



LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Plano, Texas

July 2023

THE RESULTS ARE IN

In the May newsletter and throughout the month of May, you heard about the CADDs survey and were asked to participate in this online diagnostic tool to help us determine the answer to the question, “Where are we... really?” [CADDs stands for: Congregational Assessment of Development/Decline Status.] Eighty two people responded to the surveys, (though I think some couples completed one survey together, making the actual number of participants in the survey even higher.)

What the survey found is good news. According to our own members, our congregation is overall quite healthy and stable and there are no “Disabling Factors” that will negatively impact us; that is, the survey found nothing that will contribute to decline and closure if not immediately addressed. In fact, almost all the “factors of vitality” were very positive. With that said, let me break down the survey a little further explaining what it measures and then I’ll show you the results.

The survey takes into consideration the following 10 “Factors of Vitality”our

Factors of Vitality

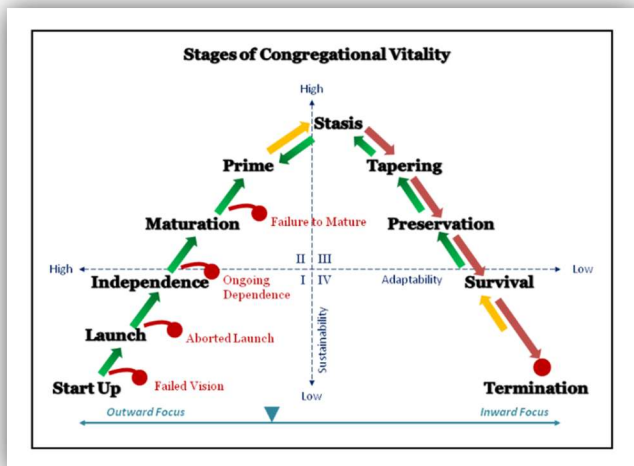
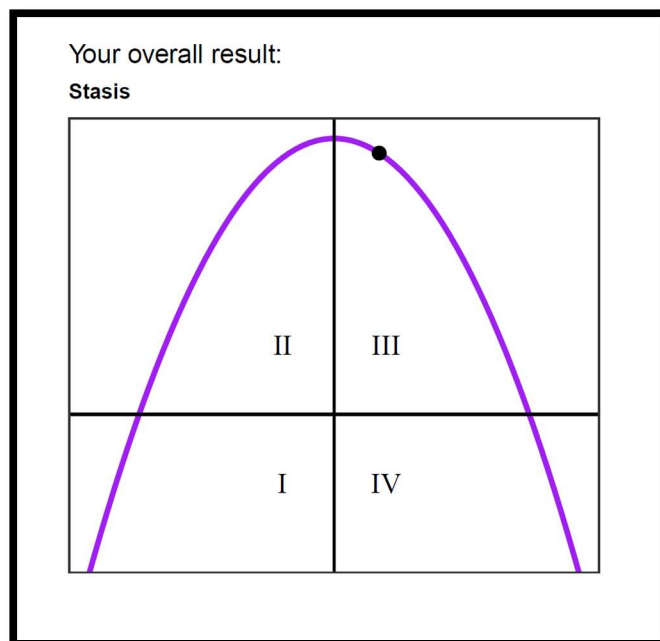
Scale	Description
Adaptability	How willing we are to make necessary changes
Community	How willing we are to engage the community around us
Family	How well we minister to families and children
Hospitality	How welcoming and responsive we are to our visitors and guests
Inactives	How well we serve our inactive members
Incorporation	How well we help our members get involved in our ministries
Outreach	How effectively we reach out to people outside of the church
Unity	How well we get along and our overall morale
Viability	How confident we are about being able to continue our ministry
Vision	How strong our sense of our mission and purpose is

