

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
of Carlisle, Pennsylvania



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

+We worship, welcome, witness, teach and serve in the name of Jesus Christ.+

DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING
November 17, 2024

Approximately 72 members attended the meeting. The meeting was held following the combined holy communion service at 9:15 a.m.

Council President Ron Jumper called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Mr. Jumper indicated that a quorum has been met. He asked if there were any additional business items for the agenda. With none offered, the agenda was accepted as presented. Pastor Leber offered a prayer.

Approval of the 2023 Annual Congregation Meeting Minutes. Motion: To approve the minutes of the November 12, 2023, Congregation Meeting as printed in the 2024 Annual Report, pages 2-5. **Motion was seconded and carried.**

Election of Congregation Council. The Nominating Committee nominated Bill Boehm, Janis Drasher, Jeri Fitzsimons, Joanne Miller and Sam Orner for three-year terms ending December 2027. Mr. Jumper asked for any nominations from the floor. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to close the nominations. **Moved and seconded** to close the nominations. **Motion carried.**

Election of 2025 Nominating Committee at-large members: The Nominating Committee nominated Connie Alexander, Kathy Hall and Karen Longenecker to serve on the 2025 Nominating Committee. Mr. Jumper asked for any nominations from the floor. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to close the nominations. **Moved and seconded** to close the nominations. **Motion carried.**

Paper ballots were distributed to congregation members to vote on the nominees for Congregation Council and the Nominating Committee. There were 72 valid ballots.

Elected to three-year terms on Congregation Council (2025-2027) were Bill Boehm, Janis Drasher, Jeri Fitzsimons, Joanne Miller and Sam Orner.

Elected to serve on the 2025 Nominating Committee were Connie Alexander, Kathy Hall and Karen Longenecker. All terms commence on January 1, 2025.

Reports of Officers and Committees: Mr. Jumper called attention to the staff, committee and other reports in the 2024 Annual Report of the Congregation. A question was asked about whether the bells are going to be fixed. The 20+ year old controller needs to be replaced, and the proposed 2025 Capital Projects budget includes funds for this project. There were no other questions or concerns.

Treasurer's Report: Hope Miller, Financial Secretary, reviewed the financial statements included in the 2024 Annual Report. The General Checking, Capital Projects, Trust Money Market Account and Treasurer's Annual reports were as of September 30, 2024. She noted a few specific items:

General Checking (page 21 of 2024 Annual Report)

Income

- As of the end of September, Weekly and Special Offerings are 107% of the YTD budgeted amount.
- Transfers from the Money Market account for operating expenses are 65% of the YTD budgeted amount.
- Benevolence Offering is 94% of the YTD budgeted amount.

Capital Projects

Income

- Weekly Offering is over 104% of YTD budgeted amounts.

Expenses

- Payment for the main parking lot project was made in September.

Money Market (page 18 of 2024 Annual Report)

Income

- Income from Wilmington Trust was up in September due to the quarterly distribution from the P.K. Miller Trust.
- Interest in September is for two months due to the timing of posting by Orrstown.

Monies Earmarked in Money Market/Capital Projects, CDs, and Debt Service Information (page 22): Balances shown as of September 30, 2024, unless otherwise indicated.

Motion: To accept the Treasurer's Report subject to review. **Motion was seconded and carried.**

Presentation of the 2025 Proposed Mission Spending Plan: Hope Miller presented the 2025 Mission Spending Plan as recommended by the Congregation Council and included as a summary in the 2024 Annual Report (page 25).

Hope noted that the proposed 2025 Mission Spending Plan reflects a decrease of \$1,150 over the current budget year.

Income

- Regular, Seasonal Envelopes and Plate Offerings were increased based on strong giving in 2024.
- Head Start Rent was zeroed out due to their departure.
- Capital Campaign Reserves was also zeroed out because of the depletion of the reserves.
- Operating Trusts Income was increased due to the reduction in other income line items.

Expenses

- The majority of the committee budgets remain flat or close to it.
- The Property Committee budget has been reduced due to transfer of 132 E. High Street (elimination of property tax and other expenses) and the big reduction in our trash bill.
- Funding was restored for the Audit Committee since the review in 2025 (for 2024) will be external.
- The Personnel Committee recommended a 3.5% pay increase for employees on our payroll [pastor, financial secretary, office manager, cantor (open)] based on the current consumer price index. Personnel also recommended an increase in Pastor Leber's Continuing Education line.
- Benevolence – A small increase was requested for our Sister Parish (\$350).

2025 Proposed Capital Projects Budget

Income

- The income projection for 2025 was kept flat based on year-to-date actuals.

Expenses

- One project is planned for 2025 - Bell Controller replacement at a cost of \$8,000

2025 Proposed Fine Arts at First

Income

- Projected income of \$5,050 from plate (free will) offering at concerts, donations, and interest.

Expenses

- Committee is projecting \$6,100 of expenses in 2025 for publicity, reception expenses and fees for special musicians for three events.

Motion: To accept the 2025 Proposed Mission Spending Plan and the Capital Projects and Fine Arts at First budgets as recommended by Congregation Council. **Motion carried.**

New Business: None.

With no further business, Pastor Leber thanked outgoing council members Connie Alexander, Kathy Hall, Karen Longenecker and Ron Jumper for their three years of service on Council. She also expressed appreciation for all that Pastor Lorenz, Robin Orner and Hope Miller contribute to the ministries of First Lutheran. Pastor Leber shared that the Cantor Search Committee will be presenting a very strong candidate to Council on Tuesday. The candidate has interviewed, auditioned and lead a mock Chancel Choir rehearsal. We are anticipating a start date in January 2025. Pastor expressed thanks to David Binkley, who has now served as our substitute Sunday organist for almost three years.

