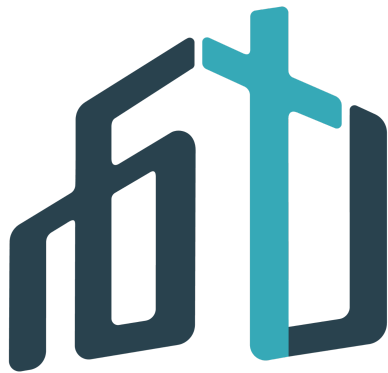




ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

**GURNEE COMMUNITY CHURCH
4555 Old Grand Avenue
Gurnee, IL 60031-2621**

It is the mission of this church to lead people to a growing faith in Jesus Christ.

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Gurnee Community Church

Mission Statement

It is the mission of this church to lead people to a growing faith in Jesus Christ.

Key Values

#1 For our Neighbors

We strive to meet the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of our neighbors near and far. We sacrificially give our time, energy, spiritual gifts, and resources with compassion. Our desire is that everyone encounters the life-giving message of Jesus Christ.

#2 Known by our Love

We love one another as a close, healthy family whose purpose is becoming more like Jesus. We care for, encourage, and motivate one another as we share in spiritual disciplines of worship, prayer, Bible study, community, evangelism, service, and stewardship. We strive for our church to feel like home, safe and welcoming to people of every age and background.

#3 Worshiping in Community

We gather purposefully because faith is best formed in community. We come together regularly to worship God as followers of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit with gifts to benefit those who gather. In all things, we prioritize God's best for our church family over our personal interests.

Introduction

Church life rarely slows down long enough for us to take in everything happening around us. One Sunday leads quickly into the next, while ministry continues throughout the week in conversations, classrooms, meetings, homes, and throughout our community. This annual report is intended to give us an opportunity to pause, reflect on the last year, and recognize the many ways God has been at work through the people and ministries of GCC. It also helps us celebrate what has been accomplished, follow the work that continues to develop, and prepare for the opportunities ahead.

This past year has been one of strengthening foundations and preparing for the future. Over the year, ministry leaders have continued to care for people, develop volunteers, support our community partners, improve our organizational readiness, and create opportunities for people to worship, serve, and grow together. Some efforts reached important milestones over the year, while others continue to take shape and gain momentum as we enter a new ministry year.

Our pastors, elders, and directors share these reports to illustrate how our community continues to learn to love each other deeply, grow closer to Christ and to one another, and extend that love beyond our church walls. Every report provides a unique perspective on our collective journey toward becoming the church that God has called GCC to be.

The pages that follow have been prepared by the leaders serving in the areas of ministry closest to each. As you read, I encourage you to give thanks for the people who have shared their time and gifts, pray for the ministries and opportunities ahead, and consider where God may be inviting you to participate in the work we share.

With gratitude and hope,

Pastor Ryan

Ryan Miller, Senior Pastor

Over the past fiscal year, I continued to provide pastoral care, premarital counseling, baptism preparation, and support for infant dedications. I also celebrated my first Thanksgiving, Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter seasons with the GCC family. Additionally, we began a Blue Christmas service to offer solace to those overwhelmed or challenged by the holiday season.

Several highlights from the year include:

- Our staff, directors, elders, and several other participants worked through *Leading with Prayer* as part of our ongoing leadership development.
 - As a result, Pastors Paul and Brian will lead a prayer study over the coming months, culminating in a mini-retreat.
- I worked with local pastors to rebuild communication among Gurnee churches, including developing an updated clergy contact list and fostering renewed opportunities for prayer and cooperation.
- I completed the Gurnee Police Department Citizens' Police Academy and was officially recognized as a volunteer GPD chaplain.
- I created and completed a new Church Connections Ministry Handbook, with our first training scheduled for August 30th, and updated GCC's Emergency Flood Plan with our Director of Building and Grounds' help.
- The Elders and I have also begun updating our emergency preparedness plans.
- While many contract reviews are ongoing, GCC's agreement with Esperanza Viva was updated as the congregation prepares to transition out of our facility by September 2027.

Looking ahead, job-description reviews are ongoing, and completing a more comprehensive action plan and vision statement will be among my goals for the coming year. Our broader priorities include strengthening GCC's culture of hospitality, building connections with young adults, supporting youth and family ministries, and beginning a deeper discernment process regarding the future of the North Wing.

