

Annual Report 2023

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Congregation Meeting

January 28, 2024

Agenda

1. Opening prayer and devotion
2. Review/approval of minutes from June 2023 congregational meeting
3. Senior Pastor's report
4. Principal/School report
5. Financial report
6. Election of officers, Council members and members of boards
7. Approval of bylaw change
8. Benediction

Congregation Statistics 2023

Baptisms	7
Confirmations	12
New Members (adults and children)	9
Transfer Out	20
Released	4
Deaths	12
Grace membership – baptized	1,067
Communicant Members	914
Associate Members	34

Dear fellow members of Grace:

Greetings to you, and I hope your new year is off to a good and blessed start and will continue that way throughout the year. As with any new year, it begins with counting our many blessings. But it also begins with global, local, and personal tensions and challenges, which this year will also play out against the background of a divisive, disturbingly nasty, but watershed election. Amidst all of this, we have to make decisions with unknown consequences and take actions with unknowable outcomes. It is so valuable to be able to undertake all this with a core sense of peace, the gift that comes from faith in God's saving grace and that also gives us the courage and confidence to decide and to act. And it is so valuable to have the reinforcement of the regular ministries of word and sacrament and music, and the solidarity we get from each other as fellow believers here at Grace.

We are grateful for that peace and solidarity, and it is ours to tend to as well. As a congregation, we do our best to discern God's will for us, and then we organize ourselves – time and talent and resources – to carry it out to the best of our ability and capacity. We have two congregational meetings each year to refresh ourselves about our work together, make decisions, and plan actions. One of those meetings is upcoming: Sunday, right after church (about 11:15 am), on January 28. At this meeting we also take the important step of electing new leadership for our committees, boards and council and express gratitude to those ending a period of service and those who have agreed to serve. A light lunch will be served.

Please attend the meeting. We are not able to livestream, so your presence would be appreciated. Happy New Year!

Peace,

John Bouman

The Rev. David R. Lyle, Senior Pastor – 2023 Annual Report

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43.19

The God we worship is the God of new things. In the living dance of Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always bringing newness forth from the creative wellspring of divine love. Thanks be to God! We live in a fallen world, a world in which things fall apart. We look back, often with grief or yearning. We look forward as doubt and worry bubble up. It can seem as if we are wandering in the wilderness, lost in the desert. And still, behold, God is doing new things!

At Grace this year, this newness was marked by a shift in our Sunday morning schedule. While I hope for the day when attendance will necessitate a return to two services, I nevertheless delight to be present with the whole worshipping community of Grace at our single Sunday service. What joy to sing praise all together to the God who meets us in Word and sacrament! As 2024 unfurls, we will be working to better and more faithfully use our Sunday mornings to deepen and grow our faith and discipleship.

Our worship life bore witness to the faithfulness of God’s promises throughout the year. We rejoiced with seven new children of God, welcomed into God’s grace through Holy Baptism. We celebrated with twelve young adults as their baptismal vows were affirmed in Confirmation. We welcomed seven new members to our community and celebrated two marriages. And we commended twelve members into God’s unfailing hands, trusting that in dying they now live through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I reflect upon the past year, I cannot help but be grateful to those with whom I share the gifts and tasks of ministry. Our church staff has seen very little turnover this year. I am constantly thankful for the collegial relationships I share with Pastor Costello and Pastor Medlin, both of whom are fully dedicated servants of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I also celebrate that we ended the fiscal year with a modest surplus. The work of stewardship is ongoing, which is as it should be. Thank you for your generous support, financial and otherwise, of the mission and ministry that has been entrusted to us at Grace.

I am grateful for the gift of sabbatical this year. This time spent learning and growing has blessed our shared ministry, and the gift of time to spend with my family is one beyond price. Thank you, too, for your support as I completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at Candler School of Theology. The journey was a joy, but I’m glad it is complete!

I encourage you to read the reports collected here. They bear witness to the great and varied work that God has accomplished through each of you.

As we look to the coming year, we hear a voice from the throne, a voice of promise and power: “See, I am making all things new.” This voice is the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the very Word who brings new creation into being.

In the hope of Christ,

Dave Lyle
Senior Pastor

The Rev. Troy Medlin, Associate Pastor – 2023 Annual Report

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Beloved children of God and people of Grace,

November 2023 marked my third anniversary as your associate pastor. The time has gone by so fast. We have experienced so many different times and seasons in the midst of those years. I am grateful for all of the ways we have partnered together in the good work of the gospel and look with faithful anticipation for all the years ahead. The work we share is so meaningful and I am glad to do it alongside each of you. Every year I am most grateful for the gift of gathering together around the risen Christ who comes among us in bread, wine, water, word, and in your very real presence week after week. I never tire of meeting you on Sunday mornings as we encounter the Living Word who raises us from death to life and calls us out into the world again and again.

I want to express my deep appreciation for all of the staff that make ministry such a blessing in this place. Pastor Lyle and Pastor Costello are both such thoughtful and encouraging colleagues. What a gift to be partners in ministry with both of them. I'm especially thankful for the close collaboration I share with Julie Modrich. Her dedicated work related to Sunday School, Confirmation, and beyond is invaluable as we walk with children and youth as they live into the promises of their baptism.

The delightful duties of preaching Christ crucified and risen, presiding at the table and the font, presiding at funerals, and providing pastor care alongside Pastor Lyle and our parish nurse Joanna Schubkegel continue to be highlights for me. These practices keep me grounded and continue to call me back to the same ocean of mercy that I have the privilege of calling each of you back to week in and week out.

Serving as the pastor to our high school youth continues to inspire me. Our youth are such witnesses to vibrant and dynamic faith lived out in our daily lives. It is an honor to walk alongside them. One of the ministry highlights of 2023 was accompanying five high schoolers, one college student, and our other adult leader, Scott Street, to Appalachia, VA. for an ASP service trip. Our group was an example of faithfulness, welcome, hospitality, and eagerness to serve for all we encountered. You would have been so proud! Faith formation of all ages enjoyed the chance to make lunches, collect breakfast items for Housing Forward, and collect items for our new neighbors as well this past year.

During this past year we had the opportunity to serve our new neighbors (migrants mostly coming from Venezuela) who have come to live in Oak Park. I've been awestruck by your generosity, especially in providing lots of warm winter clothes to those who have found themselves here. Those gifts have also been shared with those who have come to The Harmony Food Pantry. Thank you.

I count myself blessed to get to work with so many talented and faithful lay-leaders on and off committees. Particularly all those who are on the Board of Discipleship and all the committees that roll up to that board. Each of these people and their committees are such powerful witnesses to the life of the baptized. They always endeavor *to serve all people following the example of Jesus and work for justice and peace in all the earth*. That is the joyful calling of each one of us who have been baptized into Christ. I encourage you to check out all of their reports in this booklet and join all that God is up to among us.

I continue to serve as the pastoral representative for both the Men of Grace small group and the young adult Theology on Tap group. We are always looking for new folks, so join us sometime. I also continue to serve as a volunteer chaplain for the Oak Park Police Department.

As always, I look with hope towards this coming year. I am filled with gratitude for each of you. I cannot wait to see where our crucified and risen savior will lead us together in 2024. Wherever that is I know he will meet us with arms outstretched and life beyond every end we face. We will continue to become who we receive, the body of Christ. Thanks be to God!

With you on the journey,
Pastor Troy E. Medlin

Grace Lutheran School – 2023 Annual Report

Grace Lutheran School administration and staff began 2023 working on our re-accreditation. Many reports, plans, and virtual meetings with Cognia took place in preparation for the review. In July, we learned that we once again received full accreditation through Cognia.