Mr. Jumper then thanked all the council members and volunteer committee members for their work in 2024.

Motion made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting with a benediction from Pastor Leber.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Longenecker, Secretary

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear First Lutheran Family,

It's amazing how quickly time has passed since the last annual report. I'm inspired by the continued work of our congregation in our internal ministry as well as our support to local, national, and international ministries. Well done!

When I assumed the role of president this year, I was fortunate to have excellent examples of Congregation Council leadership by Ron Jumper and David Fitzsimons to provide a firm foundation for success. I also benefited from the hard work and commitment of the entire congregation council throughout the year. I think I speak for this great team when I say that we truly appreciate the dedicated efforts of Pastor Leber, Robin Orner, and Hope Miller to keep the daily operations and finance on track as well as pastoral assistance from Pastor Lorenz.

Of course, First Lutheran would be nothing without the active participation of the congregation. I offer special thanks to everyone who helps with weekly worship which includes preparing the chancel, assisting the pastor, reading scripture, ushering members, and welcoming guests. Let's not forget the faithful

service of our many committee members and leaders who help guide and implement activities. These include continuing ministries, such as My Brother's Table, Project SHARE, Advent Fill-a-Box, Salvation Army Angel Tree, Safe Harbour, and Meals on Wheels (please see more details in the individual committee reports). First Lutheran also opens its doors to help fulfill Carlisle and Cumberland County community needs such as Alcoholics and Overeaters Anonymous, election polling, blood drives, and special music events. And in good Lutheran tradition, our committees facilitate many social events such as potlucks, luncheons, Afters, and the Chili Cook-off.

I'm very happy to report that our long search for a new cantor ended as Stan Wicks began leading the First Lutheran music program. Stan hit the ground running in January to lead the Chancel Choir and was officially installed on April 6. He also has tackled the challenges of procuring new music while beginning to catalog the vast stockpile of music amassed by the church over past decades. These efforts shone forth in special music during Holy Week services as well as through music that enhances weekly worship. He also successfully implemented pick-up choirs during the summer months. Speaking of music, I'm very thankful that David Erickson continues to share his time and talents regularly as choir accompanist as well as chair of the Fine Arts at First program.

Our congregation continues to be blessed with a robust fiscal framework that allows us to finance operating costs and capital improvements while still funding outreach such as Lutheran World Relief, our sister parish Divine Redeemer Church in San Miguel, El Salvador, and missionaries Steve and Jodi Swanson in Tanzania. Many thanks to the Finance and Audit committees for their diligent stewardship of these gifts.

We weathered some storms this year – literally – which resulted in downed tree limbs and one broken light pole. However, congregation volunteers quickly took care of the mess and electricians now have all the exterior lights operational. Volunteers have also helped improve our landscaping by planting geraniums from Pentecost Sunday and watering the new grass planted after debris from the old Head Start playground was removed.

This year, the Congregation Council recommended that the congregation “right size” council membership as many of our sister congregations and non-profits have done. Adopting a smaller council/board of directors allows us to be nimbler and engage more effectively in governance. Thus, a reduction from 15 to 9 members was approved in a congregational vote on Fellowship Sunday (22 June). The ratification vote is scheduled during the annual congregational meeting (16 November) and, if passed, will go into effect on January 1, 2026. Later in 2026, we will further modify our constitution to match changes made in the ELCA's model constitution for congregations adopted at Churchwide Assembly this past summer.

This October marked an important milestone – Pastor Leber's 30th anniversary of ordination and 30 years of faithful service as a rostered minister of Word and Sacrament with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We celebrated with a reception after services on October 12, which was further enhanced by the new members received by the congregation that day. Pastor Leber's commitment to serving God and others has always been inspirational, and we are thankful for her service to Christ's church and pastoral leadership of our congregation.

As you can see, our congregation is truly blessed, but such blessings require good stewardship along with a willingness to shine God's light to the world. With that in mind, our journey as a church should emphasize seeking out and welcoming new members of all ages and backgrounds.

Sincerely in Christ,
Jeff Caton, President

CONGREGATION COUNCIL 2025

Term ending 12/31/25

Kirby Gutshall
Paul Kraus
Linda Martin
Richard Wood

Term ending 12/31/26

Jeff Caton
Roger Giffin
Mike Luther*
Rob McDaniel
Deb Reeder*

Term ending 12/31/27

Bill Boehm
Janis Drasher
Jeri Fitzsimons*
Joanne Miller
Sam Orner*

**These individuals have resigned effective 12/31/25 to facilitate the change in Council size*

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PASTOR'S REPORT

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Around the time I began my thirteenth year as your pastor this past August, a long-time member and regular worshipper at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday service shared with me his observation that every one of the worshippers seated that morning in the pews on his side of the nave, other than him and his spouse, had joined the congregation since my arrival in 2013.

It is true that, over the past twelve plus years, First Evangelical Lutheran Church has experienced remarkable change, in some cases precipitated or accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. One hundred twelve of our sisters and brothers in Christ have joined the church triumphant, including a number of patriarchs and matriarchs of the congregation who had worshipped at First Lutheran almost every Sunday of their 80 or 90 (and, in one case, 100½) years. We have welcomed 150 new members into our midst through baptism, transfer, and affirmation of faith (but, as happens in congregations, have not retained all of those new members over time). These numbers represent significant transition in a congregation that, in recent years, has been worshipping an average of 113-115 people weekly.

