



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

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 black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Agenda	2
Pastor's Report	3
Director of The House Next Door Report	7
Music Ministry	11
Council President's Report	12
January 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes	13
October 2023 Congregation Meeting Minutes	16
2024 Council Nominees	17
2024 Nominating Team Nominees	18
Treasurer's Report	19
Financial Reports	
• Balance Sheet	20
• Funds Report	21
• Spending Plan	22
Ministry Team Reports	
• Altar Guild	24
• Building Use	25
• Christian Education	26
• Communications/Digital	27
• Finance	27.5
• Parish Care	28
• Peace Garden	29
• Property	30
• Racial Justice	33
• Stewardship	34
• Reconciling in Christ	35
• Social Outreach	36
2023 Statistical Summary	37

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Sunday January 28, 2023

Agenda

Call to Order	Tim Gjenvick, Council President
Opening Prayer	Pastor Froehlke
Approval of Minutes	Tim Gjenvick
January 29, 2023 Annual Meeting	
October 29, 2023 Congregational Meeting	
Election of new Council Members and Nominating Team for 2024	Ellen McBrearity
Pastor's Remarks	Pastor Froehlke
Director of the House Next Door Remarks	Pastor Selover
Minister of Music Remarks	Dr. Doug Helvering
Constitution and Bylaws Revisions	Joan New
Reports of the Ministry Teams	Tim Gjenvick
Approval of 2024 Program of Ministry (Spending Plan)	Tim Gjenvick
Thank Yous	Tim Gjenvick
Lord's Prayer and Dismissal	Pastor Froehlke

Pastor's Report

A New Song We Now Begin

A new song we now begin, may our Lord God help us to sing what he has done. Martin Luther 1524

The Lutheran Quarterly continues to commemorate the Protestant Reformation's quincentennial. 2017 was the big year, the traditional beginning of the Reformation, but other dates stand out. For example, the winter of 1523-1524. This is when the first Lutheran hymnal was published. Robin Leaver, Professor Emeritus from Westminster Choir College, writes in The Lutheran Quarterly, "It all began with a single song, Luther's *A New Song We Now Begin*."

A New Song was not a hymn, but a ballad. Ballads were the social media in those days. Leaver writes, "news, trivial and serious, was communicated to the general populous by singers who, for a few coins, would sing the latest news ballads in places where people congregated." Luther wrote *A New Song* to condemn the execution of two Augustinian brothers who were accused of being too close to Luther. Luther felt deeply responsible as these brothers, in a sense, died in Luther's place.

From a historical perspective, however, these ballads gave Luther the idea of preserving songs that might otherwise not have survived. Singers of ballads like *A New Song*, would carry copies of their song to leave at the taverns and public places where they would sing. Luther thought if ballads could carry the news of the day, why not put scripture to song as a means to share it with a largely illiterate population.

So, in the winter of 1524 Luther was instrumental in publishing the *Achtliederbuch* (the Eight Song Book), a collection of hymns to be used for congregational singing. Luther had found a way to make scripture familiar to the people: songs sung in the vernacular to teach people the substance of faith.

Five Hundred Years Later

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Psalm 127:1

Five hundred years later I am inspired to sing new songs to teach a new generation the substance of the faith.

Robin Leaver writes that those first hymnals drew heavily from the Psalms, ancient songs that Luther understood as fundamental for devotional life. From Psalm 127 Luther saw a church laboring in vain, a church more concerned with itself than with the gospel. The Lord was no longer building the house. To right the ship, Luther got the church to sing. God's word was back among the people.

Five hundred years later the church again needs new songs; we again need a seismic shift like the Reformation so that we do not labor in vain. From my vantage, too much energy is still given to preserve a church that no longer works. Too often we protect the institution at the expense of following the Jesus way. We are singing old songs.

We need new songs. Songs people like to sing. Songs that resonate. Songs sung in the vernacular to make scripture and faith come alive. What songs can we include in our hymnal five hundred years after that first Lutheran hymnal?

Song Number One: The Lord is on Our Side.

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side our enemies would have swallowed us up alive.
Psalm 124:3

I hesitate to use this verse. In 2024 everyone is choosing sides, a side they think the Lord is on. Still, Psalm 124 was one of the Psalms Luther put to music five hundred years ago. Is there anything we can learn from this today?