Brian Walter, Senior Associate Pastor

- Guided Clayton Main and Morgan Reed in premarital counseling and service planning
- Finished preparations and planning for a pastoral renewal leave
- Concluded a period of renewal from July 17 through October 14. It was such a blessing to have this pastoral renewal leave. The focus during this time was primarily family: extended time with my wife, kids, grandkids, my parents and several of my siblings. I also had some unique worship experiences as well as some time alone with the Lord on a silent retreat. I felt truly refreshed and renewed as I transitioned back into life at GCC.
- Played a supporting role in the staff Christmas video (Great job Daniel!)
- Assisted the Uganda mission team by driving them to and from the airport and by creating a prayer card for the congregation
- Assisted in the set up leading up to Thanksgiving at GCC and participated (with my family) in the Thanksgiving meal at GCC
- Promoted, planned and hosted GriefShare Surviving the Holidays event with 18 participants in attendance
- Assisted in the planning and officiating of a Blue Christmas service
- Assisted with the Christmas Eve service with a full house in attendance
- Assisted in the planning and hosting of our Senior Event - Winter Wonderland with 60 attendees
- Planned, promoted, and helped run the No Regrets Men's conference with 120 men in attendance (the highest attendance since Covid), 19 churches were represented
- Planned, promoted, and co-led a 13 week GriefShare support group on Wednesday nights with 20 participants in attendance
- Enjoyed our first two Game On nights (organized by my wife Linda and my daughter Christina) with 25 plus in attendance on both nights
- Emceed the BIG Great Lakes Art Gala
- Helped organize and officiate our Good Friday Service
- Completed premarital counseling and service planning with Billy Roscher & Emilie Forsell
- Led weekly devotions for the citizens, volunteers, and employees of BIG Great Lakes, a ministry to adults with special needs meeting hosted by GCC
- Oversaw Kids Hope student mentoring ministry with Amy Gibes and Patty Sawin as the primary ministry leads and Carol Wright as the Prayer Coordinator. This year we continued our relationship with River Trail School in Gurnee and we experienced a tremendous growth in mentor and prayer partner involvement. Mentors: Gloria Buford, Tricia Elsbury, Allyse Harger, Stacie Hintz, Jodi Hintz, Lynn Lang, Mike Rancharan, Carrie Yeaman, & Tricia Yanuzzi. Prayer Partners: Marcie Jackson Cunningham, Robin Wantoch, Beverly Jones, Tracy Krebs, Carol Walton, Joe Gibes, Diane Iwema, and Fran Yanuzzi.
- Served alongside our wonderful congregational care team: ministry leads Diane Iwema and Cyndi Pleasant, and team members: Adele Dixon, Nancy Gordon, Sue Kilik, Martha Schmidt, and Aleta Yokus. This team does an amazing job caring for our congregation through countless cards, phone calls, visits, prayers, meal planning and serving for funeral lunches, senior events, and serving our congregation in countless other ways. This team is such a joy to work with! The care team also purchased a bench this year for outside the bell tower door for our church family to enjoy. Thank you, Gary, for picking it up and installing it!

- Officiated weddings for Clayton & Morgan Main (7/13/25) and Billy & Emilie Forsell-Roscher (6/7/25)
- Officiated funerals for Ellen Wright (10/25/25), Don Hippensteel (11/8/25), Jeffery Alderidge (1/16/26), Joan Clavey (2/13/26), Susan Carrison (2/19/26), Valerie Rastelli (4/18/26), Skyler Lybarger (4/25/26), Gail Wachowski (5/1/26), Glenna Hippensteel (5/15/25)

Dr. Paul Kattner, Associate Pastor

Each Annual Report aligns with my anniversary as your Pastor of Adult Education – this edition marks my ninth year. I remain humbled to have been called to pastoral ministry by my home church and I am grateful for the support and encouragement of many.

The Associate Pastor of Adult Education is responsible for the adult education programs of the church.

- Adult Sunday morning Sunday School continues per usual. Notably we celebrated our 13th anniversary as a class last fall. We began the year finishing up a study of the book of Leviticus. We then spent the next 30 weeks exploring Paul's letter to the church in Rome, and finished up the year in Proverbs. Our recent offerings have been particularly well-received with roughly 25-30 students joining us each week.
- I remain blessed to partner with Steve Saunders and Joe Gibes who have been teaching alongside me for many, many years now. This past year we were joined by Pastor Chris Stephens. I am grateful for each of these men as they share their teaching gifts and passion for Christian education for adult learners.
- For the second year in a row the registration for one of our nine-month-long core classes was insufficient to offer the class. This was unexpected and disappointing. Beginning in the late spring we began a short (8-week) study of a book written by Pastor Randy Alcorn entitled Heaven. This class meets on Wednesday evenings with 35 participants. I am joined by Steve Saunders, Pastor Ryan, and Pastor Bryan as co-facilitators for this class.
- Lake County Bible Study continued to meet during this past year. Thanks to Keith and Tracy Krieb for their faithful commitment to shepherding this class.

In addition to these specific activities I was also an occasional part of the worship services as coordinated by the worship planning team (though it seems I am asked less and less with each passing year). I was also blessed to be invited to preach this past year on August 24, November 23, and January 4.

I was also able to participate in co-leading the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday special services along with co-officiating several funerals.

I continue to serve as a member of the "Sermon Prep Team" each Thursday evening.

I remain encouraged by the eagerness many in our congregation have for growing in their faith by taking a Next Step and am grateful for the many people who have taken on leadership/teaching of these various classes and activities.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you in my small way.

Mike Rancharan, Director of Worship and Creative Communication

At the start of the 2025 FY, I was setting up the "Single Service Sunday" format in Planning Center Services. I also trained our new director of Hosts on how to schedule volunteers. As I continued to plan and schedule elements and volunteers for our summer blended services, I organized (with Gary Elsbury) volunteers for our outdoor service in August & September and set up the livestreams using Switcher Studio and iPads. Britta Lynch, from Carrie's ministry, was getting ready to go to college so I compiled several "Thank You" videos from our TruKids into one "Goodbye" video to show during Britta's last Sunday.

During this time, I also wrote out a Music & Tech Ministry Policy which included expectations for volunteers in the area of commitment, attitude & attire. Elders and other leadership reviewed this policy.

Lake Geneva Youth Camp's Family Labor Day Camp also happened during the Labor Day weekend. Me and a small team went there to lead the music. I took care of the slides and coordination of the musicians and rehearsals for this.

Several tech repairs were needed in our ministry including an issue with our Resi Encoder which our friend, Angel Perez was able to help fix. We also had TC Furlong come out to replace broken faders on our sound board.

I was able to connect Esperanza Viva's worship team at the time with Park City's Harvest Party group so EV could play music for the event. I also had a chance to meet with other worship leaders in the area and we were able to eat together and pray for each other.

A team of 7 members of the worship team (including myself) got to attend the Worship Innovators Conference where we got to learn more about music, tech and be in fellowship with other worshipers

Between services and after 10:45 service in the fall, my ministry had a table at the Ministry Fair. We had a sign up sheet along with a poster detailing the several roles in our worship ministry (music & tech positions). We had fun games and interactive elements with it and had members of the team interact with congregants who were interested or curious.

Toward the end of 2025, we held a Blue Christmas service and with the staff selected meaningful & contemplative songs and elements. I facilitated the musical worship w/Christina Walter and a wonderful tech team.

