

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

2023 Annual Meeting
Annual Congregation Meeting
(as prescribed in Congregational Constitution)
Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 10:00am

Agenda:

1. Call to order - President William Buckley
2. Opening devotion - Pastor Sterling Lynk
3. Approval of agenda
4. Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes
5. Reports as printed - questions/comments?
 - a. Letter from Bishop
 - b. Pastor
 - c. President
 - d. Treasurer
 - e. Education Committee
 - f. Endowment Fund Committee
 - g. Hospitality Committee
 - h. Memorial Fund Committee
 - i. Property Committee
 - j. Social Ministry Committee
 - k. Worship Committee
 - l. Chancel (Alter Gild) Committee
 - m. Dekorra Women of the ELCA
 - n. Dekorra Men for Christ
 - o. Mission of Hope
 - p. 2023 Synod Assembly Report
 - q. Thrivent Choice Committee
 - r. Steuer - Mitchell Fund
 - s. Youth and Family Committee
 - t. Parish Statistical Report
6. Old Business
7. New Business
 - a. Audit Review Report for 2023
 - b. Audit Committee Appointment 2024 (by Council)
 - c. 2024 Budget Review and Approval
 - d. Constitution Revision Approval
 - e. Endowment Fund Committee Election
 - f. Congregational Council Elections - Nominating Committee 2023
 - g. 2024 Nominating Committee Election
 - h. Appointment of Delegates for 2024 Synod Assembly
 - i. Church Council will set the date of the 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting
 - j. Any Other Business to Legally Come Before the Congregation

Motion to Adjourn

Sending and Dismissal

Dekorra Lutheran Church
154th Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, January 29, 2023

Call to Order: President Bill Buckley called the meeting to order at 9:50 in the church sanctuary and led us in the opening prayers. The congregation then sang "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart". Pastor Sterling also led in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be with us today during our meeting. After a quorum was determined to be present, Bill asked that when members wanted to respond they raise their hand and state their name. Parking lot members had the option of calling, texting, or coming up to the church door and using the microphone.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda by Lyle Hendrickson, seconded by Peggy Benson. Motion carried.

Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes by Judy Brownrigg, seconded by Brad Simplot. Motion carried.

All Committee Reports: As we moved into the committee reports and Pastor Sterling's report, Bill Buckley stated that there is a lot to be thankful for. Bill thanked the Dekorra leadership team, Oleg Rudnytsky, Sharon Kampen, Sheila Gempeler, and Pastor Sterling for all the ways they contribute to Dekorra. Some challenges he mentioned included getting the screen/technology system up and running, monitoring the pandemic, and dealing with Pastor Sterling's absence specifically thanking the Synod and Bishop Joy for helping us move forward. The leadership also looked at creating a new mission statement which had not been updated since 2003. This update started with the executive committee, moved to the church council, and on to All Committee Night for suggestions and updates. It took a lot of commitment and prayer to get to our final new mission statement ready to present to the congregation.

Bill Buckley received a notice in October that Dekorra Lutheran Church received the Poynette Best of 2022 Community Churches Award. It was obvious that people were aware and appreciated all the mission work done by Dekorra. Bill named a few which included the Hwy CS Cleanup, AA meetings, blood drives, clothing closet, school kits, support for the Ukraine effort, sending quilts, providing for area food pantries, youth family project, etc. Bill passed the Best of 2022 certificate around.

Bill asked if any committee wanted to expand on their report and asked the congregation to read these reports and get involved.

New Business:

1. The 2022 Audit Review took place thanks to Cindy Johnson, Peggy Benson, and Ruth Kohlmeyer. This was their second year and they did an awesome job. The 2022 audit report is included in this year's annual report. A copy will also go to the synod. The Audit Committee is comprised of three members serving three-year terms. Peggy Benson's term is up and the nominating committee has suggested Sandra Quam to fill the vacancy. Bill asked for nominations from the floor, receiving none, the council will vote on Sandra Quam at the next council meeting.
2. The meeting was turned over to Lyle Hendrickson to present the 2023 annual budget. Lyle thanked Oleg and the Pastor for their help. Lyle stated that Dekorra has done much through the pandemic including the payoff of two loans totaling approximately \$60,000, one for carpeting and the other for our audiovisual improvements. Lyle suggested Dekorra take a year off and not complete any capital projects this coming year and think about what we want to do in the future.
 - a. Our total offering contributions were down 15% this year, but we ended the year with a \$22,307.48 checking account balance. Total 2022 contributions were \$185,677.47.

- b. An additional \$40,140.98 was collected through other various accounts. For example, the screen fund, angels and butterflies, youth fundraisers, Ukraine fund, Dekorra women, etc.
 - c. Following the 2023 Synod Compensation Guidelines, Pastor Sterling's salary is a 5.9% raise for 2023. Pastor's housing allowance was raised to \$25,500 which is the low end of the Columbia County Housing Schedule.
 - d. The 2023 budget is an increase of 2% over 2022.
 - e. Oleg received a raise for taking on extra responsibilities like taking on the women's accounts so all accounts go through the office.
 - f. We got a new copier and a new copier lease.
 - g. We raised the ELCA giving from 5% to 6% which is based on our general offerings. Money is sent to our synod and they pass on a portion to church wide.
 - h. We hope to save on electricity as the parking lot lights are turned off at 10:00 P.M.
 - i. A motion was made by Al Bilse to approve the 2023 annual budget, seconded by Bruno Kalan. Motion carried.
3. The meeting was turned back to President, Bill Buckley. Section 4.03 of our constitution correlates with our new proposed mission statement. Our new mission statement which needs congregation approval is: ***In faith, grace, and joy, we will prepare and equip our neighbors and ourselves to respond to the Holy Spirit's call wherever it is leading us.*** A motion was made by Al Bilse to accept the proposed mission statement, seconded by Florence Schudlach. Motion carried.
 4. Al Bilse, Kathy Burhop, and Barb Johnson are the present members of the Endowment Committee. Each year one of these members is up for election. Barb Johnson has agreed to service another term. Bill asked for nominations from the floor, receiving none, The nominations were closed. The motion to elect Barb Johnson to serve another year on the Endowment Committee was made by Kristine Millard, and seconded by Peggy Benson. Motion carries.
 5. Dennis Cunningham, Sheila Gempeler, and Peggy Benson are the present members of the Nominating Committee which serves for one year. Each year we must elect three new members. The nominating committee has presented Cheryl Pendleton, Buck Bender, and Mary Thompson to serve on the 2023 Nominating Committee. Bill asked for nominations from the floor, receiving none, The nominations were closed. Motion was made to accept Cheryl, Buck, and Mary to serve on the 2023 Nominating Committee by Mike Keller, seconded by Jenny Rake. Motion carried.
 6. Everybody whose term is up on church council still has eligibility remaining and those four individuals have agreed to be nominated for another term. They are Al Bilse, Judy Brownrigg, Paul Lowenhagen, and Ellen Keller. At the last council meeting, William Priske was approved to fill John Flickinger's term. The secretary's position, a three-year term, is up for reelection and Joen Bilse has consented to keep going. Bill asked for nominations from the floor, receiving none, nominations were closed and the election was by ballot vote. Ballots were passed out and all positions were elected by unanimous vote.
 7. The church council will set the date for the 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting.
 8. Bill Schleichert presented \$1200 checks to Samatha Rake and Gracie Wei-Bergeman, the two recipients of the Steuer-Mitchell Fund.
 9. Motion made to appoint Judy Brownrigg and Joen Bilse as DLC's delegates to the 2023 Synod Assembly by Lyle Hendrickson, seconded by Sheila Gempeler. Motion carried. The 2023 synod assembly will be held in Mt. Horeb on May 20, 2023.
 10. Motion to close the annual meeting made by Kyle Knuteson, seconded by Bruno Kalan. Motion carried.

The meeting closed at 10:35.