The questions of the survey were designed to see where we score on each of these factors and when taken together, we can determine our overall picture of development/decline. So for example, a congregation that does not score high on hospitality, is unwelcoming and cold and therefore, not a place that new people are going to want to join. Likewise, a congregation that scores low on the unity factor is probably going through some crisis or conflict which also has a negative impact on the growth and vitality of a congregation and indicates that the church is not very stable. Fortunately, each of these factors can be addressed. Congregations can change and learn to become more unified or hospitable; they can do a better job of reaching out to inactive members or ministering to families and children. However, congregations that score

low on too many of these Factors of Viability are not on solid ground and may have to make a lot of changes in order to avoid closure. If they do not, closing becomes a real possibility

All congregations are alive and ever-changing: sometimes toward growth and sometimes toward decline. To that end, Lord of Life has been at different stages of health and growth throughout her 33-year history and where we are now is by no means where we have always been or will always remain. The following bell curve graph shows the stages of congregational vitality. It shows how congregations following a certain trajectory from start up to launch, independence, maturation, etc. The closer a church is to the top of the curve, the more stable it is, and the further to the left side means you are more adaptable and able to change and also more outwardly focused (which are both key factors for growing and remaining healthy.) Thus, the prime place to be is near the top and a little to the left of center.

The following graph shows the results for Lord of Life. As you can see, we are near the top but just a little bit to the right of the center.

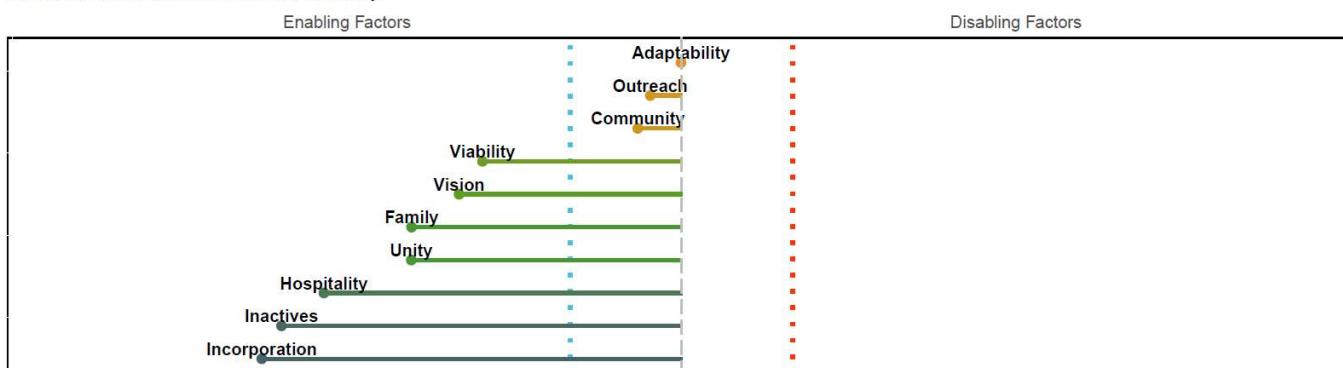


So, (as Lutherans often say) *What does this mean?*

It means that our congregation is very stable but a little inwardly focused and it would benefit us to be more adaptable and outwardly focused.

Here is how the results break down even further for us in regard to each of the 10 vitality factors:

Standardized results in each factor of vitality:



The green results from the bottom up are all factors that have a positive impact on our congregation. The three orange results in the center are not having a significant impact positively or negatively. Factors that are having a negative impact would be depicted in red and would extend to the right of the center, but as you can see in our chart, nothing is in red because we have no “disabling factors.”

So, again, we are a very stable congregation (we are hospitable, unified, and we do a good job of getting people involved, etc.) but we should start thinking about how we can be more outwardly focused. We should ask: how can we engage our community better? These are questions many churches are asking and the answers are not obvious or easy. So, I invite you to spend some time thinking about these questions and to pray about them. The leaders of the congregation will also spend more time discussing these things and thinking about how we can use our resources to engage the community and seek the lost.

The LCMS offers two additional tools that would seem to benefit our congregation and help us in thinking about outreach and getting some plans in place. One is called *CONNECT TO DISCIPLE: Engaging the Nonchurched People in Our Community*, and the other is *SERVING IN GOD’S MISSION: Strategic Planning for Congregations*. As with CADDs, the cost to the congregation for these resources is nothing; they are offered free of charge by the LCMS.