In the midst of decline, whether it be finances or attendance, it is easy to forget that the Lord is on our side. The world's mantra of scarcity hooks us. We live in zero sum world. We must hold on to what we have at the expense of our neighbor. This is an old song.

My friend and trainer, Rev Kahlil Carmichael, ends each of our training sessions with a meditation. As I sit exhausted and totally depleted, Kahlil sits me down, turns off the lights, lights a candle, and says "Peter, repeat after me."

"I am loved. I am forgiven. I am accepted. I am chosen. I am abundantly blessed. I am grateful."

The Lord is on my side.

We need to sing this song at Prince of Peace: "We are loved. We are forgiven. We are accepted. We are chosen. We are abundantly blessed. We are grateful."

The Psalmist concludes Psalm 124 by singing, *Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

When numbers decline, the church defaults to fear. Fear fails to see the Lord on our side. A better response is the song that Kahlil has taught. We are abundantly blessed. We will live by faith. This will be our song.

Song Number Two: May God's Face Shine

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make God's face shine upon us, that your way may be known upon the earth, your saving power among all nations. Psalm 67:1

Recently David Brooks wrote an essay in [The Atlantic](#), entitled, "How America Got Mean." Brooks goes beyond the usual commentary of our political divide to connect our meanness to our sadness. He writes: "Maybe we have become so mean because we have become so sad." He states that the percentage of Americans who do not have close friends has increased fourfold since 1990. He says that more than half of Americans say that no one knows them well. Brooks writes that marriage rates have fallen; romantic partnerships have fallen.

I attribute this sadness, and the mental health crisis it is spawning, to God's way not being known upon the earth. Here the church must repent for our share of judgement and condemnation that has only added

to the meanness of society. With Luther we need again to sing Psalm 67 so that God's face shines upon this mean world.

We learned a new song this past year in becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. I am proud to pastor a congregation that makes an intentional statement that we are safe to the LGBTQ community, a community that has suffered its fair share of meanness from the church. This hard work makes God's face shine upon our congregation.

Joyful Noise is a new song we are singing at Prince of Peace. God's way is being made known, again to special needs families who are not always accepted in church. I need to tell you about Merwin. Merwin never misses Joyful Noise, but he rarely enters the sanctuary. Merwin is more comfortable walking the halls of the church or not coming into the church at all, and that's okay. Merwin presents himself at POP, well, as Merwin. Because Merwin usually misses communion, at the end of the service I go out looking for him to take communion to him. Sometimes I find him in the back seat of his car. "Merwin, the body of Christ, broken for you." Merwin always takes the bread. "Merwin, the blood of Christ shed for you." Merwin always takes the wine. And God's face shines upon us. Joyful Noise is a new song that we need to keep singing.

If RIC and Joyful Noise are new songs, the House Next Door is a new musical, a medley of new music singing in the future of the church. I'll direct you to Pastor Dale's report for details on what is happening at the HND, but I need to say that the energy and growth at POP is happening next door at the house. God's way is being made known through deeper engagement with the spirit to which the church next door does not always traverse. We sing in harmony, church and house, blessed by God.

Finally, another song we are learning to sing is a beautiful scene I witness at the end of worship many Sundays. As I recess to the back of the church, Nancy Herrington is dancing with Mimi and Auroa, often the only children in worship. I wish there were more children, still, this is a song that reveals the heart and soul of this place. God's face is shining. Maybe we need to do more dancing at Prince of Peace.

Four stories of Prince of Peace at our best. Singing new songs. Expressing joy, not sadness. God's face shining, making God's way known upon the church and upon the world.

Song Number Three: My Life Flows on in Endless Song

No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that rock I'm clinging. Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing? Robert Lowery ELW 763

This hymn was not in Luther's hymnal five hundred years ago. In fact, this hymn was not in the old LBW of the 1970s, but it is in the ELW of the 2000s. We are learning to sing this song.

Music has always been important at Prince of Peace, and now more than ever we cannot lose our voice. Many fear 2024. We fear the presidential election, we fear the ongoing mental health crisis, we fear climate change.