Respectfully submitted, Joen Bilse, Secretary

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God's love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God's Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God's love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God's promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God's love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God's love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You've shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You've shared the gifts of your voices as we've tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God's love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God's love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

Dear friends in Christ,

This past October rostered leaders throughout the South-Central Synod gathered under the theme "Building, Learning, Growing." While we were gathered, the Rev. Kerri Parker of the Wisconsin Council of Churches led us in a visioning process to help us uncover our values. In a summary of the process Rev. Parker made some observations:

- *Prayer and scripture matter to us. We need to attend to the whisperings of the Spirit and be the Church.*
- *We desire to be collaborative.*
- *We have an energy for change and boldness.*
- *It feels good to Breathe, Bless, Dream, Share, Thrive and have Fun....*

These ring true to me as I think about this past year and as we plan for 2024. 2023 continued to bring challenges to the church, to our synod, and for many of our congregations. At the same time, we continued to trust and know that our God is our sure foundation. Our God is the source of all that we are. Lutheran Christians are anchored in God's grace and we walk by faith and prayer guided by the Holy Spirit. I am honored to have walked with and alongside of many of you in conversation this past year as we've counted on God to show up and be with us.

This past year also brought new collaboration around the synod. Congregations are in conversation with each other and with their neighborhoods about how best to share the love of Jesus. New partnerships are being born demonstrating that God is active. We are learning and growing as we trust in God's promises. As Matthew 13:31-34 reminds us, even a seed as tiny as a mustard seed grows into something mighty and beautiful in God's hands. God is growing beautiful ministries and relationships around the South-Central Synod.

We continue to step out in faith in this new post-pandemic world. We are changing and wondering even as we are certain of God's steadfast promise of love through Jesus Christ. We are being bold to dream and to share with one another. We are being courageous enough to sit back and breathe. We are daring to thrive and we are having fun.

I am grateful to you. I am grateful for the generosity you pour into this synod. Your financial gifts make a difference. Your gifts of service make a difference. Your gifts of prayer and encouragement make a difference. Your ministry, wherever God is leading you, makes a difference. Thank you!

Have a blessed annual meeting.

Your partner in Christ,

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

Pastoral Report for the 2023 Annual Report

Hello Jesus-People,

I think it is becoming a tradition. Last year, I reshared much of what I wrote for the 2021 annual report. So, I am going to do that again and then tell you some things I am thankful for, and finally my dream for us.

For 2021, I wrote this:

“I was stuck on what would be best to organize this letter around. Should I talk about all that we have accomplished as a community in 2021, or things we have struggled with in 2021, or maybe even the work that we are in the middle of doing after 2021? Or, should I tell you about my accomplishments in service to God and DLC, my struggles, or even my work in progress? I don’t know. 2021 was full of all of those things.

“As a Christian, as a follower of Jesus Christ, there is a problem with focusing on accomplishments and struggles and work. Of course, there is a problem with that – accomplishments and struggle and work are not Jesus, and when lost I often find it useful to focus on Jesus. This is especially true when I am writing to you all.

“This does not condemn accomplishments and struggles and work. It just points out that those things do not save; Jesus saves. They matter, especially in the sense of God’s secondary mission of health and well-being for the world. Yet, they do not compare to God’s primary mission of spreading salvation through Jesus’ gospel promise.

“It took the Reformation to remind the church in Western Europe that Jesus is primary and it is Jesus’ actions through the promise of his gospel, his good news, that saves. This is grace. When we Lutherans are at our best, we get grace better than anyone. In fact, this insight about grace is how we got Protestants (Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.) like us.

“The “conservative”, “evangelical” and Calvinistic (Presbyterian) Professor Michael Horton beautifully described the relationship between things like accomplishments and struggles and work using this formula.

“FAITH (in Christ) = SALVATION + WORKS

“Not

“SALVATION = FAITH + WORKS

“I may not agree all the time with Dr. Horton, but I think he has this right. Faith in Jesus, which is a gift of grace to us from our God through the Holy Spirit, produces our salvation and produces whatever good things we accomplish or struggle to accomplish or are in the process of accomplishing. That means your salvation does not come from your personal choice to believe combined with all the things you do or suffer or are trying to do. Amen and thank God for that.”

That applied in 2021, 2022, and 2023. I will apply in 2024 and beyond. It applies when we are 150 years old, when we turn 155, and, God-willing, when we turn 160.

Still, that demonic inner voice is telling me that I did not do “enough” in 2023. And, that is brutal because by the end of the year, I was feeling the weight of the pastoral office.

And, I am afraid.

Recently, one of my teachers shared this “pastoral grenade” on the Vibrant Faith website:

So, something to think about: In Eugene Peterson’s prophetic little “field manual” for pastors, *Working the Angles*, he lobs this grenade:

“American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn’t the remotest connection with what the church’s pastors have done for most of twenty centuries... The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper’s concerns [“reaching a younger audience” and “declining volunteering” and “declining attendance,” for example]—how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money... [But instead] the pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.”

I am afraid that this grenade is true about me. I am afraid that I am not worthy. I am afraid that I cannot even carry Christ’s light yoke.

My judgments and feelings, none of that is true, of course. In 2023 I witnessed the Holy Spirit intervene in my life directly for its betterment. No joke. Yes, the Holy Spirit works through believers and unbelievers alike, but I felt God’s direct care and blessing in that intervention. The truth is that even your pastor needs to listen less to that inner voice of judgment and damnation and instead listen to the voice of Jesus who says that I am enough and saves whether or not I feel like am doing enough.


I am thankful to our Lord for the many things that we did thanks to the gifts of faith grace and joy given us:

- A birthday party, gatherings, coffee hours, Sunday School, Confirmation, studies, and other ministries;
- We fed so many people this year with bags and bags of food blessed and donated;
- We clothed and housed people who needed warmth and shelter;
- We discerned, crafted, and accepted a statement mission. We know we are doing our mission whenever witness faith, joy, and grace come out of our work;
- Our youth plan and lead Wednesday's intergenerational worship;
- Sunday School is healthy and Vacation Bible School was great;
- You and your pastor have done dozens and dozens of pastoral visits in their homes and hospital rooms, pastoral phone calls, and home communion;
- We experienced two special worship series: "Ask" during Lent, and "How Does a Weary World Rejoice?" from Advent through Baptism of Our Lord.
- Hosted two middle-school lock-ins;
- When COVID and a late bus kept us from singing Christmas carols, we instead surprised two of our neighbors;
- We confirmed, baptized, communed, gospel-ed, blessed, and commended to the Lord people we love;
- We hosted a synod-wide ALIVE night for middle and high school youth;
- We had a float in the Poynette Holiday Parade;
- We won Poynette church of the Year for the second year in a row, now qualifying us for the Poynette Hall of Fame;
- We finished raising all the money we needed for the National Youth Gathering;
- We returned to having Lenten meals;
- We studied the Biblical witness against sex trafficking and sexual abuse, and acted against it;
- We planned and got to experience a Year of Celebration, including monthly birthday blessings and other celebrations;
- Most importantly, we have heard the gospel promise preached faithfully week-in-week-out (I pray and I believe);
- We confronted pain and sin, and asked and received forgiveness from our Lord and each other;
- and, so much more. Forgive me for failing to speak on your work and ministry.

All of that is good and great because God is good and great.

I have a dream for us. I have a dream for our 155th year as a mission and gathering place. I have a dream that helps me be courageous when I am afraid and resilient when I am low. Let me tell you about it.


A little over a week ago, a colleague of mine named Pastor Tim Knipfer, shared a meme of 19 things to know about your priest. It was borrowed from an Episcopal Facebook page (they call their pastors “priests”). My colleague noted that he believed that the list was also true about youth ministers lay leaders and deacons and all kinds of ministers. Here is that list:

 St. Mary's Episcopal Church Kansas City
January 10 at 5:01 PM · 🌐

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR PRIESTS

1. They love God and you a lot.
(Be mindful.)
2. They are painfully limited human beings.
(Be realistic.)
3. They probably have a pretty low view of their "performance".
(Be kind.)
4. They wish they were a better preacher.
(Be awake.)
5. They really do want God's best for you and your family.
(Be open-hearted.)
6. Their work knows no time or locational boundaries.
(Be patient.)
7. They hear much more negative information than positive.
(Be encouraging.)
8. They have chosen a vocation in which few remain.
(Be praying.)
9. They have chosen a highly leadership-intensive call.
(Be lead-able.)
10. They need help.
(Be available.)
11. Their God-given vision is bigger than themselves and the church.
(Be faith-filled.)
12. They want to personally meet all the needs, but know they can't.
(Be understanding.)
13. They are going to say some dumb things every now and then.
(Be forgiving.)
14. They are greatly encouraged by your faithfulness.
(Be there.)
15. They are passionate for God's Word to be made practical to you.
(Be hungry.)
16. They long for church to be your spiritual oasis.
(Be loving.)
17. They dream for your and your family's spiritual health.
(Be receptive.)
18. They need to hear that you pray for them.
(Be interceding.)
19. They are just regular people.
(Be real.)