Enrollment has continued to rise in the school. We started the 2023-24 school year with 210 students, up 5% from the previous year. Huge thanks to our Ana Garcia, our Director of Enrollment and Marketing, and the many parents and congregation members who spread the good word about our amazing school.

Grace Lutheran School saw a lot of success in 2023, both academically and in extra-curricular activities. Our end of school year standardized testing results in May were strong once again. Over 40% of our students scored at or above the 80th percentile in reading. Nearly half achieved this level in math, and just over half scored at this level in language usage which covers grammar and writing mechanics. In terms of extra-curricular activities, our girls basketball team placed 6th at the Lutheran Sports Association state tournament, and our girls track team placed 5th at the LSA state track meet. The number of students in orchestra has increased, and for the first time ever, this fall we have a Robotics team made up of 16 students in Grades 6-8.

The Forward in Faith endowment has continued to grow. Through the support of many individual donors and a large contribution from Grace Church, we now have over \$2M in pledges and donations to the campaign, with nearly \$1.7M of that amount collected to date.

The biggest challenge of the current school year has been staffing. In May of last year, the Church Council, in response to a recommendation from the Elementary Education Committee, approved the addition of a part-time Assistant Principal. Our 6th grade teacher, Kristi Underhill, was hired into this role along with teaching some upper-level math classes. Throughout the summer we were unable to find a teacher for 6th grade. In order to get everything covered, Kristi Underhill, Breah Ponce, and Bill Koehne have all had to teach more than expected. We continue to work on finding the right person to fill this position. In addition, three weeks into the school year our 2nd grade teacher, a new hire in August, resigned. Karla Koehne filled in as the 2nd grade teacher for a week and a half until we hired Megan Galeener as our new teacher in 2nd grade. Staffing our extended day care program was also quite a challenge to start this school year, but we are in a good place now with that staffing.

Despite the staffing challenges, many great things are happening at Grace Lutheran School. God continues to bless us in many ways, as outlined above. Thank you to Grace Lutheran Church for your continued support of this important ministry.

Bill Koehne, Principal

Ministry of Music – 2023 Annual Report

...and they were continually in the temple praising God. – Luke 24:53

At the conclusion of Jesus' ascension into heaven in Luke's Gospel, the disciples worshiped Jesus and then returned to Jerusalem. What happened next? The Evangelist tells us that "they were continually in the temple praising God."

I have mentioned from time to time that I think of the Grace Parish Choir when I hear this verse, because often I feel that I spend more time with them than I do anyone else. When we spend time together, we do so either in the sanctuary at Grace or in a room just across the hall where we are preparing to be in the sanctuary. During Advent and Lent these minutes seem to multiply and, with additional services, our work does indeed seem to be continual in nature. The rhythm of the liturgical year and the gifts of God given through word and sacrament give us strength, however, and our continual work of proclaiming the gospel in song is one in which we find joy.

Adults and children alike are part of this proclamation at Grace. From first grade on students at Grace School are invited to participate in leading worship. Grace School choirs participate in Sunday services, midweek Advent and Lent services, the Advent/Christmas Concert, the beloved children's services of Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve, and more. Attendance and participation continues to grow and we give thanks for the support of parents alike, without whom none of this would be possible. The Parish Choir continues with their busy schedule of singing every Sunday morning, for festival services, and the monthly Bach Cantata Vespers services. Additionally, they sing for the Advent/Christmas Concert, at funerals and memorial services, and many are traveling to Germany this summer to sing as part of the Bach Festival in Leipzig.

I am extremely grateful for all those who continue to lead worship at Grace, for the Worship Committee, and for those who schedule volunteers. I am also thankful for Johanna Johnson, our music teacher at Grace School, and Gwen Gotsch, who is now conducting our school handbell ensemble and Women's Choir.

May the Lord richly bless your worship at Grace, especially as you lift your own voice in praise of God. May you do so continually.

Grace and Peace,



Pastor Michael D. Costello, Grace Cantor

Office of Administration and Finance – 2023 Annual Report

The Office of Administration and Finance staff did not change in 2023 –Jim McClanahan as Director, Cecelia Thornton as Assistant, Jose Meza as Technology Manager, Dave Pfeiffer as Facilities Manager, and Peter Modrich as Facilities Assistant.

The Office’s primary goal is to meet your needs and expectations - our members, parents, students, staff and guests. We are responsible for Grace’s financial transactions, records and reports; facilities upkeep, maintenance, and safety; hardware and software technology; audio/visual technologies; and human resources. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Office works closely with the Board of Finance and Property; the Finance, Property, Endowment, Budget, Stewardship, Personnel, and Benevolence Committees; Church Council; the Church and School Technology and Emergency Preparedness Committees; and Church and School staff.

On the financial front:

- 2023-24 - In June, the congregation approved Grace’s 2023-24 budget of \$3,788,100 (7.18% increase from 2022-23).
 - At the half-way point, we are running a \$84,000 deficit.
- 2022-23 - At the January 2024 Congregational Meeting, the congregation is receiving the unaudited 2022-23 financial statements.
 - Church revenue was under budget, school revenue was over budget, and church and school operating expenses were under budget, resulting in an operating *surplus* for the year. The endowment fund enjoyed a stronger year than 2021-22, resulting in an even larger overall surplus for the year.

As to facilities:

- Over the summer, we replaced carpeting in certain classrooms and hallways, and we made major roof repairs to portions of the flat roof. The carpet was over 20 years old and the roof even older.
- Grace’s solar panels installed in January 2020, generated about 12% of our electricity needs in 2023 (7% last year). The percentage increased because the panels did not fully operate from July through December 2022, due to supply chain issues with a defective part.

On the technology front, we continue to enhance Grace’s network, internet, and audio/video.

On the human resources side, with the Personnel Committee and Church Council, we continue to improve the Employee Handbook to incorporate fair, clear and complete policies and practices.

Our goal is to serve you by keeping you informed about financial matters and making Grace as attractive, comfortable, useful and safe as possible. We welcome your ideas and suggestions about improving our financial systems and reporting; improving the appearance, condition and functionality of our facilities; improving our technology; and improving our employee policies and practices.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim McClanahan, Director

Communications – 2023 Annual Report

As we move into another year, I look back with gratitude for growth and cooperation. In 2023 we came together in so much collaborative work, as every year: I'm thankful for each monthly submission to Grace Notes that brought information and faith to our readers, for website news submissions, announcements, and for all your kind input and new ideas shared. This is what helps me keep all that is working and do my best to tweak the rough edges of our communication.

As always, much of my work in the past year was related to maintenance: besides the weekly and monthly communications and collaborations with Grace School, we have also used a good portion of the summer learning, investigating, and taking notes about the best possible options for a potential substitute for Constant Contact, our current mass email provider, along with a number of other digital tools. Many of us are aware of the platform's shortcomings, such as delays in emailing and errors in delivery. Because of that, I spent some time spent learning about alternatives, any potential future transition should be smooth, with little to no interference to our communications. After testing out at least 15 different providers and their products to check for usability, effectiveness and tools available, we have a detailed list with notes of the best options available in case of a future time of continuous communication trouble.

Still along the lines of technology, IT and I have been working to implement a project conceptualized for Grace in 2023: an atrium screen to display daily schedules for the church – much like our current Sunday banners, located in the atrium and near Fellowship Hall, which contain the day's schedule of activities. Feel free to send feedback once the first version is up and running!

In the past year, I also took some time to reorganize historical files and collect archives and files that were previously not available in digital form: some images from the 1902 room were scanned and made digital for use -- you might even have seen some in a past issue of Grace Notes. This was only possible due to the amazing work of all who joined Julie Hinz in the media room to look through, sort, and organize the space. I stopped by many times to collect one thing or another for use; paintings, pictures of the buildings, old floor plans. Hopefully they can all be shared back in the future, one way or another.

