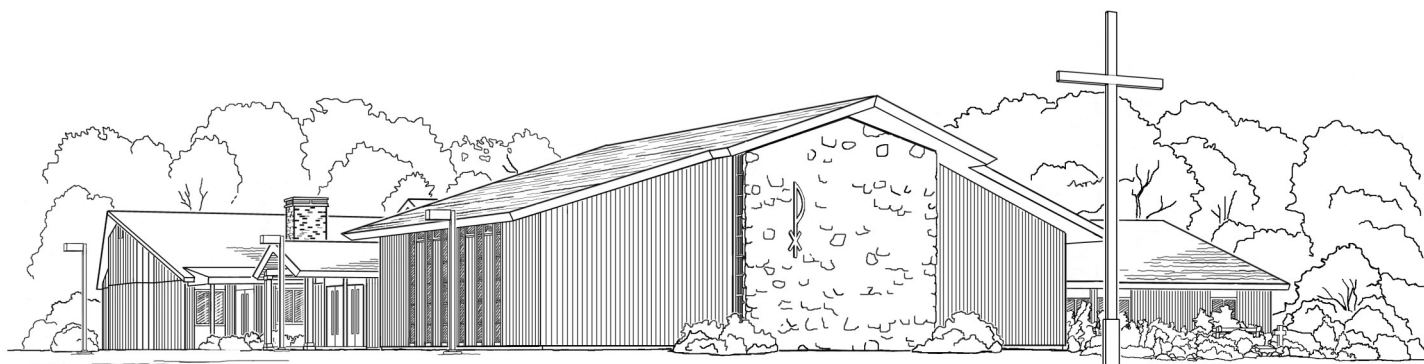


ST. LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

***We are a Spirit Driven Christian Community of
Engaged Disciples, called to Serve, Love and Forgive***

**Annual Report of the Congregation
For the Year Ending
December 31, 2025**



St. Luke is a mission and ministry-driven church located in Gales Ferry, CT. We are on a lifelong journey together. This journey is characterized by our relationships with God, our community of faith, and our global communities.

We believe that we are to grow our faith and practice of discipleship.

St. Luke is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We believe that we are freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. With our hands, we do God's work of restoring and reconciling in Jesus Christ's name throughout the world. We are a church that belongs to Christ. We live in different communities, span all ages, cultures, and races and bring to this church unique life experiences and perspectives. There is a place for you here.

*St. Luke Lutheran Church
1830 Route 12
Gales Ferry, CT 06335
(860) 464-7897
www.stlukegf.org*

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Staff, Council Members and Lay Leaders

Lead Pastor	The Rev. Heidi Johnston
Director of Music and Worship Technology	Gina Marie Williams
Parish Administrator	Rachel Goodman
Communications Coordinator	Katie Kenney
Bookkeeper	Diane Hansen
Organist	Kathleen Bartkowski
Director of Grins & Giggles Preschool/Head Teachers...	Nancy Rupert, Patricia Carroll-French
Grins & Giggles Preschool Assistant Teacher	Maryanne Greenwood, Brittany Quidgeon
Choir Rehearsal Accompanists	Cheryl Banker
Sexton	Melissa Spera, Vic Spera
President	Fawn DeMello
Vice-President	Mark Larson
Treasurer.....	Alan Nordquist
Council Secretary	Liese Zitzkat
Councilors at Large	
Lifelong Learning	Erica Sullivan
Evangelism	Pat Robbins
Facilities.....	John Perkins
Fellowship	Janis Vajdos
Outreach Ministry	Kellie August
Worship.....	Brad Dame
Cash Receipts Clerk.....	Charlie Anderson
Disbursements Clerk.....	Kathy West
Stewardship Team Leader	Natalie Donnecker
Lifelong Learning Team Leader	Leigh Sammons
Evangelism Team Leader	Jill Ragland
Facilities Support Team Leader.....	John Perkins
Fellowship Team Leader	Louise Larson
Financial Support Team Leader	Alan Nordquist
Memorial Committee.....	Elaine Remondi-Simpson
Memorial Garden Committee	Sue Anderson
Outreach Ministry Team Leader.....	Diane Hansen
Planning Team Leader	Pastor Heidi Johnston
Staff Support Team Leader	Mark Larson
Worship Team Leader	Brad Dame

**St. Luke Lutheran Church
Annual Congregation Meeting Proposed Agenda
January 25, 2026**

Call to Order

Opening Prayer – Pastor Heidi Johnston

Establish a Quorum

Election of Secretary and Parliamentarian

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes

Annual Congregation Meeting – January 26, 2025

Motion to dispense with the reading of the report

Review and Receive Reports from Pastor, Officers, Staff and Teams

Motion to dispense with the reading of the reports

Nomination and Election of Officers (1 year term)

President – Fawn DeMello

Vice President – Nominations from the floor

Treasurer – Alan Nordquist

Nomination and Election of Councilors (2 year term)

Outreach – Nominations from the floor

Appointed to Congregation Council

Council Secretary – Nominations from the floor

Nomination of Audit Team (3 year term)

Chair and Accounts Receivable – Jen Gilletti

Nomination and Election of Nominating Team (Six 1 year terms expiring January 2027)

Mark Larson

Kellie August

Nominations from the floor

Nomination and Election of Lay Synod Assembly Members(Three 1 year terms: 2 adults and 1 youth)

Jim Sammons

Jacqueline Leone

Youth -

New Business

Constitution – Fawn DeMello

Sabbatical – Pastor Heidi Johnston sabbatical with be May 4, 2026 – August 2, 2026.
Pastor Mike Lembke will be the presiding minister during this period

Internship – Pastor Heidi Johnston

(Continued on page 6)

2026 Operating Budget – Be it resolved that the St. Luke Lutheran congregation approve the proposed 2026 Operating Budget in the amount of \$534,360.20.

Others

Old Business – None

Announcements

Thanks to outgoing Councilors, Nominating Team, Audit Team and all Volunteers
Other Announcements

Blessing of the Ministry and Support Teams – Pastor Heidi Johnston

Resolution of Thanksgiving – Fawn DeMello

Motion to Adjourn

Closing Prayer – Lord's Prayer

Minutes of the St. Luke Lutheran Church Annual Congregation Meeting January 26, 2025

Call to Order

Congregation and Meeting Chair Fawn DeMello called the meeting to order at 11:09 AM.

Opening Prayer

Pastor Heidi Johnston led an opening prayer.

Establishment of a Quorum

A quorum was established (59 voting members in attendance).

Election of Secretary and Parliamentarian

A motion was made (Cyndi Arnold) and seconded (Brad Dame) to appoint Liese Zitzkat as Secretary and Charlie Anderson as Parliamentarian. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Agenda

A pen and ink modification to the agenda was made indicating that Council positions are 2-year terms. A motion was made (John Perkins) and seconded (Lisa McCabe) to approve the agenda as modified. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made (John Robbins) and seconded (Elaine Remondi-Simpson) to dispense with the reading of, and approve, the minutes of the Annual Congregation Meeting held on January 28, 2024. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and Receipt of Reports from Pastor, Officers, Staff, and Teams

A motion was made (Diane Hansen) and seconded (Leigh Sammons) to dispense with the reading of the reports. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Nomination and Election of Officers (1-year terms expiring 2026)

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Charlie Anderson moved to nominate Fawn DeMello as President, Mark Larson as Vice-President, and Al Nordquist as Treasurer. There were no nominations from the floor. The motion passed unanimously.

Nomination and Election of Council Secretary (1-year term expiring 2026)

Charlie Anderson requested nominations from the floor for the position of Council Secretary. There were no nominations from the floor.

Nomination and Election of Councilors (2-year terms expiring 2027)

Charlie Anderson requested nominations from the floor for a Councilor to serve as Facilities Liaison. John Perkins nominated himself. Charlie Anderson then moved to nominate Janis Vajdos to serve as Fellowship Liaison, Pat Robbins to serve as Evangelism Liaison, and John Perkins to serve as Facilities Liaison. There were no additional nominations from the floor. The motion passed unanimously.

Nomination and Election of Nominating Committee (Six 1-year terms expiring January 2026)

Charlie Anderson moved to appoint Mike Arnold, Bonnie Fear, Leigh Sammons, Helmut Steinnagel, Pam Suplicki, and Felix Vajdos to serve on the Nominating Committee. There were no nominations from the floor. The motion passed unanimously.

Nomination and Election of Lay Synod Assembly Members (Three 1-year terms; 2 adults and 1 youth)

Charlie Anderson moved to appoint Jim Sammons and Lisa McCabe as adult representatives to attend the Lay Synod Assembly. Nominations for a youth representative were requested from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor. The motion to appoint Jim Sammons and Lisa McCabe passed unanimously.

New Business

Proposal of Replacement of Lighting in the Building - Fundraiser

Felix Vajdos reviewed St. Luke's electrical and natural gas usage over the past year. Usage did not decrease by 10% (the goal set forth at last year's annual meeting) but is headed in the right direction.

The HVAC Committee obtained a quote from Artisenergy to replace every light fixture in the building with high efficiency LED lights. Estimated net cost would be \$24,723 (total cost of \$47,471 minus Eversource incentive of \$22,748), payable over 5 years through a 0% interest loan from Eversource (payments of \$412 per month added to St. Luke's utility bill). The money would be taken out of the operating budget and replaced via a fundraiser.

Following discussion, the motion was made (Diane Hansen) and seconded (Erica Sullivan) that St. Luke approve moving forward with replacement of lighting and aerators by Artisenergy, funded through a dedicated capital appeal fundraiser at a net cost of \$24,723. The motion did not pass.

2025 Operating Budget

Marty Wood moved and Felix Vajdos seconded the motion to adopt the following resolution: Be it resolved that the St. Luke Lutheran congregation approve the proposed 2025 operating budget in the amount of \$505,255. Treasurer Al Nordquist proposed increasing the operating budget by \$1524, totaling \$506,779, to cover the cost of building lighting replacement. Cyndi Arnold moved and Brad Dame seconded the motion to adopt the 2025 operating budget as amended. Following discussion, the question was called. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

There was no old business.

Announcements

Fawn DeMello thanked councilors, staff, volunteers, and congregation members for their encouragement, support, and guidance during her time as Council President.

Pastor Heidi stressed that filling the Council Secretary position is necessary, and she encouraged congregation members to prayerfully consider serving.

Blessing of the Ministry and Support Teams

Pastor Heidi provided a blessing.

Resolution of Thanksgiving

From our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: Be it resolved that we thank our Lord and Savior for His continued presence and guidance in all that we do, our Pastor for her continued leadership and ministry, our staff for their dedication and commitment for the mission of the church, all our volunteers and leaders who donate their time and talents to our church and our church community, and our outgoing Congregation Councilors for their time and leadership in our congregation.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made (Cyndi Arnold) and seconded (Diane Hansen). There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:13 PM, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liese M. Zitzkat
Recording Secretary

St. Luke Lutheran Church
President's Report to the Congregation
For the year ended December 31, 2025

We had 4 new members and secretary join the Congregation Council for 2025. These new members are Mark Larson, Janis Vajdos, Pat Robbins, John Perkins and Liese Zitzkat. Outgoing members were Leigh Sammons, Sue Anderson and Marty Woods. Evangelism position was vacant.

At our Council Retreat this year we discussed "Leadership and Values". Pastor Heidi and myself led a one-day retreat which was held at Enders Island in Mystic. We did a leadership activity where we asked "why do you feel you were called to serve on council". From there we asked about our personal values and how we can take our top 3 individual values and use them on the Congregation Council. During our retreat, Many Thanks to Nancy Lembke who led us in learning Robert's Rules. Each council member received a book which will be passed onto the next council member when their role is completed. We continued to build on our relationships in getting to know each other better.

Over the course of the year, we reviewed many of our Continuing Resolutions and By-Laws for all of our Ministry Teams. There were updates that needed to be made in the continuing resolutions so that they matched what our ministries are doing presently. This is a process that the ministry teams will review on a regular basis. The Executive Team most recently reviewed our Constitution. We received a Model Constitution from the New England Synod and the team went line by line to update our current Constitution. Our Constitution is being brought forth to the congregation for review and approval since it has not been reviewed since 2022 and approved in 2019. We are asking the New England Synod to also approve the Constitution so that we stay in compliance.

Mark Larson, Vice President took over this year to complete our Employee Handbook which was started in 2024 and was reviewed by the Executive Team to update and given to the Congregation Council for approval. Job Descriptions were also reviewed but not put into the Employee Handbook, they were approved and updated in the Continuing Resolutions. Staff members were asked for their input for updates to their positions prior to approvals.

Over 2026, the Executive Team and Congregation Council will review other Continuing Resolutions and By-Laws that need to be updated.

A new model was discussed at the Executive Team meetings for a new class for new members. We received 19 new members of individuals and families this year.

At our Calendar Meeting in August, all ministries were represented to fill our calendar for the remaining of 2025 and into 2026. Many events have been planned.

We had a ministry fair with all ministries in attendance which coincided with our Rally Day. It was well received and many members got to know more about the ministries offered here at St. Luke.

The Congregation Council approved 2 CD's to be established in the amounts of \$100,000 and \$50,000. Both of these CD's are with Thrivent. We received money from the IRS for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2020 and the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2021, that was used as well as some of our operating account to establish these CD's. We are supposed to receive, also through the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) from the IRS, an additional \$21,354.00 which we have not received at this time.