Along with the many Godspeeds and hellos we've said over the past twelve plus years together, other things have changed. We've put on new roofs, torn up an old parking lot, built an accessible addition, and gifted property to Safe Harbour. Long-standing activities, such as the fall and spring rummage sales, have come to an end, while new traditions, such as Advent Fill-a-Box, our Chili Cook-Off benefiting Project SHARE, the annual Fellowship Sunday, the Women's Retreat, and 55+ monthly events, have gotten their start. We've continued to explore new ways of offering Faith Formation to our youngest members, as the classic Sunday Church School model has become less workable. Head Start no longer occupies classrooms in our building, but a number of community support groups now meet here every week, and we serve as a polling place each May and November and host Supportive Partnerships for Youth (SPY) for the summer.

Over our now 260-year history, and especially in recent years, the people of First Lutheran have understood what the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (*c.500 B.C.*) meant when he observed something to the effect that "the only constant is change". I imagine the folks of Heraclitus' time would agree with us that change can be exciting, scary, positive, negative, welcomed, resisted, or all of those things at the same time.

However, *contra* Heraclitus, there is another constant in our lives besides change - God's love for us and the world, revealed most profoundly in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we continue to carry out the ministries of worship, welcome, witness, teaching and service reflected in this annual report. Thank you for offering your time, talent and treasures to this work which touches neighbors in Carlisle, our country, and around the world. Thanks, especially, to my dear colleagues, Robin, Hope, Stan, and Pastor Lorenz for your faithfulness, competence, and support. I am so glad to serve with you!

In Christ,
Pastor Leber

P.S. I am deeply grateful for the thoughtful way my 30th ordination anniversary was recognized on October 12. Many folks helped to plan, organize, decorate, host, and clean up the luncheon reception, and I appreciated your presence at this celebratory event and your cards, good wishes, gifts and other special remembrances, especially the lovely words of council president, Jeff Caton, during the sparkling cider toast! Thank you to all!

Members of Pepsi Simmon's family joined us for the reception, including her great-grandson Brent Felton (far right) who attended VBS as a youngster during my early years at First! Also pictured are Pepsi's daughter Daphne Vethune and great-grandson Ahmad Bennett.



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CANTOR'S REPORT

It is an honor and privilege to serve as the cantor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church. I have appreciated your warm hospitality as I have returned to music ministry after several years of retirement.



I arrived in Carlisle in early January 2025, officially joining the staff of First Lutheran on January 13. Pastor Leber and I did some (long distance) worship planning over the holidays, and I was able to spend time in the music library during my on-site visit in December, so I was prepared to hold a Chancel Choir retreat on Saturday, January 18, and play for worship for the first time here on Sunday, January 19.

On Transfiguration Sunday, March 2, the Chancel Choir resumed leading worship and offering anthems at the 10:30 a.m. service on a weekly basis for the first time since March 2020. While the winter/spring choir season concluded on Trinity Sunday, June 15, I offered three opportunities to

participate in a “pick up choir” at the 10:30 a.m. service during the summer. I also invited First Lutheran members to share their musical gifts by singing or playing instruments.

The 2025 fall choir season kicked off with another choir retreat, on Saturday, September 6. These retreats will continue to be held semi-annually to help set the pace for our weekly singing ministry.

Chancel Choir membership has grown with four new (or former) singers joining this fall, bringing the total registration to 22.

We continue to be blessed by First Lutheran member David Erickson, who accompanies Chancel Choir anthems when he is available. This support allows me to be more helpful to the choir as they rehearse and sing in worship.

Columbia Organ Company recently assessed our Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ. The organ is in good shape now, but down the road (in approximately 10 years), a major re-leathering project will need to be done. As this will be an expensive project, we may want to consider starting to fund it now.

The Adult Handbell Ensemble, which has not played since 2021, will be preparing music during the 2025 Advent season.

Other highlights from the year:

- Chancel Choir has new choir folders, complementing the new choir albs introduced in December 2024.
- The music library is being catalogued and digitized thanks to the volunteer efforts of Linda Caton and Connie Alexander. This project will take some time.
- The 60-year old fluorescent lights in the choir room/Cantor’s office have been upgraded to LED fixtures, greatly improving the space.
- Over the summer and fall months, we have been learning a new setting of the liturgy (from our hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*) at the 10:30 a.m. service.
- Advent Lessons & Carols is scheduled for Sunday, December 14, at 4 p.m.
- Several Chancel Choir members (and I) are rehearsing for a community-based Handel "Messiah" concert, which First Lutheran will host on Sunday, December 21, at 3 p.m.

My current home base is in Altoona; I am in Carlisle from Thursday, late morning, through Sunday worship. You can always reach me at musician@firstlutherancarlisle.org. Or make an appointment to stop in for a visit by calling the church office. We would love to have you become a part of First Lutheran’s music ministry!