A final thought about all of this... The CADDs survey is a useful tool for determining our vitality, but if they aren’t careful, a church could make too much of these kinds of tools and resources and miss the point of what God calls us to do. Remember, God calls us to be faithful, not merely adaptable. He calls us to both love and serve the stranger as well as to care and provide for those in our own congregation. The Lord wants us to make disciples. He wants us to baptize and teach everything He has commanded and to “do this in remembrance of me...” God does not want us to grow huge institutions for their own sake. He doesn’t want us to get so “adaptable” or “outwardly focused” that in our attempts to reach the world, we become worldly. Or, in our efforts

to get people into Christ’s church, we turn Christ’s church into something more like a social club.

In the reading for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, we heard how Jesus sent out the 12 Apostles and He told them what they could expect when they engaged in proclaiming the Gospel. Not everyone would receive them. Not every town would be open to their message. To those people that rejected the Apostles, Jesus did not tell them to change the message or come up with gimmicks that will attract more people. He said,

“And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the Day of Judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.” (Matt. 10:14-15.)

My point is, that now as then, some are not going to receive the Gospel. In fact, today many will actually be hostile to it. Not long ago, people thought of Christians as the good guys. Even if they weren’t Christians themselves, they admired Christian people and their morals. But that is no longer the case. For years and years our modern culture has been shouting the message that Christians are bigots and hateful because of our morals or that we are narrow minded and intolerant because we insist that the Bible is true and Jesus is the only way to heaven. It might be tempting to compromise our morals or our doctrines in order to reach the lost and seem more attractive to them, but such an approach will not do. We are not called to grow the church at all cost. There is a point at which Jesus tells His disciples to shake the dust off their feet.

I am not trying to make excuses for not being outwardly focused. It is necessary to think about the lost and how we can evangelize them. But I also want to assure the members of our congregation that we are not going to become so “adaptable” and focused on pleasing people that we go too far and lose our focus on being faithful to Jesus. After all, it does no good to bring people into a church if that church’s one foundation is something other than Jesus Christ our Lord.

PrS



prepare for worship in July

July 2: Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Jer. 28:5-9; Rom. 7:1-13; Matt. 10:34-42

Hymn of the Day: "Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus," 685

July 9: Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Zech. 9:9-12; Rom. 7:14-25a; Matt. 11:25-30

Hymn of the Day: "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," 699

July 16: Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Texts Is. 55:10-13; Rom. 8:12-17; Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23

Hymn of the Day: "Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast,"
577

July 23: Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Is. 44:6-8; Rom. 8:18-27; Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43

Hymn of the Day: "Lord of Our Life," 659

July 30: Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Deut. 7:6-9; Rom. 8:28-39; Matt. 13:44-52

Hymn of the Day: "Your Kingdom, O God, Is My
Glorious Treasure," 654



JULY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Don Bunger |
| 1 | Chad Reese |
| 2 | Ana Scarth |
| 2 | Emily Scarth |
| 3 | Nelda Schrank |
| 5 | Mike Phelan |
| 7 | Sylvia Rippey |
| 8 | Emma Padgett |
| 8 | Suzanne Smith |
| 10 | Brooks Smith |
| 12 | Donovan Cawood |
| 12 | Suzan Grabow |
| 13 | Carter Bunger |
| 13 | Sandy Ehrett |
| 13 | Ethan Hacker |
| 13 | Garrett Hacker |
| 14 | Carol Nance |
| 15 | Gary & Charlotte Bennefeld (62) |
| 17 | Becky Padgett |
| 17 | Ben & Melanie Scarth (13) |
| 18 | Kathy Plagens |
| 19 | Carolyn Moudy |
| 19 | Emma Ziegelbein |
| 19 | Noah Ziegelbein |
| 20 | Don Padgett |
| 20 | Magdalena Shaltanis |
| 22 | Kevin Reeves |
| 24 | Jonelle Peters |
| 26 | David Armstrong |
| 26 | John Frinsko |
| 26 | Winona Parish |
| 28 | Mark Knowles |
| 28 | Susan Knowles |
| 29 | Phil & Candace Klein (34) |
| 30 | Charlotte Bennefeld |
| 30 | Linda Francis |
| 30 | Kenneth Tabor |
| 30 | Charles & Dixie Hacker (29) |