The Congregation Council approved to continue our HVAC Ad-Hoc team to continue to review our needs for our building. Due to a high increase of the lighting project, the Congregation Council with the recommendation from the HVAC Ad-Hoc team decided to terminate this project for this year. The furnaces, as well as other necessities with our heating system came up for discussion and are being reviewed as our priorities.

Pastor Heidi Johnston will be going on Sabbatical in 2027, and the Congregation Council has approved the sabbatical. This will be discussed and approved at the Annual Meeting for 2026. Many details have been forwarded to the Congregation.

Also, for discussion with be the possibility of becoming an Intern site for Lutheran Seminary Students. A meeting was held with Pastor Mark Lingle from the New England Synod, which was attended by 33 people. Much more information will be brought forward and also discussed for approval at our annual meeting 2026. The Audit Report was accepted at a Congregation Council meeting. It is noted that a summary of the audit was not completed.

The St. Luke Lutheran Charter was reprinted and hung up on the wall. The original charter will be put into a fireproof safe for safe keeping. We did find out that it must lay flat or the paper will start to deteriorate. We are in process of obtaining a safe. Thanks for John and Julie Perkins for donating to have the charter reprinted. Many thanks to John Perkins for overseeing the refurbishment of the Cross outside. It was removed from its base, inspected for any rooted wood, which none was found, cleaned up, stained and replaced in its base. It looks wonderful.

The President Town Meetings have been held by the New England Synod this year with the addition of the Vice Presidents of Congregation Councils. The last meeting was held in November. We split into small groups and talked about ways to increase memberships.

We had a change to our Advent Festival this year, where it was included in part of our service. Many members of all generations participated. It was a fun experience.

Thank you to all the members of the Congregation here at St. Luke Lutheran Church. For the trust and support that you have shown over this past year to accomplish so much. St. Luke thrives because of all of you. Thank you to the Staff and volunteers for all your dedication to help St. Luke grow. Your time and efforts were well observed, appreciated and I thank you for all of your assistance. Thank you also to the many chairs of our ministries in coming up with new ideas to continue to build our church.

I would like to thank all the members of the Congregation Council: Erica Sullivan, Pat Robbins, Janis Vajdos, Kellie August, Brad Dame, and John Perkins. Thank you to our Council Secretary Liese Zitzkat. Without you, so much could not have been done to move St. Luke into the future.

Thank you to the Executive Team: Pastor Heidi Johnston, Mark Larson, and Al Nordquist. We tackled many different aspects of St. Luke that have not been looked at for a couple of years and I look forward to the growth that we accomplished for the health of St. Luke Lutheran Church. This was truly a team effort to accomplish so much and I am grateful for the input and collaboration that we had together.

I am especially thankful for our Lord and Savior. Whom without, we would not be able to do all that we offer to our members and our community here at St. Luke Lutheran Church.

God is Good All the Time, All the Time God is Good.

Respectfully submitted,
Fawn R DeMello

2025 Annual Pastor's Report
St. Luke Lutheran Church, Gales Ferry, CT
To be presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 25, 2026

Ministry verses for 2026: Isaiah 40:28-31(NRSVUE)

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹He gives power to the faint
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted,

³¹but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.

Dear St. Luke Siblings in Christ,

We trust in the Lord, who is our sustenance and inspiration as we look together towards ministry year 2026! In July of 2026, we will mark five years together in mission for the life of the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Part of our agreement when we began this journey together was that I would have the opportunity to take a sabbatical every four years, to seek spiritual renewal, physical health, continuing education, and other renewing endeavors. A commitment to a regular sabbatical schedule supports longevity in ministry for the pastor and congregation.

This coming year will be marked, then, by efforts to prepare for a successful sabbatical time, and reentry into ministry together.

Ministry goal for 2026: To ensure lay ministry systems, staff, and supply pastor are equipped to perpetuate vibrancy at St. Luke in spirit and mission in the name of Jesus Christ, during the sabbatical time (Monday, May 4 - Sunday, August 2).

Specific ministry plans to support this goal in 2026:

- 1. Schedule a new members class for early Spring 2026, and equip the Evangelism Team to stay connected with regular visitors and new members.**
 - 2. Schedule early evaluation and goal assessment conversations with staff for program year 25/26.**
 - 3. Credential and encourage St. Luke Faith-based Organizing Core Team to begin congregational one-to-ones and to stay connected with interfaith partners in this work during the sabbatical time.**
 - 4. Reengage lay Eucharistic Ministers, reevaluate assignments, and establish sustainable reporting practices**
- Equip supply pastor for sabbatical time**

The above goal is in addition to my ongoing work as your pastor, supporting:

*Meaningful worship, with faithful preaching and administration of the sacraments

*Pastoral visits, esp. with visitors to St. Luke and homebound members

*Identification and training of lay leaders

*Evangelism and service in our local and global communities, partnering with interfaith and ecumenical partners.

*Support education for all ages

Many thanks to our Vision/Planning Team, Fawn DeMello (Pres.), Mark Larson (V.P.), and Alan Nordquist (Treas.) and to the whole Congregation Council.

I offer gratitude for the movement of the Holy Spirit in a motivated, faithful Council willing to share openly and ask thoughtful questions.

Many thanks to our staff. The staff (all honored by name at the beginning of the Annual Report) is integral to maintaining and supporting God's work through St. Luke so we are a responsive, vibrant, organized church for parishioners and community members alike. I praise God for you.

******Thank you, St. Luke parishioners,** for all the ways you engage and vision and participate as the body of Christ through St. Luke Lutheran Church. Together with the Spirit, you bring the good news of Christ into this church, community, and world, so that St. Luke worshipers and others might be raised up on wings like eagles, buoyed with hope and belonging.

Many thanks to all our committees and their chairs! You are some hard-working folks! You are God's blessing in this world, caring deeply and generously, offering the St. Luke community ways to live out our faith actively and meaningfully. Thank God for you.

2025 in Review

Ministry goal for 2025: Continue to cultivate relational culture within St. Luke, and with our SE CT partners for vitality in our congregations, and for justice and compassion in the public sphere.

Specific actions that supported this goal in 2025:

1. Supported training of lay leaders for one-to-ones, house meetings, and other organizing essentials and "universals."
2. Continued conducting one-to-ones with St. Luke parishioners to appreciate their natural curiosities and passions, although this was less than expected.
3. Continued meeting regularly with the interfaith SE CT Steering Committee. The process is slow, and we had a setback with the short-lived employment of a part-time organizer for SE CT. 2026 will include more lay involvement and concrete plans to launch the organization!

Continued as a member of the SE CT Core Team of leaders (We plan and lead SE CT Steering Committee meetings and events)

Below you will find statistics regarding pastoral ministry in 2025 through St. Luke.

	2025	2024
Baptisms	5	1
Affirmation of Baptism	0	8
Funerals	6 member/1 non-mem	7 mem/4 non-mem
New Members	17	no classes in '24
Weddings	0 at St. Luke/1 offsite	1 at St. Luke/1 offsite
Vow Renewal	1 members (offsite)	0

*One funeral was for 2 members (V. & R. Brasel)

May God build us up in faith and ministry joy this year, while we are together, while we are apart, and when we reunite, together again in mission.

Pastor Heidi Johnston

Lifelong Learning 2025 Annual Report to the Congregation

2025 continued to be a year of slow but steady growth for Lifelong Learning (LLL) at St. Luke. God has blessed us with a small dedicated band of children and adults who keep us moving forward teaching and learning about the good news!

In January 2025, Mark Larson shifted from LLL team leader to the role of Vice-president of the Congregational Council, and Leigh Sammons took over team leader for LLL. However, Mark and Louise Larson continue to be instrumental in helping to set up, shop for and organize snacks, and support the Kids' Corner (KC) program. They are so appreciated!

In 2024, we also bid farewell to Michele Clements, our wonderful nursery attendant, after many years of her caring for the children of St. Luke and collaborating with LLL as well as Grins and Giggles Preschool. A year has passed, and we have not replaced Michele, thus we have no regular nursery coverage available. Finding a paid attendant and/or volunteer has proven challenging but will remain a goal for the upcoming year.

This spring, we committed to having Kids' Corner more often, on the second and fourth Sundays each month. While attendance is dynamic, most KC Sundays are well-attended with a range of ages from toddlers to middle-schoolers. A typical KC session includes a reading of the Gospel lesson from the children's Spark Bible or other appropriate Bible story, a snack, and some sort of activity or project to accompany the lesson. Projects included making beaded bracelets to review The Lord's Prayer, crafting corsages for Mother's Day, decorating flower pots and planting seeds, making "lanterns" to keep us alert to God's Word, Luther's Rose, planting zinnias for GWOH Sunday, and others.

As we "rolled" into July, St. Luke hosted Vacation Bible School (VBS) with the theme "Rolling River Rampage". We had 20 children participate along with 5 teen helpers. As in the past, this was in collaboration with volunteers from St. David's and United Methodist. Participants were enthusiastic and enjoyed the thematic songs, lessons, and activities.

We continue to connect our children with the broader life of the church through annual projects such as Socktober. For this project, children decorated large boxes for collection of socks. Children also helped to sort and count the collected socks—always a fun day! This year, KC supported God's Work Our Hands Sunday by planting a bed of zinnias. Zinnias were harvested and made into bouquets for community members stopping by to pick up free veggies, who then also received a lovely bouquet to brighten their day.

The Lifelong Learning Team continues to seek ideas for Adult Education Opportunities. This year, we offered 2 successful sessions of a book study on Christian Nationalism, led by Pr. Heidi Johnston. We also hosted an adult session about the possibility of St. Luke becoming an intern site, presented by Pr. Heidi Johnston and Pr. Mark Lingle. This discussion will continue into 2026, with St. Luke potentially becoming an intern site in 2027.

Looking forward to 2026, we will continue hosting Kids' Corner twice a month. Goals include the possibility of establishing a middle-school youth group and/or splitting Kids' Corner into 2 groups, one for younger children and a separate group for middle-schoolers. At this time we do not have a confirmation class but anticipate one in the near future. Occasional activities for middle school students would allow students to know each other better and develop friendships looking ahead to confirmation.

Another goal for 2026 is to develop more robust adult education opportunities such as book studies, Bible studies, video series, and single-session classes.

Of course, increased engagement from all stakeholders is always a goal. Many thanks to Pastor Heidi, Mark and Louise Larson, Noelle Hale, Raegan Aberle, Erica Sullivan, Fawn DeMello, Lily Chapelle, Elaine Remondi-Simpson, Dan and Emily Miller, Joe and Christine Imbrogno, The Brundage Family, Katie Launer-Felty, and others who contributed time, materials, and ideas to help make KC a success. We surely are abundantly blessed!

Thanks be to God!

Respectfully Submitted,
Leigh Sammons

Outreach Ministry Team Report for 2025

Thanks to all who support outreach into the community and into our congregation, through amazing, generous gifts – pledges and grace giving and gifts of time and talent. We've stretched our budgeted funds – about 3% of annual expected income – pretty far.

Thanks to the Team members for their contributions – Sue Anderson, Cyndi and Mike Arnold, Kellie August our Council representative, Dyann Baker, Dawn Chapman, Sue Conley, Diane Hansen, Ray Heller, Penny Howell-Heller, Leah Lozier, Leigh Sammons, Elaine Remondi-Simpson, Jeanne Steinnagel, Kathy West, Mike Wuesthoff and Karen Wuesthoff. It has been my privilege to serve as Team Lead the past two years.

Budgeted monetary contributions to social service organizations

\$2,500 Chikumbuso Widows and Orphans Project (global ministries)

\$1,000 Ledyard Food Pantry (meals)

\$1,000 LICEAF (meals)

\$1,800 St. Vincent DePaul Place (shelter and meals)

\$1,000 Martin House (shelter)

\$1,000 Start Fresh (shelter)

Service Activities

Card Ministry – Leigh Sammons

Chikumbuso Widows and Orphans Project – Jeanne Steinnagel

Community Garden - Ray Heller, Penny Howell-Heller, Elaine Remondi-Simpson with huge help from Kris Balinski, Fawn DeMello, Andy Eld, Mark Godette, Jean Loomis, Linda Martin, Judy Owsley, Norm Owsley, Jim Sammons

Crisis Meal Ministry – Sue Anderson

CROP Hunger Walk – Elaine Remondi-Simpson

Furniture Bank of Southeastern Connecticut TAG SALES - Mike and Karen Wuesthoff

Gifts for Jesus and Alternative Gifts – Mike and Karen Wuesthoff

God's Work, Our Hands – Committee as a Whole

Ledyard Social Services – Thanksgiving and Christmas food assistance – Leigh Sammons

MOSAIC – Pastor Heidi Johnston

New London Community Meal Center (DINE) – Ray Heller and Penny Howell-Heller with volunteers

Prayer Shawl Ministry – Kathy West provides crocheted items

Red Cross Blood Drives - Elaine Remondi-Simpson

Socktober – Leigh Sammons

St. Vincent de Paul Place – Leigh Sammons

Camp Calumet

Calumet Sunday resulted in a donation of \$844.63 went to Camp Calumet.