In Christ,
Dr. Stanley M. Wicks

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MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS (October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025)

Membership as of December 31, 2024:

Baptized: 343

Confirmed: 301

Contributing/Communing: 224

Transfers In: 1 Transfers Out: 2 Baptisms: 1 **Stone, Jeremy Andrew** – April 13, 2025

Deaths: 10

Frederick, Thomas E. – November 27, 2024	Pounder, Michael Anderson – February 25, 2025
Thumma, Clarence William – December 20, 2024	Baish, Nancy Goodyear – May 27, 2025
Morrison, Roma Elaine – January 14, 2025	Shenk, Marjorie Harrick – July 18, 2025
Lewis, Joan Elizabeth – February 5, 2025	Ward, John Smith – June 25, 2025
Rahal, Virginia Louise – February 24, 2025	Hollen, Robert Arthur – July 25, 2025

Average Sunday Worship Attendance			
Month	Oct. 1, 2022– Sept. 30, 2023	Oct. 1, 2023– Sept. 30, 2024	Oct. 1, 2024– Sept. 30, 2025
October	106	106	111
November	112	113	118
December	92	110	107
January	108	107	95 (<i>snow</i>)
February	118	121	110
March	123	147	114
April	128	130	146
May	119	118	103
June	115	108	106
July	109	104	107
August	109	103	111
September	112	107	124
Yearly Avg.	113	115	113

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AUDIT COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Bill Boehm, Roger Giffin, David Haag

Boyer & Ritter was engaged to conduct an outside financial review, currently conducted every two years (alternating with internal reviews by the Audit Committee). The response to record requests during the review was handled by our financial secretary, Hope Miller (Thank you, Hope). On August 15, 2025, the committee received Boyer & Ritter’s Independent Account’s Report for 2024 which reflected that our internal controls and financial accounting and reporting processes are working well.

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EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Leann Erickson, Jeri Fitzsimons, Kathy Hall (co-chair), Pastor Leber, Joanne Miller (co-chair), Robin Orner

The Evangelism Committee meets five times a year to invite, welcome and integrate new members, while providing hospitality and fellowship for all.

“Afters in the Atrium”, a fellowship event held the second Sunday of each month following the second service, was hosted by different committees and volunteers. Thank you to all who helped.

The committee hosted a cookie reception after Lessons and Carols in December 2024. This annual fellowship opportunity has been well received in recent years and will continue.

Our fifth annual Fellowship Sunday was held on June 22 this year, with 93 worshippers attending the 9:15 a.m. combined service. Most stayed to share a light breakfast in the Martin Luther Room and enjoy a time of fellowship. Fellowship Sunday is also Name Tag Sunday, when we ask worshippers to wear name tags to help us all get to know one another better.

Our “in-house” pictorial directory is still a work in progress. Thanks to David Fitzsimons for taking photos for this project. We have photos of many of our members and are still working to include as many as possible.

Flowers continue to be delivered to our homebound and other members at Easter and Christmas. Many thanks to those who volunteer their time to brighten the day of our members. Attendees at the Fellowship Sunday breakfast in June signed cards that were sent to all homebound, who expressed thanks for the remembrance.

Fifteen new members were received on October 12. They were recognized at Pastor Leber’s 30th Ordination Anniversary reception following the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

The Downtown Carlisle event known as Spooky Saturday resumed this year (October 25). We welcomed over 130 kids and their families into the nave to receive candy and have an opportunity to look around.

Planning is underway to participate in Ice Fest for the first time next February 2026. We intend to order an ice sculpture and offer cocoa and popcorn on the High Street plaza during the evening hours of Ice Fest on Friday and Saturday.

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FAITH FORMATION COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Kathy Brunie, Caryn Carr, Pastor Leber, Rob McDaniel, Robin Orner, Sam Orner, Debra Reeder

The Faith Formation Committee plans and oversees faith formation for all ages, organizes service and fellowship opportunities for our youth, encourages and facilitates youth participation in the ministries of the congregation and of the larger church, and provides books, devotional materials, and other educational resources for all ages. Highlights from this past year include:

Adult Faith Formation: Various one-off adult faith formation classes and series were offered this past year.

- December 8 & 15 – Pastor Lorenz led discussion on “What the person in the pulpit preaches and what people in the pews hear.”

- February 2 & 16 – Pastor Leber led discussion on how the ELCA interprets the bible (shortened by one week due to a snow event).
- March 9 – April 13 – Caryn Carr led a video-based series by Amy Jill-Levine entitled *Difficult Words of Jesus*.
- September 7 – 28 – Pastor Leber led discussion on “Who are we Lutherans, anyway?”
- October 12 – November 16 – Rich Wood presented on Christianity in the Roman world.

Mid-Week Lenten Series: On Wednesday evenings during Lent, Pastor Leber led a series on Lent, Holy Week and Easter worship, which began with an introduction to Lutheran liturgy.

2nd Sunday Gatherings for Youth and Families: On the second Sunday afternoon of each month (September through April), youth and their families gathered with Pastor Leber, Robin and Kathy for a time of stories, crafts, activities and service projects followed by a light meal, ending for the summer with a picnic and flower planting at the church in June. Service projects included making Thanksgiving cards for homebound members, sorting LWR personal care kit supplies, and making blessing socks for clients of Community CARES.



Ella and Lyla Stone and Hugo and Henry Stuby learning to make palm crosses at our 2nd Sunday Gathering in April.

55+ Potluck Luncheons: This monthly luncheon event, now in its third year, is held on the 2nd Friday of each month with various speakers. Average attendance is 28-30.

First Annual Women’s Retreat: Seventeen women participated in a weekend of worship, bible study, fellowship, crafts, games, and fun led by Pastor Leber at Camp Nawakwa, in late January. We plan to make this an annual event.

Easter Fellowship/Egg Hunt: This time of fellowship and fun was held between services on Easter Sunday, April 20, with approximately 80 in attendance. In addition to a light breakfast, the event included an egg hunt for the children and the assembling of 154 LWR personal care kits.

Inaugural “Table Talk”: In the tradition of Martin Luther, on Reformation Sunday evening, Pastor Leber hosted a “tischreden” (table talk), an informal gathering around her dining room table to discuss whatever theological issues were raised. Eleven people attended. She plans to hold these at least quarterly.