But as Luther taught the church to sing in 1524, I teach Prince of Peace to sing in 2024. Singing new songs meets the challenge of this new day. Robert Lowrey's song is not new. He wrote it 1869, but it is a song that equips us for ministry in 2024.

My life flows on in endless song, above earths lamentations.

I catch the sweet, though far off hymn, that hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing,

It finds an echo in my soul; how can I keep from singing?

Five hundred years after the first Lutheran hymnal, let us live our tradition. Let's sing. Let's dance.
Let's rediscover our voice and discover new ways of being church.

The world will sing along and our songs will help God save the world.

How can we keep from singing?

Pastor Froehlke

January 11, 2024

The House Next Door

I Love to Tell the Story

ELW #661

My favorite story to tell is the story of the House Next Door. I tell it everywhere I go, to anyone who will listen. I love to tell the story because it is God's story. The House Next Door is a story about stewardship and a congregation who had a house. It is a story about faith and a team of people who had a vision for what God might do with that house. It is a story about listening: listening to one another, listening to the needs of the community, and most of all, listening for God: God's invitation, God's direction, God's guidance. It is a story about prayer and a God who answered each and every one of our prayers beyond what we ever could have imagined. Ultimately, the story of the House Next Door is a story about God. God doing a new thing. God breathing new life into God's church. It is a story that continues to unfold.

Our Mission

As the story of the House Next Door continues to unfold, so too does our Mission Statement.

Originally a spiritual formation center, with the addition of Marriage and Family Therapist, Pastor Christine Ruth, the mission of the House Next Door has expanded to include mental health. We are all familiar with the NRSV, the new revised standard version of the Bible. Well, today it is my joy to share with you the newly revised version of our Mission Statement:

The House Next Door offers a safe space and a place of grace for all who are seeking healing, wholeness and transformation.

We do this by:

***creating a welcoming environment that nurtures spiritual growth and emotional well-being.**

***providing spiritual direction, therapy, retreats and workshops that deepen spiritual and mental wellness.**

Come As You Are

Our mission is to provide a safe space and a place of grace where all feel welcomed, loved, and accepted for who they are, just as they are. Our mission is to embody the love of Jesus. When guests approach the front door of the House Next Door, they are greeted by a welcome mat that says, "Come as you are."

This year **579** individuals walked across that welcome mat. (a conservative number)

177 crossed that welcome mat for the first time. (also a conservative number).

This is a substantial increase from 2022 when we welcomed **374** people.

I Thank My God Every Time I Remember You

Philippians 1:3

This ministry would not be possible without the faithfulness and passion of the following people:

The Spiritual Formation Team: Kate Chen, Jen DiGioia, Nancy Herrington, Ellen McBrearity, Audrey Oehm, Nancy Reyes, and Gerda Somers.

The Vision Team: Pastor Peter Froehlke, Pastor Brandi Hebert, Pastor Kayla Hopgood, Pastor Laurie Matarazzo, Beth Michell, Pastor Christine Ruth and Elizabeth Wagner.

Our program leaders: named in the next section of this report.

Programs, Partners and Participants

We were overjoyed to offer a variety of programs in 2023. Programs are offered weekly, monthly, seasonally, and annually. We were also overjoyed to welcome a number of new presenters and new programs. They are denoted with a ++.

Individual Spiritual Direction

Group Spiritual Direction

Marriage and Family Therapy

Worship: Dinner Church

Service of Hope and Healing (Blue Christmas)

Service of Lament and Hope (Tree of Life Chapel)

++Gathering the Graces: Gatherings for Spiritual Directors

Prayer Circle with Charlie Frantz

World Labyrinth Day with Drum Circle led by Cathy Campanero

Beyond Book Club

Day and Overnight Respite for Pastors

Grief Workshops with Christine Ruth

++Artist's Way with Christine Ruth

++Dream Group with Christine Ruth

++Art.full Prayer with Pat Pickard

++Soul Collage with Teresa Knipper

++Music and Meditation with John Franek

++Self-Compassion and Care with Dr. Zan Struebing

Retreats led by Pastor Dale:

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Women's Retreat @ Red Bank

God's Love Lutheran Church Women's Retreat @ Newtown

++United Methodist Church of Red Bank Youth Leader's Retreat

Day of Respite for NJ Synod Rostered Leaders

++Presbyterian Cohort Lenten Retreat @ Prince of Peace
++NJ Synod Diakonia Retreat
++Retreat for Chaplains of Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, New Brunswick
Retreat for the Women of Westside Presbyterian @ Ridgewood
Retreat for Candidates of the NJ Synod
Women's Retreat @ Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center
Ash Wednesday Retreat @ Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center

Retreats held at the House Next Door:

++Northampton Presbyterian Session Retreat
Joshua Prayer Group

Retreats held at Prince of Peace:

++Light of the World Women's Group, Hamilton

We always appreciate invitations from others who provide us with the opportunity to tell the story of the House Next Door and share our ministry. This past year Pastor Dale was invited to lead a workshop for the Day of Respite for the Rostered Leaders of the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod; lead a workshop for the Candidacy Committees of the ELCA; be a guest presenter for a class Bishop James Hazelwood, New England Synod was teaching at United Lutheran Seminary; and be a guest on Bishop Hazelwood's podcast.

Why Are We Doing This???

For the past ten years I have felt nothing but excitement and passion for the ministry of the House Next Door. Watching this ministry unfold...having a front row seat to witness what God is doing...has been one of the greatest joys of my life and ministry. But I would not be honest if I did not share with you that the growing pains of this ministry have been difficult. Don't get me wrong. The growth of programs, presenters and participants has been amazing. It has been an answer to prayer. But it has also been challenging to navigate this growth without the needed staff and funding. I really struggled this fall. There were times when I would cry out to God: Remind me again, why are we doing this? Why am I doing this???

I was having one of those moments, when I opened PrayerNotes from the Homestead, my morning devotion that is written by my spiritual director, Glenn Mitchell. Glenn was reflecting on the brokenness of our world. He writes,

Tikkun olan is a Hebrew expression from the Judaic tradition. It is an invitation to repair the world. In Islam here is a parallel tradition, carried by the Arabic word islah. The tradition asserts that in the midst of creation, God pulled back enough to give space for humans to tend or repair the world. The tradition has mystical roots asserting that it is our stepping forward to create and mend that continues the intention of God in creation. Our stepping forward is essential in the ongoing creative and redemptive process...In the mystery of tikkun olam, there is no wasted effort. No mending action, no matter how small or inconsequential, is lost upon the world.

This is it! This is why we do this! God has called us to be repairers of a broken world. And no act of mending, no matter how small, is inconsequential. Every time a person walks the Labyrinth, the world is healed. Every time parents place a stone at the font of the Tree of Life Chapel, naming their child, the world is healed. Every time Christine or I sit with a client or a directee, the world is healed. Every time a pastor spends a night of respite at the House Next Door, the world is healed. We are repairers of a broken world. This is why we do this.

Where is God Inviting Us?

With the growth of the ministry of the House Next Door comes the need for infrastructure, especially in the form of staff and funds. The Spiritual Formation, Vision, and Finance Teams are faithfully discerning next steps so that this vital ministry is sustainable.

This year we literally outgrew our building. We are now receiving requests from groups that are too large for the House Next Door to hold, and we are “overflowing” into Prince of Peace. Pastors are telling me that there is a shortage of affordable, spacious retreat spaces where they and their congregations can gather for retreats, meetings, and workshops. How might we meet this need? What are we being invited to? What might this mean for our building usage?

Please join me in this time of discernment as the ministry of Prince of Peace and the House Next Door continues to unfold. How else might God be inviting us to be repairers of the world? We are blessed to have a front row seat where we get to watch this new thing that God is doing. God is breathing new life into God’s church. Let’s tell the story.

Submitted with Joy and Thanksgiving,

Pastor Dale C. Selover

Pastor of Spiritual Formation and Director of the House Next Door

Music Ministry

The Music Ministry at Prince of Peace is one of our most visible and active ministries. On average, we involve approximately 30 disciples in active participation. During our worship services, the offering of music plays a central role in our worship experience, as our ministry increases to include all of *our joyful disciples, living the faith*.

In 2023, the work of our Music Ministry continued to provide music for our worship services. We exercised restraint and cautiousness as we went about our work, as the COVID virus continues to be an active issue. Thankfully, we have been able to offer vocal/choral, instrumental, and handbell music for all 2023 worship services.