Card Ministry

Our new outreach program is mailing greeting cards to members and friends who are on our prayer list. Team members get a list monthly of names and basic information about the reason prayers are requested. The outreach has been very well received.

Chikumbuso Widows and Orphans Project

Sponsorship funds of \$2,500 supporting 2 young students, a college fund, general needs, and subsidizing (1/2) graduation and licensing fees for Sarah Banda were sent to Chikumbuso in March.

Chikumbuso Sunday was June 8. We celebrated 20 years of supporting this global ministry

(Continued on page 17)

with our choir singing an African song and our altar rail decorated with chatenges. A collection for this ministry yielded \$627. Items made by Chikumbuso participants were offered for sale after worship

Linda Wilkinson's retirement was celebrated on June 19 at Jonathan Edwards Winery in North Stonington. Building an empowered community in Ng'ombe, Zambia through love, education, and micro-enterprise continues as the focus of the Chikumbuso Project. The widows who were expected to visit from Zambia to participate in the celebration were unable to get visas.

Community Garden

Our garden was planted last spring with another year of seedlings grown by the Ledyard High School VoAg program. Favorable weather and several new volunteers got us off to a good start. Mark Godette made extensive improvements to strengthen the equipment shed and add slate pieces to the new gravel steps to make them more secure. All was going well until crop damage appeared from a very unusual climbing woodchuck who had an appetite for butternut squash! A critter cam, major actions and expenses were necessary to extend the height of the fencing to block the critter's entry.

With those investments the harvest began July 2nd and continued until October 25th, with all produce going to the Gemma Moran United Way Food Center in New London and the Shoreline Pantry in East Lyme. The total harvest produced this year was 1,406 pounds, the garden's second highest production. Another 95 pounds was donated by church members from their home gardens.

Our composting project will be producing good organic soil next spring. Fresh food scraps can be brought up the hill to the wooden bins all winter but the black plastic compost bin by the church back entrance will be removed before Christmas, until the spring.

Many thanks go to all the volunteers: Linda Martin, Mark Godette, Jeanne Loomis, Jacqueline Leone, Megan Victoria, Jim Sammons, Fawn DeMello, Andy Eld, Kristian Balinski, Drew Chappelle, Helmut Steinnagel, Lisa McCabe, Wesley and Ben Johnston.

Crisis Meal Ministry

We had few calls for meals in 2025. Please remember that lovingly prepared meals are available to you when a short-term crisis makes you unable to cook for yourself.

CROP Hunger Walk

CROP Walk October 19 had 21 St. Luke walkers and a cat. They raised \$3,334.59. Eighty-nine total walkers and two dogs from local churches and community groups raised \$23,676.76 – exceeding the goal for 2025 and the second-best total ever! Twenty-five percent (25%) will go to Gemma Moran Food Center programs.

Furniture Bank of Southeastern Connecticut

Tag Sales were hosted at St. Luke May 30 and 31 and November 7 and 8. Receipts from sales and admissions were \$6,000 from the Spring sale and \$5,854 from the Fall sale. Items left after the sale were taken to Goodwill by a wonderful group of volunteers from TVCCA, where they were able to exchange the items for vouchers to give to their clients to use at Goodwill.

The Furniture bank is no longer able to pick up and deliver donated furniture. The hope is that an individual or organization can take on this part of the ministry. Purchased beds are given to people in financial need, with intake and provision of the beds all done remotely.

(Continued on page 18)

Gifts for Jesus and Alternative Gifts

The “Gifts for Jesus” Alternative Gifts Ministry, led by Mike and Karen Wuesthoff, provided opportunities for St. Luke members and friends to give Christmas gifts to 54 Martin House residents, gift bags with candy and gift cards to 26 residents of four group homes managed by Safe Futures, and the children of 12 Furniture Bank families. Donors were invited to take an ornament corresponding to their gift as an alternative gift to friends or family. Many thanks to Dyann Baker for making these beautiful ornaments.

Also offered as alternative gifts to be made in the name of someone who would not need a tangible item as a Christmas gift were opportunities to donate to a number of global agencies including ELCA Church World Service, Habitat for Humanity and the Chikumbuso Project.

God’s Work, Our Hands

September 7 Free Veggies event started in the rain and ended with a large donation to Gemma Moran United Way Food Center.

A \$250 Community Impact gift card from Thrivent (Action Team event) was used to purchase God’s Work Our Hands t-shirts.

Signs (re-used the 2024 lawn signs) went up on August 31 in Gales Ferry on Route 12.

The event was promoted on Facebook and in internal communications.

75 pounds of organic produce was donated by our Community Garden and over 200 pounds by our members (some purchased, some homegrown.)

Our Sanctuary on September 7 was a glowing goldenrod yellow, with most of our worshipers wearing their God’s Work Our Hands t-shirts. Pastor Heidi and our Youth created signs and waved them *in the rain* at passing vehicles and got lots of honks! We had around 30 customers. We hope the event gave them a good feeling about St. Luke as well as tasty fresh veggies.

Seventy-five pounds of produce that was not given away was taken to the Gemma Moran food center.

Heifer International

We made a significant gift! Envelopes adorned with chickens were in the pew racks during Lent. Requests for donations for flocks of chickens were made at Kids Corner, in internal communications, and during worship. We raised \$1,064.40 which bought 53 flocks of chickens. All donations were matched by Heifer International.

Ledyard Social Services – Thanksgiving and Christmas food assistance

\$990 in loose offerings and designated contributions on November 10 went to Ledyard Social Services for Thanksgiving Baskets. Recently, monetary donations only have been requested for Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, an effort to make sure each recipient gets approximately the same amount and quality of food. There were special offering envelopes in the pew racks on November 10.

MOSAIC

Becca Piel, Community Relations Representative, was with us for worship on May 18. She preached and offered an Adult Forum after worship. We collected office supplies during April and May. The Evangelism Team paid for a booth adjacent to the St. Luke booth at Pride Fest on August 9. Visitors were enthusiastic about learning about MOSAIC, taking printed materials for additional information.

New London Community Meal Center (NLCMC) (DINE)

On the first Sunday of every month we prepare, cook and serve nutritious meals at the Meal Center on Montauk Avenue in New London. Their mission is to provide nutritious meals and offer comfort, and hope for the future in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Our standard meal is sloppy joe, steamed vegetables, and pasta salad. Dessert and drinks are provided by the Meal Center.

We served 1239 meals in 2025, an average of 103 meals and spent \$4,805.73

We appreciate and always need your contribution of cans of Manwich. Leave them on the Manwich table in the Narthex.

New cooks and servers are needed and welcomed. The commitment is once every two months.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Kathy West continues to crochet comforting blankets for our siblings in Christ who need comfort in crisis. Thanks to our Women's Group, who placed their powerful prayers into the prayer shawls.

Red Cross Blood Drives

April 10 - 41 pints, 123 units of red cells, plasma and platelets.

October 2 - 33 pints, 99 units of blood products

December 4 collected 36 pints, 108 units of blood products and met our goal for this blood drive.

Socktober

In the month of October, Kids Corner participants created collection boxes. We collected 664 pairs of new socks for distribution to social service agencies. Thanks to all who donated!

St. Vincent de Paul Place

200 personal care items were collected in in February at St. Luke, then delivered to SVDPP.

We received an urgent appeal from SVDPP for personal care items. Items ordered from Amazon and Dollar Tree were delivered directly in September. A radically generous donation to the **Good Samaritan Fund** allowed us to supply \$1,125 of personal care items.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Hansen
Team Lead

2025 Annual Report Worship Team

The Worship Team is responsible for overseeing the worship experience and music program at St. Luke. The team meets as needed with the pastor and the Director of Music to discuss, review and plan the worship items of the congregation.

Many people take part in supporting and contributing to worship services every Sunday. In addition to staff members, there are also volunteers for several focus ministries that contribute to worship services. Following is a list of worship focus ministries outside of the music program and the people who oversee them:

Acolytes – Ad hoc, led mainly by Pastor Heidi at this time

Altar guild – Cathy Hanson

Assisting ministers – Leigh Sammons

Communion deacons – Leigh Sammons

Lay readers – Bob Nelson

Ushers – Ray Heller

Worship Tech Team – Gina Williams

Eucharistic Ministry – Jim Sammons

Thank you to these individuals and those they oversee for contributing to functions that make regular worship services possible. We are always looking for more volunteers to help with each of these ministries.

We continue to hold a single worship service on Sundays at 9:30. Another way to worship besides in the sanctuary is via live online worship. That form of worship continues to be a blessing for those who cannot make it to the physical church building.

St. Luke worship services continue to be blessed by the leadership of our pastor, Heidi Johnston. Pastor Heidi brings an amazing energy and enthusiasm to our worship life, something for which to be very thankful.

In her Director of Music and Worship Technology role, Gina Williams continues to direct the music program's bell choirs and the Senior Choir. Leslie Woods continues to lead the Celebrate Team. Music has been and will continue to be a centerpiece of worship at St. Luke.

Kathleen Bartkowski continues to fill the role of organist and accompanist. While front and center offering her musical talents for worship services, Kathleen is also important to the music program's success for some behind-the-scenes contributions.

Additionally, a lot of effort goes into preparing slides for worship each week, both for in-person worship and online worship. Gina has done a wonderful job with that aspect of worship.

While the Worship Team had limited formal meetings this past year, a core group of people continue to contribute to worship oversight and planning. Among the items facilitated was a refurbishment of the altar railings. Many thanks to Diane Hansen for leading this effort and for Ben Johnston for volunteering to complete the work. The railings were installed in time for Christmas Eve services and look great! Additionally, a problem relating to sanctuary sound was troubleshot and resolved during this past year.

Along with the many volunteers who support various aspects of worship life, we continue to be blessed in having a wonderful worship experience at St. Luke. Thank you to the congregation for continuing to support St. Luke's worship ministries.

Submitted by Brad Dame, Chair and Council Liaison

Director of Music Annual Report 2025
Gina Marie Williams

“I am strongly persuaded that after theology, there is no art that can be placed on a level with music, for besides theology, MUSIC is the only art capable of affording Peace and joy to the heart.”
– MARTIN LUTHER

This past year God called approximately 48 talented and dedicated people to become partners in the St. Luke Music Ministry. For ten months out of each year we have continued to praise the Lord with our voices, bells, organ, brass, woodwinds, guitars, drums, strings and even cymbals! With continual support and encouragement received from everyone, not to mention outstanding volunteers, we have all collaborated as one to provide worshipful music for services.

Senior Choir. Senior Choir has had as many as 14 singers this past year. Fourteen anthems have been heard during fourteen services including Ash Wednesday, Tenebrae Service, Easter, Community Christmas Concert and Christmas Eve. Thank you everyone who sang at some point with Senior Choir this past year – Charlie Anderson, Kellie August, Kristian Balinski, Natalie Danneker, Catherine Freamon, Noelle Hale, Katie Launer-Felty, Lisa McCabe, Amanda Murrizi, Bob Nelson, Jim Sammons, Helmut Steinnagel, Brian & Ginny Sturm, Pam Suplicki, Leslie Woods and Liese Zitzkat. Cheryl Banker continues as our rehearsal pianist.

Ash Wednesday & Holy Week. Choir presented one anthem for Ash Wednesday, and four anthems at the Tenebrae Service. Senior Choir processed in on Easter Sunday and sang one anthem.

Christmas. The choir participated in the seventh annual Community Christmas Concert. Senior choir sang two pieces. Senior Choir sang at the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Celebrate Team. Leslie Woods has continued to excellently lead the Celebrate Team. Celebrate led music on January 1, February 2, March 2, April 6, June 1, September 7, October 19, November 9, and December 7. Members of the team including Leslie (guitar/voice), Steve Loomis (guitar), Niko Vjados (keyboard) and vocalists Brad Dame, Jim Sammons and Liese Zitzkat.

Special Music. This past year we had special music by members of the congregation. Niko Vajdos – June 8; Roy Belhumeur – November 16; and Ben Johnston – December 7th.

Handbell Program. Overall there has been a total of 19 adults and 12 youth participating this past year. The congregation enjoyed handbells during 23 services including Ash Wednesday, Tenebrae, Easter (2 services), and Christmas Eve (2 services). Concert Handbell Choir disbanded in March due to school work demands on our four senior ringers. Thank you to everyone who has participated in making our handbell program a success – Sam, & Carson Aberle, Beth & Rob Ayer, Emilee & Kristian Balinski, Debbie Burgess, Betty Caruso, Nathaniel & Logan Dame, Fawn Demello, Bonnie Denton, Ian & Logan Enslow, Camille Felty, Catherine Freamon, Steve Gadaree, Wesley Johnston, Elijah, Luke & Peter Keefe, Jeanne Loomis, Lisa McCabe, Amelia, Kenly & Everette McCurdy, Alex & Nathaniel Nicki, Elaine Remondi-Simpson, Everett & Michael Steele. Thank you to our ever-willing subs - Kathleen Bartkowski and Jen Nicki.

Winter Workshop. Sponsored by Area 1 of Handbell Musicians of America (HMA) at UMass, I attended workshops on January 24th & 25th. Our clinician was Jason Krug, a proficient handbell composer. I led a repertoire reading session.