Pray for our priests. 🙏

 You, Joy Mortensen-Wiebe, Mary Kay Knipfer and 16 others 3 comments 1 share

Throughout that list are a bunch of behavioral reminders and then ends with the instruction to “Pray for our priests”.

My dream is not that we pray for me, but that instead we pray that these become true for all of us Jesus-people here at DLC. I dream that in 2024 we love God and each other a lot, that our limitations do not limit our love, that we encourage each other, that we preach that gospel promise everywhere, that we pray for God’s best for each other and each other’s people, that our joy knows no boundaries, that we hear more positive information than negative, we choose to be faithful even when few are, we are all lead-able, we help each other, we have a God-given vision bigger than ourselves and our congregation, we meet the needs we can meet and pray for the needs we cannot, we are wise in our words and graceful when we are not, we are emotionally, physically and spiritual present, we make God’s word practical for each other and our neighbors, DLC becomes more than a gathering place by becoming a true spiritual oasis, we work for the spiritual health of each other and each other’s people, we each know that we are being prayed for, and we are real with each other.

That’s my dream for us. I wonder what the Holy Spirit dreaming up for us this year.

Peace,
+Pastor Sterling Lynk
January 18, 2024

P.S. – I believe it is customary for the pastor to offer a look at some of the year’s pastoral numbers in these letters. With that custom in mind, here is a look at some of 2023’s pastoral numbers –

- Baptisms – 6
- Weddings - 2
- Funerals and Commendations - 7
- Confirmations - 3
- New Members/Adult Professions of Faith – 0

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Our 154th year of ministry and mission here at Dekorra Lutheran Church was fairly normal. My definition of "normal" is simply that there weren't any major crises for our church. I would like to thank a dedicated Council and Pastor Sterling for being patient and supportive of the leadership team during the past year. I thank the congregation for its support, prayers, and confidence in your leadership team. I believe we are all glad to be back to the "new" normal. Thank you! A special thanks to Oleg, our very competent, talented, and friendly office manager who always makes me smile, even when I'm feeling grumpy. We are so blessed to have the talented Ann Carncross as our music director. I sometimes feel we take her musical talent and dedication for granted, but I thank God every day that she is on our balcony each and every Sunday. Thank you, Ann. Also a special thanks to Sharon Kampen who single-handedly schedules and notifies all the folks that make our worship services special. This includes ushers, greeters, acolytes, AV ministers, worship assistants, readers, and communion assistants. It's an enormous job that she handles perfectly. I encourage you to help Sharon out by volunteering to participate in one or several of the worship duties. I know she would greatly appreciate it. Lastly, I would like to thank each and every member of DLC for your support, time, and encouragement that you provide to make our staff's jobs easier and more rewarding. Thank you, God, for all the disciples you have assembled here that make DLC a family.

I would encourage each member to take a very close look at this annual report and read the reports of the organization and committees. DLC is a very busy place! Not only are we providing basic worship and educational opportunities, but our other mission projects are off the charts. Quilts, yellow bags, clothes closet, Mission of Hope, book club, school kits, Dekorra Loves Community, and the list goes on and on. All of these projects don't just happen. It is the work of dedicated, talented disciples who give unselfishly of their financial resources and time. Please take time to say thanks to these individuals and better yet join in! The surrounding community is noticing what we do and that is reflected by the "Best of Poynette Community Churches 2023" award that DLC received. You have earned this award in back-to-back years, which is pretty cool. Service to our God and fellowship with other Christians is hands down the most rewarding work you can possibly accomplish. The more hands that are involved, the more mission we can accomplish. Has DLC reached its peak in this regard? Absolutely not, but we will need everyone to be engaged and contributing to successfully improve our mission.

Here is my challenge for 2023, as it was for 2022. We need to concentrate on getting everyone back to Sunday worship. Look around the church and if you haven't seen someone for a while let's give them a call or stop by for a visit. If you see a "sold" sign on a home for sale in the area let's drop off a "welcome to DLC" gift. A simple invite that shows we care about our neighbors' faith journey can easily re-energize our worship numbers. 2023 saw a financial struggle that we hadn't seen in nearly 10 years. At our last annual meeting, we voted to increase our synod support from 5% to 6%. I made it clear at that vote that we would need to step up our giving to accommodate the percent increase. That did not happen. Therefore, the council has had to propose dropping our synod contribution back to 5%. Not a pleasant proposal, but we simply cannot support the 6% with current contributions to the general fund. You may see additional fundraisers to support the general fund in 2024. Please come to these events, have some good food and fellowship, and support the general fund so that DLC remains financially viable.

Letting DLC dissolve like so many other churches have recently, would be a tragedy and in my opinion is just not an option! 2024 will mark 155 years of mission for DLC. There are lots of fun things being talked about to celebrate this major birthday year. I encourage you to participate in all the celebrations being planned and rejoice in our past history and in our future.

Sunday School and Confirmation continued to be viable educational ministries this past year due to the dedication of students, teachers, leadership staff, and Pastor Sterling. Thanks to Sheila Gempeler, Brad Simplot, Lynn Lund, and all of you educational-based disciples who made these ministries possible at a high level. 2023 was the year of fundraising for our "Dekorra Loves Community" (DLC) youth. This group took on an enormous project with the goal of raising \$15,000 so they could send 10 members to the New Orleans youth gathering in July of 2024. I was recently informed that the youth have attained their goal and are all set to enhance their faith journey by attending the church-wide youth gathering. Thank you to all of you who supported this enormous project. Congratulations, the youth of DLC!

I would like to close my last annual report as your president with an explanation of why I am not seeking a second term as president of DLC. Year one was tough (2021) with all the monthly decisions regarding COVID. Year two (2022) was a different kind of tough with Pastor Sterling's leave and struggle with the death of Aubrey. Year three (2023) was by far the easiest and most enjoyable year as there were no major crises. Unfortunately, years 1 and 2 took their toll on me mentally. I will give you one last scenario from the outdoors that attempts to relay how I feel. We have all watched flocks of geese or cranes migrating in the spring and fall. Regardless of the size of the flock, geese fly in a traditional "V" formation. The reason they do this is not to appear organized, but to break the air in front of each bird. This creates less resistance which allows the birds to tire less during flight. The lead goose confronts the most air resistance and, therefore tires first. Once the lead goose is tired out they move farther back in the formation and a fresher bird takes the lead position. This process allows the entire flock to travel on their journey while keeping as fresh as possible. Well, the lead goose (Me) is tired and needs to move back and refresh. That in no way means I leave the flock, but just means I assume a less prominent role. I am confident a new leader for DLC will emerge and strongly lead this church on its journey. I pray that the rest of the DLC flock will continue on this journey by supporting, praying, and encouraging the next president (lead goose) as they have done so graciously for me. Thank you, DLC for the privilege of allowing me to be the lead goose for the past 3 years. You all are awesome and may the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Respectively Submitted,

William Buckley, Jr.
Dekorra Lutheran Church, Council President

Treasurer's Report 2023

Dekorra Lutheran Church has had a challenging financial year in 2023. We were able to survive the pandemic, but the aftermath of the economy and our general offerings have once again gone down. As a council, we decided not to take on any additional projects this year to help our general fund be able to handle our regular bills. In August, the council gave approval to borrow \$5,000 from our Contingency Fund when our general balance fell below \$10,000. We were able to pay our bills on a weekly basis instead of our regular monthly basis, but by December 1, 2023, our general balance fell to \$3,364.45. We then borrowed \$5,000 from the Contingency Fund and made a plea to the congregation for additional funds. We were able to end December with a balance of \$17,690.24 and all bills paid.

We did have a bit of exciting news with the Youth & Family Fund being able to reach their \$15,000 goal for their trip in 2024 to the ELCA Youth Convention. A lot of hard work from the team and your contributions helped make this possible. We are very thankful.