I baked and boxed cookies with the rest of our staff for River Trail. I also led rehearsals for our Christmas Eve service and led the Christmas Eve service.

In 2026, I planned music, scheduled musicians and techs, led rehearsals and facilitated worship for our yearly No Regrets Men's Conference. I also did the same for our Ash Wednesday and Easter services. I also had the opportunity to lead worship with other leaders at a worship night called "Citywide Worship" hosted by Fierce Church in Grayslake.

I continued to plan for the Spring and revived our "Single Service Format" for the summer of 2026.

This year my ministry forged a relationship with CCI Solutions, a company which has faithfully been serving churches of all sizes in the area of tech integration. Mark, our rep from CCI, installed a new roving camera. Mark was incredibly knowledgeable and fixed many other minor issues we had been having in the sound booth over the past several months. He even helped us avoid a fire hazard by having us show him where the panels for the stage (ceiling) lights are, they were covered in layers of dust which Gary promptly cleaned!

On Friday, July 10th, we hosted a Night of Worship similar to the one we had in 2024 where there were many creative expressions of worship like liturgical dance (Emma Stephens), a live painting (BIG Great Lakes), a testimony (Isaac), silence and prayer (Pastor Ryan), a choreographed kid-friendly song (Christina Walter) in addition to live worship music.

Some other special events I played a role in were: an Eagle Scout Ceremony. Eric and Erin Taylor's Piano Recital, training on A/V gear for Thanksgiving, Adat Hatikvah's Yom Kippur Service

Funerals I played a role in for this fiscal year were for those of Karen Sinde, Hank Balgemann, Arlene Herrick, Larry Salmons, Don Hippensteel, Terrance Herberger, Ellen Wright, Wiltshire, Jeffrey Aldridge, Joan Clavey, Susan Carrison, Devy Lee, Valerie Rastelli. Skyler Lybarger, and Glenna Hippensteel. I either sang, played music, handled the livestream, audio, media, or coordinated for a musician and/or tech to be there.

I also continued to serve in the Kids Hope ministry this year.

My ongoing duties of keeping our sound, media, lighting and livestream hardware and software in good condition are going well with the help of fantastic volunteers like Gary Elsbury and Eric Krueger. Thank you to the TARTs and music team for their dedication and service every week! I'm always actively looking to grow our TARTs team with detail-oriented and reliable folks. It has been wonderful having Daniel Lense as a new director and he has used his skills and passion for video editing to create extremely high quality videos for our church. On the few occasions when Daniel is unavailable, I continue to make (lesser quality) videos as needed like the "Thank You" videos I made for Brian, Nikki, Stacie and Carrie's work anniversaries.

In closing, I'm embarking on my 6 week renewal leave starting on July 26th. I've spent much time planning and scheduling ahead for the rest of the summer so musicians, techs & songs are laid out for the ministry to continue without me. It goes without saying that I am truly grateful for this time away with my family.

I humbly and sincerely thank you for the opportunity to serve our GCC family and community.

Stuart Swank, Director of Missional Living

- Worked with the Missional Living Advisory Team which consisted of Kirsten Saunders, Chris Morgan, Barb McKown, Robin Wantoch, and Laura Kassel, Hank Rastelli, and LoAnn Martens in monthly meetings via zoom.
- The Missional Living function has now been divided into 2 separate entities: Ministry Partnerships and Community Connects.
- Ministry Partnerships: Stuart Swank, Director consists of:
 - Managing financial support of missionaries and supported ministries
 - Communications with missionaries and supported ministries
 - Coordination of visits and updates from missionaries and supported ministries
 - Decisions on support levels, changes, removals, and additions
 - Projects and events with ministry partners (LOVE, INC, Kindred Life, etc.)
 - Bringing awareness of the missionaries we support has been successfully implemented through visits when appropriate and the missions message board at the top of the ramp to the sanctuary. Over the last year, a different missionary or activity has been highlighted each month.
- Community Connects (Deanna Dryer is the new director), consists:
 - Outreach projects initiated by GCC (Thanksgiving Dinner, Operation Christmas Child, Park City Fall and Spring Festivals, Kids Hope. River Trail school, etc.)
 - Outreach Communications (social Media, mailings, outward facing website content, etc.)
 - Outreach/invitation campaigns
- Continued monthly financial support as well as communication by e-mail with the following partners incorporating their updates on the message board and email to all members of the team. These are:
 - Love in the Name of Christ of Lake County (LOVE, INC.)- a local organization that helps churches meet the needs of some of the neediest in our communities
 - Kindred Life Ministries- a local organization that assists young unmarried mothers, fathers and their families
 - International Gospel Missions- Paul and Leah Manyara (church planting, feeding programs and education) in Kenya
 - ABBAS House Orphanage run by Simon and Margaret Muhota in Kenya (funds are transferred through Threshold Church in Lancaster, PA)
 - Shepherd's Little Lambs Feeding Centers in Kenya (funds transferred through East Africa Partnership)
 - ReachGlobal- Carlos and Suzanne Tejada in Costa Rica (evangelism and training pastors)
 - Word of Life Ministry- Jon and Bianca Fowler (Leaders) and the WOL camp in Panama
 - Pioneer Bible Translators- Carsten and Thea Colburn in North Africa (new language translation)
 - Reliant/Perspectives-Amy Deming (scheduling and facilitating training in missions)
 - Navigators- Zac & Kimmy (Lense) Wille doing campus evangelism and discipleship (now at University of Canterbury, ChristChurch, NZ)
 - Student Mobilization (StuMO) - Nicole Ulrich -Staff Member University of Missouri Outreach program to 30,000 students to bring them to Christ and spread the Gospel to campuses in the US and other countries.