Throughout the year, Minister of Music Dr. R. Douglas Helvering and Church Musician Victoria Chow shared responsibilities from the piano/keyboard for our livestream, in-person, and outdoor worship services. Dr. Helvering remains on staff in 2024, and Ms. Chow remains our preferred guest musician whenever her services are needed.

I would like to thank all our participants in the ensembles for their participation and dedication to this ministry. Navigating the act of music making as we have emerged from the pandemic has been quite an emotional challenge for me, and I'm thankful for the support and collaborative spirit of our volunteer musicians. The Music Ministry will continue our rehearsals and worship activities in 2024, keeping a high attention to the sincere intent and offering of music to God. If you have any questions for me, please email rdh@rdouglashelvering.com.

– Doug Helvering
Music Minister

Prince of Peace Church Council Report

The new year is a time when we often look back at the year just past and look forward to the year to come, knowing that God will guide us on our way as he always has. The past few years have seen declines in church attendance throughout the United States, as the number of regular worshipers has dropped, and the number of people who have no faith (the “nones”) has increased. How we witness to God’s love for all when many no longer see church as important is the challenge facing all Christian denominations. The old ways of doing church, with weekly services, while familiar, is not reaching as many people as it used to. We are still called to spread the Gospel, so we need to pray for God’s guidance as we search for new ways to be the church.

Here at Prince of Peace we are trying new things yet continuing the old. We continue to have monthly Joyful Noise services open to all, but especially for families and children with special needs. The House Next Door provides a safe space for those who need counseling, support, or spiritual guidance. We have Dinner church, often monthly, as an alternate, and ancient way, of worship. We have opened our doors to more community programs, some long standing and some new, with continued use of our space by Alcoholics Anonymous, Boys and Girls Scouting programs, music recitals, the Indian Dance classes, Power Speakers, and others. The word is heard and preached and communion is celebrated weekly. We continue to train future church leaders by supporting Lutheran interns, Daniel Marrone for the first half of the year and Sara Manning the second half. We have become a Reconciling in Christ Church by adopting a Welcoming Statement that states we intentionally welcome all to join us but especially the LGBTQIA+ community. We continue to support our neighbors through our relationship with St. Bart’s, our Social Ministry and Racial Justice Teams, and our financial support of the New Jersey Synod and the ELCA. What else are we called to do? Let us pray for God to guide us as we continue our ministry.

Our aging building continues to need care. This year we replaced the parking lot and gutters, repaired the roof over the gathering area, and partly improved the water drainage of the circular driveway by cleaning the dry well. There will be continued need to replace or repair the church building and its fixtures to maintain it for us and for those who use our space. Just like our homes, there will always be work needed.

I want to thank Pastors Peter and Dale for their continued service to this congregation. I would also like to thank all the members of the church council (Jessica Clarke, Joan New, Christian Oehm, Dorothy Safranek, Con Sweeney, and Claudia Thompson, and especially Mary Ellen Glickson and Wendy Schutzer who are finishing their terms after 6 years on council, and David Jeedi, who served briefly) for their service. Thanks also to all the team leaders and team members for all they contribute to our thriving congregation. Finally, it has been my privilege to serve as the council president these past two years. My job was made easy with the support of all of you. We can be assured of God’s blessings and guidance on our faith journey together.

Tim Gjenvick
Church Council President

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 29, 2023

President Tim Gjenvick called the annual congregational meeting to order at 11AM; a quorum was confirmed. Tim welcomed all who were present in person and online. Pastor led the opening liturgy.

The congregation reviewed the minutes of the January 30, 2022 Annual Meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes (Joan New/Josh Grim); the motion passed.

Election of Council Members and the 2023 Nominating Team: Dave New, Council Secretary, expressed his appreciation to the 2022 Nominating Team (Kate Chen, Kimberly Contini, Lisa Schott, and Jim Winder), and presented the nominees for Congregation Council (Jessica Clarke, David Jeedi, and Claudia Thompson); there were no additional nominations from the floor. The three nominees were elected. Dave then presented the nominees for the 2023 Nominating Team (Ellen McBrearity, Greg Nowak, and Elizabeth Wagner); there were no additional nominations from the floor. The three nominees were elected.