College Care Packages: Care packages continue to be sent to our college students in the spring and fall to let them know we are thinking of them.

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FINANCE COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Bill Boehm, Caryn Carr, Roger Giffin, Jered Hock, Pastor Leber, Beverly Mancke, Rob McDaniel (treasurer), Hope Miller, John Steffee (chair), Rich Wood

2025 Budget

A balanced Mission Spending Plan of \$618,750 and a Capital Budget of \$8,000 for the replacement of the bell controller system were submitted to and approved by the congregation at its annual meeting in November 2024. The Mission Spending Plan reflected anticipated increases in regular envelope contributions and operating trust income to offset anticipated decreases in rent income from Head Start and Capital Campaign donations. Overall, expenses were projected to be slightly lower than 2024.

Proposed 2026 Budget

In July 2025, work began on the 2026 budgets. Budget requests were submitted by committees and staff during August and September. A draft mission spending plan, capital projects budget, and Fine Arts at First budget were reviewed by the Finance Committee in September and approved for recommendation to the congregation by Congregation Council in October.

Endowment Assets

The total value of our trust funds on September 30, 2025, was \$6,925,480. This is an increase of \$465,748 (7.2%), since January 1, 2025, value of \$6,459,732. The Finance Committee meets with our investment managers from Wilmington Trust and Bryn Mawr Trust during the first quarter of each year to review the previous year's performance of our portfolios.

Debt Service

The initial mortgage with Orrstown Bank to fund the building project and renovations known as Building to Serve All God's Children (2018) was \$1,518,389. The outstanding balance on our loan as of September 30, 2025, was \$414,397.

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FINE ARTS AT FIRST

MEMBERS: Caryn Carr, Donna Chestnut, David Erickson (chair), Leann Erickson, Linda Fargus, Kathy Hall, Beverly Mancke, Sarah Miller, Annette Nickey

The program year for the Fine Arts at First Series runs from fall through the following spring. This differs from a calendar program year; our program year overlaps two calendar years.

In the spring (second half) of the 2024-2025 program year, we hosted two concerts, Knock on Wood: Marimba Band (March 2, 2025) and The Chenault Duo Organists (May 18). The May program was a benefit program for the Shenk and Yocum Scholarships for Young Organists of the Harrisburg Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Donations totaled \$995.

We are working to grow our list of donors and our mailing lists as attendees express interest in offering support and request information.

Our 2025-2026 season includes three concerts, a local pianist, a nationally famous early music ensemble and a Lutheran College Choir program. The first program, featuring Antonio Centenera, piano, on October 19, benefited Project SHARE.

In the early summer, we printed and mailed the season brochures with invitations to support the series. In the early fall we prepare and disseminate posters to local churches, libraries, and institutions. As programs approach, we mail or email reminders.

Thanks to the wonderful team that coordinates, decorates, and runs the receptions following each program.

A special thank you to Janelle Hoch for creating the season brochure.

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Jeff Caton, Pastor Leber, Ron Jumper (chair), Rich Wood

First Lutheran currently has three long-time employees, who provide stability and continuity, and a newer addition, Dr. Stanley Wicks, our part-time cantor, who has been a blessing to our congregation in his first ten months on staff. The Personnel Committee, augmented by Donna Chestnut, chair of the Worship & Music Committee, interviewed and auditioned Stan last November, at which time a mock Chancel Choir rehearsal was also held, and recommended to Council that Stan be hired. Pastor Leber facilitated the transition planning and onboarding during November and December, and Stan began officially on January 13, 2025. The Committee conducted his six-month evaluation this summer and noted that the pandemic interrupted our staff evaluation process for other employees.

The Committee voted last fall to transition the church payroll to MinistryWorks, a subsidiary of our insurance carrier, Brotherhood Mutual. Both Pastor Leber and Robin Orner invested a lot of time and energy into this transition during the first six months of 2025. We have already experienced a significant reduction in fees and better customer service since MinistryWorks began processing payroll in July.

After much discussion and input from staff, the Committee recommended to Congregation Council that the weekly work hours of the Office Manager be reduced from 36 to 27, with church building/office hours on Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and Friday, 9 a.m.-12 noon. This change was approved in August and implemented in September.

This fall, the Personnel Committee discussed the changes upcoming in 2026 to the health insurance plans offered by Portico and recommended that First offer “Select Copay 2000”, which is most similar to the current plan offered. The Committee also recommended a staff COLA which is reflected in the proposed 2026 Mission Spending Plan.

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PROPERTY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Jim Brantner, Jeff Caton, Paul Kraus, Pastor Leber, Mike Luther, Rob McDaniel, Sam Orner, Ann Roeder, Rich Wood (chair), plus non-member “friends” who help in our work

The Property Committee's function is to care for First Lutheran's physical plant. A number of items were addressed in the past year.

Lighting in the choir room was significantly upgraded with the replacement of 60-year old fluorescent fixtures with LED panels.

The replacement of the 20+ year old system that controls the ringing of First Lutheran's bells, which was the congregation's approved capital project for the year, is nearing completion. This project involved both

extensive electrical upgrades as well as installation of new equipment from the company that continues to service our bells, Verdin Bell.



Exterior church lighting issues were addressed, including repair of the lamppost blown over in the June storm. A number of other lampposts were rewired this fall, and a flood light on the Christian Ed building was replaced.

The June 30 storm did a lot of damage in the Carlisle area, including to several trees and the above-referenced lamppost on our grounds.