MOLLIE MANNING'S NEW ADDRESS

1410 Dragonfly Lane

Carterville, IL 62918

Teen Times

As the month of June comes to a close and we begin the month of July, a small part of me is relieved that the middle month of summer has begun. For the past thirty days or so, we have been inundated with one word that can be put into several contexts, and a symbol that has a very different meaning when mentioned in Genesis 9. This word can be in the form of a noun or a verb and has various meanings depending on the way that it is used. The following definitions are listed from the Oxford Languages when this word is used as a noun:

1. *A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.*
2. *A person or thing that arouses a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction.*
3. *Confidence and self-respect as expressed by members of a group, typically one that has been socially marginalized, on the basis of their shared identity, culture, and experience.*

Here is the definition when used as a verb:

"To be especially proud of (a particular quality or skill)"

In case you haven't guessed what the word is, it's "pride," and the symbol is a rainbow. They have been forced into the spotlight by TV broadcasts, news channels, social media, celebrity personalities, professional sports teams and public displays of celebration to glamorize the LGBTQ+ movement. In Genesis 9 the rainbow was used by God to signify an unconditional divine promise never to destroy all earthly life with some natural catastrophe; a totally different meaning as it was sin that moved God to do this in the first place. Hence, I would like to focus on the verb form of the word "pride" as it relates to us as Lutheran Christians.

At the end of July, our Sr. High youth will attend the annual Higher Things youth conference at Trinity University in San Antonio with about 800-900 other Lutheran youth and adults for 3 ½ days of divine worship, sacred teaching, good fellowship, and lots of fun. The theme this year is Beyond Reasonable Doubt and will address what we believe and why we believe it. The motto of Higher Things is "Dare to be Lutheran." In other words, "be especially proud of a particular quality" (the verb form). Don't let society tell you that being a Lutheran Christian is weird, arrogant, smug, or wrong. We are Lutheran because the Holy Spirit has called us to be disciples of Jesus Christ in this capacity. As Lutherans we believe we are saved by Grace alone, through Faith alone, by Scripture alone. It is not a stance that we should boast about, but a particular quality that we should be proud of.

Until next time, God bless and Dare to be Lutheran!

Scott Peters



LWML National Convention



Last year, I wrote about my experience representing Lord of Life women at the LWML Texas District Convention in Houston. This summer, I was honored to represent our Dal-North Zone at the national convention in Milwaukee, WI. The theme was *Celebrate the Lord of the Nations*. Nations all over the globe were represented as we celebrated where all the Lutheran Women's Missionary League has reached. Here are some of the highlights of the convention.

Goal Statement: As His children, we celebrate the Lord of the nations.

Objectives: Convention attendees, understanding that we are all His children, will:

- Celebrate our Lord through Word and Sacrament.
- Honor God by serving our neighbors.
- Proclaim His message to the nations.

On Thursday, **1200** Servant Event participants collected **79** units of blood for the American Red Cross, assembled **566** backpack school kits for Orphan Grain Train, made **162** fleece blankets for Phil's Friends and A Place of Refuge, assembled **1,167** braille books and calendars for Lutheran Braille Workers, packed **50,000+** meals for Orphan Grain Train, made **4,751** bracelets for MOST Ministries, wrote **443** cards of encouragement for Refuge for Women, wrote **254** cards and bookmarks for mission workers and military, and wrote **457** cards of hope for Phil's Friends.

Always the highlight of the convention for me, Thursday ended with the opening worship service including Holy Communion. (A local artist was commissioned to make all 30 matching sets of communion ware, and they were beautiful!)