Logan Dame. Logan has been rehearsing Glory Ringers as part of his high school Capstone senior project. He is doing very well. He is also a member of JuBellation.

(Continued on page 22)

We have been working together in planning Hallelujah for Handbells and the informational videos to be made. We chose a theme concerning space "Look Up to the Sky".

Hand Chimes purchase. The lowest octave of chimes have been purchased (\$8000) with memorial money from my mother (who passed away on 1/7) and myself. They will be dedicated at my mother's Celebration of Life on May 10th.

New handbell. A necessary duplicate bell ordered in September arrived in November, however it was out of tune with our bells. I contacted the manufacturer right away (who had an excuse). I sent the duplicate bell back with our bell. They fixed (retuned) it immediately and sent back both bells quickly.

Youth Handbells. Concert Handbell Choir disbanded in March due to school work demands on our four senior ringers. Unfortunately beginning in September Joyful Noise had only one child so the ensemble was discontinued. Glory Ringers has 5 ringers and has been renamed **Grace Notes**.

Hallelujah for Handbells. Was held on Friday, June 6th at 7 pm. Was a great success. With the theme of "Look Up to the Sky" every piece of music was introduced with an educational video where we learned about Voyager 1 & 2, How to Become an Astronaut, Apollo 11 first moon landing, Apollo 13 first space walk, how the moon was formed, etc. EmBellish Handbell Choir led by Jane Nolan was our guest and perform two pieces. Concert went very well with a highly receptive, albeit small, audience. I am proud of the rehearsal time that our youth and adults dedicated themselves in order to present this concert.

Festival Conference. Sponsored by Area 1 Handbell Musicians of America this was held at Worcester State College on June 26-29. I was the clinician liaison for our guest clinicians (Fred Gramman from France, and Stevie Berryman, Houston Chamber Ringers). I led a repertoire reading session as well as a 2 session track teaching intermediate conducting skills. I also took educational classes and rang with the New England Ringers.

Christmas Eve Services. Grace Note Ringers participated in the Family Service playing "The First Noel". Grace Notes accompanied congregational singing of Silent Night. Seven ringers rang "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" during the Candlelight Service as well as accompanying Silent Night.

Ledyard High School Music. St. Luke hosted Ledyard High School on May 16th for their annual small ensemble Concert. There were 137 people in attendance not including students. The LHS Chamber Choir performed a joint concert with the University of Connecticut Chamber Choir on Friday, October 3rd. Again, the sanctuary was full. LHS Music has already scheduled their next small ensemble concert here for this coming year on May 15th.

Memorial Day Parade. Was once again a huge success as quite the number of people participated - Jen & Alex Nicki; Pastor Heidi, Ben & Wesley; Brad and Nathaniel Dame; Kristian & Emilee Balinski; Noelle Hale; Fawn DeMello; Natalie Donneker & daughter; the McCurdy family - Will, Rachel, Kenley, Amelia, & Everette; Betty Caruso; Everett Steele. Seven children with their parents from Grins & Giggles participated. We used a smaller float (8x4 feet) this year loaned to us by Pastor Heidi and driven by Ben Johnston. We had a giant whale with the saying "Peace like an Ocean" on the side. A bubble machine added to the fun.

Trunk or Treat. Was held on Friday, October 24th at the Ledyard Town Green from 5:30 to 8:00. A generous supply of candy was donated from the congregation. Our theme this year was a "spooky choir" using our choir robes and milk jug heads (thanks to Leigh Sammons). A skeleton sat at a mock organ with spooky choral music playing. Thank you to everyone who helped: Kristian Balinski, Noelle Haley, Jackie Leone, Natalie Danneker and daughter.

Community Christmas Concert. Our seventh concert took place on Friday, December 5th. Participating again this year was Tono Dolce Community Choir, Ledyard High School Carolers as well as St. Luke Senior Choir and JuBELLation. What a joy to conduct the combined 72 voices, JuBELLation and the 11 piece professional musicians in our final numbers. This was definitely our largest audience ever with 187 people attending. Thank you to everyone who helped and forgive me if I forget some names: Steve Gadaree and Kristian Balinski for transporting choir risers between Ledyard High School and St. Luke; Janis & Felix Vajdos for organizing the reception; Brad Dame for projection/video recording.

Worship Technology. I am grateful for Rachel Goodman for her willingness to serve as Worship Technology Assistant. Rachel has learned how to create both projection and livestream and does this for the last Sunday of every month, giving me a break! I am appreciative for those individuals who have participated in the Worship Team this past year – Kristian Balinski, Brad Dame, Al Norquist, Roni Rollinson, and Jim Sammons. It always takes two people for every service and more volunteers are certainly desired.

Soundboard Troubles. We had some major problems with the soundboard this past summer. After much investigation I discovered that someone had turned completely down a very important fader. Faders feed the volume of sound to the speakers. It was marked do not touch however....

Projection. As in the past, we continue to project our liturgy, readings and hymns.

Livestream. Despite some issues with livestreaming, most if not all problems have been resolved and continues to run effortlessly.

Slide Creation. I use PowerPoint to create all slides for projection and livestream. Each individual slides must be in two different sizes due to the differences between projection and livestream. It continues to be necessary to “re-create” many of our hymn slides to fit the new formats as well as new hymns.

Video Creation. I continue to create videos for our livestream, both at the beginning and end of the services. I have also become more creative in animating all of our announcement slides.

Memorial Service Support. Sound, projection and/or slide shows created for five services. Marge Johnson – February 21; Terry Blair – March 15; Joan Heidisch (my mom) – May 10; Vern & Rose Brasel – October 25; Bob Erickson – November 1.

Grins & Giggles. I continue to support the graduation ceremony by running both projection and sound. I create a video of photographs that are sent to me monthly with highlights from each month.

There are not enough words to express how thankful I am for the wonderful people who give of their time and talents. First and foremost, a heartfelt thank you to Pastor Heidi for her leadership and support! A hearty thank you to Rachel Goodman, who is a delight to work with! Thank you to Katie Kenney for her support in publicizing the Community Christmas Concert. Special thanks to Kathleen who has given me so much support and words of wisdom and has filled in ringing bells when needed. To the Senior Choir who I love dearly for their continued dedication in praising God through song and for dare I say it – the fun and laughter we share. Thanks to the Celebrate Team and the leadership of Leslie Woods in her dedication in leading the congregation in praise. Thank you to Cheryl Banker, choir rehearsal pianist. Thank you to the bell choirs, from our youngest to our “mature” ringers – I can’t say enough about the smiles, laughs and hard work that you continue to do. A special thank you to the parents of our young handbell ringers for bringing them to rehearsals! Thank you to Fawn DeMello and the church council for their support and our congregation for entrusting me with this responsibility.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gina Marie Williams

St. Luke Lutheran Church 2025 Evangelism Report

We were able to give money this year to two organizations: United Lutheran Seminary – to assist Lutheran Seminary students and Reconciling Works. We will continue to support both of these organizations for 2026 and add in a contribution for our organizer for the Faith Based Organization Community in Southeastern Connecticut.

Our Faith Based Organization Community has continued to grow over this year and we have developed a core team. This core team will be conducting meetings throughout 2026 to hear what our community is looking for in change for the good for Southeastern Connecticut.

Advertisement for Lenten Services was provided as well as Easter Services – there were anywhere from 14-16 participants on any given Wednesday for the Lenten Soup and Study. A total of 22 came throughout the 5 weeks. Great soups, bread and desserts were provided by volunteers and thanked each week.

We participated again in the Memorial Day Parade. Many thanks for the volunteers from church and Grins and Giggles students and parents who walked and decorated our float. Many thanks to Pat Robbins who brought food for the volunteers and Gina Williams for our theme of Jonah and the Whale, plus those that contributed candy. It was a Great day and perfect weather.

Pridefest was again in August and organized by Fawn R DeMello for the third year. There were a number of attendees that look for St. Luke on the boardwalk each year. We were one of only two churches represented this year. Thank you to the volunteers that came: Felix Vajdos, Jerry Swope, Mike and Cyndi Arnold, Pastor Heidi, Angie Phillips, and Diane Hansen and Kristian Balinski to help set up and breakdown. Visitors from all over the state and especially our own backyard stopped by and did our prayer squares. We teamed up with Mosaic to have a booth next to ours and will continue this collaboration.

The Welcome Statement for Reconciling Works was updated as well as on our website, bulletin, weekly, scroll and slides. There are 4 requirements to continue being a Reconciling Church in Christ, which we are in compliance with and will continue to review.

New members were received in September of this year. We had 19 individuals or families join as members of St. Luke. A class was held and a service to welcome our new members. Trunk or Treat was run by Gina Williams again this year with the theme of a spooky choir. There were many children that came through to get candy. Thank you to the volunteers who helped give out candy and decorate, as well as the many bags of candy we received from the congregation.

Postcards were made to give as invitations for our members to invite friends and others that they meet to come to St. Luke for a service or event. We have had many new people come to St. Luke over this past year.

We provided advertisement for the Christmas Eve services this year with bigger ads. The services were well attended with the 8:30 service overflowing into the Narthex. It was a beautiful sight to see.

Thank you to the volunteers on the Evangelism Team of Pat Robbins, Pastor Heidi, and Jill Ragland. We welcome anyone who would like to join our team. Exciting things are coming in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Fawn R DeMello

St. Luke Lutheran Church 2025 Fellowship Report

The Fellowship Team continues to promote social interactions to foster a sense of community among the congregation.

In 2025, we hosted:

- Several coffee hours following service
- Themed events following service
 - Summer Strawberries and Lemonade (also celebrated the welcome of new members)
 - Ice Cream Bar Sunday
 - Advent Festival
- Potluck lunches
 - Dust Off Your Cookbook Recipe swap
 - Rally Day
- Farewell and welcome receptions
 - Farewell to the Croteau's
 - Welcome MOSAIC
 - Chikumbuso Sunday
 - Calumet Sunday
- Receptions following Celebration of Life services
 - Terry Blair
 - Marge Johnson
 - Joan Heidisch
 - Vern and Rose Marie Brasel
 - Bob Erickson

Thank you to all the volunteers who brought food, helped with set-up and/or clean-up, washed table linens, donated wreath-making materials, or made coffee this year. Special thanks and recognition goes to the Fellowship team chair, Louise Larson, and members, Dennis Sindel, Janeese Watson, and Sue Anderson. The team is always looking for new members to plan and organize upcoming events. They meet at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Monday of each month in the conference room.

Next year we hope to support improvements in the kitchen that include replacing the existing countertops that are water damaged and installing air conditioning in the fellowship hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis Vajdos, MS, PMP
St. Luke Council Liaison to the Fellowship Team

**Facilities Support Team
2025 Annual Report**

Accomplishments

-Several projects were started and complicated. First and for most I would like to thank all of those who were involved over the summer that made sure the grass was kept cut and the grounds was kept clean of litter. You know who you are.

-One major project that was done was the taking down and refurbishing of the cross.

Goals/objectives/events planned for the upcoming months

-One goal that I have planned and working on is to find a reliable company that can repaint and stain the exterior of the church.

-The other short term goal is to find a reliable electrician to handle some small electrical problems.

Issues/Concerns

-None at this time

Council Actions requested

-None

Expenditures

-None

Respectfully Submitted,
John Perkins

Liaison for building and grounds

**St. Luke Lutheran Church
2025 Memorial Garden Report**

The dedication and consecration of the St. Luke Memorial Garden took place in June 1998. Since then, the memorial brick path, millstone and bell have been added. As of this fall, the ashes of 48 family members and friends have been interred in the garden in unmarked ground. No containers, markers or flower bouquets are permitted in the garden.

Maintenance is ongoing by a dedicated group of church members: Kari Hammen, Cathy Hanson, Bob and Joanne Erickson, Leigh Sammons, Sue Bibeau and Sue Anderson. New gardeners are needed as the current group are aging out! The time commitment is small (2-3 hours every few weeks on weekday mornings during the growing season).

The families of those interred are asked to make a one-time donation of \$100 to the Memorial Garden Fund to maintain the garden, walkways and stone walls. This donation may be waived by the pastor in certain circumstances. The Fund is also used to engrave nameplates which are affixed to the plaque in the Narthex for those who are interred. Families are encouraged to contribute a brief biography of the deceased (which can be the bulletin from the Funeral/Memorial Service) for inclusion in the Commemorative Book which is located on the credenza in the Narthex.

All are welcome to come and sit in the garden for a moment of reflection. It is peaceful and beautiful.

Sue Anderson

St. Luke Lutheran Church
People Support and Vice-President's Annual Report 2025

It has been my pleasure to serve as Vice President and Chair of the People Support Team for St. Luke Lutheran Church this year. I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside our Council members, dedicated staff, and fellow volunteers. Much of the year's efforts centered around updating Church documents and the hiring of new staff.

First, I would like to extend my thanks to Gina Donovan, Carolyn Kracke, Bob Nelson, Leigh Sammons, Pam Suplicki, and Marty Wood for their work serving as People Support staff liaisons. Their time and effort are greatly appreciated.

The year-long effort to update Church documents began with revisions to the continuing resolution for The People Support Team, followed by a comprehensive update to the Employee Handbook. Changes ensured that it reflects current practices and offers consistent guidance on staff rules and expectations. Alongside this, we looked closely at job descriptions for church staff, making sure each role and responsibility is clearly defined and aligned with the church's mission and goals.