- To assist our missionary partners to meet immediate needs of those they serve, Discretionary funds were used for the following:
 - **Love, Inc.-** A significant number of GCC congregants were able to help in the warehouse, furniture delivery, thrift store and New Hope ministries throughout the year..
 - **BiG Great Lakes** - We again sponsored Nicco (\$500) at the Mayor's Annual Charity Golf Outing.
- Other activities:
 - **Mahota's Visit to GCC:** Simon & Margaret Mahota updated the congregation on Abbas House and their activities in Kenya. The missions team hosted a lunch at Nancy Westover's home to visit and help organize their trip home. Unfortunately Simon turned ill and had to be admitted to a local hospital for a few days. Hank Rastelli and Chris Morgan were gracious to provide them a ride to Kansas to their daughters home to rest and return to Kenya.
 - **Thanksgiving Dinner for Navy Recruits** - Many recruits were treated to dinner, phones, games, and worship. This is a major activity involving a large segment of the church in order to provide for these recruits a break from basic training.
 - **Colburns (Carston &Thea)** - Provided \$1,000 to Pioneer Bible Translators and their community that was attacked by another tribe and displaced many members, and had a day of Prayer.
 - **Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse)** - We again participated in this ministry with Barb McKown volunteering to lead the program and 103 shoe boxes were prepared and sent.
 - **Loving In Deed:** Provided \$1,000 to Loving in Deed for their organization
 - **AMY Deming** - She provided an update on her activities with Perspectives on July 19th to the congregation. She was in the Chicago area to visit family and update us on Perspectives.
 - **Abbas House Orphanage:** Provided \$9,000 for a new indoor kitchen at the orphanage and also provide new desks for the school
 - **Uganda Mission trip** - Emma Cramer organized a trip in December to help at Pioneer Bible Translators annual conference in Uganda. Five other members joined Emma on the Trip from November 30th till December 9th and provided childcare during the conference.
- We encourage each of you to get acquainted with our partners: the individuals, families and organizations are great reflections of the love and servanthood of Jesus. Volunteer with the local outreach groups. Subscribe to the email updates from our global partners and keep everyone bathed in prayer as they reach out in ways we each cannot.

Stacie Hintz, Associate Pastor and Director of Student Ministries

- Youth Events

- Summer Meeting Times: As the congregation transitioned to a single service schedule over the summer, student ministries also adjusted its summer meeting times. We did not offer Sunday School before or during our weekly worship time over the summer so that students could attend worship with the rest of the congregation, but we did offer a weekly gathering time after church that attempted to be a hybrid between Sunday School and Youth Group with Bible lessons and opportunities for fellowship. Overall, attendance was pretty sparse over the summer months.
- We had our grade promotion celebration on August 24. This was a time to celebrate all of our students officially bumping up a grade level and welcome in our new 6th grade students who have now officially made the transition from TruKids to Veritas. We had a bonfire at my house and I was incredibly encouraged with the level of participation and engagement I experienced with both students and their parents.
- I offered a parent meeting on Wednesday, September 3, that was well-attended, with many parents opting to attend via zoom. It was a great time to connect with parents and let them know about some of the changes that will be happening this year within student ministries, inform them about upcoming events, remind them that I am a resource for them and not just their kids, and also provide space for questions and discussion.
- After Labor Day, GCC went back to its 2-service format, and Youth Sunday School started up again during the 10:45am service. Youth Group also kicked off, but we did make the decision to adjust our meeting time to be on Sunday evenings from 5:30-7:30pm, attempting to incorporate a shared meal time between students and their parents who would also be participating in a parent small group led by Pastor Ryan.
- Krolls Farm Event (Sept. 26)
- One student completed Confirmation on Sunday, September 28 and he was baptized and celebrated during the morning worship services.
- 3rd Annual Mystery Day (Oct. 11): Youth fellowship event where students arrive for a day of activities, but do not know what any of the activities will be in advance. We start with a scavenger hunt for clues around the church and then at each stop throughout the day, we read a clue that describes where we will go next and students make guesses and can win prizes for the most correct guesses. Students, the friends they invited, and volunteers had so much fun and it was a great opportunity for relationship building.
- Trunk or Treat (Oct. 25th): Students planned the theme and helped decorate a trunk and pass out candy to the younger kids.
- Informational Meeting for next summer's Youth Mission Trip to Panama (Nov. 2)
- Turkey Trot—Students and families volunteered to serve by setting up for the event and helping direct runners or serve in a hospitality space the day of the run (Nov. 26th and 27th)
- Veritas Christmas party (Dec. 21st)
- Winter Retreat @Camp Timber Lee (Jan. 1-3)
- Church Family Superbowl Party (Feb. 8th)
- Easter Eggspedition (Mar. 29th): A city-wide egg scavenger hunt with teams made up of students and parents. Younger siblings and other parents were also invited to hang out at GCC during the event and then end the night with pizza and dying easter eggs together

- High School Graduate Recognition Sunday (May 10th): We honored 2 graduating high school students during service.
- 5th Grade Preview Day (May 17th): 5th grade students joined our youth Sunday School class to learn more about what to expect when they move up into Veritas Student Ministries in the fall. They could ask questions about Sunday School, Youth Group, or just middle school in general and it was a great opportunity for our older students to offer advice and encouragement to our younger students.
- Transition back to Summer Worship Schedule: GCC transitioned to its single-service-sunday summer worship schedule, and we decided this year to offer Sunday School at 9am (before the worship service) and weekly Youth Group, but meeting at varying times and places with the goal of having at least two fellowship events and one service opportunity each month. I also offered summer “check-in” times for students where students could sign up to meet with me, ask questions, share ideas or life-updates, etc. at a time that worked best for them and their families during the busy summer months.
- Outreach
 - Carrie Yeamen and I worked closely with the Principal and Social Worker of Rivertrail School to continue to foster our growing relationship of collaboration and support for the students and teachers. We planned various outreach and care events throughout the year and all seemed to be very well-received. Rivertrail also expressed their gratitude by having their garden club come and plant flowers in front of the office entrance at GCC.
 - Served as a Kids Hope Mentor throughout the school year
 - Met with the Youth Pastor of Journey Church in Beach Park to connect and discuss potential collaboration between our youth groups
- Other Pastoral Roles/Responsibilities
 - Led devotional times for BiG Great Lakes occasionally throughout the year (especially during the time when Pastor Brian was on his renewal leave over the summer)
 - Attended the Conference for Pastor Theologians in Oak Park, IL (Oct. 20-22)
 - Assisted in the planning, preparation, and execution of our interactive Good Friday worship service (April 3)
 - Participated in weekly Sermon Prep Team Meetings
 - Preached during Sunday Morning Worship Services (Mar. 1, Jul.12)