To put it shortly 2023 at Grace was full of sorting files, making banners, compiling announcements, uploading livestreams, learning new things, updating data, preparing for new challenges, and many more daily, small, "behind-the-scenes" tasks – but what truly matters is that I got to do it all to honor the Lord you, the loving people of Grace. Thank you!

Brendha Klaus, Communications Coordinator

Board of Discipleship - 2023 Annual Report

Throughout 2024, the Board of Discipleship and its related Committees has worked to connect activities in an effort to provide opportunities for spiritual and communal growth both at Grace and throughout the greater area.

Our various Committees were as active as ever this year, arranging for leadership training focused on racial equity; providing care and comfort for the hungry and unhoused; and being ready to receive immigrants and refugees to our area with open arms, clean clothes, and a warm meal.

We are happy to have played a role in educating Grace children, families, and congregation through weekly talks and curated reading opportunities in our library.

Together with you, the Grace congregation, charitable organizations have received valuable financial support to help them establish and grow ministries of their own.

2024 was a year to be proud of for the Board of Discipleship and we hope the Grace congregation has felt the support and passion we've attempted to bring to our activities.

On behalf of the outgoing members of the Board of Discipleship, I want to thank our fellow board members for their partnership over these past years, and the Grace Church and School communities for their trust and support. Our best wishes go out to the incoming board members as they begin their important journey. And to Julie Hinz and Pastor Troy, thank you for your spirit and never-ending support in keeping us going!

- Ryan Balock

Board of Discipleship Members

- Karin Danganan – Justice & Peace
- Stephanie Wilkening – Social Ministry
- Jessica Bullock – EEC
- Hannah Langhoff – Adult Education
- Scott Street – Benevolence
- Tina Baird – Children and Family Ministries
- Ryan Balock – Library and Chairperson
- Kristi Underhill – Grace School
- Pastor Troy Medlin – Grace Church

2023 Annual Report – Children and Family Ministry

During this past year Children and Family Ministry has continued to focus on helping students explore faith and Christian living in partnership with other ministries of Grace Church. Challenges continue with finding volunteers to implement Faith Formation programs.

Faith Formation instruction highlights

- **Sunday School** (PK to 4th grade) 46 preschool through fourth grade children enrolled in Sunday school.
- **Pre-Confirmation** (5th and 6th grade) We brought back our reconfirmation instruction using Connect curriculum. We have 16 students registered for this instruction.
- **Confirmation.** Twelve ninth-graders were confirmed in October. We currently have twelve confirmands in our eighth grade class and eight in seventh grade. Confirmation instruction is led by Pastor Lyle and Pastor Troy.
- **Mentor Ministry** led by Linda and Scott Street. Mentors and 2023 confirmands met through September of 2023 before affirming their faith. Another amazing group of 8th graders and mentors were connected this fall currently led by Jessica and Keith Bullock. We are excited to walk with them on their faith journey.
- **Combined church and school events**
 - Friday Barn Dance -April 2023, 120 in attendance**
 - Families of all ages attended for fun, food, fellowship and lots of dancing.
 - BBQ pulled chicken, hotdogs, Mac & Cheese, coleslaw, fruit and dessert were served.
 - Middle School Christmas Party**
 - About forty-five 6-8 graders gathered for Christmas cheer in festive apparel.
 - Pizza, hot cocoa and cookies were served.
 - Many laughs and fun were had throughout the evening, gift exchange and open gym.
- **Communion Retreat** Seven fourth graders and their parents attended the one-evening retreat on March 3 led by Pastor Troy and Julie Hinz. Students designed and glazed a chalice and decorated a white garment with symbols of their life and faith. Families created videos of their child answering questions about their white garments. The families of our first communion students worshiped and communed together in person on Palm Sunday.
- **Confirmation Retreat** Fourteen confirmands joined Pastors Lyle and Troy and Julie and Katarina Modrich at camp. It was wonderful to return to Lutherdale for our first retreat since the pandemic. We had an amazing time at Lutherdale learning about Martin Luther, sharing in worship, playing, laughing and growing together in Christ.

Service projects

Throughout the year, children and their families gathered to participate in various service projects. Epiphany lunch packing for Housing Forward, a Lent project for Beyond Hunger, lunches packed for The Night Ministry twice and a Pentecost project for clients of Housing Forward.

Together in Christ,

Julie Modrich, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Elementary Education Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Board Members: Joanna Schubkegel (chairperson), Sara Chizzo, Ed Kelly, Nicole Schmidt, Janel Bishop, Ed Mason, Jessica Bullock. (Bill Koehne (Grace School Principal) and Rev. David Lyle are non-voting members.)

Per Grace by-laws, the Elementary Education Committee is responsible for overseeing the operations of Grace School. The EEC accomplishes this by setting policy for the School (subject to the Board of Discipleship and congregational oversight), receiving monthly reports from the principal and interacting with the principal to set goals for and to deal with issues affecting the administration of the Church's day school ministry.

In 2023 the board did the following:

Increased Communication/Expanded Representation

- communicated with teachers via the School Leadership Team consisting of teachers nominated by their peers and administration.
- Recruited two new members to the EEC. Nicole Schmidt is a current Grace school parent and Grace Church member. Janel Bishop is the parent of two Grace school students.

Administration

- hired an Assistant Principal and have helped navigate the new role along with the lack of a full time 6th grade teacher.
- surveyed teachers and evaluated the principal.
- dealt with personnel issues and concerns, as well as hiring decisions.
- set the 2024-2025 school year calendar
- update policies and procedures

Marketing

- engaged with Ana Garcia to support her efforts and access her progress.
- helped host the donut-making and sales for the Oak Park Farmer's Market.

Parents

- The EEC conducted a parent survey to gauge satisfaction on a range of topics.
- participated in parent group discussions around school uniform/dress code changes.

Finances

- a committee member regularly attended church finance committee meetings and updating the EEC on financial matters impacting the school ministry.
- set tuition and update variable tuition policies
- an EEC member took part in the Grace Budget Committee meetings.

Adult Education – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Ted Anton (chair), Troy Medlin (pastoral representative), Dan Cattau, Jim Kerns, Hannah Langhoff (Board of Discipleship representative), Laura Merwin

We began the year with the Rev. Dr. Roger Ferlo, who spoke on Dante's *Inferno*. Joanna Schubkegel and Melissa DeVries did a two-week presentation on late life directives. In February, Jim Kerns spoke on debunking brain myths, and Grace's cantor Michael Costello reported on his sabbatical. Dr. Laura Merwin, Dr. Carol Rausch Albright, Dr. John Albright, and Dr. Larry Garber participated in a panel discussion on how their Christian faith informs their work as scientists.

In March, David Pope, President of the Oak Park Residence Corporation, spoke on racial justice in affordable housing and the church's role in Oak Park. In April, Eunice Eifert presented on ancient theater and the early Church, while Julie Hinz reported on her first year serving as Fellowship Coordinator at Grace.

As is customary, we went on recess during the summer months. We kicked off the second half of the year with Sharenda Barlar, Senior Lecturer in Spanish at Wheaton, who spoke about her experiences leading groups of students on the Camino de Santiago.

In October, Pastor Troy Medlin presented on his theological influences. Dr. Jill Baumgaertner, poetry editor at *The Christian Century*, read from two new books, *From Shade to Shine: New Poems* and *Taking Root in the Heart: 34 Poets from The Christian Century*. Linda Street, leader of Grace's refugee resettlement team, spoke about assisting asylum seekers arriving in Chicago. Ted Anton gave a presentation on his new book, *Programmable Planet: The Synthetic Biology Revolution*. Dr. Michael Marissen, Professor Emeritus at Swarthmore College, spoke about the relation of scripture to Bach's music.