On Friday, we voted our new 2023-2025 mission goal to be **\$2,350,000**. The following mission grants were selected, in order of votes:

1. Orphan Grain Train Servant Center — Orphan Grain Train, U.S. \$100,000

2. A Healing Space for At-Risk Children — Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, ND \$100,000

3. Serving God's Children with Special Needs — Journeys Lutheran School, Milwaukee, WI \$100,000

4. Fortifying Faith in Those with Vision Impairment — Lutheran Braille Workers \$100,000

5. Disaster Response Team — Trinity Lutheran Church, Tyler, TX \$50,000

6. Mobile Kitchen — Forged by Fire Services, Gulf Coast Region, U.S. \$85,000

7. Upheld by God's Hand, Mental Health Outreach — LCMS Life Ministry \$96,500

8. Expanding Gospel Proclamation Worldwide — Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO \$100,000

9. Equipping Young Leaders — LCMS Youth Ministry \$50,000

10. Set Apart To Serve — LCMS Office of Pastoral Education \$100,000

11. Lutheran Women in Mission Finish the Job — Ministry in Mission, Haiti \$85,000

12. Sharing Christ Crucified with High School Youth — Lutheran High School of Greater New Orleans, LA \$35,000

13. Water and the Word — Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya \$80,000

14. Enhancement of Deaf Ministry and Outreach — Ephphatha Lutheran Mission Society, U.S. \$47,000

15. Feeding Haitian Children Through Gospel and Meals — Trinity HOPE \$58,082

16. Care for Street Children of Western Kenya — Capstone Ministries \$50,000
17. Nurturing Faith for the Aging — Lutheran Ministries Media (Worship Anew) \$100,000
18. Zoe's Home Support — Zoe's Home, Trinity Lutheran Church, Clinton, MO \$75,000
19. Tanzania Children's Homes — Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Africa \$74,500
20. Sharing Christ with Women and Children in Kazakhstan — Lutheran Hour Ministries \$100,000
21. Healthy Together: Healthy Workers, Healthy Church — Lutheran Family Services, U.S. \$106,000
22. Expanding Gospel Outreach to Hispanics in U.S. — Lutheran Hour Ministries \$100,000
23. A Legacy of Love for Special Needs Children — Lutheran Special Education Ministries, U.S. \$100,000
24. God's Word for Central and South American Missions — Lutheran Heritage Foundation \$100,000
25. Bringing God's Word to India — India Bible Translation Project \$100,000
26. Life Connection Events and Kits — Lutherans for Life \$70,000
27. Siouxland Lutheran Hispanic Ministry — Hope Lutheran, South Sioux City, NE \$50,000
28. Growing Our Place: Care for Special Needs Students — Our Place After School Care, Inc., NE \$20,000
29. Repairs for St. Paul's Lutheran School — St. Paul Lutheran School, Cullman, AL \$50,000
30. Showering Love on the Least of These — Mercy Holistic Ministry, CA \$100,000
31. PARTIAL Breaking Generational Poverty in Detroit — Camp Restore Detroit, MI \$58,988

The day ended with a Fabulous Friday Fest in the exhibit hall. Games and activities were sponsored by the various booths present. The fest ended with a game of chair volleyball between Past LWML Presidents challenging Past Pastoral Counselors!

Then on Saturday we voted in new officers and the nominating committee, the later was also installed:

NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Eden Keefe

Vice President of Organizational Resources: Arlene Naasz

Vice President of Special Focus Ministries: Karol Selle

Treasurer: Anita Werner

Pastoral Counselor: Rev. Mark Maas

Nominating Committee: Olajumoke Odedele (Chairman), Deaconess, Betty Knapp, Laura Strattman, Melissa Vance, and Roxanne Pieper

Saturday evening, the entertainment was brought to us by The Lutheran Ladies Lounge. They host a regular podcast that invites women to chat, learn, and laugh as they celebrate Lutheran life and culture in fellowship together.

On Sunday, the officers were installed and the convention concluded with the sending worship service.

Again, these are just the highlights. The days were also filled with mission speakers, bible studies, humorous interruptions, and much more, all of which can be found at lwml.org, including full-length video of each of the convention sessions. I would encourage anyone, who's interested in learning more what the LWML is all about, to view the sessions.