Here is our current trend over the past three years for general offerings.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>General Offering</u> | <u>Auto-Giving</u> | <u>Total Offerings</u> |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 2021 | \$186,428.74 | \$31,823.00 | \$218,251.74 |
| 2022 | \$154,489.19 | \$31,188.28 | \$185,677.47 |
| 2023 | \$147,852.04 | \$26,355.13 | \$174,207.17 |

Total donations for the year were \$207,505.05 which include funds raised by Social Ministries (Angels & Butterflies), Sunday School, Youth & Family Ministries Fundraisers, Dekorra Women of the ELCA, Thrivent Matching Funds, Scholarships, & other pass-through accounts.

Salaries make up 75% of the budget and with diminishing funds, we had a difficult year making a budget for 2024. We were only able to give Pastor Sterling a 1% raise and give our office manager a minimal raise as well. All other staffing will remain the same in the coming year. We also decreased the percentage we are going to give to the Synod by 1% from 6% to 5%. These are difficult times, and the budget reflects this.

Our goal for 2024 is to increase giving to our general fund by \$27,000. We will focus on our budget and encourage everyone to help us celebrate our upcoming 155th Anniversary with increased enthusiasm.

I would personally like to thank Oleg Rudnytsky for all his hard work keeping our office and church running smoothly.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyle Hendrickson, Treasurer

DLC Annual Giving Amounts Report

Ending 12/31/2023

| # of Giving Units | Amount Given |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 28 | \$0.00 |
| 23 | \$1.00 - \$99 |
| 23 | \$100 - \$249 |
| 20 | \$250 - \$499 |
| 13 | \$500 - \$749 |
| 9 | \$750 - \$999 |
| 12 | \$1,000 - \$1,249 |
| 11 | \$1,250 - \$1,499 |
| 5 | \$1,500 - \$1,999 |
| 4 | \$2,000 - \$2,499 |
| 7 | \$2,500 - \$2,999 |
| 5 | \$3,000 - \$3,499 |
| 3 | \$3,500 - \$3,999 |
| 3 | \$4,000 - \$4,499 |
| 1 | \$4,500 - \$4,999 |
| 2 | \$5,000 - \$5,999 |
| 2 | \$6,000 - \$6,999 |
| 1 | \$7,000 - \$7,999 |
| 0 | \$8,000 - \$8,999 |
| 1 | \$9,000 - \$9,999 |
| 1 | over \$10,000 |
| 174 | |

2023 Annual Report – Christian Education

Committee members: Sheila Gempeler- chairperson, Judy Brownrigg -council liaison, Ardyce Piehl, Cheryl Pendleton, Julie Clark, Ruth Kohlmeyer, and Ellen Woodward. The committee meets monthly, and a representative also attends All Committee night.

Youth Education

The First Communion class began in the form of a Passover meal in March with 23 family members attending. Four students, Clara Sohn, Sophia Szalc, Sawyer Woodward, and Melanie Paskey began taking communion after this class.

Confirmation ceremonies were held on April 30, with 3 students completing their studies, Kiera Cartwright, Austin Browne, and Bennet Nyquist.

VBS was held in August with the theme **God's Living Water**, thanks to our staff: Coordinator: Sheila Gempeler, Pastor Sterling, Teachers: Ruth Kohlmeyer, Mary Thompson, Music/puppets: Merry Seng, Registration: Cheryl Pendleton, Crafts: Ellen Woodward and Kristiana Hinzmann, Kitchen/snacks: were handled by Dee Sachtjen, Diane and Bill Buckley, and Sue Poznanski, Technology/screens: Shelley Roelke and Youth helpers: Sawyer Koch, Paceler Moll, Kinzie Lintl, Griffin Lintl, Clara Sohn and Bailey Sohn. We enrolled 10 students with 1 new family.

Fall confirmation classes including 6th grade students began in September. Classes were held on Wednesday evenings along with intergenerational services. Brad Simplot, Lynn Lund, Kerri Lintl, Erin Semrad, and Ruth Kohlmeyer were mentors and coordinators.

Sunday School, met from Jan-May, with the same staff as fall 2022. In January, the students began a mission - raising funds to purchase 3 sheep through Heifer International.

Fall Sunday School classes began meeting on Sept 17, with 13 children enrolled. Staff includes Sheila Gempeler, Superintendent, Mandy Paskey-3-5th grades, Morgan Loewenhagen 1st and 2nd grades, and Florence Schmuldach-Kindergarten and 4K. Enrollment is down somewhat as the 6th grade is now attending confirmation classes, however, we enrolled 3 additional children at Christmas time.

Curriculum for 2023: "Top 50 Bible Stories" with Old Testament Stories for 4K-2nd grade. 3rd-5th grade worked on understanding one Bible verse each week with activities to help them remember and apply the scriptures. In May 2023, the students led by Ruth Kohlmeyer planted another pollinator garden. As their mission project for God Living Water, the children began raising funds to purchase a water well through Heifer International. Thrivent matching funds will be available.

Third-grade bibles were presented in September.

Music Director: Merry Seng leads music time in the sanctuary from 10-10:15 utilizing music videos on the sanctuary screens and movement and dance. She leads the children in the Lord's Prayer. Merry also wrote our Christmas skit and program, *The Family Gathering*.

DLC Book Club

The book club held discussions on the books, *A Walk in the Woods*, *The Sweetness of Forgetting*, *A Spark of Light*, *The Last Garden in England*, *the Giver of Stars*, *Ordinary Grace*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Deal of a Lifetime*. This year the group held an outing to Montello, to visit a used/new bookstore, have lunch, and explore the town. The DLC Book Club meets on the third Weds afternoon of the month. Thanks once again to Ardyce Piehl for leading this effort, researching books, and printing posters and bookmarks.

Adult Education

Beginning in July, Pastor Sterling led a 6-week study on the *Mary's of the Bible*.

Plans are underway to hold a Women's' Retreat in April.

Two Women's Circles bible studies continue to meet monthly using the **Gather** magazine.

Submitted by Sheila Gempeler

Hospitality Team 2023

Mission Statement: *The mission of the Hospitality Team is to be the hands and feet of Jesus in welcoming guests to our faith community and encouraging them to join us in the worship of our Lord.*

Membership: Ruth Kohlmeyer, Mary Thompson, Joen Bilse, Jane Manke, Barb Johnson and Jill Emmons Council Liaison Joen Bilse

Meetings: Monthly Meeting on the first Tuesday of the month at 9:30

Constitution Activities:

- In conjunction with the Worship Committee provide and maintain a system for identifying, welcoming, and obtaining the names and addresses of visitors who attend worship services. Thank them for participation, obtain feedback on their experience at worship, and ascertain ways the congregation might serve them further.
- Make available visitor gift bags and send welcome notes to visitors who fill out visitor information.
- Along with the pastor schedule new member classes and receptions.
- Provide information regarding ways for members to be integrated into the life of the church in ways that best reflect their gifts and interests for living a Christian life.

2023 Achievements:

We continue to keep the nursery clean and organized. As a committee, we send out visitor welcome cards and make the visitor gift bags available. Our committee along with other volunteers now brings home communion to 8 homebound members and non-members of Dekorra Lutheran Church. Our committee helped with the annual church picnic on Rally Sunday. This year we initiated the first Sunday of the month coffee hour. Our hope is that it will continue with non-committee members becoming involved. Our committee was instrumental in starting the OWLS group meeting again.

Goals for 2024:

Our main goal for 2024 is to work with Pastor Sterling to enhance and continue to show hospitality to visitors at Dekorra Lutheran Church. Our goal is always to find various ways to encourage people to experience life at Dekorra as we continue to care for our congregation and others. We will strive to have a member of our committee attend All Committee Night whenever possible.

Annual Report 2023
Dekorra Lutheran Memorial Fund

| | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------------|---------|
| Bank Balance January 1, 2023 | | \$11,912.68 | plus CD |
| Income - Memorials | 275.00 | | |
| - Interest | <u>17.62</u> | | |
| Total Income | 292.62 | \$292.62 | |
| Expenditures | | | |
| Payment for a new refrigerator | | | |
| by Library | <u>931.50</u> | | |
| Total Expenditures | 931.50 | -\$931.50 | |
| Bank Passbook Balance December 31, 2023 | | \$11,273.80 | |
| Certificate of Deposit | 5,565.44 | \$5,565.44 | |
| Interest has been included. CD renewed. | | | |

Memorials were received in memory of Wm Ayers, Mike Poznanski, and Margaret Jameson.

