Fant
_____	_____	_____

CONFERENCE/SYNOD DELEGATES: - 2024 (TBD)

Female Rep. _____ Male Rep _____

Augsburg Lutheran Church

ELCA

100 N. Mineral Springs Road

Porter, Indiana 46304

(219) 926-1658

2024 Congregational Council

Officers:

		<u>Phone No.</u>
Pastor	Rev. Erik Bernth	926-1658
President	Caroline Ward	916-0341
Vice President	Travis Dunlap	617-8395
Secretary	Jim Babcock	929-8297
Treasurer	Robert Ton	921-3599

Members and Committee Assignments:

Christian Education	Kaitlin Ferguson	771-7923
Pre-K Liaison	Jim Babcock	929-8297
Parish Life	Maria Sisco	299-1573
Property	Brian Gustafson	929-5891
Social Ministry	Jim Fant	926-3517
Stewardship & Finance	Travis Dunlap	617-8395
Worship and Music	Janice Holguin	983-9556

Appointed Member Positions:

Archivist/Historian	Mandi Dunlap	921-9265
Financial Secretary	Brian Ton	395-1734

Church Staff:

Pastor	Rev. Erik Bernth
Church Secretary	Lisa Valdez
Organist / Vocal Choir	Jane DeVries
Bells / Choirs	Ann Ballinger
Youth Group Director	Ann Ballinger
Pre-K Director	Sara Bernth / Lorene Schaudt
Custodian	Donna Hodgson

Pastor's Report

Friends in Christ:

Looking back on calendar year 2024 we again have much for which to be grateful. We continue to maintain our membership and average weekly attendance along with our combined Christian Education ministries of Confirmation preparation and Sunday School—both of which moved from Wednesday evenings in 2023 to Sunday mornings last year. The monthly coffee hour continues strong support both by the those who sponsored them and by those who attend. Recall, the purpose of the event was to offer an opportunity for this community of faith to get to know one another by spending some social time together. Looking beyond our doors, we maintained our support for the Westchester Township Food Pantry, First Contact and Lutheran World Relief. Many thanks for your support and for the volunteers who participate in them. I also want to thank both our outgoing and incoming Church Council members for their invaluable guidance, and I appreciate your support of their ministries along with encouraging you to step in when called upon by them for any necessary assistance.

Our worship life here continues to be rich as we once again celebrated Martin Luther's Latin Mass on Reformation Sunday, followed by a delicious Oktoberfest and we saw strong participation in both the mid-week Lenten liturgies and the soup suppers ahead of the evening one. We also celebrated a very spiritually meaningful *Paschal Triduum* (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil) along with a well-attended Easter Sunday morning liturgy which was followed by our historically delicious Easter breakfast. Many thanks to the Altar Guild, lectors and assisting ministers who always help us celebrate those special liturgies along with each Sunday.

Finally, while none of us knows what 2025 holds in store for us, I anticipate we will face both opportunities and challenges in our shared life of faith here—but I am confident God will guide us in the proper way as our history attests.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Rev. Erik Bernth, Pastor

Congregational President

As the year 2024 closes, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Congregational Council for their leadership and service. The 2024 Congregational Council members included:

Caroline Ward	President
Travis Dunlap	Vice-President
Jim Babcock	Secretary; Pre-K Liason
Bob Ton	Treasurer
Judy Beschinski	Parish Life Committee
Jim Fant	Social Ministry Committee
Debra Gruzosky	Christian Education Committee
Brian Gustafson	Property Committee
Janice Holguin	Worship & Music Committee
Maria Sisco	Parish Life Committee

We continue to strive to make fellowship opportunities available. This gives us the opportunity to get to know our fellow parishioners. We have moved some opportunities to Sundays after service. This gives those who cannot return during the week, a chance to participate.

OUR church does not run on its own. We all need to be involved in OUR church. Your financial support is important. In addition to financial support, OUR church needs us to provide our time and our talent. We are always in need of Lectors, Assisting Ministers, Offering Counters and Altar Guild. Training is always available for any of these important roles. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me or anyone from the Congregational Council.

We continue to serve those outside of OUR church by providing funding for First Contact, Westchester Food Pantry and Lutheran World Relief. Let us not forget that we continue to serve those who are not able to attend in-person worship service. With a generous memorial given by Doris Swanson's family, we are live streaming our service to our YouTube channel. If you missed the live stream, we also have it available within our YouTube channel.

I look forward to 2025 as your Congregational Council President again. We hope to bring even more opportunities to fellowship and worship together. May God bless everyone from OUR congregation and beyond.