The site of the former Head Start playground and other areas between the main and overflow parking lots were rehabilitated. E.W. Mainhart was engaged to excavate old tree stumps, roots, landscaping cloth, and mulch, grade with new topsoil, and seed for grass, which was done in September. Property Committee volunteers regularly watered the grass this fall to get it established.

Several workdays were held to address areas requiring regular attention (shrubbery and tree trimming, weeding, flower planting, mulching, etc.). Thanks especially to Ann Roeder, who is regularly on the grounds watering, dead-heading, and caring for the Pentecost geraniums planted each spring in the beds on High Street.

And, finally, thanks to all who make themselves available to help out when spur of the moment maintenance issues such as roof leaks and heating issues “pop up”, as they do in a physical plant consisting of buildings that are now 125 (nave and Martin Luther Room and lounge), 59 (Christian Ed building) and six (Atrium) years old.

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SOCIAL MINISTRY AND WORLD OUTREACH COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Patty Gillingham, Janelle Hoch, Ron Jumper, Pastor Leber, Karen Longenecker, Mike Luther, Robin Orner (chair), Sam Simmons, Sue Simmons

During the past year, the Social Ministry & World Outreach Committee supported the following ministries.

American Red Cross Blood Drives: We hosted blood drives on October 26, 2024, and October 25, 2025.

The Salvation Army: Last November members and friends purchased Christmas gifts for 50 children in need through the Angel Tree project. During 2025, volunteers prepared and served meals at My Brother’s Table Soup Kitchen in January, April, July and October.

Sister Parish: We continue to support the congregational and vocational ministries of Divine Redeemer in El Salvador through financial gifts and prayers.

Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry Counties and Carlisle Area Family Life Center: Through our Advent 2024 Fill-a-Box event, we collected 35 boxes of much-needed items for these two organizations.

Carlisle Truck Stop Ministry and Cumberland County Prison: Members baked and packaged Christmas cookies to distribute to travelers and prisoners.

MLK Commemoration Service Scholarship Sponsorship: The committee donated \$100.00 to the MLK Scholarship Fund.

Project SHARE: Our 4th annual chili cook-off on February 1 raised \$800 for Project SHARE.

Supportive Partnerships for Youth (SPY): We made a donation to SPY to help fund its Counselor-in-Training program to offset SPY's loss of funding for the program. First Lutheran also served as a host site for SPY's summer program. From June through early August, students, teachers and volunteers from the community used Festal Hall, our kitchen and a number of classrooms for learning, meals, and fun. We have already committed to host SPY again next summer.



Lutheran World Relief (LWR):

- Personal Care Kits: During Lent, congregation members donated supplies and monetary gifts for 154 personal care kits, which were assembled on Easter Sunday, April 20, blessed on Sunday, April 27, and delivered to the LWR warehouse for distribution around the world.

Easter Sunday kit assembly pictured left.

- School Kits: During our Christmas in July/August initiative, congregation members donated school supplies and monetary gifts for 156 school kits assembled in September.

- Quilts: On Sunday, October 19, 102 quilts (along with the 156 school kits) were blessed before being delivered to the LWR warehouse. In addition, approximately \$300 was collected for LWR's Quilt & Kit Shipping Fund.

West Virginia Flooding Initiative: Congregation members donated \$1,250 to Community Lutheran Partners (the WV-WM Synod social ministry organization) to help those in West Virginia affected by major flooding.

Missionary Support: After much prayerful reflection and deliberation, the missionaries First Lutheran has been supporting in recent years, Dr. Steven and Jodi Swanson, made the decision to resign from the ELCA, effective October 31, 2025, and incorporate their own non-profit to oversee their NICU and pediatric health care ministry in Arusha, Tanzania. This was due primarily to the challenging environment in Tanzania and interference with the operations of the hospitals the Swansons have been serving. The Committee recommended, and Council approved, that First Lutheran continue to support the Swansons' important work through their new non-profit, Institute for Child Healthcare Africa, going forward.

A huge thank you to all! Our ability to help provide for those in need in our community and around the world could not happen without YOU!

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT
January 1 – September 30, 2025

GENERAL CHECKING ACCOUNT 2025

	1st QTR	2nd QTR	JULY	AUG	SEPT	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET
Beginning Balance	13,935	24,593	22,198	15,441	15,252		
CURRENT INCOME							
Offerings (Envelopes, Plate, Special)	83,542	62,927	17,124	21,249	21,672	206,514	208,200
Other Receipts	1,814	588	276	8	303	2,990	3,375
Capital Campaign Offering	3,095	1,985	1,345	335	305	7,065	13,500
MM Transfer - Operating	45,000	55,000	45,000	20,000	25,000	190,000	214,988
MM Transfer - Debt Serv-Principal Only	50,000	0	0	0	3,513	53,513	0
MM Transfer - Memorials	0	553	0	0	0	553	0
Benevolence Offering	5,059	5,399	1,473	1,743	2,588	16,262	22,500
Rental Income	670	700	480	280	375	2,505	1,500
TOTAL INCOME:	189,180	127,151	65,698	43,615	53,756	479,401	464,063