There were expenditures from this account in 2023 to purchase a new refrigerator for the old kitchen by the library.

Memorials are used only for non-budgeted items. Memorials are a very special way to honor a loved one or a special event as we glorify our Lord with gifts of thanksgiving.

Memorial Committee Members: Donna Schwoch, Claudine Hanson and Peter Holzman

Memorial Fund 2023

| Date | Memorial or Memo | | Deposit | Interest | Withdrawal | Balance |
|----------|---|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1/1/23 | Balance Brought Forward | | | | | 11,912.68 |
| 2/8/23 | Russel Ayers | M | 100.00 | | | 12,012.68 |
| 7/1/23 | Int Q 1 & 2 | | | 8.72 | | 12,021.14 |
| 7/19/23 | Mike Poznanski | M | 25.00 | | | 12,046.40 |
| 9/22/23 | Margaret Jamison | M | 150.00 | | | 12,196.40 |
| 9/25/23 | Interest | | | 4.55 | | 12,200.95 |
| 10/31/23 | Purchase Refrigerator for kitchen by library | | | | 931.50 | 11269.45 |
| 12/25/23 | Interest | | | 4.35 | | 11,273.80 |
| | Total | | 275.00 | 17.62 | 931.50 | 11,273.80 |

PROPERTY COMMITTEE REPORT 2023

Mission Statement:

To provide for the maintenance and improvement of all the property of Dekorra Lutheran Church; to provide the equipment and materials, necessary and helpful, for the congregation to carry out its mission and ministry; to provide for the scheduled maintenance and replacement of property and equipment as needed.

Members of the Property Committee: Dennis Cunningham, Chairman, Bill Buckley, Bob Acker, Darryl Knuteson, Harry Benson, and Paul Knuteson-Liaison to the Council

Project Items Conducted

1. Set up and take down of the Nativity Scene
2. We made a Sign for the Fellowship Hall north door and taped off an area around it – NOT TO BE BLOCKED OR PATHWAY OBSTRUCTED. To meet Fire Inspection.
3. We assisted in setting up tables, chairs & amplifier in preparation for the Alive Event on 2/8.
4. Discussion with Bill S & Hospitality Committee on New Refrigerator. That was finally obtained in October.
5. We did the programming of thermostats for scheduled times of occupancy in the building.
6. In March we found storage racks for our excess chairs from the Wi Surplus Auction site.
7. In April, TSR company applied new surfaces to our entrance area aprons.
8. A **VERY SPECIAL** thanks to Sara Schroeder for continuing to mow the property lawn and to David for maintaining the equipment.
9. Special thank you to the group that plants and maintains the flower beds in the parking lot.
10. Mid-season weed control and fertilizer applied. Thank you to Bill Buckley
11. Had sewer and septic inspected per state requirements.
12. Repaired/replaced kitchen faucet. 10/5
13. Spring and Fall clean-up of the yard and Highway CS cleanup. Thank you to all who helped.
14. Thanks to Oleg, in our office, for communicating property concerns and his assistance in facilitating solutions.
15. Setting the timer of parking lot lights to work with the season of daylight.
16. Salt was replenished & placed at entrances for winter.
17. We have contracted Neil Lee of Bay Valley Enterprises again as our snow-plowing contractor.
18. Filters in all furnaces and air handling units have been replaced.

Pending Projects in the upcoming year

1. Review Elite Pest Control quote
2. Get bases/platforms made for screen towers.
3. Review Synod recommendations to comply with environmental issues.
4. Plan to paint the exterior and clean up with special prep for the 155th celebration.
5. Upgrade the parking lot with resurfacing or seal coating again

The Property Committee has initiated a maintenance log of tasks to be completed and maintains a copy of Vendors and Suppliers which is located on a shelf in the storage room.

Special Thanks to All of the people who have taken time from their schedules to work on the Church facility & grounds and for their help on Cleanup Days. We know in these times we do not want to spend frivolously unless other needs have been met first. Discussion of such spending has been expressed in our meetings.

Respectfully Submitted
Paul Knuteson

SOCIAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mission Statement: To lead the congregation of Dekorra Lutheran Church to address the social, economic, and emotional needs of the people both within the congregation and in the community at large. Committee members include Margo Holzman, Ellen Keller (council liaison), Kathy Pederson, and Natalie Westegard. The responsibilities of the committee are to study the materials provided by the ELCA and other community agencies and to create awareness in the congregation of social problems or needs, to lead in active participation, and to conduct programs to provide material and spiritual assistance to those in need.

CARE NOTES: located in the rack at the back of the sanctuary for children, teens, and adults. Topics include prayer, faith, health, grief, and stress.

FIRST AID KITS: located in the kitchens and bathrooms.

PRAYER CHAINS: provide supportive ministry.

BULLETIN BOARDS: updated with information, messages of faith, displays of Easter butterflies and Christmas angels.

EASTER BUTTERFLIES: Butterflies decorate the large bulletin board by the sanctuary with names of family members or friends to honor or remember a loved one. Monies raised totaled \$650 with matching funds from Thrivent. \$650 to Prairie Valley Resale for glasses for three school-age children from Lodi, Harmony Grove, and Arlington. \$650 was sent for Ukraine Relief.

ELCA GLOBAL HEALTH MINISTRIES: 12 newborn kits and 16 hospice kits were taken to the Synod Assembly.

LITTLE LIBRARY: available to all.

SCHOOL KITS/HEALTH KITS: 114 school kits and 21 personal care kits were assembled for Lutheran World Relief along with 92 quilts.

FREE CLOTHES CLOSET: Volunteers sort and organize the clothing and the church members are encouraged to take and share items. Clothing is also shared with other community closets and surplus is taken to Appalachia three times a year.

LITTLE BAG/BIG IMPACT: Food and personal care products are collected for Lodi, Arlington, and Poynette food pantries. The yellow bags are taken by individuals and are returned to the shelves filled with items needed.

SAMARITAN'S PURSE/OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD: 35 shoe boxes were sent for children around the globe with gifts for specific age children enclosed.

CHRISTMAS ANGELS: \$800 was raised and matching funds were provided by Thrivent. \$1600 was given to Dekorra youth for their planned youth gathering in New Orleans.

The Social Ministry Committee thanks the congregation for their continued support.

Respectfully submitted by Natalie Westegard

Worship Committee Annual Report for 2023

At the suggestion of Pastor Sterling, we will begin planning for our yearly events several months earlier than we have in the past. We will determine which elements of each event should be emphasized and come up with creative methods of making the services more meaningful to the congregation.

We reinstated the practice of having the ushers pass the plate during service instead of having them drop their offerings in baskets by the doors although that option will still remain for those wanting to make use of it.

We purchased battery-operated candles for the sanctuary which adds to the atmosphere created for church services.

Ann Carncross ordered and received the One License for \$290 which enabled us to use Holden Evening Prayer Service among other prayers and hymns. We recommended and used the Holden Evening Prayer for Lenten Services. On Maundy Thursday we had foot washing with sins forgiveness; communion at the altar rail; the stripping of the altar and then left the sanctuary in darkness and silence. We used the Stations of the Cross and the Nailing of our Sins to the Cross as part of our Good Friday service. We held two services on Easter Sunday at 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM.

Brenda Schumann was a guest speaker on April 16. She spoke about her missionary work with "Light of the World" in Honduras.

The sanctuary was decorated with hanging flames and banners for Pentecost on May 28th along with several people speaking different languages during the service.

A worship help appeal was sent out in the June newsletter asking for additional volunteers to help during church services.

Readings for June 18th - July 23rd were in sync with the Bible Study on Mary's of the Bible. Pastor Sterling was on vacation Sunday, July 23rd so Chaplain Dan Pulfas, our supply pastor, preached on Mary Magdalene.

The decision was made to stop using parking lot ushers as of July 2, 2023. Those worshipping in their cars were asked to come to the front door and honk their horn so an usher could bring the bulletin and communion elements to them and collect their offerings. However, the outdoor ushers will remain in place whenever we hold outdoor services.

The combined church picnic/rally day/youth event was held on September 10 with the outdoor service being held at 10:30 and the picnic following. Pastor Sterling included the blessing of the backpacks as part of the service.

Holy Cross Sunday was celebrated on September 24.