Carrie Yeaman, Director of Children's & Family Ministries

We are always trying to find ways to connect our children, families and congregation to each other and to deepen their relationship with Jesus. This is done through texts, constant contact newsletters, attending kids extra curricular events, groups, events and more.

In **July** we had our All Church Pool Party at Gurnee Aquatic Center with 123 people of all ages in attendance.

August started the school year groups with Monday evening moms group has 10 women that participated throughout the school year with studies and prayer. The Thursday morning moms group started the school year with 9 women who spent the group sharing prayer requests. We also started our volunteer schedule for the 2025-2026 school year with 33 volunteers for the check-in desk, nursery, preschool room, elementary small groups and large group teachers. We had one of our outdoor services which included our backpack blessing (light up guy, "The real glow up is Jesus," Evette singing, "This Little Light of Mine," and cardstock backpacks with the name of every child from preschool-5th grade of them for people to pick up and prayer for them. After the service we moved to Old Grand Ave for the Gurnee Days parade where we provided blankets, snacks and water for our families. There was Grade Promotion Sunday which consisted of the children's area getting decorated with balloons, the bouncy house being up, the kids blessed in service and walking over the bridge and 8 incoming 6th graders receiving bibles to transition into Veritas. The second outdoor service/church picnic included outdoor toys and activities during service, then face painters and a balloon artist during the church picnic time. We were able to participate in Safety Stars and Dilly Bars put on by the Gurnee Police Department included GCC having a booth with our version of safety with emotional safety where the kids got to paint kindness rocks, receive temporary tattoos about kindness, stand as the I in front of the backdrop "Be the _ in Kindness" all while the bubble machine was blowing bubbles. We had 9 GCC volunteers participate in this event for the community. GCC provided River Trail Staff with a luncheon on one of their institute days. Many people donated food and drinks. We had 9 volunteers. August wrapped up with Family Labor Day Camp @ Lake Geneva Youth Camp with 4 GCC families participating in the weekend.

In **September** we had our fall festival at Kroll's Farm with 91 people in attendance. The families were provided glow bracelets (provided by Julie Swanson) and mini flashlights. There was pizza (provided by Student Ministries, Stacie), dessert and water. A special part of September was the baby dedications of Kairo Martinez and Emberly Ege.

October was the time the Ministry Fair happened on a Sunday after a sermon that encouraged people to give of their time by volunteering. Children's Ministry gave out prayer pets with certificates of ownership and bedtime prayer cards for kids to use to pray with their prayer pet. People volunteered to clean toys, pray for kids and send out birthday cards for TruKids kids. We ended the month Trunk or Treat that was moved indoors this year due to storms. We had 20 "trunks" (tables). We were blessed to have Laura and Eric Main help again with hot chocolate; LoAnn Martens, Jan and Ken Herrel helped with games: Christian Youth Theater (CYT) had several students help with set up, "check in" and tear down. Winners...1st place - Student Ministries, 2nd place - Rychwa Family, 3rd place - Yeaman Family.

The month of **November** included the baby dedication of Millie McFaddin. The Holiday Lights event held by the Gurnee Park District was something we partnered with. This event uses the GCC building for bathrooms, classrooms for dancers to change, gym for pizza, drinks, sponsor tables and decorating donuts/cookies, and fellowship hall for craft. GCC provides the craft (wooden ornaments and gnomes). GCC had 6 volunteers at this event. Nearly 400 people from the community were in attendance at this event. We had 9 GCC people volunteer at the River Trail book fair. We started the Advent season with Advent Readers (families) for both services scheduled for weeks 1 & 2: the Romero family, the Rychwa Family, the Pleasants and the Wantochs.

December had a lot of fun ways to celebrate Jesus's birth including the Christmas Performance which happened during the 10:45 service with the kids singing "Go Tell it On The Mountain" taught to them by Annette Swank. Following the performance the kids attended a birthday party for Jesus where they sang a silly birthday song, ate cookies and did a fun craft (coloring plastic cups, then putting them into the oven to make Christmas ornaments). The GCC staff made cookies for the staff of 65 people at River Trail school. -Bags were given to children's ministry families with box cake, frosting and candles to make to celebrate Jesus' birthday. These were put together by Sue Kilik, Deanna Dreyer and Diane Iwema. There were more Advent Readers (families) for both services were scheduled for weeks 3, 4 & Christmas Eve: the Peaveys, the Jennings/Twidell, the Marcinkus, the Gribbens, and the Miller family. The Children's Christmas Eve message was about celebrating Christmas differently in the US vs Africa. Kids goody bags included: mix and match nativity people, popsicle sticks used to make pictures, African candy, African key chain, coloring page of African drum and crayons. The 2025 year ended with a New Year's Eve Party that was opened to the entire church. There were 115 people in attendance. Dinner was a yummy baked potato bar provided by Steve and Kirsten Saunders. The gym had the bouncy house, balls, scooters and is where the Minute To Win It games (Brandon and Kelsi Schroetter helped with the games) were held. The night ended with the community room set up as a black light room that glows with fun decorations and a balloon drop. Decorations were set up by Jeremy and Kimberly Packer, Isla and Freya Yeaman.