CURRENT EXPENSES

Personnel	58,139	66,783	21,109	19,460	26,556	192,047	196,294
Worship/Music	1,188	684	82	728	148	2,830	2,850
Evangelism	183	167	0	0	0	350	2,100
Stewardship	411	0	0	0	0	411	675
Faith Formation	1,326	966	135	23	72	2,523	3,975
Social Ministry/World Outreach Adm.	174	0	0	0	0	174	56
Administrative	8,753	7,782	2,313	1,657	1,938	22,442	24,225
Property	28,412	19,278	28,215	6,862	6,032	88,799	107,850
Music Department	1,393	2,741	219	0	166	4,518	7,125
Miscellaneous	38	773	73	13	12	908	1,613
Audit Committee	135	0	0	0	2,875	3,010	3,000
Debt Service Interest Expense	9,403	8,507	2,742	2,818	2,804	26,275	29,250
Memorials	0	553	0	0	0	553	0
Benevolence-Synod/Local/Grace Fund	9,748	14,622	11,724	10,041	4,041	50,176	58,275
Social Ministry/World Outreach Benev.	0	136	64	0	0	201	1,500
Sister Parish	3,500	0	3,500	0	0	7,000	5,250
TOTAL EXPENSES:	122,803	122,990	70,176	41,602	44,645	402,216	444,038

CAPITAL PROJECTS 2025

	1st QTR	2nd QTR	JULY	AUG	SEPT	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET
CURRENT INCOME							
Weekly Offering	1,975	5,895	1,245	1,700	2,010	12,825	15,000
Special Gifts	0	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0
Main Parking Lot Reconstruction Appeal	20	0	0	0	0	20	0
Interest	31	34	12	12	12	101	0
TOTAL INCOME:	2,026	6,929	1,257	1,712	2,022	13,946	15,000

CURRENT EXPENSES

Bells Electrical System	0	3,635	0	0	3,635	7,270	8,000
TOTAL EXPENSES:	0	3,635	0	0	3,635	7,270	8,000

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

January 1 – September 30, 2025

MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT 2025

	1st QTR	2nd QTR	JULY	AUG	SEPT	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET
CURRENT INCOME							
Income from Wilmington Trust	34,890	34,890	9,713	6,338	18,438	104,271	118,988
Income from Bryn Mawr Trust	32,226	32,073	10,691	10,691	10,691	96,371	96,000
Interest	2,033	1,382	472	443	427	4,757	0
Special Gifts - Restricted	1,000	0	0	0	3,513	4,513	0
Income - Memorial Monies	775	775	0	625	380	2,555	0
Bequests	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	70,924	69,120	20,876	18,097	33,449	212,466	214,988
CURRENT EXPENSES/TRANSFERS							
Transfer to Current - Operating	45,000	55,000	45,000	20,000	25,000	190,000	214,988
Transfer to Current - Principal Only Payment	50,000	0	0	0	3,513	53,513	0
Transfer to Current - Maintenance Reserve Fund	0	4,376	0	0	0	4,376	0
Transfer to Current - Youth Monies Earmarked	0	2,456	0	0	0	2,456	0
Transfer to Current - Special/Memorials	0	553	0	0	0	553	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	95,000	62,385	45,000	20,000	28,513	250,897	214,988
Ending Balance	367,612	374,347	350,223	348,320	353,257		
Monies Earmarked in Money Market/Capital Projects							
Maintenance Reserve Fund:	262,796						
Main Parking Lot Reconstruction Appeal:	4,539						
Memorials:	4,338						
Paraments Fund:	3,000						
TOTAL:	274,673						
CD at Orrstown Bank (MLR Renovations):	29,943						
CD at Orrstown Bank (Minter Bequest):	448,049						
Debt Service							
Beginning Balance as of 1/1/2025	486,885						
YTD Principal payments:	72,488						
Remaining Principal Balance:	414,397						
Interest Paid YTD:	26,275						

FINE ARTS AT FIRST CHECKING ACCOUNT 2025

	1st QTR	2nd QTR	JULY	AUG	SEPT	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET
CURRENT INCOME							
Plate Offerings	549	995	0	0	0	1,544	600
Donations	50	5,525	0	883	685	7,143	3,000
Interest	19	21	8	8	8	63	38
TOTAL INCOME:	618	6,541	8	891	693	8,750	3,638
CURRENT EXPENSES							
Reception Expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0	600
Publicity/Postage/Misc.	221	185	266	0	0	672	225
Contributions - Local Benevolence	0	995	0	0	0	995	0
Special Musicians	350	500	0	0	0	850	2,250
TOTAL EXPENSES:	571	1,680	266	0	0	2,517	3,075
Ending Balance	25,370	30,231	29,972	30,863	31,556		

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE

MEMBERS: Linda Caton, Donna Chestnut, Jay Chestnut, Kirby Gutshall, Pastor Leber, Linda Martin, Debra Reeder, Stan Wicks, Rich Wood

First Lutheran's pastor and cantor are responsible for worship planning, the selection of hymns, liturgies, and special music, and scheduling rites such as baptisms, first communions, and reception of new members.

The Worship and Music Committee supports this work, evaluates worship, makes recommendations about resources such as new hymnals, discusses trends in worship and music, and oversees the budget for worship supplies.

First Lutheran follows the church calendar, so in the fall of 2024 we observed Reformation Sunday (October 27), All Saints Sunday (November 3) and Christ the King Sunday (November 24).

It takes many hands to get our building ready for Advent/Christmas inside and outside each year. Thanks to the volunteers who set up our trees in the nave and Atrium, pick up wreaths and greens, help with the hanging of the greens, decorate our outside lampposts and railings, set up the Mary display, install spotlights and banners, install and remove the pew candleholders, foil the poinsettias, etc. This year, the Committee developed a "roadmap" of all these tasks to make annual scheduling more efficient.

The Chancel Choir began wearing their new white tunics, similar to the albs clergy and assisting ministers wear, in December. The tunics replaced the choir's 40+ year old cassocks and surplices.

Lessons and Carols was held on December 15 at 4 p.m. While worship was lovely, snow started falling shortly beforehand which had an impact on attendance. This was David Erickson's final worship event as our part-time Chancel Choir director. The Evangelism Committee hosted a cookie reception following.