In November we were joined by Leslie Lopez, Director of Development at Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois, on the occasion of LCFS's 150th anniversary. In December, Pastor Dave Lyle reported on his sabbatical. We continued our December tradition of having Elizabeth Palmer, the book editor from *The Christian Century*, present on the best books of the year.

During 2023, Grace went from two services to one 10:00 service on Sunday mornings. Thus, instead of occurring between services, Adult Education sessions are now scheduled for 9:00 AM, before the Sunday service. We have continued to use a hybrid structure, with in-person attendees meeting in the Seminar Room and virtual attendees using Zoom. In 2024, we hope to publicize our speakers and sessions better and achieve better attendance. We are always on the lookout for new speakers and topics and welcome any suggestions from the congregation.

Respectfully submitted,
Hannah Langhoff
Board of Discipleship Representative

BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Committee Members: Esther Armstrong, Steve Beck, Jessica Bullock, Val Stefanic, Scott Street, Shawn Vogen

The committee focuses on ensuring basic needs of humanity as a top priority – alleviating homelessness, hunger and providing for the needs of families and young people, including refugees and asylum seekers. Alignment with a Christian mission and status as a non-profit organization were essential criteria.

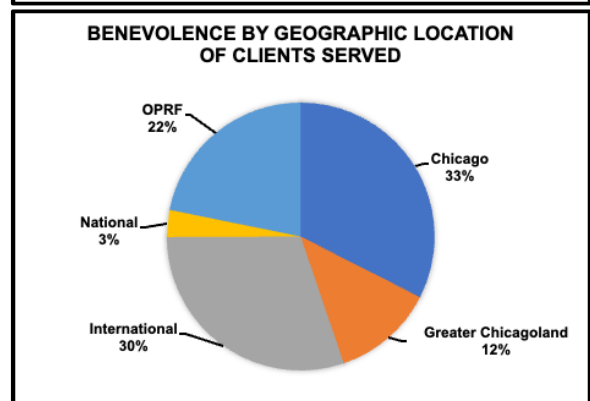
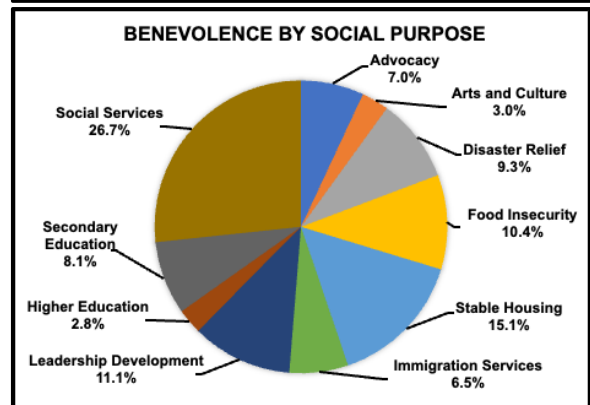
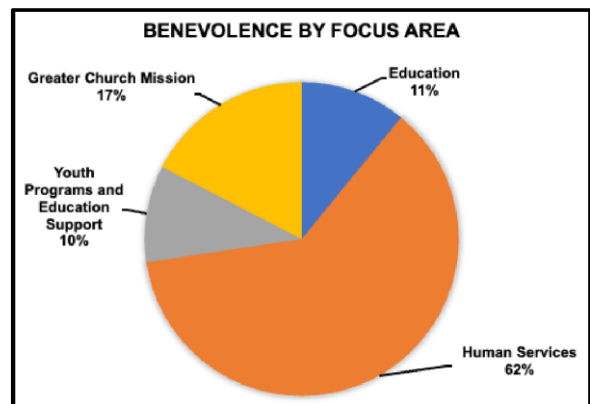
Additional criteria included:

- o Donation Impact
- o Grace Lutheran Connection
- o Geographic Proximity
- o Service Area
- o Responsiveness
- o Justice and Peace

We believe God continues to call our committee to a model emphasizing increased financial support to fewer organizations. The Council approved \$228,000 from church revenue and \$16,000 from the Kingdom Frontier Fund for Benevolence distribution in the current fiscal year.

Benevolence Ministries Funded

- A House in Austin
- Appalachia Service Project
- Beyond Hunger (OPRF Food Pantry)
- Build Chicago (New)
- Cabrini Green Legal Aid Clinic
- Center for Christian Education
- Concordia University
- Cornerstone Academy
- ELCA Global Missions
- ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod
- ELCA World Hunger
- ELCA- International Women Leaders
- Harmony Community Church Food Pantry
- Hephzibah (New)
- Hope for Grieving Children - Africa
- Housing Forward
- Kidz Express
- L'Arche Chicago (New)
- Lawndale Christian Legal Center
- Lutheran Child & Family Services of IL
- Lutheran Disaster Response
- Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service
- Lutheran School of Theology Chicago
- Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
- Lutheran World Relief (New)
- Maywood Fine Arts (New)
- New Moms
- Pangea Educational Development



Benevolence Ministries Cont'd:

Refugee One

Serving People with a Mission

The Night Ministry

Uniting Voices Chicago

Valparaiso University

Walther Christian Academy

Young Adults in Global Mission

Justice and Peace Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Dear friends in Christ,

The Justice and Peace Committee began 2023 by hosting a Leadership Retreat with members of the Clergy, Staff, Grace Council, Boards, and Committees, as well as representatives from Grace School. The retreat, held at Grace on February 11, was facilitated by Rev. Sunitha Mortha, Associate to the Bishop and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging for the Metro Chicago Synod of the ELCA. Pr. Sunitha led us through a series of activities designed to help the participants discover how listening to the stories of people and communities can lead to a deeper understanding of their issues and concerns as well as how we all fit together as One Body in Christ. The participants had the opportunity to tell their own stories in small groups and to share with the larger group, an enriching exercise that helped open our hearts to the experiences of others.

The next step in this journey will be a second retreat on February 10, 2024. Participants from the first retreat are being asked to complete a survey called the Intercultural Development Inventory, or IDI. The IDI is an assessment of intercultural competence that empowers individuals and groups to engage cultural differences more effectively. We will use the IDI results to help the Grace community understand what is contributing to our successes and challenges in areas of difference, and what actions we can take to navigate those differences more effectively. At the upcoming retreat, Pr. Sunitha will walk us through the group-level results of the IDI and help us explore next steps individually and as a community.

During 2023, the committee partnered with other Grace groups and area congregations to raise awareness and serve the needs of those in the local community. The committee contributed \$200 from our budget to purchase items for Welcome Kits for Foster Children, an initiative led by the Grace Social Ministry Committee that provided duffel bags filled with essential items to children being placed in foster families. We joined in an effort led by First United Church of Oak Park to sponsor a sign in front of Grace in June, “Imagine a World Without Gun Violence,” to bring awareness to the ongoing issue of gun violence in our country and our local communities. Volunteers from the committee also stepped up to help when migrants were housed at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and United Lutheran Church in Oak Park.

In 2023 the committee had the opportunity to meet twice with members of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale who are engaged in similar justice and peace work. We shared the story of our journey over the past several years and learned how they are working to build awareness of racial and other justice issues within their own congregation. We look forward to working with them in the future.

Members of our committee have been attending meetings of the Community of Congregations and the Congregations Networking for Social Justice. We have also started to explore how we can partner with Live Free Illinois, an organization dedicated to addressing violence in Chicago’s Black communities and clearing the records of those who have been incarcerated and served their time so they can successfully return to the community without living under the shadow of their prior incarceration.