Though **February** is a shorter month we managed to fit in a few things. The Superbowl party that had 40 people in attendance in Fellowship Hall. In collaboration with Pastor Brian (setting up tvs). Student and Children's ministry provided comfortable seating, an open gym (bouncy house, scooters and balls), and drinks and sides for the event. We "Filled the Fridge" for River Trail staff. Drinks provided by GCC congregation to encourage the River Trail staff.

Easter was early this year so **March** was a busy time. On Palm Sunday was the children's performance lead by Annette Swank, movie and craft. We provided "Egged" supplies to each family for them to do as an at home activity for the week of Holy Week. There were 8 eggs filled with pictures and candy/toy to do an egg hunt. There was a pamphlet included with a video and discussion questions for each day, along with a coloring sheet. For the Good Friday service there were separate stations of the cross for kids to attend. There were 9 kids in attendance and Tashia Shine Prakash and Freya Yeaman helped. Our Annual Easter Egg Hunt was indoors this year due to bad weather. The 0-4 year olds hunt was in the Community Room with 20 kids. The kindergarten-4th grade hunt was in the gym and had 32 kids. The middle and high school hunt happened in the sanctuary with 23 kids. Immediately following they decorated cookies in Fellowship Hall where Sue Kilik, Shirley Nunley, Lupe Navarrette, Kim Diehl, Matteo Carlsen. The Easter Services had a children's message at both services with the focus of the empty tomb with a "magic box"

that Jesus disappears because He has risen. The kids watched a movie and did two crafts (cross on black paper with colorful chalk and a tomb made out of food). We even squeezed in a time to give the River Trail staff a special treat during state testing week by bringing in a company with a portable coffee cart. Probably the most exciting part of the month was the baptism of Cheryl Gribbens and Kelsi Schroetter.

In **May** we celebrated our moms with a Mother's Day gift of mason jars with candy in them and the tags said, "I love you to pieces." A Memorial Day Parade and Party was held at the Yeaman Family house. Family Ministry provided the main dish, drinks and games. There were 14 families (60 people) who attended the party.

June was another celebration of parents but this time it was dads. For Father's Day the kids picked out socks to give their socks with tags that said, "Thank you for helping me walk with the Lord." We held an Ice Cream Social to celebrate the end of the school year. Student (Stacie) and Children's ministries collaborated to have an outdoor event with ice cream (Peaveys and Shaws handed out), bouncy house, 9 square and other outdoor games. There were 50 people in attendance. Then there was the annual Donut Sunday with a donut wall and donuts from Duck Donuts. After the service was the congregational meeting with childcare provided in the lobby with around 10 children. Activities provided were coloring, legos, fidgets, and more. The month ended with VBS Sports Camp with 70 kids, 54 volunteers and 18 kids accepting Jesus. The Uncharted Waters Sports Ministry (UW) is a wonderful program that provides. There continues to be a wonderful team of integral volunteers...Nancy Gordon - snacks, Megan Lense - decorations, Brandon Swanson - tech/sound booth, Pastor Brian - tech support and Daniel Lense - photography video. Brandon and Kesli Schroetter step in to help with ALL areas. Milk Shakes provided by the Steak N Shake (Martens Family). The kids performed the VBS song in service following the week of VBS

Some ongoing things in Children's and Family Ministries include a monthly zoom group that goes year round and consists of women in California, Texas, Missouri, New Hampshire and Illinois. There are 11 women that participate in the zoom all of whom either attended GCC while they lived in the area or participated (or continue to participate) in a moms group at GCC. There are Monthly Children's Director meetings with other local churches held at GCC. We continue to use Gospel Project Curriculum for Sunday School preschool-5th grade (3 year chronological study of the bible)

Dave Ulrich, Director of Stewardship

See 3 financial *fiscal year end* (June 2026) documents at the end of this report:

1. Balance Sheet
 2. Summary of Dedicated Accounts
 3. Statement of Activities
- FY July 2025 - June 2026 Summary Results
 - Total Revenues 903,471 (actual) vs 958,028 (budgeted)
 - Total Expenses 886,183 (actual) vs 958,028 (budgeted)
 - Underspent vs. actual revenue \$17,287
 - Operating budget: Developed an operating budget of \$942,644 (15K decrease from previous year) for the 2026-2027 fiscal year which was approved at the Annual congregational meeting on June 14, 2026.
 - A 5 year capital improvement plan is being developed

	2025-2026 Budget	2025-2026 Actual	2026-2027 Budget	Variance 2025/2026 vs. 2026/2027
Total Revenues	958,028	903,471	942,644	-15,384
Total Expenses	958,028	886,183	942,644	-15,384
Net total	0.00	+17,287	0.00	Reduced budget 15K vs. last year's budget

- Ministry highlights included:
 - Endowment fund (EF)
 - The EF bylaws document was updated and approved by the elders 2nd Q 2025, which allows “sweeps” of funds above baseline.
 - In Aug 2025 the Baseline increased from 740K to 1MM due to a generous donation.
 - Sweeps above the baseline are moved into a CD or MM at the bank next door to GCC. There were 7 sweeps in the fiscal year - supporting many capital improvements AND monies held in CDs/MM at Gurnee Community bank.
 - The Endowment Committee (EFMT) had 3 face-2-face (zoom) meetings last year and one with the CenterCoast Financial group (they maintain the investment portfolio)
 - CenterCoast Private Wealth Management (Rob's Weiss is the owner) has moved from “Wells Fargo” to “Fidelity” in 3rd qrt. 2024.
 - **The hidden workers**
 - The counters continue to be an integral part of the Stewardship ministry team and under Linda Walter's leadership continue to provide accurate and timely reporting on a biweekly basis.