We had a guest organist for Christmas Eve, with holy communion and candle lighting at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

We thanked our long-term substitute organist, David Binkley, with a reception following worship on Sunday, January 5, 2025. David's last Sunday was January 12. We were delighted to welcome our new part-time cantor, Dr. Stanley Wicks, who joined our staff officially on January 13. Stan has been a blessing, offering his vast experience, many skills, servant's heart, and wonderful sense of humor to our congregation.

Under Stan's leadership, on March 2, the Chancel Choir resumed weekly worship leadership for the first time since the pandemic began in March 2020.

Our worship schedule for Lent, Holy Week and Easter was similar to recent years. Pastor Leber offered mid-week study and evening prayer on Wednesdays during Lent.

A brass ensemble (students from Messiah University) helped lead Easter Sunday (10:30 a.m.) worship for the first time since 2019, which helped make the day especially festive. A light breakfast, egg hunts, and LWR personal care kit assembly occurred between services.

The seven weeks of Easter celebration, during which we reintroduced the congregational sharing of Christ's peace (suspended during the pandemic), concluded with Pentecost Sunday, when red geraniums decorated the chancel, as has been our tradition.

Our committee discussed introducing a new liturgy to the congregation from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (our hymnal), which we have not been able to do without a musician on staff. Beginning in June, some of the liturgical music from ELW 2 was sung at the 10:30 a.m. service, with the remaining music from ELW 2 introduced in September when the Chancel Choir resumed worship leadership.

Our annual Fellowship Sunday occurred on Sunday, June 22, with one combined holy communion service held at 9:15 a.m. followed by a continental breakfast.

This spring, the long-time chair of the Worship & Music Committee, Donna Chestnut, announced her retirement from this role. Donna has been a faithful and careful steward of First Lutheran's worship life, and we are so grateful for her dedicated service. We are also grateful she has agreed to remain on the committee as a member! Linda Caton will be assuming the role of chair going forward.



Easter Sunday 2025

**2026 PROPOSED MISSION SPENDING PLAN
GENERAL FUND**

	<u>2025</u> <u>Approved Plan</u>	<u>2026</u> <u>Proposed Plan</u>	<u>Inc/(Dec)</u> <u>Change</u>
Income:			
Weekly Offerings	\$ 277,600	\$ 292,600	\$ 15,000
Benevolence	\$ 30,000	\$ 26,000	\$ (4,000)
Rental Income	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,000
Other Receipts	\$ 22,500	\$ 4,500	\$ (18,000)
Trust Income:			
Transfer from Trusts	\$ 286,650	\$ 275,800	\$ (10,850)
Total Income	<u>\$ 618,750</u>	<u>\$ 601,900</u>	<u>\$ (16,850)</u>
Expenses:			
Personnel	\$ 261,725	\$ 255,017	\$ (6,708)
Worship & Music	\$ 3,800	\$ 3,800	\$ -
Music Department	\$ 9,500	\$ 9,900	\$ 400
Evangelism	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,800	\$ -
Stewardship	\$ 900	\$ 900	\$ -
Faith Formation	\$ 5,300	\$ 6,300	\$ 1,000
Social Ministry & Global Outreach Oper.	\$ 75	\$ 175	\$ 100
Audit Committee	\$ 3,000	\$ -	\$ (3,000)
Property	\$ 143,800	\$ 139,500	\$ (4,300)
Administrative	\$ 32,300	\$ 33,800	\$ 1,500
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,150	\$ 2,400	\$ 250
Debt Service	\$ 66,700	\$ 60,608	\$ (6,092)
Benevolence	\$ 86,700	\$ 86,700	\$ -
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 618,750</u>	<u>\$ 601,900</u>	<u>\$ (16,850)</u>
Net	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

2026 PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECTS AND FINE ARTS AT FIRST OPERATING BUDGETS

2026 Proposed Capital Projects Operating Budget

	<u>2025 Approved Budget</u>	<u>2026 Proposed Budget</u>	<u>Inc/(Dec) Change</u>
Income:			
Weekly Offerings	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -
Total Income (for Capital Projects only)	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -
Expenses:			
Capital Projects	\$ 8,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 12,000
Total Expenses	\$ 8,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 12,000
Net	\$ 12,000	\$ -	

2025 Approved Capital Projects:

Bells Electrical System

2026 Proposed Capital Project:

Carpet Replacement - Lower Level East Wing

2026 Proposed Fine Arts at First Operating Budget

	<u>2025 Approved Budget</u>	<u>2026 Proposed Budget</u>	<u>Inc/(Dec) Change</u>
Income:			
Plate	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 200
Donations	\$ 4,000	\$ 6,500	\$ 2,500
Interest/Miscellaneous	\$ 50	\$ 60	\$ 10
Total Income	\$ 5,050	\$ 7,760	\$ 2,710
Expenses:			
Publicity	\$ 800	\$ 500	\$ (300)
Reception Expenses	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ -
Special Musicians	\$ 3,500	\$ 8,600	\$ 5,100
Contributions - Local Benevolence	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,000	\$ (500)
Total Expenses	\$ 6,100	\$ 10,400	\$ 4,300
Net	\$ (1,050)	\$ (2,640)	



55+ Holiday Sweater Contest – December 2024

*Our first (hopefully annual!)
women's retreat at Camp
Nawakwa – January 2025*





2025 Chili Cook-Off cooks – winner Ruth Osborne (3rd from right)



Youth and family hike on the AT – October 2025

First Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)

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