Yours in Christ,

Caroline R Ward

Altar Guild 2024

The members of the Altar Guild prepare the altar and worship area for worship and occasional services. We care for the articles that are used in the worship services such as: changing paraments and vestments, preparing for communion and baptisms, replacing candles, dusting, and checking that the pews are clean and in order. We help the Cross-bearers prepare for their duties prior to the services. Following services, we clean the communion materials and return them to their storage places. We also take care of the altar flowers for the families who may have sick or shut-in members.

Most of the preparations for worship are done on Fridays or Saturdays.

We welcome new member Lori Rizer.

The Altar Guild dedicates its efforts and ministry to the Glory of God.

We invite all members of the congregation to join us in this very purposeful part of worship in our church. Ask any Altar Guild member about joining us!

The following are current member of the Altar Guild:

Heidi Babcock

Jennifer Dimitroff

Kaitlin Ferguson

Debra Gruzosky

Heather Harwood

Janice Holguin

Lori Rizer

Sharon Robey

Pam Stawitcke

Kathy Ton

Caroline Ward

Cemetery Committee

Augsburg –

There were three burials this past year - no cremations.

There were four foundations for headstones installed. There was a tree in the SE corner of the property that was professionally removed.

All the flags and artificial flowers were removed in the fall. The torn and faded flags were taken to the VFW to be disposed of in an honorable way.

Small sticks and limbs were picked up.

In the late fall, graves with artificial flowers and dead ones were removed for winter.

Burstrom –

There were no burials or cremations this past year.

In late fall, graves with dead and artificial flowers were removed for the winter.

There was a tree in the SW corner of the property that was professionally removed.

All the flags were removed (torn and faded) for the winter and taken to the VFW to be disposed of in an honorable way.

Another big thank you to the church members that worked on the chapel, and Brian Gustafson for helping when needed.

This Report submitted by Committee Members:

Mel Bigger

Keith Gesse

Brian Gustafson

Memorial Committee

The mission of the Memorial Committee is to carefully and prayerfully consider the purposes for which the memorial donations will be used by the congregation. The intentions of the donors of the memorials are important factors in making decisions, as are the appropriate uses of the gifts. The honor paid in memory of a departed loved one is a precious thing for those making the donation, and this makes any decisions very important and are not taken lightly.

During the calendar year 2024 there was a significant donation made to the Memorial Committee from the Family of Doris Swanson. In memory of Doris the committee along with her Family decided to purchase a new video system - this system gives us the opportunity to live stream our services and post them on our YouTube channel.

This past year there were additional purchases of candle stick holders for the Chapel, a pollinator garden bench and bell choir binders.

As needs arise for important worship purposes, some non-designated money has been used in the past, after reasonable discussion has taken place.

At the time when a memorial gift is to be considered, there are opportunities to discuss that with Pastor or a member of the Committee, whose members' names are available in the church office.

Respectfully submitted by the Memorial Committee

Brian Gustafson

Parish Life

The Parish Life Committee focused on coffee hours this year as part of the New Beginnings initiative. The coffee hour is held the second Sunday of each month after regular church service. There is a sign up sheet in the narthex for members to volunteer to host and/or clean up. The coffee hour enjoyed consistent participation throughout the year, with plenty of food and fellowship shared by all in attendance.

In addition to the regular monthly coffee hour, Parish Life also helped organize Lenten soup suppers beginning with the first Wednesday of Lent on February 21st. The soup suppers continued each week of Lent and were fairly well attended. The annual corn roast was held mid-summer.

In August, White-Love Funeral Home donated place mats, for which we are very thankful.

Parish Life held a chili cook-off in October with seven chili participants entering their favorite chili recipe for all to enjoy. Oktoberfest was also held in October in conjunction with pumpkin carving.

Looking forward to building on the success of these events in 2025.

Maria Sisco and Judy Beschinski

Parish Statistics

Baptisms -3

Grimes, Apollo Michael	2/11/2024
Rapp, Henry William	4/26/2024
Field, Everleigh Ann	12/1/2024

Confirmed - 0

First Communion - 2

Townley, Gavin 5/5/2024
Townley, Cameron 5/5/2024

Deaths - 3

Starbuck, Patricia	4/14/2024
Boo, Betty	5/18/2024
Miller, Carolyn June	5/22/2024

New Members *

Preschool Report

Pre-K

Pre-K enrollment numbers were again lower this school year when compared to last year's numbers. There are currently two sessions: Tuesday and Thursday sessions provide for mixed groups 3 - 5 year olds, while Monday, Wednesday, and Friday sessions are an extended day program for 4 - 5 year olds. There is currently one teacher and three teacher aides. Enrollment for the 2024/2025 school year began in December for current students and siblings and in January for others. Due to increasing operating costs, the Pre-K Board decided to raise tuition and registration/supply rates for the 2025/2026 school year.