The committee is fortunate to benefit from the passion and commitment of the members who served during 2023: Pat Anderson, Karin Danganan, Sue Foran, Larry Garber, Ruth Hughes-McElravey, Sabrina Maggio, Dick Martens, Miriam Moore, Mary Paulson, Harriet Roberts, and Stephanie Wilkening, as well as Julie Hinz, our staff liaison, and Rev. Troy Medlin, our pastoral representative.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance Wilkening
Justice and Peace Committee Chair

Library Committee - 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members:

Linda Street

Olinda Fink

Carolyn Garber

Marilyn Fall

Pastor Troy Medlin – Resource

Ryan Balock – Board of Discipleship representative

The library continues to be a welcoming space on Sunday mornings. The *Cornerstones* fellowship makes regular use of the space on Wednesday mornings as well. Hearing is often difficult for seniors in the larger meeting areas at Grace. *Cornerstones* participants are thankful to have access to the library. In addition, *GriefShare* and *Finding Hope* groups have found the church library to be an intimate venue for quiet, personal sharing dealing with tender topics. The *Grace Knitters*, the team folding the Grace Notes and other groups are visitors here as well. We commend the willingness of Grace Staff as they rearrange chairs and tables to facilitate a variety of uses for this space.

And besides that – we have books, CDs, and videos to check out! Yes, we are a lending library with a diverse collection on all sorts of topics, plus fiction and children’s books. Best advice – browse the shelves while sipping your coffee on Sunday morning. Check out a book that calls your name.

The seasonal collection of books in the atrium display case has evolved to provide a shared experience with other church committee groups. Please contact any member of the library committee to arrange to use this space for your group. Books available in the library related to the work of your specific committee can be displayed along with other materials sharing the work of your group.

Religion in Literature books are regularly ordered so there are at least two copies of each selected text available for ALL Grace members who wish to join in the discussions or to just read the books for their own pleasure. Check out the ladder-style shelf for the *Religion in Literature* books.

Other new books are regularly ordered based on the recommendations of Grace readers. We are always open to suggestions regarding new books.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Street, Library Committee Chair

Social Ministry Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Rebecca Dahlstrom, Jo-Ellyn Dorsey, Heidi Hamernik (co-chair), Susan Hickey, Julie Hinz (staff liaison), Loretta Lattyak, Ellie Schnack, Lance Wilkening, Stephanie Wilkening (co-chair)

The Social Ministry Committee's mission is to raise awareness about people in need and offer opportunities for hands-on service. This year we continued to sponsor a variety of initiatives for many community organizations. We can't thank the congregation enough for its generous support. The following is a description of the work performed and sponsored by the SMC in 2023.

Food Drives and Food Pantry Donations

Monthly donations supply food on a rotating basis to Beyond Hunger in Oak Park; Fraternite Notre Dame in Chicago's Austin community; Harmony Church in Chicago's North Lawndale community; and Forest Park Food Pantry. In partnership with Grace Lutheran School, the committee also held a spring food drive and the proceeds were shared among the pantries.

Meals for the Night Ministry

Committee and congregation members cooked and delivered two meals to the Crib, a Chicago shelter run by the Night Ministry for unhoused young adults from 18 to 24 years old. Throughout the year committee members and congregation members also made sack lunches that were delivered to the Night Ministry and then distributed to Chicago's unhoused.

Mitten Tree

A collection of children's scarves, mittens, hats and gloves were distributed in January to Little Leaders of Tomorrow, a Head Start program in Chicago's Austin community. Thanks to Grace's knitting group for the many beautiful items donated to this drive.

Welcome Kits for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois Foster Care Children

This spring the committee collected monetary donations from other committees and the congregation to create Welcome Kits for 5- to 10-year-old children who are new to foster care. Each kit included a tie fleece blanket, hygiene products, a \$20 gift card and some personal items packed in a laundry bag. We are grateful for the help with blanket production from Grace School student volunteers, the congregation members who helped tie the blankets, and the Vacation Bible School students who helped pack the kits. We thank the committees and congregation members for their financial contributions.

Toilet Paper and Diaper Drive

This spring we collected toilet paper for Harmony Food Pantry and diapers for New Moms, an organization that serves young mothers and their children.

Coat Collection

The committee collected fall and winter coats for children, men and women served by the Harmony Food Pantry and its New Neighbors program for migrants in Chicago's Lawndale community.

Evie Tiemann Memorial School Supply Drive

We collected school supplies including backpacks, notebooks, pens, pencils and crayons for Chicagoland Lutheran Educational Foundation (CLEF), which distributed the items to urban Lutheran schools in Chicago. The drive is named after the late Evie Tiemann, a beloved committee member and passionate educator.

Christmas Giving

We collected about \$3,000 in gift cards from the congregation for the Night Ministry, Oak-Leyden Adult Developmental Services and seniors at Mills Park Tower and The Oaks. We also collected \$750 in gifts and gift cards for New Moms, which serves young mothers and their children, and monetary donations to Lutheran Child and Family Services' Christmas drive for children served by LCFS. This year, in collaboration with Grace School, as part of our Adopt-a-Stocking program for the Night Ministry, 164 stockings were made and filled with toiletry and sundry items.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Hamernik and Stephanie Wilkening, Co-Chairs

Board of Spiritual Life – 2023 Annual Report

The Board of Spiritual Life (the “board”) is composed of elected congregation members who are referred to as elders. Those serving during 2023 were Mark Bouman, Amy Claud, Jeff Cribbs, Dan Lehmann, Lori Martin, Paulette Reddel, and Valerie Spiller.

The board is charged with providing for the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the sacraments; attending to the spiritual needs of the congregation; enhancing the worship life of the congregation; fostering fellowship within the congregation; and integrating new members into the congregation. The board works alongside Grace’s pastors, cantor, staff, and members of the congregation in implementing these charges.

Elders meet monthly, usually on the fourth Tuesday evening of the month, and otherwise as needed. The elders’ duties during 2023 at Grace include the following:

- Worked with pastors, cantor, church staff and members to recommend Grace move to a single Sunday morning worship service this past fall. In 2022 we resumed two worship services on Sunday following a single service during the summer months. Based on attendance patterns, worship expectations and participation and pastoral and member input, the board recommended that we keep one Sunday morning worship service for the foreseeable future following another summer of one service in 2023. The Church Council agreed. Leaders continue to assess how one service meets the needs of members and community while also reviewing best use for other times on Sunday mornings.

- Elders continue to review attendance and volunteer participation in various roles related to worship (i.e., Altar Guild, ushers, greeters, etc.).

- Pastor David Lyle completed both his Doctor of Ministry degree and sabbatical in 2023. The board fully supported both actions and congratulated him accordingly. The sabbatical provided opportunities for Pastors Troy Medlin and Michael Costello to preach with regularity, which was a blessing to the congregation.

- Elders endorsed and supported tuition assistance for continuing education costs for Julie Hinz, coordinator of discipleship and fellowship, as she pursues consecration into Diaconal Ministry through the Lutheran Diaconal Association in Valparaiso, IN.

- Elders assist in leading in-person worship in our role as deacons (tending the communion “table”) and visit and serve communion to members of the congregation who are home-bound or in care facilities. This is done in conjunction with the pastors and Stephen Ministry members.

- Elders serve as liaisons to the Grace committees tied to the board under Grace’s bylaws, i.e., Health Cabinet, Worship, Stewardship, New Members, Evangelism, and Fellowship. Thanks to the members of these committees for their faithful efforts in furtherance of God’s work within and through the Grace community.

- Elders meet regularly throughout the year with each pastor and the cantor for support, assessment, and accountability.

- At our regular meetings, elders discuss concerns congregation members brought to us or to one of the pastors or cantor, with a goal toward enriching the life of the congregation. Members of the congregation are encouraged to communicate their concerns with any elder.