- I'll (Dave) be updating (formalizing) the 4 page document on counter responsibilities - per the elders' request
 - Our bookkeeper, Maria Landvit, continues to provide accurate and timely reporting of our monthly financial statements for staff, directors and elders.
 - I'll (Dave) be developing 1) a contract for Maria, 2) a procedural document on Maria's responsibilities and 3) procedures (SOPs) for the 5 main tasks that she performs.
 - Note: Maria's monthly reports are what I use to distill down to a one page/table "monthly financial summary" report - which gets sent to all staff and elders and reviewed "monthly" at the staff meeting
 - Note: The software used for payroll will not be available starting Jan 1 2027. Working with Maria to identify and purchase BEFORE Jan 1 2027.
 - Our Controller, Laura Kassell continues to work closely with Maria to provide additional expense oversight and signs all checks
 - John Skillam and I are obtaining "check approving privileges"
 - With help from Nikki continue the Stewardship section in the electronic version of Connect Newsletter. (Need to restart the Stewardship devotionals in the Newsletter (stated this last year also)
 - Sent out mid year (Nov 2025) and YE (Jan 2026) giving letters.
- Pledging / Cash Reserves / 2025/2026 operating budget
- Pledge: giving campaign yielded 79 pledges totalling \$573,519 of giving commitments. Pledges are for a calendar year (Jan to Dec) vs. GCC budget is July / June.

YEAR	Number of Pledges	Pledge Total	Total received
2021	91 (2)	546,510 (3)	785,582
2022	89 (3)	501,220 (5)	807,693
2023	82 (4)	488,442 (6)	810,945
2024	94 (1)	558,105 (2)	779,949
2025	78 (6)	520,829 (4)	852,082
2026	79 (5)	573,519 (1)	337,171 (as of July 2026)

- Note: The number of pledges do not correlate to dollars pledged
 - Numbers in parentheses are rankings
- Cash Reserves:
 - Started the 25/26 budget year (July 2025 numbers) cash in the bank was 617,864 (dedicated accounts were 468,397) resulting in "true cash reserves" of 103,845.

- Ended the 25-26 budget year (June 2026 numbers) cash in the bank 484,179 (dedicated acct 228,073) resulting in “true cash reserves 207,456.

Nikki Behler, Director of Administration

- Thursday and Sunday online newsletters
- Management of Church Calendar and room & equipment bookings via Planning Center
- Management of web content for gcchome.org and TV informational presentations
- Management of the church database (Planning Center) including registrations for events and family info
- Promotion for special services, events and classes. Including Thanksgiving, Christmas, No Regrets, Easter and VBS
- Support for Finance Office - giving envelopes, year end statements, online pledging
- Support for funerals
- Replacement of GCC phone system

Gary Elsbury, Director of Building and Grounds

- June 2025- Finished the planting area below the message board in the south parking lot
- August 2025- Recycled a large batch of electronics at no cost.
- September 2025 - Added the second electrical panel needed in the north wing
Signed a contract to put smoke detectors in the west half of the building
Signed a contract to install 4 trees on the north side of the building
- October 2025 - Started the replacement of the HVAC unit for the chapel.
- November 2025 - Started putting together a job description for a new Director of Building & Grounds anticipating a new director for the 2027 / 2028 GCC budget.
- January 2026 - Roof replacement delayed waiting for an insurance claim for hail damage.
- March 2026 - Entire roof to be replaced as weather breaks. With an insurance claim and 2 large donations from the congregation.
Along with Nikki, our church admin, we are looking to reduce our insurance premium by increasing our deductible.
- April 2026- Installed 18 additional cameras in classrooms and meeting rooms. (Hallways and exterior are already covered.)
- May 2026 - roof work is 95% complete and soffit and fascia are 85% complete. Gutters to follow when soffits are done.
- June 2026 - Roof complete, soffit ,fascia, and gutters complete
Anticipating my, (Gary E) retirement of being the director by 2027 / 2028 budget year.

Daniel Lense, Director of Digital Communications

Another year, another series of lessons to be learned as we continue to navigate the social media sphere and connect our church with the larger community that lives beyond its walls. This year, we leaned on a few of our “old reliable” strategies from last year, while introducing a few ones (some inadvertently) that led us to a **very successful year**.

Highlights from the last year:

- Coming into the 25-26 year, we found that photos really connect with people on our pages, whereas **long-form video content has struggled** to perform nearly as well. Videos are fun to make and are a great joy to watch together during services, but the reality of today’s social media is that people need their attention drawn in very quickly, and this is much harder to do with a video.
 - As a result, we did many more picture posts this year. These are much easier to create, and some of them exploded in ways we could never predict.
 - This also forms most of the routine content we put out: weekly / bi-weekly pics from service. Beyond this, most content are one-offs or separate projects, described here below...
- In **August**, we began the year strong with two **baptisms for Carlos and Cecily**.
 - I found these baptisms to provide a great opportunity to capture photos for both the people being baptized (+ their families) as well as a **strong avenue through which people engage and show love + support online**. It is a wonderful thing to see!
- In **September**, it was a similar story with **Matteo’s baptism**.
- Then the **holiday season**, our busiest season, comes around:
 - New this year was a short video for the annual **Harvest Party**.
 - Halloween brings with it **Trunk-or-treat**.
 - **Thanksgiving day** is a special day for so many people, and so we feel very lucky to be able to capture everything with pictures and videos that families from so far away can enjoy.
 - Christmas brought the return of the **advent video**, featuring Pastor Ryan for the first time!
 - Around this time, there were also a few quick posts featuring the **Uganda mission team** and service work for **River Trail School** that were surprisingly strong!
- Winter is otherwise a quiet season, featuring the **No Regret’s conference** and **Super Bowl** party.
- In **March**, excitement grew with the **baptisms of Cherly and Kelsi**, along with **Easter**, of course.
- Then in April, we were shocked and baffled by the explosion of several posts we made pertaining to the **Des Plaines River flooding at GCC**.
 - These posts received around 100K views altogether, which is rather insane. It was fun to have so many people share reactions online, and interesting that our “best-performing” posts for the year were something completely spontaneous and beyond our control.
- In **June**, we had **VBS** provide another fun opportunity for photos and videos.
- In **July**, our **Worship Night** was a unique chance to capture different forms of worship.
- Then very recently, we have been blessed again by the baptisms of **Greta, Freya, Gloria, Caleb, and Issac**, which everyone continues to respond very positively towards online.