Reformation Sunday was October 29 with a visiting pastor, Reverend Smalls, preaching. The sanctuary was decorated in red and the congregation was also asked to wear red.

All Saints Day was celebrated on November 5. Thankoffering Sunday was held on November 12.

The children's Christmas program was held as part of our December 17th service. They did an excellent job and the program was enjoyed by all. We did not have communion at this service.

Blue Christmas was celebrated on December 20. Christmas Eve was on the 4th Sunday of Advent this year. We determined that the morning service emphasizes the 4th Sunday in Advent and the afternoon service celebrates Christmas Eve. Pastor Sterling prepared separate readings and sermons for each service. The Christmas Day service was a hymn singing with Pastor Sterling giving a few readings.

Planning has begun for a year of celebration for the 155th Anniversary of Dekorra Lutheran Church on Sunday, August 24th. Bishop Joy will join us for this milestone event.

Submitted by: Sue Poznanski

Dekorra Lutheran Church Women of the ELCA

Annual Report 2023

WELCA participants practice seven marks of discipleship: praying, studying, worshiping, inviting, encouraging, serving, and giving. Here at Dekorra, the women work toward discipleship in many ways.

Praying: Weekly congregational prayers for church members, families, and friends along with world needs are often led by women.

Studying: At Dekorra we continue our monthly bible studies using the GATHER magazine. Many of our women work with the Sunday school and confirmation classes.

Worshiping: Regular worship continues in the sanctuary and/or with the parking lot church. Many helped with the planning of services, cantor duties, and reading the Word.

Inviting: Many of our women participate in welcoming people to our sanctuary as greeters. Dekorra WELCA Quarterly meetings were held with invitations sent by email and in the monthly newsletter. In 2023 thanks to Dekorra women the OWLS group was again organized after disbanding during Covid. This group encourages our older community members to get together for food, conversation, and monthly topics of interest. In May we held a salad supper for the ladies and encouraged the inviting of guests.

Encouraging: Women in the church are encouraged to participate in many activities, from sewing quilts to attending Book Club, and submitting articles to the newsletter. We sent 2 participants to the S-CSW biennial convention in Madison.

Serving: At Dekorra the women serve those families who have lost loved ones by providing funeral lunches at a minimal cost. In 2023 we served 5 funeral luncheons. Women also serve coffee hours after church services.

Giving: Dekorra women organized the worship service for Thank Offering Sunday. Our quilters sent 79 quilts to LWR, made 10 quilts for Habitat for Humanity, and donated one to Lutherdale for their fundraising auction. We supported many LWR projects. In 2023 Dekorra women shipped personal care kits and school kits. Women collected and packed items for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes and organized a free clothing closet in the church.

Dekorra Lutheran Church Women of the ELCA

Annual Report 2023

All members participate in the monthly "yellow bag" ministry to local food pantries. In addition, our group provided funds to the WELCA synodical organization and numerous charities, including Katies Fund, Lutheran World Relief Disaster Fund, Hope House, and Keep Wisc. warm/cool fund, and area food pantries. To meet these needs, we held a Lefse and bake sale, so that with God's help we can continue these projects into 2024.

A thank you to the women of Dekorra who give of their time and talents again and again. Dekorra women participate in all committees and activities of the church. Their generosity and discipleship are truly appreciated.

With God, all things are possible.

Respectfully submitted by Sheila Gempeler

**DEKORRA WOMEN OF THE ELCA
ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023**

Balance In Checking As Of December 31, 2022 \$3,132.90

Income

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Coffee Hour | \$196.52 |
| Coffee/Tea/Cards, etc. | \$112.00 |
| Bible Study and Quarterly Offerings | \$701.00 |
| Pennies For Poverty | \$119.00 |
| Five Funerals | \$1,160.00 |
| Quilts Sold | \$65.00 |
| Quilt Account Transfer | \$220.00 |
| Donations | \$160.00 |
| Thankoffering | \$768.00 |
| Lefse and Bake Sale | \$1,814.00 |

Total Receipts \$5,315.52

Disbursements

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Coffee Hour Expenses | \$339.98 |
| Funeral Expenses | \$893.11 |
| SWO Quarterly Donations @ \$300.00 Each | \$1,200.00 |
| WELCA Triennial Convention Offering | \$300.00 |
| SWO - Katie's Fund | \$300.00 |
| SWO Biennial Convention Offering | \$100.00 |
| Lutheran World Relief | \$600.00 |
| Hope House | \$100.00 |
| Kits | \$100.00 |
| Gather Magazine | \$49.95 |
| Keep Wis. Warm/Cool Fund | \$100.00 |
| Pennies For Poverty - Hope House | \$116.00 |
| Thankoffering | \$568.00 |
| DLC Staff Christmas Gifts | \$200.00 |
| Audit Adjustment | \$225.52 |
| Lefse Making Expense | \$60.00 |

Total Disbursements \$5,252.56

Balance In Checking As Of December 31, 2023 \$3,195.86

Respectfully Submitted, Kathy Burhop, Treasurer

Dekorra Men for Christ Annual Report 2023

Mission Statement: That every man grows in his relationship with Jesus Christ through an effective men's ministry at Dekorra Lutheran Church.

Motto: Jeremiah 29: 13-14: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity." (SIN)

Membership: Any man who wishes to talk the talk and walk the walk, with Christ!

Meetings: The second Sunday of each month at Dekorra Lutheran Church. (No meeting held in 2023 due to Covid issues)

Activities: Christian worship and learning, Habitat for Humanity Build, Thrivent Builds, Lutheran Men in Mission, Mission of Hope, and any worthy cause that may come to the attention of the group. (Normal activities were limited due to COVID 19)

Officers: Bill Schleichert (president), Vacant (vice-president), Bill Buckley Jr. (secretary), and Pete Kamps (treasurer).

2023 Financial Report

(January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023)

Beginning Balance: \$ 6961.69 (checking + savings)

Income: \$ 0.00

Expenses: \$ 780.94

=====

Ending Balance: \$ 6209.17 (checking + savings)

Contributions (not all-inclusive):

WI Dept. Rev = \$25.00 (raffle license)

Mallards Tickets = \$340.00

Mother's Day = \$65.94

WI Veterans Mission fund = \$50.00

Wild Wings Veteran Hunt = \$300.00

2023 DEKORRA MISSION OF HOPE ANNUAL REPORT

Another year has passed and we have seven students going into the 2023/2024 school year. (schools in Tanzania have fourteen grades to graduate). We still have only seven sponsors for those students though we would gladly accept more!

This program began in the early 2000s when one of our interns brought a fellow seminary student and her family to Dekorra during the Thanksgiving holiday. They, and one of our families from Dekorra who had kids of similar ages, put together a program to provide financial aid to students in Tanzania so they have the ability to attend school. That was the beginning of Mission of Hope. There are three other Mission of Hope groups: one each in West Springfield, MA; Chokio MN and Sullivan, WI. Sponsors pay \$160 yearly for elementary students and \$310 yearly for high school students. Each sponsor "adopts" a student for the duration of their school experience.

Please contact Bill Schleichert if you would like to participate in this very worthwhile program.

| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Beginning balance: | \$788 |
| 2023 income | \$2360 |
| 2023 balance | \$3098 |
| 2023/24 Expenses: | (\$1570) |
| Ending balance: | \$1528 |

2023/2024 Mission of Hope Student List

Dear Bill,

Merry Christmas to you all and happy New Year 2024. We all had a very blessed Christmas season here.

In 2023/24 you will have 7 students (3 for high school and 4 elementary) as follows:

| Student | Grade | sponsor | Fee |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|
| 1. Happiness Zebedayo - high school | | Simplot | \$310 |
| 2. Marian Elisamia - high school | | Jacobson | \$310 |
| 3. Collin Elishilia - elementary school | | DMC | \$160 |
| 4. Denis Derick - high school | | Schleichert | \$310 |
| 5. Loveness Ayo- elementary school | | Kohlmeyer | \$160 |
| 6 Solomon Michael Sumari – elementary | | DLC | \$160 |
| 7. Jovin Kitomari-elementary school | | Gladdem | \$160 |

Total \$1570

THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLAR COMMITTEE

2023 Report

Mission Statement: To further the countless missions of Dekorra Lutheran Church through the use of our time, talents, and treasures.