Members of our Dal-North Zone in Milwaukee

Lord of Life Small Groups

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth
BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meet one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or speters@planolutheran.com
- † Usually meet one Sun. a month at 5:30 PM

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Will meet Sat., June 17 at 6:30 PM for Bible study

COLLEGE GROUP

- † For students in college or recent grads
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at
PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com
- † Usually meet after the late service for lunch and Bible study

A LETTER FROM NICK BELCHER:

Dear Lord of Life Lutheran Church,

Greetings! I pray this letter finds all of you well and that your summer has gotten off to an excellent start. I wanted to provide you with a brief update and to say thank you for all your wonderful support.

In the first place, I'm pleased to inform you that as of May 19th, I've become a graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne and am now set to move (Lord-willing) to Topeka, Kansas where I've been called to serve at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church as an Associate Pastor. Thanks be to God! My family and I are overjoyed that the Lord has called me into the holy ministry, and we look forward to getting settled in Kansas as we enter this new chapter of life there.

Looking back, I must say it's frankly surreal that 4 years of undergraduate education and an additional 4 years of seminary have gone

by as quickly as they have. For so long, entering pastoral ministry has seemed to be only a distant dream, and now that the time has come for me to begin, it's hard to believe that this dream has finally become reality. It's also been surprisingly hard to see all my seminary classmates with whom I've been formed for ministry over the past 4 years now be scattered to the winds, so to speak, as they, too, now depart and head to the specific part of the Lord's vineyard in which He has called them to labor. Needless to say, it's certainly a bittersweet time, as I'm sure you all can imagine, but my family and I are nonetheless excited to see what the Lord has in store both for us and for the other newly graduated seminarians going out into the field as well. If the Lord permits it, we plan to arrive in Kansas sometime around the middle of July as my official ordination and installation date has been set for July 23rd. God be praised!

As stated above, I also want to express my sincere gratitude for all your prayers and your generous financial support. Truly, for all the groceries, schoolbooks, clothing for growing children, medical bills, and for everything else with which your support has helped us, thank you so very much! You all have made a profound difference for my family and I during our seminary journey and I'm genuinely unsure what we would have done without your assistance. Please know that you have most certainly been an answer to our prayers.

May our gracious Lord continue to bless all of you richly in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and keep you in His peace. If any of you happen to be traveling through Topeka for any length of time, please stop by and say hello! I would love to see you and take time to visit. Thank you again!

In Christ,

Pastor-elect Nicholas Belcher

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
Summarized Statement of Activity
5 Months Ending May 31, 2023

	Y-T-D Operating Funds	Y-T-D Budget	Variance	Jan-Dec 2023 Budget
Contributions				
Regular Offerings	\$233,336	\$237,996	(\$4,660)	\$560,692
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Income	\$233,336	\$237,996	(\$4,660)	\$560,692
Expenses				
Benevolences	\$16,198	\$16,660	(\$462)	\$39,248
Elders	\$161,248	\$160,960	\$288	\$386,297
Education	\$0	\$350	(\$350)	\$1,000
Outreach	\$76	\$250	(\$174)	\$600
Office Expenses	\$5,440	\$4,925	\$515	\$12,090
Utilities	\$14,246	\$13,880	\$366	\$33,415
Property Maintenance	\$21,893	\$16,150	\$5,743	\$34,440
Stewardship	\$0	\$350	(\$350)	\$350
Family Ministries	\$763	\$2,520	(\$1,758)	\$5,290
Youth Board	\$2,640	\$3,000	(\$360)	\$6,100
Children's Ministry	\$1,590	\$2,450	(\$860)	\$6,700
Admin Council	\$824	\$1,050	(\$226)	\$2,600
Total Operating Expense	\$224,918	\$222,545	\$2,373	\$528,131
Mortgage Payment	\$12,036	\$12,900	(\$864)	\$30,960
Total Expenses	\$236,954	\$235,445	\$1,509	\$559,091
Surplus or (Deficit)	(\$3,618)	\$2,551	(\$6,169)	\$1,601
Other Information:				
Operating Fund Balance	\$130,942			
Restricted Funds Balance	\$128,690			

DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES IS THE 20th — lol.newsletter.editor@gmail.com