Kaitlyn Ferguson and Kathy Ton joined Deborah Gruzosky and Linda Dolk to complete the current Pre-K Board. Jim Babcock was the liaison member to Church Council. Sara Bernth assumed the role of director for the Pre-K Program.

The Pre-K Board sincerely appreciates the support of the congregation in its endeavors to provide a quality early childhood education adventure for our community's youngsters.

Property Committee

The Property Committee continued to support the mission and vision of Augsburg through the day-to-day upkeep of the church's assets. Following is a list of the activities conducted this past year:

The oak flooring in the living and dining room of the parsonage was refinished including the restoration of the original oak base shoe

The flush valve in the Parsonage toilet required replacement

NIPSCO wanted to upgrade the old-over-size gas meter to current technology. This required the replacement of the main pipe feed into the boiler room

Volunteers again trimmed numerous bushes around the church. Additional bushes along the kitchen and education wing were removed to clear the view from the windows

A few trees and bushes were removed at the parsonage, again clearing the view of the windows.

Several weather damaged trees at Burstrom Chaple were removed

The new video system hardware was installed so that services can be recorded and live-streamed.

Porter fire department assisted with installation of new rope on the flag poles

Repairs were made to several of the church's vacuum cleaners.

Additional items that need attention in the near future:

A temporary fix to the parsonage roof leak has been completed. The damage to the roof on the Sanctuary continues to be investigated. Discussions with our insurance company continue on both of these issues

The H&A systems for the sanctuary have been operating well. One of the three units has been shut down due to the failure of the heat exchanger coils. The replacement of this coil has been put on hold due to repair cost of approximately \$4500. This condition needs to be addressed in the coming year.

Several of the geothermal units in the education wing are not working in AC mode. Professional assessment is required to determine the extent of repairs needed.

A list of repairs still needed to Burstrom Chapel will be done by volunteers.

Thanks to the many volunteers that have helped during the completion of the above projects. Special thanks to Rob Ahrendt and Jack Anderson their continued attention to maintenance at Burstrom Chapel.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Gesse

Brian Gustafson

Dennis Brubaker

Travis Dunlap

Don Freese

Jim Babcock

Social Ministry 2024

Sharing Blessings

The Social Ministry Committee's purpose is to serve the Lord by gathering items and funds to share with the needy. A generous response by people of God shows a proper response for all we have been given.

Our Augsburg donation designated to go to First Contact gives financial assistance for our Porter County neighbors. Our offerings to Lutheran World Relief help those who may live far away from us.

The items we contribute to the Westchester Food Pantry provide food for members of our own community.

During Lent we gather towels, combs, toothbrushes, bars of soap and nail clippers, and then assemble Personal Care Kits to be sent to needy persons who are escaping terrorism, as well as to others who lack these necessities.

Throughout 2024 we assembled School Kits that were sent to children who need them in order for them to attend schools. Thanks to all who gave the pens, pencils, notebooks, crayons, erasers, scissors, and rulers, and also to the two persons who manufactured all of the backpacks. It requires the generosity and combined efforts of many people to make this important mission to be a success. For 2024 we were able to send 700 School Kits to the children! **This saves lives!**

As we are given our Daily Bread, we share with those who are Our Neighbors, no matter how close or far apart we may live. As God blesses us, God blesses others through our giving and sharing.

Thanks be to God!

Social Ministry Committee:

John and Jeanette Baker, Marianne Ahrendt, and Jim Fant

Stewardship & Finance

On behalf of the stewardship and finance committee, I am pleased to share with the congregation several positive things that came with 2024 at Augsburg. Although financial support is essential, it is only a part of Christian stewardship. At Augsburg we are blessed to have so many members who have given and continue to give of their time, talent and resources in other areas as the need arises. 2024 was no exception to that - thank you! We closed the year as follows, consistent with the operating fund and treasurer's report:

Contributions (actual): \$250,887
 Expenses (actual): \$249,650
 2024 TTL (actual): **+\$1,237**

This is good news – this means we finished 2024 *in the black*, or neutral and financially solvent! Income exceeded expenses by +\$1,237 for the entire year (cumulative thru December), which supports cash flow relative to church operations, and similar to the last year (+\$3,381 in 2023). We've continued to make a conscious commitment to keep the congregation informed of this status on a regular, monthly basis strictly for awareness, so this comes not as a surprise nor incessant request. The council will continue to support spending very sensibly and well considered in effort to remain below budget with expenses as accomplished in 2024.