- Elders recognize and acknowledge each month by written personal notes the service of those parishioners who make special contributions to the life of Grace and to the success of Grace’s mission. We also write personal notes of encouragement to confirmands upon their public witness and confirmation.

We acknowledge and thank elders Valarie Spiller and Jeff Cribbs whose terms on the board expire is month.

Respectfully submitted, Daniel J. Lehmann, board chair

Altar Guild - 2023 Annual Report

Current MSP Active Rostered Members:

Amato, Catherine
Andrew, Jane
Becker, Laura
Dorsey Swanson, Jo-Ellyn
Gillespie, Roberta
Hanson, Liz
Moehlenkamp, Marilyn
Murtoff, Jennifer
Serpico, Donna
Starrick, Christina
Street, Linda
VanDriesen, Gerlinde

The Grace Church and School Altar Guild has adjusted to the Sunday 10:00 AM service schedule. Although fewer services to cover, the team has experienced attrition from members moving away, limited by physical abilities and conflicts with competing Sunday obligations. Recruiting efforts, including the recent “Backstage Pass at Grace “event, have successfully identified some interested parties and training is ongoing to get them integrated into the Altar Guild roster.

Altar Guild uses a modified Ministry Scheduler Pro program for signing up and substituting dates for communion service set up and clean up. A “Refresher/Training” gathering was held in October 2023 to introduce potential new Altar Guild members and clarify protocol details.

Altar Guild is blessed with dedicated and congenial servants who faithfully provide the essential “setting the table” for communion at Grace. We prayerfully continue to encourage interested Grace members, individuals, couples, friends, youth and family groups, to consider joining this most rewarding and “behind the scenes” ministry for Grace Church and School and all who commune with us at Grace.

“The Gifts of God, for the People of God. Come, for all is now ready!”

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Gillespie, Grace Altar Guild

Worship Committee Report - 2023 Annual Report

Voting Members: Jill Baumgaertner, Eunice Eifert (chair), Sarah Gruendler-Ladner, Justin Martin, Marilyn Moehlenkamp

Non-voting member: Pastor Michael Costello

Board of Spiritual Life liaison: Mark Bouman

The Worship Committee is charged with providing guidance regarding Grace's worship life, providing lay perspective to the pastors and cantor, and being a conduit for Grace members to express their thoughts regarding worship.

The Worship Committee also assists the various groups who support worship at Grace: Altar Guild, Chancel Guild, Greeters, Lectors, Assisting Ministers, Ushers, and Audio/Visual. The committee meets monthly to discuss issues and material significant to it.

In the past year, the following was discussed and/or accomplished:

- Actively sought out more volunteers for various worship functions
- Purchased a credence table for use at baptisms and funerals
- Proposed to the pastors the use of various forms of confession and absolution
- Representative of committee attended the Peace and Justice Retreat
- Reviewed the stands/boxes that hold flowers and requested that they be restored
- Discussed the possibility for a "thank-you gathering" for worship volunteers
- Discussed the implications for worship in going to a single service on Sundays
- Suggested that a session (or sessions) for the congregation on the art and architecture of Grace be considered
- Recommended that the text for the lessons which are sent out to the lectors be formatted the way they are in the lectionary
- Suggested that there be a time when members of the congregation could get information about the various worship volunteer positions to encourage more involvement

- Received updates on various areas that affect worship life (e.g. sound and lighting improvements, music ministry changes and progress)
- Read and discussed the ELCA document "The Use of the Means of Grace" and *Living the Liturgy* by Carl Schalk
- Meeting time was changed from Thursday night to Sunday after church
- Received new members to the committee and selected a new chair for the committee.

The Worship Committee continues to be responsive to requests of congregation members, groups, staff, and pastors. We discuss ways to enhance the worship life at Grace in all its aspects and endeavor to meet the needs of Grace Lutheran worship life. Our focus remains centered on bringing the Good News of Christ to all who worship at Grace.

Respectfully submitted, Eunice Eifert, chair

Health Committee - 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Joanna Schubkegel (Parish Nurse) Bryan Bernard, Margret Burke, Karen Eckstein, Loretta Lattyak, Cindy Rohlfing, Nancy Wohlford, Val Spiller, Patty Engebretson

Parish Nurse Ministry:

- Regular meetings: I attend biweekly staff meetings, biweekly pastoral care meetings, weekly Cornerstones, health committee meetings (monthly), Finding Hope (monthly) and the knitting group and Grace Notes mailings (monthly).
- Care of the congregation: I regularly visit members in their homes and care facilities, as well as frequent phone conversations and email exchanges. Visits with members can include assessments, support and active listening, education, emotional and spiritual support, and serving as an advocate. I also accompany members to doctors appointments, providing transportation, support, advocacy and reteaching after appointments.
- Monthly and annual AED maintenance and first aid kit maintenance.
- I (along with Pastor Troy) lead the emergency preparedness committee. We audit emergency flip charts, revise the posted plans, plan staff training, and research emergency notification systems.
- I lead a biweekly zoom group for members who are homebound.
- In August I took a group on a field trip to the Chicago Botanic Gardens.
- In November, I led a two part series book group discussion on the book *Good Inside*.
- I participate in a group of other Faith Community Nurses. They host monthly meetings on a variety of topics.
- I continue a birthday card ministry, sending cards to members whom I visit or communicate with.
- I create a new seasonal bulletin board each month.

Anointing: Anointing is provided on the first Sunday of each month.

Vaccine Clinic: We hosted the annual vaccine clinic on September 24th. The vaccines were administered by Jewel-Osco. The clinic had advanced registration but also accommodated walk-ins. There were over 110 participants receiving one or more vaccines.

Prayer Shawls: New prayer shawls were blessed and are continuously distributed.

Lenten Meal: The Health Committee prepared and served a meal during lent.

New Members Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Pastor David Lyle, Amy Claud (chair), Julie Hinz, and Renata Serpico.

The mission of the committee is to help welcome and orient new members to Grace Lutheran Church. The committee members support the pastors by organizing two new member courses each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. These courses provide education on Lutheran theology and life at Grace. Each session is around eight weeks long and ends with a reception into membership. Along the way, we aim to engage new members in the ministries of Grace and help connect them with others in the body of Christ. To that end, we have a mentor program that connects new members with more seasoned ones to help integrate new members into congregational life. We end the class with a casual dinner for mentors and new members that helps begin to facilitate these relationships.

After record setting 2021 participation, our 2022 classes were smaller. Our spring new member class had a total of 5 participants. Our fall class welcomed 2 new members.

The committee attends all new member sessions, meets in person as needed, but does the majority of its work over email and text.

The committee has a budget of \$300/year. This year we spent \$224 of our budget.

We are thankful that God continues to bring wonderful new members to Grace. The energy and experience they bring to our congregation is a blessing indeed.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Claud

Evangelism Committee – 2023 Annual Report

In September 2021, the Evangelism Committee was established to encourage the people of Grace to bring our faith into the community, and bring members of the community into Grace. In 2023, Katharine Roller served as Chair of the Committee for the first half of the year before taking parental leave from the Chairship from June through December. The Chairship remained vacant during that time. The Committee looks forward to resuming with a full slate of members in 2024.

Evangelism, in today's terms, is different than the traditional evangelism of the past. Our focus is to look at Grace from both the inside and outside, learn what we are doing well and where we can improve on welcoming our neighbors, forming believers who can see and speak their faith, and make everyday faith conversations something as routine and natural as our liturgy.