Purpose: To oversee the dispersal of Thrivent Choice Dollar funds in accordance with the accepted guidelines of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Committee members: Dee Sachtjen, Claudine Hanson and William Schleichert

Though this was a short “year”, our committee has been very busy. We received three requests for funding and granted a total of \$1,080 to the three. We have been amazed at the generosity of the members of Dekorra in their support of the mission work being generated here by our members. The fundraisers, and the amount of money raised by and granted for each, are as follows:

- **Easter butterflies:** Congregation members bought butterflies in remembrance of loved ones at Easter. A total of \$650 was collected and Thrivent Choice matched that with \$650 for a total of \$1300. Half the funds went to the Lodi Prairie Resale store for glasses for three youths and the other half went to Ukraine relief
- **Heifer International:** The Sunday school students raised money to provide a water well in a village in Africa. The students raised \$375 and Thrivent Choice matched the \$375 for a total of \$750.
- **Christmas Angels:** Congregation members bought “Angels” in remembrance of friends and family. The monies collected will be split between the youth group's trip and Brenda Schumann’s mission work in Honduras. Approximately \$800 was raised and Thrivent Choice will donate the rest of the money to make it \$1600.

You people are absolutely awesome!! Thanks be to God for your caring and support!

The total dollars remaining in the fund for 2021 are approximately: \$8,400

For those of you who are planning to organize a fundraiser in the future, and would like to obtain grant money from the Thrivent Choice Dollar Fund, there is a written list of what you need to do hanging on the bulletin board by the old kitchen. You can also contact Claudine or me.

Respectfully Submitted, William Schleichert

Steuer-Mitchell Education Fund

2023 Annual Report

Continuing Resolution CR25

Mission

To faithfully administer this fund to assist with the post-secondary education of members of Dekorra Lutheran Church, who have graduated from high school. To invest the monies received in a prudent manner that will make it possible for the fund to grow, so that it will live in perpetuity and be able to award meaningful scholarships on an annual basis.

The fund is invested with E.D. Jones invested and did well this year. Our hope going forward is that our investments will continue to grow so that we can offer more meaningful scholarship amounts in the future.

The two recipients of \$1,000@ for 2023 are:

Emma Glaser and Bryn Romeis

The committee is open for applications for 2024 and may be obtained from the Poynette and Lodi school counselors, or from the Dekorra church office. The deadline for submission is May 1st, 2024.

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| February 24 2017 account opened | \$50,000 |
| December 31, 2023 Fund total | \$51,636 |
| December 31, 2023 cash available | \$2,016 |
| Amount awarded to date | \$15,700 (12 scholarships) |
| Amount to be disbursed in 2023 | \$2,000 (2 scholarships) |

Committee members are; William Schleichert, Karen Bender, Lyle Hendrickson, William Buckley, Pete Kamps, Pastor Sterling

Respectfully submitted,

William A Schleichert, Dekorra Lutheran Church Council Vice-President

2023 DLC Youth/Family Annual Report

Youth and Family committee offers service and fellowship opportunities for Dekorra's youth and families. Our definition of 'family' is very broad; we encourage participation from everyone. The following activities occurred in 2023. Several activities were related to sending at least five youth, three adult leaders, and Pastor Sterling to the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans:

February – hosted Synod Alive! event at DLC

March - a private showing of Jesus Revolution movie at Marcus Theater in Sun Prairie

March - Reach Out Lodi drive and service work followed by game night at DLC

April - Cty Hwy CS roadside clean-up with DMC

July – brat stand fundraiser in Lodi

August - VBS helpers with the Education team

September – Rally Day game, music, and activity helpers

October – Cty Hwy CS roadside clean-up with DMC

November – quilt raffle/bake sale with DWELCA

December - Poynette Christmas parade with choir and DMC

December - Christmas caroling at nursing homes and member homes with choir, followed by a lock-in dance party at DLC

December - bucket raffle fundraiser at church

Recurring – Wednesday night worship servants

We may add more attendees to the 2024 Youth Gathering. Those committed to attending are fully funded by related fundraisers and matching funds from multiple church subgroups. Thanks be to God!

THANK YOU to the youth and families who participated and to MULTIPLE church groups who supported them. Please encourage youth to get involved, do some good, and have fun.

Lynn Lund, Kyle Knuteson, Kerri Lintl, Brad Simplot

CONGREGATION REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

This report should be filed online. Connect to the website (ELCA.org/congregationreport) and enter your congregation's ID and password (printed below). If you are unable to file electronically, complete this paper form and return it to your synod office by March 1, 2024.

Latest report on file: 2022

1. Baptized membership at end of 2022

2. Baptized members received during 2023

- a. By baptism: children (15 yrs. and younger).....
- b. By baptism: adults (16 yrs. and older).....
- c. By affirmation of faith.....
- d. By transfer.....
- e. From other sources and statistical adjustment.....
- f. Total members received this year.....

| | |
|---|-----|
| | 773 |
| | |
| 5 | |
| 1 | |
| 0 | |
| 0 | |
| 0 | |
| | 6 |
| | |
| 7 | |
| 1 | |
| 0 | |
| | 8 |
| | 711 |

3. Baptized members removed during 2023

- a. By death.....
- b. By transfer.....
- c. For other reasons and statistical adjustment.....
- d. Total members removed this year.....

4. Baptized membership, end of 2023

5. Total confirmed membership, end of 2023 3

6. Number of baptized youth who were confirmed in 2023 3

7. In 2023, the number of weeks this congregation worshipped:

a. On-site (in person) 52 b. Online (via streaming) 52

8. Average weekly worship attendance in 2023:

a. On-site (in person) 85 b. Online (via streaming) 25

9. Total number of people (including children) actively participating in the life of the congregation in 2023 110

10. Race/ethnic origin of ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS. Must equal active participants on line 9:

| African American/Black | African National/African Caribbean | American Indian/Alaska Native | Arab/Middle Eastern | Asian/Pacific Islander | Latino/Hispanic | Multiracial | White | TOTAL |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 5 | | | | | 5 | 2 | 98 | 110 |

Verify the following congregation information (items 11-15 and the congregation's mailing address). Corrections can be made below or online at ELCA.org/tools/updatecongregation.

- 11. Phone:** (608) 635-7200 **12. Fax:** (608) 635-4960
- 13. Email:** dekorra@dekorralutheran.org **14. Website:** http://www.dekorralutheran.org
- 15. Location address describes where the church or place of worship is physically located.** This may differ from the mailing address, but must identify a street name.
 Dekorra Lutheran Church
 N3099 Smith Rd
 Poynette WI 53955-9435

Congregation's mailing address If you do not file electronically, return Form A to the synod office at:

000122*****AUTO**ALL FOR AADC 535**T1 P2
 DEKORRA LUTHERAN CHURCH
 N3099 SMITH RD
 POYNETTE WI 53955-9435

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA
 PO Box 14496
 Madison WI 53708-0496



AUDIT REPORT

Hi all,

The audit was finished on Jan 18, 2024. It was completed by: Ruth Kohlmeyer, Sondra Quam, and Cindy Johnson.

Almost all recommendations from 2021/22 have been reconciled, which made our job so much quicker and easier this year! We thank you!

One question was about Mission of Hope and Ruth is contacting Bill Schleichert on this matter.

Everything else is in good standing.

One concern: We recommend the Dekorra Men for Christ follow others and consolidate to DLC General Acct!

Any questions, contact Ruth, Sondra, or Cindy

Thank you all!