In terms of additions to personnel, we successfully interviewed and hired two new assistant teachers for the Grins and Giggles Preschool. Marianne Greenwood and Brittany Quidgeon, who had both previously served as substitute teachers, came with years of experience working with children and were eager to expand their roles in the program. In addition, we officially hired Vic Spera for intermittent maintenance work, and his contributions have already proven valuable.

As part of our commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment, we developed and implemented a Safe Church Training quiz for all staff and volunteers. This training will ensure awareness of best practices and protocols for maintaining a safe space. Working with members of the Executive Team, I researched director of worship technology positions both locally and around the country to consider a prudent salary adjustment. Based on that research and conversations with Gina Williams, we recommended an increase in compensation.

Lastly, the Executive Team worked together on revisions to the St. Luke Constitution. The main goal of these revisions, which are pending Congregational approval, is to align the Constitution with the ELCA New England Synod guidelines.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Larson
Vice President/People Support Team Chair

**St. Luke Lutheran Church
2025 Communications Coordinator Report**

The Communications Coordinator position was held by Katie Kenney. I maintained the Midweek email, website, social media posts, email eblasts, graphics for ads and designed the Scroll newsletter on a monthly basis.

Throughout the year I maintained my duties I established in 2024. This included designing graphics for the Midweek and organizing announcements to be shared both to the midweek and on our Facebook and Instagram pages. To share events I also designed flyers to be posted at St. Luke as well as to be shared on local community forums. I maintained St. Luke's online presence by sharing information to social media as well as sharing event photos with our church community and our wider local community. Monthly, I designed the Scroll which included making graphics, taking photos as well as organizing articles for placement in the Scroll. I designed ads for our upcoming Easter and Christmas Eve services to be distributed in local newspapers as well as marketing our events both digitally and print. Additional responsibilities included updating our website with updated photos, the newest midweek and Scroll, promoting other community events and sharing church news.

A few of my responsibilities included:

1. Maintaining the website and updating the content and design.
2. Sharing news from our congregational council through the Midweek.
3. Designing print materials to be distributed by local news outlets.
4. Creating Facebook events to remind our followers of the events coming soon.
5. Designed the Scroll newsletter throughout the year.
6. Maintained church Instagram to share reels and photos to increase engagement and share information to our community members.

Katie Kenney

Communications Coordinator

2025 Parish Records

NEW MEMBERS (17)

Transfer from ELCA

Transfer from Other Lutheran

Transfer from Non-ELCA

Affirmation of Faith

Roy Belhumeur
Lauren Brundage
James Brundage
Nora Brundage
Daisy Brundage
Mike Dobson
Mayra Dobson
Rob Funk
Christina Imbrogno
Joseph Imbrogno
Violet Imbrogno
Jackie Leone
Larry Parsons
Laura Parsons
James Ragland
Megan Stone
Wally Stone

Statistical Adjustment/ Restoration of Membership

BAPTISMS (5)

Brundage, June Michelle
Brundage, Theo Jonathan
Polacek, Logan Martin
Polacek, Maeve Laurie
Elliott, Emry Michele

YOUTH CONFIRMED

BIRTHS

TRANSFER/REMOVED (8)

Transfer to other ELCA

Transfer to Other Lutheran

Transfer to Non-Lutheran

Death (6)

Marge Johnson
Terry Blair
Rose Marie Brasel
Jim West
Vern Brasel
Bob Erickson

Moved, No Transfer (2)

Croteau, Carol & Rudy

Withdrew from Congregation

Other/Statistical Adjustment

PASTORAL ACTS

Funerals

Marge Johnson
Terry Blair
Vern & Rose Marie Brasel
Jim West
Bob Erickson

Non-Member Baptisms

Marriages

Renewal of Vows

*Funeral services included interment of ashes.

Membership Trend Report, 2020 - 2025

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
MEMBERS RECEIVED BY:						
Baptism: Children (under age 15)	1	2	1	1	0	5
Baptism: Adults		0		0	0	0
Affirmation of Faith	4	0	14	3	0	17
Transfer from ELCA Congregations		3	6	2	0	
Transfer from other Lutheran		1		1	0	
Transfer from Non-Lutheran		0	1	0	0	
Statistical Adjust./Restoration of Membership	1	0	3	0	0	
TOTAL MEMBERS ADDED	6	6	24	6	0	22
MEMBERS REMOVED						
Death	6	3	4	4	6	6
Transfer to ELCA Congregation	7	0		0	0	
Transfer to other Lutheran		0		1	0	
Transfer to Non-Lutheran		0			0	
Moved, No Transfer	64	18	11	10	4	2
Withdrew from Congregation	14	5			2	
Other/Statistical Adjustment	221	0	13			
TOTAL MEMBERS REMOVED	312	26	28	14	10	8
MEMBERSHIP CHANGE	(306)*	(23)	(4)	(8)	(12)	14
Baptized Youth Confirmed	4	4	0	8	0	0
Confirmed Membership	370	354	352	352	340	354

* During the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020, the computerized membership database was carefully combed through, deleting duplicate entries and correcting errors. Member update requests for each household were sent and records were updated with the responses that were received. Remaining records were made inactive if they showed no attendance and/or giving in the previous ten years.

Submitted by Rachel Goodman, Parish Administrator

**Memorial Committee
2025 Annual Report**

The Memorial Fund received fifty-nine (59) memorial gift donations totaling \$12,784.50 in 2025. Grateful acknowledgments have been sent for memorial gifts to honor: **Joan Heidisch** (6), **Marge Johnson** (12), **William Kracke** (1), **Terry Blair** (4), **Rose Marie & Vern Brasel** (4) and **Bob Erickson** (16) Chikombuso and (17) Memorial Fund. Six **name plates** for the Memorial Garden Plaque were purchased, costing \$20.00 each from Grader Trophies.

The **ending balance** in the Memorial Fund, as of December 31, 2025 **\$1,699.46**

Six memorial gifts were given in honor of **Joan Heidisch**.....\$8,741.50
Two gifts for bass handchimes and racks..... \$8,341.00. Four designated for music.....
\$400.50

A **name plate** was purchased for the Memorial Garden Plaque.....\$20.00
Her service and interment in the Memorial Garden was held on Saturday May 10, 2025.

Twelve memorial gifts were given in honor of **Marge Johnson** (\$25.00 for music).....\$815.00
(\$447.54 was spent on products to refurbish the communion rail, \$342.46 is remaining.)

One memorial gift was given in honor of **William Kracke**\$257.50
(Including the \$1,173.75 given in 2024, the total of Bill's memorial money is \$1,431.25.)

Four memorial gifts were given in honor of **Terry Blair** (\$25.00 for music)\$130.00

A **name plate** was purchased for the Memorial Garden Plaque\$20.00
His service and interment in the Memorial Garden was held on Saturday March 15,
2025.

A **name plate** was purchased for James H. West for the Memorial Garden Plaque.....\$20.00
A private family service and interment was held on Friday September 19, 2025.

Four memorial gifts were given in honor of **Rose Marie & Vern Brasel**.....\$260.00
They were designated for meal ministry as they have supported that charity for decades.

Two **name plates** were purchased for the Memorial Garden Plaque.....\$40.00
Their service and interment in the Memorial Garden was held on Saturday October 25,
2025.

Sixteen memorial gifts were given in honor of Bob Erickson for **Chikumbuso**.....\$1,185.50

Seventeen memorial gifts were given to the **Memorial Fund** in honor of Bob
Erickson.....\$994.50

A total of 33 designated memorial gifts for a total of\$2,180.00

A **name plate** was purchased for the Memorial Garden Plaque.....\$20.00
His service and interment in the Memorial Garden was held on Saturday November 1,
2025.

(Funds to purchase **name plates** came from interment fees in the **Memorial Garden**
account.)

Respectfully,
Elaine Remondi-Simpson

RaiseRight Update 2025 Annual Report

The RaiseRight Program came into being many years ago. There have been several ebbs and flows since the pandemic. This past year was a difficult one due to medical and life issues that affected me and my back-up, Pat Robbins, being present on a consistent basis. Be that as it may, as a church we were able to ensure that those who needed assistance were tended to in the form of gift cards. For the coming year, Pat and I have discussed making the cards available on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month to serve the congregation. The gift cards that are available rotate based on what is offered to the supply organization and economic viability of the companies providing the cards. I would be more than happy to provide a monthly list of current vendors if requested. Beyond grocery, gas and restaurant cards, there are cards for air travel and some cruise lines!

The cards are available all year round. Upgrades at the RaiseRight program allow the purchase of gift cards on-line with a credit card or debit card, for a nominal convenience fee that is not passed on to the church. You can still attach a dedicated checking or savings account to pay for physical or e-gift cards. There is now an option to order gift cards and have them shipped to your home, or another designated address. If you would like to take advantage of this option, you would be responsible for the shipping fee. (If this is an option anyone would like to pursue, please let me know and I would be more than happy to assist you.)

As the RaiseRight Program Coordinator, I manage the ordering of cards but have no input in how these funds are used. The use of these funds is totally at the discretion of the church council.

I would like to thank all the church members that have used the program this past year. If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Crystal Dame
RaiseRight Coordinator

Grins & Giggles Preschool 2025 Annual Report

Once again, I have the challenge of wrapping my head around a school year that ended in June and a new one that began in September. Each class is so different! Here is my segmented 'summary'.

We graduated 18 children in June. Eight children went on to kindergarten, nine returned to continue with Grins & Giggles and one child left to attend a free preschool offered by his hometown. One child who dropped out in October of 2024 returned to join us in September 2025.

This September we had the luxury of a waiting list for preschool, a never before occurrence! Six of the students from the graduating class returned to us as full time, five day a week students. This arrangement made planning activities more stressful for the staff. We needed to offer new more challenging activities to those children which required more planning and coordination with staff not to duplicate the projects. We rose to the challenge, however, and reinvented the 'wheel' so to speak!

Many of our students this year come from military families. As one family 'shipped out' we would go to our waiting list and offer the spot to a new family. There was some overlap at times which meant we had 11 or 12 children in class instead of our usual ten but as staff we agreed we were able to handle the additional children to accommodate their family's needs. If the personalities in the classroom could accommodate an additional child, we agreed they could join us. Currently we have 19 on our roster with six of them coming five days a week.

We completed four weeks of Kids Summer Camp with Ms. Susanna Curtis as Head teacher. Each week was full enrollment. Sadly, when the camp was finished Ms. Susanna flew off to return to her native country, Sweden. Her husband had been employed with the Defense Department and with the cutting back of Federal employees, Chuck was 'retired' earlier than expected. The rush to find her replacement did not take long, thankfully. Brittany Quidgeon and Marianne Greenwood, both parents of children who had attended our preschool and who were currently acting as our substitutes and assistant teachers at Kids Camp gladly stepped forward to take her place. Marianne agreed to assist with the Tuesday/Thursday class and Brittany agreed to assist with the Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes. Each assistant comes with the necessary qualifications needed to fill the positions. Both assistants spent the summer updating their resumes and attending the appropriate classes to become certified 'Assistant Teachers'. April 1, 2025, the OECE (Office of Early Childhood Education) required that all Head teachers take 5 hours of Safety Training online and Assistant Teachers take 18 hours of Safety Training online. Both Marianne and Brittany were up for the task and have decided in January 2026 to pursue their 'Head Teacher' certifications as well which both Patricia and I are pleased to see happen. Although Patricia and I are not considering retirement yet, it's good to see qualified enthusiastic teachers following in our footsteps. Both assistant teachers are very technologically savvy which is a God-sent to both Patricia and me. We welcomed their expertise in that area! Our combination of years of experience coupled with their ability to use technology is a nice blending of teaching techniques and styles where each learns from the other.

With our new teachers we saw a new room arrangement which gave us more space for our circle time and art projects. A new rug was purchased to discard the old ragged one in the nursery side room and a new sensory table built by one of our parents was added too. The campaign to raise money by the congregation to purchase materials to sew the Nap Mats was successful. With Jo-Ann Fabrics closing their doors I was able to purchase the fleece at discounted prices and a widowed friend of mine whose wife was an avid seamstress

donated fabrics and thread as well. My neighbor (a 'Michelin' star seamstress!) helped me design and sew all the Nap Mats during the summer with various congregational members joining in to help. A truly group effort! The result was 20 Nap Mats that could be used year after year. When interviewing new families, they were very impressed that we provided the Nap Mats for them. I consider this project one of the major accomplishments of 2025.

Our playground fence needed repairs often. The two swinging doors must have been hit by the snowplow once too often and needed to be jacked up to be able to lock once more. The cover to our sandbox is not stopping the mice from nesting inside so I would love someone to design a new top to prevent this from happening.

The year saw our usual visits from the Ledyard Fire Department, Ledyard Police Department, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, Stacey Burt (Ledyard Librarian), Kat Silver (Entomology specialist with CAES -The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station) and various musical guests such as Scott Gordley and Leslie Woods. We also had a visit from Robin Nelson to talk about how she illustrates books and Leslie Woods read the book that she wrote 'Paper Zoo'. As a class we went on our two field trips: Scott's Farmer Orchard, East Lyme and Waterford Country School, Waterford. We walked in the Memorial Day parade, collected canned food for the Ledyard Food Bank in December and participated in the church Christmas pageant. It was a very busy successful year overall!