Encouraging Community in Faith

The Evangelism Committee's main non-Christmas project in 2023 was a planned summer event in which Grace members would staff a table at Oak Park's A Day in Our Village Event with information about Grace Church and School and with a public art project that would encourage passersby to reflect on the question "How can you show kindness today?" and share their answers. When Day in Our Village organizers belatedly informed the Committee that Grace was not eligible to participate, the Committee quickly pivoted to use the already-created art project at the All-Grace Picnic instead, to ask members of the Grace community to reflect on and share what they were excited to see from or at Grace this year.

Easter Outreach to Nonattending Members

Some Grace members who previously were regular attendees of worship have not returned to in-person worship; Easter presented an excellent opportunity to invite those members back to in-person worship. Committee members and staff collaborated to design cards and postcards, which Committee members and volunteers from outside the Committee then addressed and sent to nonattending members with personal handwritten notes inviting them to Easter worship. Although not all members who received these notes returned to in-person worship at Grace, some did; and of those who did not, some at least reached out to the note-writers to explain their decision not to return. Those conversations provided valuable information that contributed to the discussion preceding the move to a single Sunday worship service.

Christmas Evangelism

Christmas provides a special opportunity to share the good news of Christ with the world. In 2024, the Evangelism Committee again sponsored two opportunities for Christmas caroling, improving upon 2022's successful events.

On December 2nd, Grace members again caroled around downtown Oak Park during Oak Park's Winterfest event, and again drew passersby to join the group in sharing the glad tidings of Christmas. And on December 17th, Grace members brought Christmas cheer to senior living center The Sheridan and Brookdale, via a group of about 20 carolers, who were also received with delight in both the lobby and the memory care unit. At both locations, residents joined in the singing.

New in 2023 were the addition of scarves in Grace colors, to make clear our identity as a group; a new streamlined music selection to make it easier for passersby and Sheridan residents to join in the singing; and a large, portable sign identifying the Grace group during our downtown caroling and providing information about Grace to anyone whose attention we captured with our singing. We intend to continue improving and refining the caroling project in 2024.

Looking Forward

The Evangelism Committee intends to take on new projects in 2024, particularly in the areas of making Grace a more welcoming environment for visitors and for encouraging Grace members to share their faith in all areas of their lives – making disciples who make disciples. This work will include and be guided by information-gathering projects as well as by the opportunity for Committee members to participate in professional development in this area at an upcoming conference.

Submitted by: Katharine Roller, Chair

Committee:

Julie Hinz

Ed Mason

Paulette Reddel

Linda Street

Scott Street

Endowment Fund Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Appointed Members (subject to term limits): Jeff Cribbs, JR Reynolds, Julie Christopher, Kirk Carpenter, Mica Just, Buzz Schwandt.

Board Member: Elizabeth Thompson (Chair), Karen Brunssen

Other attendees: Jim McClanahan (Business Office), Daniel Krout (Treasurer), Elizabeth Henderson (Assistant Treasurer)

Responsibilities

The Endowment Fund Committee (the Committee) is a sub-committee of the Board of Finance and Property. The Committee's main responsibilities are: (1) investment of the endowment funds of the congregation; (2) acceptance of gifts made with special terms or conditions (subject to church council approval); (3) maintaining written procedures for investment and use of each fund in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant or endowment; and (4) reporting to the congregation.

Investment Manager

Since 2013, Grace has used Fiducient Advisors, a professional investment consulting firm, to help manage Grace's endowment funds. Fiducient does not make final investment decisions. The firm provides investment analyses and recommendations to the Committee for review and approval. Fiducient is then directed to execute the Committee's investment decisions. The endowment funds are managed in conformance with Grace's Investment Policy Statement, as adopted by the church council.

New Business

In January 2023, the Committee voted unanimously to create a separate endowment account for the school funds raised through the Forward in Faith capital campaign (as well as previously donated funds.) Going forward, Grace will have two endowment accounts. Both will be managed in conformance with Grace's Investment Policy Statement.

The Committee also elected to conduct an investment manager review, an action many institutions take every three to five years. The review is currently ongoing.

Investment Overview

For the majority of 2023, Grace allocated funds among three primary asset classes, averaging: 56% in equities, 35% in fixed income (e.g., bonds), and 9% in other ("real") assets such as real estate and commodities.

The Grace Endowment does not invest in individual stocks, bonds, or real estate parcels. Based on Fiducient's recommendations, Grace selects investment funds by nationally recognized investment managers (e.g., Vanguard).

When necessary, the Endowment Funds assets are used as collateral for the congregation to borrow against to meet cash flow shortfalls. During the calendar year 2023, with church council's approval, the congregation repaid previous borrowings, as follows:

- Remaining \$5k of \$60k borrowing for solar system.

As of December 31, 2023, the outstanding loan balance was \$0.

See below for portfolio performance and the investment summary:

2023 fiscal year Grace portfolio return (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) = +9.77%

2023 fiscal year Benchmark Target Allocation return: +8.04%

2023 calendar year Grace portfolio return: +14.96%

2023 calendar year Benchmark Target Allocation return: +13.98%

2023 Overall Investment Summary:	Investments	Margin Loan
January 1, 2023 Investment Balance	6,393,812	4862
Deposits to the Account:		
Repayment of Solar Loan	4862	
Dividends and interest income	180,747	
Annual Distributions to General Fund and Custodial Funds	(297,496)	
Change in market value	772,627	
Forward in Faith deposits	570,999	
Other income or expense (including Fiducient Fee of \$34,829)	(35,079)	
December 31, 2023 General Investment Balance	6,417,267	
December 31, 2023 Forward in Faith Investment Balance	1,173,205	
December 31, 2023 Margin Loan Balance	0	
December 31, 2023 Net Asset Value	7,590,472	

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Thompson, Chair

Finance Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Members: Daniel Krout (Treasurer), Elizabeth Henderson (Assistant Treasurer), Beth Reynolds (Vice President), John Lattyak (Property), Elizabeth Thompson (Endowment)

Other attendees: Jim McClanahan (Business Office), David Lyle (Sr. Pastor), Sara Chizzo (Elementary Education), Candice Buchbinder (Stewardship)

Fiscal 2023 Summary

A financial summary of Fiscal 2023 (ended June 30, 2023) is presented below.

Church and school operating revenue increased by \$120,000 in Fiscal 2023 relative to Fiscal 2022. Operating expenses were \$99,000 higher than the prior year. While slightly improved, the operating deficit was \$168,000 in Fiscal 2023 vs. \$189,000 in Fiscal 2022. Endowment distribution revenue increased to \$230,000 in Fiscal 2023 vs. \$193,000 in Fiscal 2022, resulting in a surplus of 62,000 in Fiscal 2023 vs. \$4,000 in Fiscal 2022.

General Fund Fiscal 2023 July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023		Fiscal 2023 30-Jun-23	Fiscal 2022 30-Jun-22	Fiscal 2023 Budget	Fiscal 2023 Actual/Budget
Revenues					
	Church Contributions and Other Revenue	1,705,000	1,818,000	1,903,000	(198,000)
	School Revenue	1,599,000	1,366,000	1,428,000	171,000
	Total Revenues	3,304,000	3,184,000	3,331,000	(27,000)
Expenses					
	Personnel	2,583,000	2,560,000	2,669,000	86,000
	Benevolence	182,000	166,000	177,000	(5,000)
	Property	375,000	258,000	355,000	(20,000)
	Boards	86,000	74,000	100,000	14,000
	School	150,000	118,000	149,000	(1,000)
	Administration	96,000	97,000	84,000	(12,000)
	Total Expenses	3,472,000	3,373,000	3,534,000	62,000
	Operating Deficit	(168,000)	(189,000)	(203,000)	35,000
Other Revenue					
	Endowment Income, now including Forward in Faith contributions (20% to budget, 80% to Future), and budgeted other church revenue	230,000	193,000	203,000	27,000
Surplus (Deficit) Before Transfers					
		62,000	4,000	0	62,000
Non-Recurring Items					
	Transfers from custodial accounts	172,000	200,000	0	172,000
	Special benevolences	0	(100,000)	0	0
	Bequest Income	26,000	0	0	26,000
	Net Surplus (Deficit)	260,000	104,000	0	260,000

Fiscal 2024 through December 31, 2023, Summary

Grace continues to experience seasonality of operating cash flow, but our cash position has been strong throughout fiscal 2023 and now in fiscal 2024. School revenue is above prior year due largely to higher enrollment and higher endowment income. The bulk of first year pledges to Forward in Faith (FIF) began in Fiscal 2023 (Note: 20% of first year gifts to FIF are directed to the operating budget). Consequently, first year FIF operating budget contributions were lower in the first six months of Fiscal 2024 vs. the first six months of Fiscal 2023.