Cindy

| Dekorra Lutheran Church | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Budget Preparation for 2024 Fiscal Period | | | | |
| | | Approved 2023 | 2023 Actuals | Proposed 2024 |
| Acct. #'s | | Budget Amounts | | Budget Amounts |
| PASTOR EXPENSES: | | | | |
| 500.001 | Pastor Salary | \$45,466.00 | \$42,452.16 | \$46,252.00 |
| 500.002 | Pastor SS Allowance | \$5,428.90 | \$5,428.80 | \$5,548.32 |
| 500.004 | Pastor Housing Allowance | \$25,500.00 | \$25,500.00 | \$26,275.00 |
| 500.005 | Pastor Medical Insurance | \$10,332.00 | \$10,332.00 | \$10,824.00 |
| 500.006 | Pastor Life Insurance | \$652.00 | \$611.16 | \$652.32 |
| 500.007 | Pastor Pension | \$9,167.39 | \$9,167.40 | \$9,369.04 |
| | Pastor Disability | \$652.08 | \$687.60 | \$652.08 |
| | Survivor Contribution | \$579.72 | \$579.72 | \$579.72 |
| | Pastor Retiree Support Contribution | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 500.008 | Pastor Continuing Education | \$500.00 | \$817.55 | \$750.00 |
| 500.009 | Pastor Auto Allowance | \$1,200.00 | \$29.12 | \$100.00 |
| 500.010. | Pastor Professional and Meeting Expenses | \$800.00 | \$158.15 | \$200.00 |
| 500.013 | Pastor Moving Expenses | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | TOTAL PASTOR EXPENSES | \$100,278.09 | \$95,763.66 | \$101,202.48 |
| | | | | |
| 515.001 | Supply Pastor | \$1,000.00 | \$403.42 | \$750.00 |
| LAY STAFF SALARIES: | | | | |
| 520.001 | Office Manager & Bookkeeper | \$36,608.00 | \$36,608.00 | \$37,440.00 |
| 520.002 | Organist/Choir Director | \$9,100.00 | \$7,550.00 | \$9,100.00 |
| 520.003 | Substitute Organist | \$1,000.00 | \$1,500.00 | \$1,000.00 |
| 520.004 | Custodian Salary | \$6,274.12 | \$6,081.81 | \$6,274.12 |
| 520.006 | Substitute Office Manager/Bookkeeper | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | TOTAL LAY STAFF SALARIES | \$52,982.12 | \$51,739.81 | \$53,814.12 |
| LAY STAFF EXPENSES: | | | | |
| 525.001 | FICA(7.65%) | \$2,800.51 | \$3,265.93 | \$3,344.13 |
| 525.002 | Wisconsin Department of Revenue | \$100.00 | \$0.00 | \$100.00 |
| 525.003 | Worker's Compensation(Incl in liability ins) | \$1,750.00 | \$1,053.00 | \$1,053.00 |
| 525.004 | Blanket Bond Insurance | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 525.005 | Staff Continuing Education | \$100.00 | \$0.00 | \$100.00 |
| | TOTAL LAY STAFF EXPENSES | \$4,750.51 | \$4,318.93 | \$4,597.13 |

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| | ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES: | | | |
| 530.001 | Office Expenses | \$3,200.00 | \$2,198.69 | \$2,800.00 |
| 530.002 | Copier/Lease/Maintenance | \$4,520.40 | \$5,240.28 | \$4,800.00 |
| 530.003 | Office Equip Repair/Maint. | \$250.00 | \$0.00 | \$250.00 |
| 530.004 | Postage | \$1,000.00 | \$990.00 | \$1,200.00 |
| 530.005 | Paper Supplies/Bulletin Paper | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 530.006 | Miscellaneous Advertising | \$200.00 | \$600.20 | \$750.00 |
| 530.007 | Synod Assembly | \$600.00 | \$225.63 | \$600.00 |
| 530.009 | Office Equipment | \$200.00 | \$0.00 | \$200.00 |
| 530.011 | Leadership Development | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 530.020. | Bank Fees | \$100.00 | \$419.88 | \$400.00 |
| 530.024 | Auto-Giving Expenses | \$450.00 | \$740.44 | \$750.00 |
| 530.025 | Giving Envelopes | \$1,000.00 | \$1,661.34 | \$1,500.00 |
| | TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES | \$11,520.40 | \$12,076.46 | \$13,250.00 |
| | | | | |
| | EDUCATION EXPENSES: | | | |
| 535.001 | Sunday School | \$1,000.00 | \$608.48 | \$800.00 |
| 535.002 | Vacation Bible School | \$1,000.00 | \$503.30 | \$800.00 |
| 535.003 | Confirmation | \$750.00 | \$372.51 | \$500.00 |
| 535.004 | Adult Education | \$225.00 | \$200.00 | \$225.00 |
| 519.001 | Educational Worker | \$500.00 | \$500.00 | \$500.00 |
| | TOTAL EDUCATION EXPENSES | \$3,475.00 | \$2,184.29 | \$2,825.00 |
| | | | | |
| | WORSHIP EXPENSES: | | | |
| 540.001 | Altar Supplies | \$2,300.00 | \$1,514.53 | \$1,750.00 |
| 540.006 | Music/Repairs | \$500.00 | \$125.00 | \$400.00 |
| 540.008 | Worship Song Select | \$500.00 | \$702.70 | \$800.00 |
| 540.009 | Picnic | \$200.00 | \$0.00 | \$200.00 |
| | TOTAL WORSHIP EXPENSES | \$3,500.00 | \$2,342.23 | \$3,150.00 |
| | | | | |
| | COMMITTEE EXPENSES: | | | |
| 545.001 | Hospitality Committee | \$150.00 | \$1,020.80 | \$150.00 |
| 545.002 | Finance Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.003 | Intern Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.004 | Property Committee | \$275.00 | \$35.00 | \$200.00 |
| 545.005 | Social Ministry Committee(Pass Through Account) | \$150.00 | \$2,241.40 | \$150.00 |
| 545.006 | Mutual Ministry Committee(Staff Support) | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.010. | Education Committee | \$100.00 | \$0.00 | \$100.00 |
| 545.011 | Stewardship Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.012 | Worship Committee | \$100.00 | \$171.57 | \$300.00 |
| 545.015 | Technology Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.013 | Youth & Family Committee | \$5,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 545.028 | Call Committee | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | TOTAL COMMITTEE EXPENSES | \$5,775.00 | \$3,468.77 | \$900.00 |

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|---------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
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| | MISSION EXPENSES: | | | |
| 550.001 | ELCA (5% of General Offering-based on \$185,000) | \$12,000.00 | \$10,452.43 | \$9,250.00 |
| 550.002 | World Hunger(Pass Through) | \$150.00 | \$0.00 | \$150.00 |
| 550.003 | Misc. Mission Appeal | \$2,000.00 | \$100.00 | \$0.00 |
| 550.007 | Seminary Appeal | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 550.013 | Lutheran Social Services | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| 550.009 | Lutherdale | \$250.00 | \$150.00 | \$250.00 |
| 550.011 | Habitat For Humanity (Pass Through) | \$0.00 | \$645.00 | \$0.00 |
| 550.008 | Mission of Hope (Pass Through) | \$0.00 | \$660.00 | \$150.00 |
| 570.005 | Endowment Fund (Pass Through) | \$0.00 | \$2,000.00 | \$0.00 |
| | TOTAL MISSION EXPENSES | \$14,400.00 | \$14,007.43 | \$9,800.00 |
| | | | | |
| | CHURCH UTILITIES | | | |
| 555.001 | Building Heat | \$2,800.00 | \$2,229.07 | \$2,800.00 |
| 555.002 | Building Electric | \$3,800.00 | \$3,157.78 | \$3,500.00 |
| 555.003 | Building Phone | \$2,500.00 | \$2,122.23 | \$2,500.00 |
| | TOTAL CHURCH UTILITIES | \$9,100.00 | \$7,509.08 | \$8,800.00 |
| | | | | |
| | BUILDING EXPENSES: | | | |
| 580.001 | Misc. Kitchen Expense | \$750.00 | \$79.96 | \$400.00 |
| 560.002 | Building/Euipment Maintenance | \$3,500.00 | \$2,932.44 | \$3,500.00 |
| 560.004 | Snow Plowing/Mowing | \$2,500.00 | \$1,867.50 | \$2,500.00 |
| 560.005 | Custodial Supplies | \$500.00 | \$409.52 | \$400.00 |
| 560.006 | Liability & Property Insurance/Church | \$5,000.00 | \$5,972.75 | \$6,781.00 |
| 575.011 | Screens Fund Expense(215.001) | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | TOTAL BUILDING EXPENSES | \$12,250.00 | \$11,262.17 | \$13,581.00 |
| | | | | |
| 570.001 | MEMORIAL FUND (PASS THROUGH) | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | | | | |
| | ANNUAL TOTALS: | \$219,031.12 | \$205,076.25 | \$212,669.73 |
| | | | | |
| | Dif. From 2022 | -\$4,355.34 | Dif. From 2023 | -\$6,361.39 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | Congregation Challenge Increase Revenue 2024 | | | \$27,000.00 |