Nancy Rupert
Grins & Giggles Director

**St. Luke Lutheran Church
Treasurer's Report
For the year ended December 31, 2025**

This report documents the financial activity of St. Luke for fiscal year ending December 31, 2025.

It takes many people to run the financial operations of the church. I would like to thank the following people for their dedicated service to St. Luke this year:

- Bookkeeper: Diane Hansen
- Cash Disbursements Clerk: Kathy West
- Cash Receipts Clerk: Charlie Anderson
- Counters:
 - Dennis Sindel (lead counter/coordinator)
 - Debbie Main
 - Amanda Thorne
 - Hal Oberg
 - Jerry Swope
 - Warren Chmielecki
 - Grace Demarco
 - Helmut Steinnagel
 - Bob Nelson
 - John Robbins
 - Pam Suplicki
- Financial Stewardship Drive Lead: Natalie Donnecker
- Audit Team: Roni Rollison, John Felty, Edna Johnson

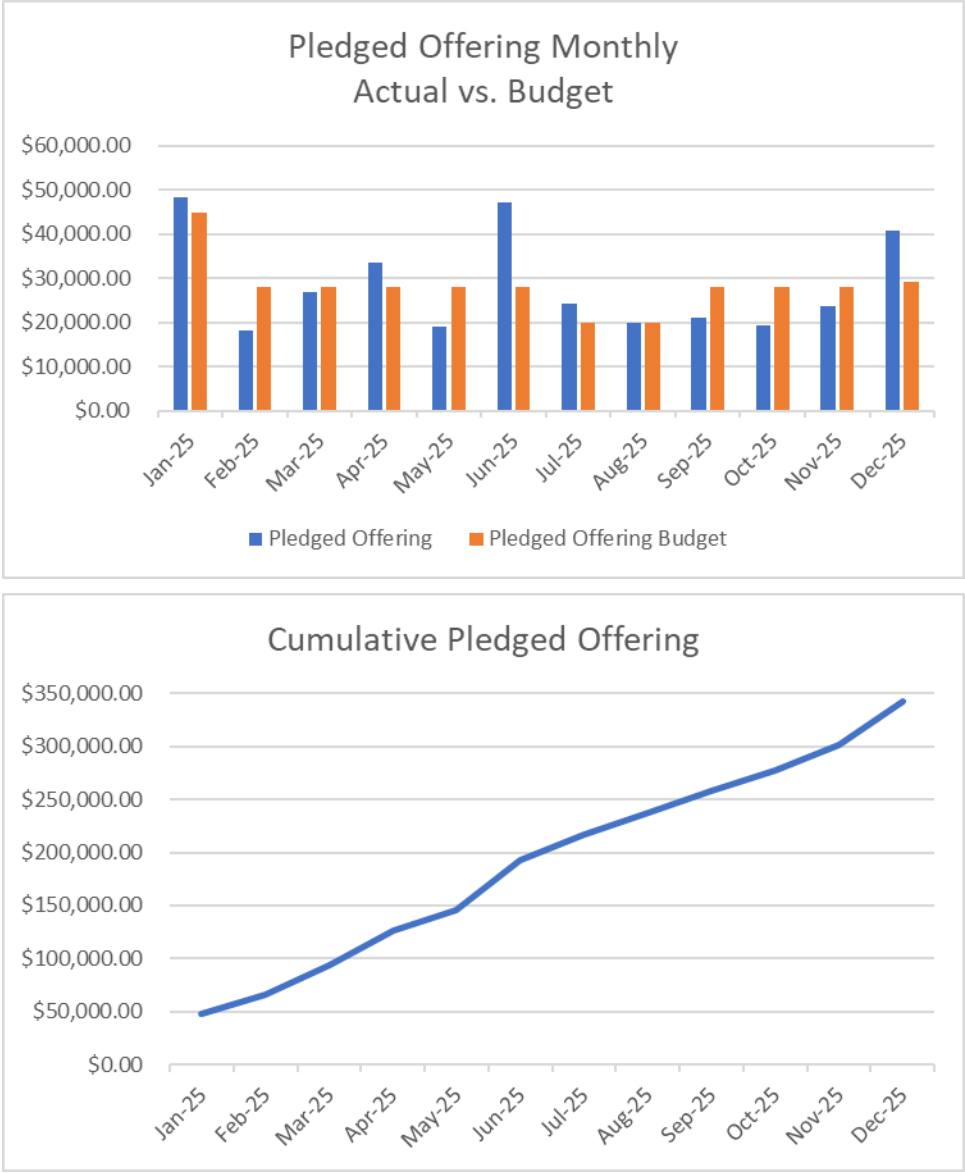
The audit team completed the audit of St. Luke's finances for 2024. The team's report is included here in the annual report.

Income Summary for 2025

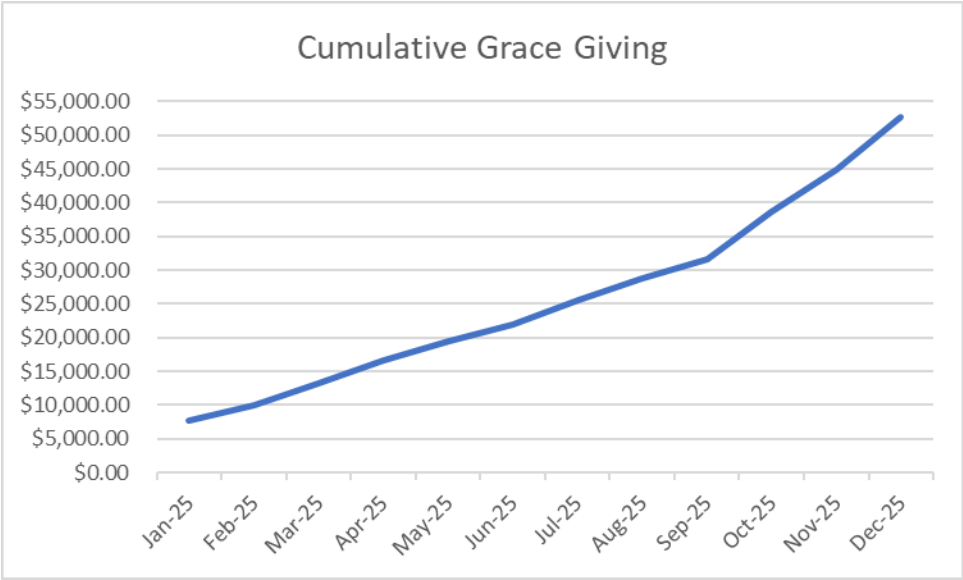
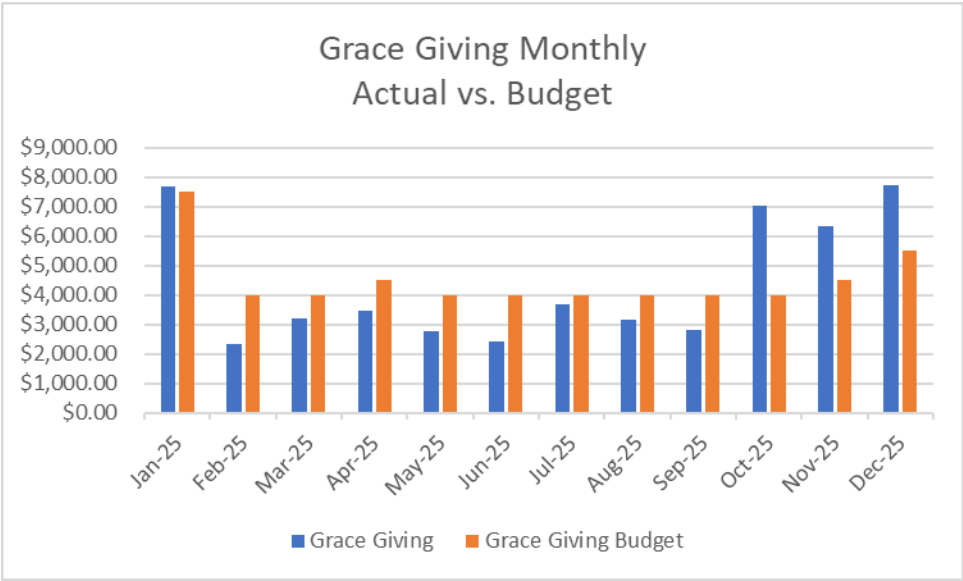
Our total in 2025 exceeded our budget by approximately \$12.4K. Pledged offering exceeded the budget by \$4K, and Grace Giving was below our budget by \$1.3K. Grins & Giggles income exceeded the budget by \$7.2K, as we ended up having more students, on average, than what we accounted for in the budget. The below table shows our year-end actual income as compared to the budget:

Account Name	2025 Actuals	2025 Annual Budget	Difference from Budget
Pledges	\$342,177.41	\$338,147.00	\$4,030.41
Grace Giving	\$52,680.13	\$54,000.00	(\$1,319.87)
Loose Cash Offering	\$5,015.91	\$3,600.00	\$1,415.91
Special Envelopes	\$1,693.60	\$2,600.00	(\$906.40)
Offerings	\$401,567.05	\$398,347.00	\$3,220.05
Building Use	\$3,413.78	\$2,500.00	\$913.78
Structures Income	\$3,413.78	\$2,500.00	\$913.78
Investments Div/Interest	\$3,123.32	\$2,000.00	\$1,123.32
Other Income	\$3,123.32	\$2,000.00	\$1,123.32
Grins & Giggles Income - Donations	\$391.20		\$391.20
Grins & Giggles Income-Tuition	\$92,245.00	\$85,850.00	\$6,395.00
Grins & Giggles Income-Registration fees	\$1,085.00	\$700.00	\$385.00
Total Grins and Giggles Income	\$93,721.20	\$86,550.00	\$7,171.20
			\$0.00
Total Budgeted Income	\$501,825.35	\$489,397.00	\$12,428.35

The below charts show our actual pledged offering and grace giving offering by month as compared to the monthly budget, and cumulative pledged offering and grace giving for the year:



(Continued on page 38)



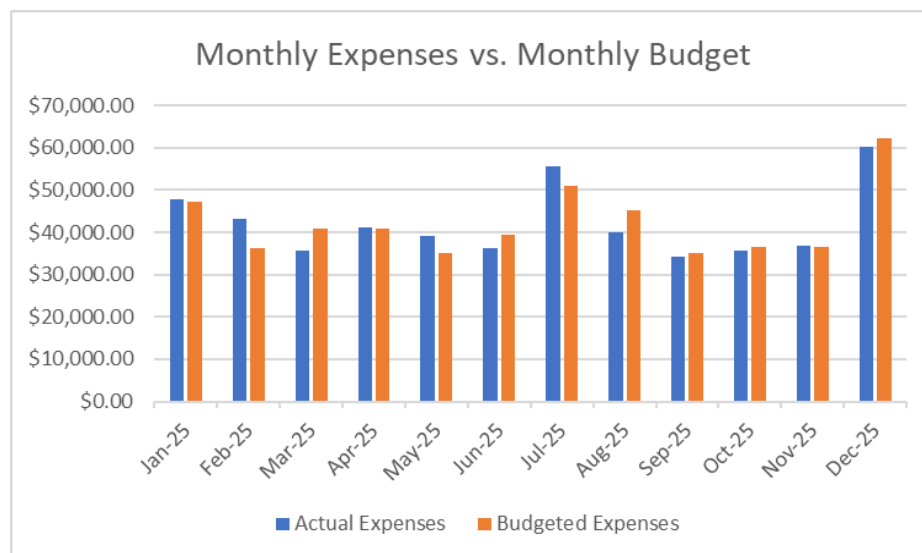
Expense Summary for 2025

Our total expenses for the year were almost exactly equal to our budget. Although Grins & Giggles expenses exceeded the budget by \$5.4K, several other categories of expenses were below the budget, including Staff Salaries by \$2.6K, Facilities Support by \$2.2K, and Life Long Learning by \$1.6K. Staff salaries were below the budget primarily because we budgeted \$2080 for a nursery attendant in 2025, but did not have an employed nursery attendant. All other staff salary actuals were very close to what we budgeted. Grins & Giggles expenses exceeded our budget primarily because the Head Teachers worked more hours than what we had used in the calculation for the 2025 budget. The 2026 budget uses a better estimate of hours to be worked by all Grins & Giggles staff.