A financial summary of the first six months of Fiscal 2024 (ended 12/31/23) is presented below.

Operating revenues through six months were lower than for the same period one year ago and well below budgeted revenues. Operating expenses were higher than in the prior year but still below budget. The operating deficit for the first six months of Fiscal 2023 was approximately \$84,000 compared with a surplus of \$45,000 in fiscal 2023.

General Fund July to December 2023	YTD Actual Thru 12/2023	YTD Actual Thru 12/2022	YTD Budget Thru 20/2023	YTD Budget/Actual
Revenues				
Church Contributions	861,186	917,264	1,009,500	(148,314)
School	853,522	827,499	893,750	(40,228)
*Total Revenues	1,714,709	1,744,764	1,903,250	(188,541)
Expenses				
Personnel	1,354,972	1,235,684	1,449,700	94,728
Benevolence	85,000	90,882	88,500	3,500
Property	187,908	171,231	178,050	(9,858)
Boards	39,407	44,564	52,800	13,393
School	81,261	105,509	80,100	(1,161)
Administration	50,220	52,113	54,100	3,880
Total Expenses	1,798,767	1,699,983	1,903,250	104,483
Surplus (Deficit) Before Transfers	(84,058)	44,781	-	(84,058)

*Unlike the Fiscal 2023 / Fiscal 2022 numbers on the prior page, the Total Revenue line above already includes Other Revenue (Endowment Income and other budgeted revenue).

Challenges

- Full operating expenses: Church and school operations continue to move toward normal levels of expenditures. Year-to-date personnel expenses are lower than expected in Fiscal 2024 largely because of a vacancy in a full-time teacher position.
- Church Revenue: Year-to-date church offerings are lower than one year ago and are significantly below budget.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Krout, Treasurer

Property Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Michael Gillespie, Joel Lueking, Tom Demas, Josh Wood, Drew Niermann, John Lattyak (chairperson)

Ex Officio: Jim McClanahan, Business Office Administrator, Dave Pfeiffer, Facilities Manager

2023 Summary

ONGOING PROJECTS/ISSUES (NOT PRIORITIZED)

1. Continuing to have woodwork throughout the facility stripped and refinished.
2. Refinish exterior doors for Bonnie Brae sanctuary entrance.
3. Clean canopy at Division St door.
4. Replace recycling containers with more attractive containers in high profile areas.
5. Upgrade floor in youth center.
6. Exploring resodding of memorial garden.
7. Evaluating bids for potentially upgrading sanctuary lighting.
8. Considering building a welcome center area in the atrium.
9. Exploring revisions to existing sign at Division and Bonnie Brae to better identify GLCS.
10. Add cloud-based message scrolling to both the atrium and Fellowship Hall TV's.
11. Continuing wall and ceiling repairs at various locations within the building.
12. Re-evaluate and replace directional signage throughout the building.
13. Obtain bids to replace carpeting in additional areas in the building that were not included in the 2023 replacement project.
14. Evaluating roof under solar panels for replacement.
15. Evaluating bids for new concrete apron leading up to stairs at church Bonnie Brae doors.
16. Reupholster/refinish atrium benches.

CLOSED PROJECTS/ISSUES (NOT PRIORITIZED)

1. New roof installed over offices, atrium, and older sections of the building.
2. Carpeting replaced throughout major areas of the building.
3. Organ repairs completed.
4. Tuck pointing completed.
5. Memorial garden lighting upgrade completed.
6. Cleanup of mezzanine closets.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lattyak, Committee Chair

Audit Committee – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members: Tom Swanson, Jane Andrew, Casey Blashill, Neal Armstrong, John Rudy

The Audit Committee was active throughout Calendar Year 2023 with its objective to provide an independent assessment of the church and school finances, controls and operations. To facilitate this, the committee utilized a working list of independent testing activities which began to be implemented in 2022 and will continue in future reporting periods.

Committee activities performed in 2023 included:

- Reviewed the unaudited internally prepared financial statements for the Fiscal Year ended 6/30/23
- Independent testing activities in 2023 included:
 1. Reconciliation of bank accounts
 2. Sample testing of giving statements
 3. Review of expense management practices, including sample transaction testing
 4. Review of payroll, 1099 tax reporting and pension deposits

Preparation is under way for the required external audit work to be performed every three years in conjunction with the Fiscal Year 2024 reporting period. The committee is exploring (subject to formal by law modification) both a traditional audit of the internally prepared statements as well as a more targeted Agreed Upon Procedures report, either performed by an external auditor. Potential qualified audit providers are being contacted to arrange the necessary resources to augment our 6/30/24 financial reports.

Lastly, I would like to recognize and thank Kathy Hale for her years of dedicated expert services to the committee as she finished her active role with the committee in 2023.

Conclusions:

Based on independent audit work performed by the committee, the books and records of Grace appear to be materially accurate in all respects. Testing performed found only minor exceptions of immaterial amounts which have been discussed with the Director of Administration and Finance. Overall controls governing financial operations appear to be in place and operating as intended.

Respectfully submitted,

John T. Rudy
Audit Committee Chair

Refugee Ministry – 2023 Annual Report

Committee Members:

This committee is open to all. “Members” come and go as there is need. Some have helped welcome new families as part of Co-Sponsor teams through RefugeeOne. (Currently we have Co-Sponsored three immigrant families.) Some have helped setting up apartments. Some organize clothing collections for these families. Some provide financial support. **ALL** are considered “members” of this committee.

Recently this committee has been working to welcome “New Neighbors” at our Harmony Cares site in North Lawndale. Close to 200 backpacks with necessary hygiene items and clothing have been given to the influx of migrants coming to Chicago by bus. The backpacks are funded, packed, and distributed by volunteers from Grace and other partnering churches. We are also distributing warm coats, hats, scarves (donated by Grace knitters) and other winter clothing to all in need in the North Lawndale area.

We do intend to get on the list at RefugeeOne to Co-Sponsor another immigrant family as the Lord leads. If you would like to help with any part of this ministry, contact Linda Street kentuckystreets53@gmail.com.

BALLOT

I VOTE "YES" FOR ALL CANDIDATES AS PRESENTED ON THIS BALLOT

OR

YES

NO

Officers of the Congregation

President	John Bouman	2 years
Treasurer	Elizabeth Henderson	2 years
Assistant Treasurer	Neal Armstrong	1 year

Board of Spiritual Life

Paulette Reddel (Council Rep)	2 years
Amy Claud	3 years
Rich Schubkegel	3 years
Jo-Ellyn Dorsey Swanson	3 years

Board of Discipleship

Linda Street	3 years
Hannah Langhoff	3 years
Larry Garber	3 years
Deb Stonich	3 years

Board of Finance and Property

LizThompson	3 years
Josh Wood	3 years