All in all, our posts received around 200K views altogether, which is exciting and inspirational. We hope that this next year creates even greater connections!

Reminder: Everything discussed here (and more) can be found on our [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)!

Report of the Board of Elders

Report of the Board of Elders 2025-26

Nancy Westover, GCC Secretary

The Board of Elders has been active in overseeing the health, safety, and spiritual growth of our staff and congregation. It is a joy to see and hear about the ways God is manifesting Himself in our midst. We focused specifically on the following this past year:

- Changed the meeting format to devote more time to prayer and seeking God's direction within the meeting.
- Completed a Review and updated the Guiding Principles, a document outlining the Mission, Boundary, Accountability and Organizational Principles to be followed by the Senior Pastor and Church Leadership in managing the church.
- Increased church security by
 - Conducting a Security Review with the Gurnee Police Department to increase awareness of potential safety risks and recommendations
 - Reviewing the Child Protective Policy with our Child and Family Director and Student Ministries Pastor
 - Developing Contingency Plans with input from Staff and Directors for the following potential occurrences within the church: Pastoral Emergency, Flood, Fire and Tornado, Active Shooter, Medical emergency, and Abuse/Assault Allegations
 - Requesting additional security cameras within the church building
- Worked with Building and Grounds, Senior Pastor, Director of Stewardship, Treasurer, and Endowment Committee on timing and funding of new roofing project.
- Conducted the first Annual Review for Pastor Ryan which reflected the initial positive feelings expressed by both the congregation and staff regarding his potential to lead GCC into greater commitment and service for the Lord
- Benefited from a year-long discussion of *Leading with Prayer* by Skoog, Greer and Doolittle
- Attended the Annual Leadership Retreat led by Steve Saunders
- Reviewed and approved the proposed Annual Budget
- Prepared a Christmas letter reviewing the life of the church in 2025
- Developed a framework for financial approvals for large capital expenditures

We recently welcomed Jenila Mathialagan as an Elder and thanked Charlene Quint for her years of service to the Board.

Baptisms, Dedications, Confirmations, Weddings & Deaths (July 2025-June 2026)

Child Births,Baptisms & Dedications Kezea Colburn Emberly Ege Kairo Martinez Millie McFaddin Augustus Peters Adult/Young Adult Believer Baptisms Carlos Alvarado Matteo Carlsen Cheryl Gribbens Cecily Miller Kelsi Schroetter Confirmands Matteo Carlsen New Members Matteo Carlsen Zac Wille	GCC Member/Attender Weddings GCC Member/Attender Deaths Joan Clavey Fae Cole Arlene Herrick Devy Ann Lee Skylar Lybarger Carol Marin Duane Painter Valerie Rastelli Larry Salmons Jim Stephens Ellen Wright
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Minutes of Congregational Meetings

Congregational Meeting June 14, 2026

Meeting Held in the Gurnee Community Church Sanctuary

Total Attendance: 74

Members: 71

Hannah Goering, Elder Board Chairperson welcomed all who joined the meeting at 11:35AM and explained the process. All in attendance signed in and a count was taken. Members were given a ballot to vote for the nomination of one new Elder. Elder Carol Walton opened in prayer.

The Elder Board moved to approve the minutes from the Congregational Meeting of June 8, 2025. Margie Carrick seconded the motion. Discussion was held. The congregation approved by voice vote.

Dave Urich, Director of Stewardship, presented the proposed budget for 2026-27 fiscal year. Dave used a Power Point on the Sanctuary screen to outline each area of the budget. Increased expenses included electrical, insurance and payroll processing. He reviewed the history and use of the Endowment Fund. Josiah Goering and Cindy Hooten joined the committee to replace two previous members. Capitol Improvement Funding was explained along with the prediction process for the new budget.

Margie Carrick questioned as to who made the decision and who paid for the use of barricades if needed in a flood. Pastor Ryan explained that the recommendation to use barricades was made primarily by local Gurnee officials and the GCC Director of Building and Grounds in consultation with local weather experts with current predictive data. If used, the barricades could cost up to approximately \$20,000 to be paid by the church. A specific fund has now been started to save money each year towards that expense when needed.

John Hintz asked about plans for the further development and use of the unfinished North Wing. Pastor Ryan stated that we were waiting for a proposal being developed by Pastor Brian in consultation with Staff and Directors. Once a proposal was received by the Elders, it was to be presented to the congregation for input before proceeding further.

The Elders moved to approve the GCC 2026-27 budget. Betty Holleman seconded the motion and it was approved by voice vote. The congregation showed appreciation to Dave and other church leaders who spent time managing the 2025-26 budget and preparing the 2026-27. With fiscal management and special donations, the entire roof and associated repairs as well as two HVAC units were replaced this year. Gary Elsbury was also acknowledged for his dedicated role as Director of Building and Grounds. Charlie thanked the anonymous donor who gave \$300,000 enabling completion of this work.

Charlene Quint was recognized for her four years of service as she steps down from the Elder Board.

The Elder Board moved to approve the nomination of Jenila Mathialagan to fill the open position. Jenila and her immediate family left the room as requested. Tricia Elsbury seconded the nomination. Discussion was opened. The Congregation overwhelmingly approved by paper ballot.

Pastor Ryan prayed for Charlie, Jenila and the congregation. Charlie then closed in Prayer. The meeting was adjourned by Hannah at 12:23PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Westover
GCC Secretary