The below table shows our year-end actual expenses as compared to the budget:

Account Name	2025 Actuals	2025 Annual Budget	Actuals Difference from Budget
Lead Pastor Expenses	\$125,970.04	\$127,193.00	\$1,222.96
Total Grins & Giggles Expense	\$92,526.49	\$87,130.00	(\$5,396.49)
Staff Salary	\$145,803.70	\$148,417.00	\$2,613.30
Subcontractors	\$2,523.00	\$3,595.00	\$1,072.00
Office Expense	\$5,027.58	\$4,250.00	(\$777.58)
Contractual	\$22,123.30	\$21,753.00	(\$370.30)
Insurance	\$11,737.50	\$11,320.00	(\$417.50)
Technology	\$8,605.63	\$8,500.00	(\$105.63)
Financial	\$6,646.12	\$6,500.00	(\$146.12)
Professional Development	\$2,030.67	\$1,805.00	(\$225.67)
Life Long Learning	\$2,748.36	\$4,350.00	\$1,601.64
Evangelism	\$1,473.68	\$1,450.00	(\$23.68)
Fellowship	\$3,739.18	\$2,500.00	(\$1,239.18)
Worship	\$5,990.26	\$6,650.00	\$659.74
Facilities Support	\$27,853.69	\$30,024.00	\$2,170.31
Synod Support	\$29,085.00	\$28,742.00	(\$343.00)
Outreach Support	\$12,608.08	\$12,600.00	(\$8.08)
TOTAL Budgeted Expense	\$506,492.28	\$506,779.00	\$286.72

The chart below shows our monthly actual expenses as compared to our monthly expense budget:



Income/Expense Summary for 2025

As a result of our budgeted income being \$12.4K greater than the budget, we used only \$4667 of our funds to meet our expenses, as compared to our budgeted allocation of \$17,382 of our funds. The table below shows our total expenses as compared to the total budget:

Account Name	2025 Actuals	2025 Annual Budget
Total Budgeted Income	501,825.35	489,397.00
TOTAL Budgeted Expense	506,492.28	506,779.00
Difference	(4,666.93)	(17,382.00)

Other Income and Employee Retention Tax Credits

In addition to budgeted income sources detailed in the table in the income summary above, we also receive “unbudgeted” income every year in the form of donations to specific funds, for which the donor may direct the donated money to be used for a specific purpose or direct it to a specific fund. In 2025, in addition to these types of donations, we also received an Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) from the IRS. Between these donations and the ERTC, we had a total of \$120,258.87 of unbudgeted income. The ERTC that we received was \$54,283.53 in February 2025, and was deposited into the Unrestricted Gifts fund. The ERTC is a tax credit that St Luke applied for approximately three years ago, and is a tax credit offered by the IRS that “is a refundable tax credit for certain eligible businesses and tax-exempt organizations that had employees and were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic”, per the IRS website. We are expecting additional ERTC income in 2026.

Certificates of Deposit

Because we had a large amount of money in our savings and checking accounts early in the year, the council decided to open two certificates of deposit (CD’s) to generate additional interest income. Therefore, we opened a 9-month CD with an initial deposit of \$100,000 in March 2025, and we opened a 12-month CD with an initial deposit of \$50,000 in August 2025. The 9-month CD has since matured and has been rolled over into a new 9-month CD. Both of these CD’s were opened with Thrivent Credit Union (now called Thrivent Bank), and both have annual percentage yield rates of 3.004%. These two CD’s combined generate approximately \$400 in income per month.

Respectfully Submitted,
Alan Nordquist
Treasurer

St. Luke Lutheran Church Audit Committee Annual Report 2025

This report documents the findings of the 2024 St. Luke Audit Committee. The members of the Audit Committee are Veronica Rollinson, John Felty, and Edna Johnson.

The audit committee conducted an audit of St. Luke's financial records and processes for 2024. The audit committee used audit guidelines provided by the previous audit committees, which are tailored from the guidelines provided by the New England Synod, ELCA.

The audit has typically consisted of three portions:

1. Accounts Payable
2. Accounts Receivable and Cash Receipts
3. Personnel and Payroll

The specific attributes audited and the findings and conclusions are described below.

Accounts Receivable/Cash Receipts

Review of Weekly Offering Count as Compared to Bank Deposits

All 21 of the offering deposits that were reviewed were accounted for through bank deposits. The findings are as follows:

- On 12/9 Raise Right was not accounted for on the counters sheet, it was accounted for on the batch report
- Ash Wednesday did not have a batch report summary

Recommendation: Giving summary batch report does not breakdown information the same way that the counting sheets do. My suggestion would be to continue to standardize the information across both reports.

Review of Giving recorded by St. Luke to individuals

15 Families were contacted to confirm their giving amount for the year out of 78 families that regularly give at the church. 13 families responded. All confirmed that the amount that St. Luke had listed was the correct amount that was donated from their accounts. One family did make note that they have not been receiving their giving summary the past couple of years.

Review of Grins & Giggles Payments as Compared to Bank Deposits

All Grins & Giggles receipts for the year were reviewed for correlation with bank deposits and completeness of recording of all receipt information. Payments received by other than EFT (electronic funds transfer) for Grins & Giggles (G&G) tuition are recorded on a G&G deposit worksheet with the family/student name, month paid for, check number, and tuition amount paid. The worksheets have a "date prepared" line and a "by" (prepared by) line, with the G&G receipt copy (the original of which is given to the payer) stapled to the deposit worksheet, as well as the bank deposit receipt. The following issues were found with the G&G deposit worksheets:

- There is one summary sheet with many dates of payment received and oftentimes multiple deposit checks within.

- Days between date of collection and deposit date range from 0 to 12 days
- No one signed off on the summary sheet on 12/10/14

There is a monthly tuition summary and often it was not filled out or only filled out partially

Recommendation: Overall, recommendation will continue from 2022 and 2023 that a second person review and sign each deposit worksheet and verify the accuracy and completeness of the information entered by the person who prepared the worksheet, including the presence of a prepared by name and date, complete recording of all the payments received, verification that all payment receipts are attached, and verification of the total amount recorded. Suggestion to be done either by bookkeeper more officially shown in the paperwork or by a second individual within Grins and Giggles. Additionally it is recommended to keep worksheets for a given day only and not for multiple collection days. Finally it is recommended that a procedure be implemented to allow for easier accountability of each student. Almost every summary for the monthly tuition was not filled out by Grins and Giggles, it is recommended that this should act like a summary sheet for the month akin to giving summaries, where the number of days that an individual student was there is listed and how much they paid be noted and all the following sheets be stapled to that.

In spite of all of the issues found with the recording of deposits, no discrepancies were found between the amounts recorded as being received and the bank deposits.

Accounts Payable

A random selection of checks and supporting documents were reviewed.

Forty transactions were reviewed for the following:

- Signed approvable
- Compare the invoice amount to the check amount
- Compare the invoice date to the check date
- Compare the debit account number on the check to the St. Luke debit number

Signed approvable was present on all transactions. All invoice amounts compared with the check amount. No discrepancies were noted. The invoice dates were compared to the date on the check. All invoiced were paid within 30 days. The debit account number on the check was compared with the St. Luke debit number. No discrepancies were noted.

Ninety-five transactions were reviewed for the following:

- Compare the check amount, the payee, and the date to the general ledger entry
- Checks signed by the authorized personnel
- Checks were endorsed

No discrepancies were noted when comparing the check amount, the payee, and the date to the general ledger entry. An authorized person signed all the checks. The endorsement on six checks with illegible.

Blank check stack is locked securely.

(Continued on page 43)

Personnel and Payroll

Results of audit:

Weekly timesheets for the 2023 Fiscal Year

- Random sampling of payroll files showed all employees had submitted timesheets.
- All of these timesheets had been signed by supervisors.
- These hours all accurately matched up with the bi-weekly payroll spreadsheets created by the bookkeeper.
- All bi-weekly spreadsheets were signed by the treasurer. Any corrections or anomalies noted included documentation of explanation and sign-offs.
- Clear documentation of sick, vacation, and holiday time usage.
- Clear comments on changes to any typical hours.
- Clear documentation of adjustments to pastor paycheck end of year pay to adhere to budget.
- Bookkeeper clearly detailed all work done during their hours of work. Checklist for work performed by the sexton daily included.
- Direct deposit summaries received and signed off on by treasurer.
- Retroactive pay and mileage clearly documented on summary excel sheets.

W-4 Withholding Forms

- All personnel files included W-4 forms.

I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form

- The binder with I-9 forms included documentation for all employees who received pay in 2024.

Allowed Hours, Current Pay, and Benefits

- Personnel files for employees included an offer letter as well as a letter stating their current pay. However, there is limited information in files in regards to allowed hours per week.

2024 W-2 Forms

- W-2 forms were all reviewed and compared to 941 forms.

Quarterly 941 Forms

- 941s Quarterly Tax Filings were available for Quarters 1, 2, 3, and 4 for state and federal. All were submitted on time and federal form details bi-weekly amounts. Comparison of 941s to W-2s was accurate in regards to wages, federal withholding, and state withholding.

Other

- One personnel file included clear documentation of employees voluntary choice to leave their position as well as all notices from the state department of labor regarding claims filed.

Personnel and Payroll Recommendations:

- St. Luke's bookkeeper should be commended for the organization, availability, depth, and accuracy of records.
- As mentioned in the two previous years of the audit, a spreadsheet or binder of each employee's allowed hours and current wages should be created to allow for a more in-depth and precise review of bi-weekly payroll. In the past it was noted this spreadsheet would be created by the bookkeeper to be supplied to the audit team. This seems a conflict of interest as the bookkeeper should be the one verifying hours per week compared to allowed hours per week, not dictating them on a spreadsheet they create.

Respectfully Submitted,

Veronica Rollinson, John Felty, and Edna Johnson
Audit Committee

St. Luke Lutheran Church
2025 Annual Report of the Bookkeeper

I appreciate your continuing support of me as Bookkeeper for this Congregation. My thanks to Kathy West, our Cash Disbursements Clerk who also brings our deposits to Dime Bank, to Charlie Anderson, our Cash Receipts Clerk, to Treasurer Al Nordquist, and to Elaine Remondi-Simpson and Sue Anderson for shepherding the Memorial Fund and the Memorial Garden Fund.

Thanks to our Counters, who document our weekly cash and check donations. The Counters have limited access to our internal network via the Bookkeeper's computer. The Bookkeeper administers the online donations program (through Vanco) and Charlie Anderson has the responsibility of transferring online donations into the St. Luke accounting program.

Our 2025 Workers Compensation insurance audit resulted in a premium refund of \$281.

I spent some time responding to the HVAC ad hoc committee, escorting contractors through the facility and distributing a map showing all our existing equipment to aid in the bidding process.

New England Payroll Service processes our payroll then reports and pays our withholding taxes. They issue our Forms W-2 and 1099. Payroll service costs are budgeted in the Professional Services line.

Our internal Audit of the 2024 fiscal year was largely positive.

We use paper checks to pay our bills, with review and signature by either the Cash Disbursements Clerk or the Treasurer. There is a cost for check stock, envelopes, and postage. Credit cards are issued to staff and members who are most likely to make purchases. The Bookkeeper administers the credit card program.

I made very little progress sorting old paper files that were removed from the Bookkeeper's office in 2021.

In the 2026 year I will continue working on process manuals for the Bookkeeping functions. I would like the Council to proactively consider the lack of staff redundancy. In the event of an unplanned or prolonged absence, it would be difficult to find someone to step into the Bookkeeping role and process a timely payroll or bill payment.

We should establish better procedures for payment approvals.

Again in 2026, there is no budget for having our books audited by an external auditor.

Respectfully,
Diane Hansen
Bookkeeper

St. Luke Lutheran Church
Consolidated Fund Activity Report
Year Ending 2025

Account Name		Beg Balance	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfers/	End Balance
<i>Administrative-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Sabbatical Fund Balance	9,750.00	-	-	-	9,750.00
	Special Gifts Balance	225.01	-	44.97	-	180.04
	Staff Development Balance	3,794.80	-	-	-	3,794.80
<i>Building Fund Balance</i>						
	General Building Fund Balance	22,372.55	10.00	-	-	22,382.55
	Sanctuary Renovations Balance	4,572.36	10.00	-	-	4,582.36
<i>Discretionary Gifts Balance</i>						
	Camp Calumet Scholarships Balance	700.00	-	-	-	700.00
	Council Discretionary Fund Balance	3,107.20	-	-	-	3,107.20
	Good Samaritan Fund Balance	4,880.42	-	628.50	-	4,251.92
	Pastors' Discretionary Balance	13,322.25	-	2,148.40	45.00	11,218.85
Embellish (Bells of Fire) Fund Balance		1,507.43	614.00	-	-	2,121.43
<i>Facilities Support-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Memorial Garden Balance	4,005.85	-	-	-	4,005.85
<i>Family Ministry-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Family Ministry Activities Balance	208.00	-	-	-	208.00
<i>Fellowship-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Fellowship Furnishings Balance	6,021.56	-	-	-	6,021.56
	Fellowship Special Events Balance	2,318.34	-	206.38	-	2,111.96
Flowers Balance		(161.33)	284.99	265.00	-	(141.34)
General Operating Fund Balance		44,234.02	59,499.70	60,145.96	-	43,587.76
<i>Life Long Learning-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Ecumenical VBS Balance	252.58	-	-	-	252.58
	Grins & Giggles Donations Balance	248.02	-	59.54	-	188.48
	Women's Retreat Balance	236.12	-	-	-	236.12
Long Term Contingency Fund Balance		14,062.68	10.00	-	-	14,072.68
Memorial Fund Balance		7,952.80	250.00	2,104.53	-	6,098.27
<i>Ministry-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Chikumbuso Balance	0.00	570.50	570.50	-	0.00
	Meal Center Balance	858.22	260.00	394.97	-	723.25
	Thrivent Choice Balance	0.00	36.00	36.00	-	0.00
Net Fixed Asset Fund Balance		1,918,224.00	-	-	-	1,918,224.00
<i>Special Programs Balance</i>						
	Great Lakes Scrip Program Balance	1,618.22	1,840.00	1,075.97	-	2,382.25
Unrestricted Gifts Fund Balance		93,691.25	36.00	-	-	93,727.25
<i>Worship-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	Handbell Program Fund Balance	787.91	1,000.00	-	-	1,787.91
	Special Music Balance	2,644.61	-	100.00	-	2,544.61
<i>Youth-Dedicated Balance</i>						
	ELCA Youth Gathering Balance	5,960.48	-	-	-	5,960.48
	Youth Mission Trip Balance	522.15	-	-	-	522.15
	Total	\$2,167,917.5	\$64,421.19	\$67,780.72	\$45.00	\$2,164,602.9