We dedicated Sunday, December 8, 2024 as the Day of Giving for our congregation's annual spotlight on stewardship, which was well attended and received response equally well. This spiritual growth oriented process is intended to enrich our biblical understanding of Christian stewardship and spiritual development. Thank all those that were able to participate and certainly extend gratitude particularly to those in the majority of total congregational "units" that made a 2024 pledge in the form of financial commitment as an act of worship thru faith!

This goes to support ministry efforts supported by Augsburg for organizations to help those within our community and the broader world, including \$1,800 each (additional to goods collected) for First Contact or Noisy Offering in the past and the Westchester Food Pantry.

As a reminder, consistent cash flow is important to managing our finances. Envelopes work great because they can also be mailed, though contributing electronically is still also available. Options to consider are link on our website (<https://www.augsburglutheran.org/on-line-giving>) or many banks offer electronic contributions directly.

We are grateful for everyone's contributions in time, talent and financial support in 2024, while we also seek to grow the community of faith and ministry efforts at Augsburg.

In Christ,
 Travis Dunlap

Worship and Music

Augsburg's music committee includes pastor Bernth, organist Jane DeVries Byeand Janice Holguin. They met four times this year to select hymns compatible with the church calendar.

Our Bell Choir participates in Sunday services with musical selections. Basic training is available to all ages if interested contact and Ballinger.

Assisting Pastor Bernth are the Lectors and Assisting Ministers. There are 8 volunteers serving as Lectors. They present our Sunday readings and the Psalm for the day, while the Assisting Ministers assist Pastor at the altar and giving communion. They assist at all 9:00 AM Sunday services as well as on Wednesday at 9:00 AM.

Many additional services were held throughout the year including Lenten and Advent services, the Burstrom Chapel service and on Reformation Sunday Martin Luther's formula missae (Latin mass) in both English and Latin.

Sunday services are now available via stream on the YouTube channel.

Respectfully Submitted:
Janice Holguin

Christian Education Annual Report

Sunday School attendance for pre-kindergarten through 6th grade ranged from 3-9 elementary and intermediate school aged individuals. We are utilizing various free online resources for the Bible lessons, activities, and game ideas.

Christian Education instruction took place on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm, along with the Confirmation class. During Lent, the Sunday School students read the Prayers of Intercession during the Wednesday Liturgies. We hope to continue this during the 2025 Lenten Season. In the fall, we moved instruction back to Sundays at 10:15am. Students have been playing chimes with Ann Ballinger during the beginning portion of class. We have had success with this new schedule, and attendance has been steady. We are currently looking for substitute Sunday School teachers, contact Debra Gruzosky if interested.

Vacation Bible School was held during the week of June 3rd. We had a "Beach" theme. We had 9 participants throughout the week. We enjoyed bible lessons, crafts, games, whiffle ball, and a water fight! Some participants helped Jennifer Dimitroff in the butterfly garden, weeding and watering the plants. In November, Kaitlin Ferguson stepped down as the VBS Director, and we are currently looking for volunteers to plan and organize VBS in 2025. Please contact Debra Gruzosky if interested.

Christian education sponsored some events during the year, such as the Chili Cook-off with pumpkin carving. While all these events were a lot of fun and successful, we are always hopeful for more participation from the entire congregation and their families!

The Christmas Program was held on December 22nd. We had 11 Confirmation and Sunday School participants. Thank you, Ann Ballinger and Jane DeVries, it wouldn't be successful without you!

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Gruzosky

Operating Summary Report - 2024
1/1/2024 through 12/31/2024 Using Operating Budget 2024

1/7/2025

Page 1

Category	1/1/2024 Actual	- Budget	12/31/2024 Difference
INCOME	250,886.88	267,116.00	-16,229.12
Contributions	228,889.91	256,836.00	-27,946.09
Miscellaneous Income	21,996.97	10,280.00	11,716.97
EXPENSES	249,649.89	267,115.92	17,466.03
Administration	10,171.04	11,058.00	886.96
Benevolence	21,600.00	21,999.96	399.96
Building	40,043.62	38,400.00	-1,643.62
Education	0.00	500.00	500.00
Evangelism	0.00	50.00	50.00
Miscellaneous Expense	2.94	0.00	-2.94
Parish Life	0.00	200.00	200.00
Pastor Benefits	36,796.76	37,685.00	888.24
Payroll Expenses	116,212.99	129,671.00	13,458.01
Stewardship	646.11	550.00	-96.11
Utilities	18,660.85	21,092.00	2,431.15
Vacation Supply	175.00	950.00	775.00
Worship-Music	5,340.58	4,959.96	-380.62
Net Difference:	1,236.99	0.08	1,236.91

Dura Brusky 1-12-2025
Emily Greene 1/12/25
Jenna Faw 1/12/2025