**St. Luke Lutheran Church
Proposed Budget Report
Year Ending 2025**

The proposed 2026 budget is in this section of the report. This narrative provides key assumptions and changes from the 2025 budget as follows:

Income:

Budget uses 100% of pledged offering

The Grace Giving number is decreased from the 2025 actuals by \$15K. This is because there are giving units that have newly pledged for 2026 that grace gave in 2025

Grins & Giggles income is increased over the 2025 budget for two reasons:

We underestimated the number of students in the budget for 2025, and thus 2025 actual tuition income was approximately \$6400 more than the budget. We have assumed that we will have the same number of students in 2026 as we have had in 2025

The council has decided to increase Grins & Giggles tuition rates by 5% starting with the summer camp. The last tuition increase was in the fall of 2024

Employee pay rates:

Lead Pastor salary is increased by 3.75%, consistent with recommendation from the ELCA New England Synod

Director of Worship and Music salary is increased by 10%, to get this salary closer to what the council believes is fair market compensation for this position

Grins & Giggles Director pay rate is increase by 23%, to get this rate closer to what the council believes is fair market compensation for this position

Pay rates for the two new Grins & Giggles Assistant Teachers are unchanged for now, but the budget assumes a 3% increase for these employees later this year after they have achieved 1 year of service in their positions

Custodial Staff pay rate is increased by the same percent increase as the Connecticut minimum wage increase, which is 3.6%

All other staff pay rates are increased by 3%, with the exception of Grins & Giggles substitute teachers, who remain at the new Connecticut minimum wage

Other expenses noteworthy changes:

Grins & Giggles teacher and director salary budget use a better (higher) estimate than the 2025 budget for hours expected to be worked

Heating and Cooling maintenance agreement is reduced by approximately \$3100.

We are entering a new contract with a new HVAC company, at a lower annual cost, and canceling our previous HVAC contract

Professional Services, which is mostly our payroll service, is decreased by \$1560 due to an error in calculating this expected expense in the 2025 budget

Insurance is increased by \$978, based on increased insurance premiums

Synod support is increased from 8.5% to 9.0% of pledged income

Synod Assembly is increased by \$1410, due to the 2026 assembly being 3 days and the 2025 assembly being 2 days

Utilities (electricity, gas, and water) are increased based on 2025 actual usage and potential rate increases in 2026

Ministry team expenses (Outreach, Fellowship, Evangelism) are increased per the requests of these teams

St. Luke Lutheran Church
2026 Proposed Budget, p. 1/3

Account Name	2025 Budget	2025 Year End Actuals	2026 Proposed Budget	Proposed 2026 Budget vs. 2025 Budget
Pledges	\$338,147	\$342,177	\$371,268	\$33,121
Grace Giving	\$54,000	\$52,680	\$37,700	(\$16,300)
Loose Cash Offering	\$3,600	\$5,016	\$4,000	\$400
Special Envelopes	\$2,600	\$1,694	\$1,700	(\$900)
Offerings	\$398,347	\$401,567	\$414,668	\$16,321
Building Use	\$2,500	\$3,414	\$3,400	\$900
Structures Income	\$2,500	\$3,414	\$3,400	\$900
Investments Div/Interest	\$2,000	\$3,123	\$4,920	\$2,920
Other Income	\$2,000	\$3,123	\$4,920	\$2,920
Grins & Giggles Income - Donation	\$0	\$391	\$0	\$0
Grins & Giggles Income-Tuition	\$85,850	\$92,245	\$94,579	\$8,729
Grins & Giggles Income-Registration fees	\$700	\$1,085	\$1,100	\$400
Total Grins and Giggles Income	\$86,550	\$93,721	\$95,679	\$9,129
TOTAL Budgeted Income	\$489,397	\$501,825	\$518,667	\$29,270
Funds: Allocated for use in current year	\$16,723	\$4,667	\$15,694	(\$1,029)
TOTAL Income	\$506,120	\$506,492	\$534,360	\$28,240
Lead Pastor's Salary	\$9,952	\$9,952	\$27,950	\$17,998
Lead Pastor's SS Allowance	\$6,888	\$6,870	\$7,660	\$773
Lead Pastor's Housing Allowance	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$55,000	(\$15,000)
Lead Pastor's ELCA Pension	\$10,421	\$10,420	\$10,873	\$452
Lead Pastor's Health Insurance Allowance	\$23,844	\$23,844	\$25,064	\$1,220
Lead Pastor's Portico Insurance (Disabiity & Group Life Ins.)	\$868	\$549	\$906	\$38
Lead Pastor's Professional Exp	\$4,220	\$3,620	\$3,000	(\$1,220)
Lead Pastor Continuing Education	\$1,000	\$715	\$1,000	\$0
Lead Pastor Compensation	\$127,193	\$125,970	\$131,454	\$4,261
Grins & Giggles-Salary - Director	\$2,183	\$2,567	\$4,025	\$1,842
Grins & Giggles-Salary-Head Teacher	\$48,212	\$54,011	\$54,472	\$6,260
Grins & Giggles-Salaries-Asst Teacher	\$27,725	\$28,043	\$28,570	\$846
Grins & Giggles - Substitutes	\$899	\$0	\$932	\$32
Grins & Giggles-Employee Screening	\$0	\$26	\$0	\$0
Grins & Giggles-Insurance (Workers Comp)	\$1,100	\$425	\$446	(\$654)
Grins & Giggles-Licensing	\$285	\$95	\$500	\$215
Grins & Giggles-Supplies	\$600	\$600	\$700	\$100
Grins & Giggles-Professional Development	\$150	\$99	\$321	\$171
Social Security Taxes-Grins&Giggles Staff	\$5,976	\$6,473	\$6,661	\$685
Grins & Giggles Donations Expense	\$0	\$186	\$0	\$0
Total Grins & Giggles Expense	\$87,130	\$92,526	\$96,627	\$9,497
Parish Admin Assistant	\$25,431	\$24,803	\$26,194	\$763
Bookkeeper	\$20,656	\$20,832	\$21,278	\$622
Director of Music and Worship Technology	\$37,885	\$37,885	\$41,674	\$3,789
Asst. Technician to Dir of Music/Worship Tech	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Custodial / Housekeeping Staff	\$13,008	\$13,257	\$13,480	\$472
Church Musicians - Organist	\$17,459	\$19,692	\$17,982	\$524
Church Musicians- Choir Accompanist	\$2,142	\$0	\$2,206	\$64
Nursery Attendant	\$2,080	\$49	\$0	(\$2,080)
Communications Coord	\$14,480	\$15,042	\$14,914	\$434
Parish Admin Assistant ELCA Pension	\$1,526	\$1,624	\$1,572	\$46

St. Luke Lutheran Church
2026 Proposed Budget, p. 2/3

Account Name	2025 Budget	2025 Year End Actuals	2026 Proposed Budget	Proposed 2026 Budget vs. 2025 Budget
Parish Admin Assistant Portico Insurance	\$254	\$134	\$262	\$8
Director of Music and Worship Technology ELCA Pension	\$2,273	\$2,273	\$2,500	\$227
Director of Music and Worship Technology Portico Insurance	\$379	\$189	\$417	\$38
Social Security Taxes-non-rostered, non-school Staff	\$10,185	\$10,022	\$10,536	\$351
Staff Salary	\$147,758	\$145,804	\$153,015	\$5,258
Supply / Guest Pastors	\$1,845	\$773	\$1,613	(\$233)
Special Musicians	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$500	(\$500)
Supply Organists	\$750	\$750	\$1,000	\$250
Subcontractors	\$3,595	\$2,523	\$3,113	(\$483)
General Office Supplies	\$1,100	\$909	\$950	(\$150)
Computer Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Postage	\$200	\$383	\$420	\$220
Telephones/Internet	\$2,850	\$3,198	\$3,200	\$350
Church Kitchen Supplies	\$100	\$538	\$200	\$100
Office Expense	\$4,250	\$5,028	\$4,770	\$520
Heating/Cooling Maint Agreement	\$10,228	\$9,967	\$7,115	(\$3,113)
Fire Alarm Services	\$1,027	\$1,370	\$1,400	\$374
Copier Maintenance Contract	\$4,048	\$4,350	\$4,200	\$152
Snow Removal	\$1,450	\$3,161	\$3,000	\$1,550
Security Monitoring	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$0
Trash Collection	\$1,230	\$1,260	\$1,300	\$70
Professional Services	\$3,470	\$1,715	\$1,910	(\$1,560)
Contractual	\$21,753	\$22,123	\$19,225	(\$2,528)
Church Property Insurance	\$8,920	\$9,461	\$9,898	\$978
Workers Comp Insurance	\$2,400	\$2,277	\$2,391	(\$9)
Insurance	\$11,320	\$11,738	\$12,289	\$969
Software Support/Upgrades	\$5,000	\$6,133	\$6,200	\$1,200
Computer Repair & Replacement	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	(\$1,000)
Cloud Application Services	\$2,500	\$2,473	\$2,500	\$0
Technology	\$8,500	\$8,606	\$8,700	\$200
Bank & Investment Fees	\$2,300	\$2,549	\$2,500	\$200
Finance Supplies	\$200	\$97	\$200	\$0
Sabbatical Fund Contribution	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$2,500	(\$1,500)
Financial	\$6,500	\$6,646	\$5,200	(\$1,300)
Employee and Volunteer Screening	\$15	\$0	\$15	\$0
Staff Prof'l Mileage & Conferences	\$200	\$63	\$200	\$0
Synod Assembly/Bishop's Convoc	\$1,590	\$1,967	\$3,000	\$1,410
Professional Development	\$1,805	\$2,031	\$3,215	\$1,410
Life Long Learning Curriclm/Resource	\$200	\$0	\$100	(\$100)
Sunday School Supplies	\$0	\$158	\$100	\$100
Adult Education	\$150	\$195	\$150	\$0
Confirmation Program	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$300
Vacation Bible School	\$200	\$200	\$250	\$50
LLL Special Events / Family Ministries	\$300	\$195	\$350	\$50
Youth Ministry & Mission	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500	\$0
ELCA National Youth Gathering	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,100	\$100
Life Long Learning	\$4,350	\$2,748	\$4,850	\$500
Stewardship Drive & Supplies	\$100	\$87	\$100	\$0
Evangelism Supplies	\$450	\$454	\$1,481	\$1,031
Evangelism Outreach	\$900	\$932	\$3,000	\$2,100
Evangelism	\$1,450	\$1,474	\$4,581	\$3,131
Fellowship Kitchen Supplies	\$750	\$703	\$1,000	\$250

St. Luke Lutheran Church
2026 Proposed Budget, p. 3/3

Account Name	2025 Budget	2025 Year End Actuals	2026 Proposed Budget	Proposed 2026 Budget vs. 2025 Budget
Fellowship Special Events	\$1,750	\$3,036	\$3,000	\$1,250
Fellowship	\$2,500	\$3,739	\$4,000	\$1,500
Sheet Music	\$1,500	\$1,407	\$1,000	(\$500)
Music Program Supplies	\$250	\$252	\$250	\$0
Membership & Licenses	\$2,900	\$2,477	\$2,900	\$0
Worship - Equipment Maintenance & Repair	\$750	\$639	\$750	\$0
Worship & Sacristy Supplies	\$1,000	\$884	\$1,000	\$0
Worship Resource Material	\$250	\$331	\$250	\$0
Worship	\$6,650	\$5,990	\$6,150	(\$500)
P & G General Supplies	\$1,400	\$1,806	\$2,000	\$600
P & G - Maintenance & Repairs	\$4,000	\$1,936	\$2,000	(\$2,000)
Electricity	\$9,080	\$12,940	\$13,000	\$3,920
Natural Gas	\$7,500	\$8,976	\$9,246	\$1,746
Water	\$2,100	\$2,196	\$2,261	\$161
P&G Equipment Replacement	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	(\$1,000)
Light & Aerator Replacement	\$4,944	\$0	\$0	(\$4,944)
Facilities Support	\$30,024	\$27,854	\$28,507	(\$1,517)
Synod Mission Support	\$28,742	\$29,085	\$33,414	\$4,672
Synod Support	\$28,742	\$29,085	\$33,414	\$4,672
Shelter Assistance	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,300	\$300
Meal Assistance	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$3,100	\$300
Local Benevolences	\$300	\$308	\$550	\$250
Soup Kitchen Support	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$5,500	\$1,500
Global Ministries	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,800	\$300
Outreach Support	\$12,600	\$12,608	\$15,250	\$2,650
TOTAL Budgeted Expense	\$506,120	\$506,492	\$534,360	\$28,240