Pastor's Remarks: Pastor Peter Froehlke

- Pastor Peter began by relating how Bishop Tracie Bartholomew recently joined us for a Joyful Noise service. She had just presided over the closing of a church and was feeling down, but the Joyful Noise worship lifted her back up. Pastor Peter also learned, just as he was writing his report, that St. Bart's plans to raise Pastor Erich to full-time ... using funds that came from the closing of another congregation. He found these to be examples of how new life can persist, even in the wake of endings.
- Pastor then spoke of the House Next Door. He has been struck by how safe people, and even strangers, feel when coming to the HND, sharing struggles in ways that would likely never take place in a church sanctuary. People feel an immediate connection when they walk in the door, and we need to continue to honor and support that ministry.
- Francisco Herrera is a PhD student at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He will be joining us on February 19, and also leading the Council retreat the day before, to share how the Gospel and Lutheran Confessions can drive us in reaching out to the local community.
- We will be holding a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper with our congregation partners (St. Bart and Abiding Presence) on February 31 at 6:30PM.
- Pastor Peter concluded by giving thanks to: Pastor Dale and her leadership at the HND; Doug Helvering for his partnership in the worship life of POP; Geeta for all of her support, particularly following her help in the quick resolution of a sewer back up this past week; Charlie Frantz and Elizabeth Wagner for their concluding service on Council; and all of POP for being so lively and faithful and fun and challenging.

Director of the House Next Door Remarks: Pastor Dale Selover

- Pastor Dale noted that she and Pastor Peter set aside time at home every morning for coffee and reflection, when they often reflect on how blest they are by the ministry of POP at this time in their life.
- Pastor Dale relayed some of the positive feedback she's received about the HND. She spoke about the HND at a Lutheran gathering in another synod, and was blown away by their response to what we are doing here at POP and the community; one person was struck by how organic the HND ministry is. People also tell Dale that they are able to share things that they could not share

in their own faith community; while that is sort of sad, being a safe place of grace is at the heart of the HND ministry.

- The HND has received a grant in partnership with LSM to supply pastoral care for pastors who are struggling with the impacts of the pandemic and hurricane; the grant has helped to develop a year-long program which will be available for continued use in the future.
- Pastor Dale recently led workshops and provided individual spiritual direction at a gathering in the SE Penn Synod.
- Pastor Dale said she is not one to get excited about numbers ... BUT ... 374 different individuals walked through the HND door, with a total (including revisits) of over 3000 visits. This has perhaps been the greatest joy of Dale's ministry as she sees how the HND changes lives.
- Christine Ruth's family counseling accounts for about half of those 3000 visits. Christine is an ELCA pastor and she says she feels she is doing more evangelism through her counseling than she ever has before
- The HND as evangelism: We wanted the HND to be evangelism, with people walking through the door who aren't necessarily walking through the doors to POP. Most all people who come to HND are, in fact, connected to a church, they come wanting to grow their faith in deeper ways ... and that is evangelism.
- Growing pains: The HND is now at a point where Dale is fully booked with programming and directees; she's finding it overwhelming to also handle administrative/cleaning tasks. It's a good problem to have but, looking forward, she will be looking at how to fund some support staff.
- Pastor Dale invited all to read the annual report to learn more about HND activities.

Minister of Music Remarks: Dr. Doug Helvering

- Doug noted that, as hard as it is to believe, they are in the middle of their 14th year at POP. The congregation has been such a blessing. The pandemic these last few years has been a struggle as we sought to continue to minister through music and liturgy. But we managed to find ways. Doug expressed his thanks for all the support and participation of everyone in the music ministry, the congregation, and the pastors. Doug is open to any input, so feel free to reach out to him.

Reports of the Ministry Teams: The Annual Report contains the various team reports. There were additional comments from Con Sweeney and Nancy Reyes:

- Con – Reconciling in Christ Task Force: We are working to expand our welcome to the LGBTIA+ community. What would change? Actually, not a lot. The ELCA is already mostly there as a denomination ... ahead of other denominations. But this will be a declaration of our intention. We are currently conducting one-on-one interviews to get the pulse of the congregation. We will continue to share updates as we move forward.
- Nancy Reyes – Racial Justice Team: First – thanks to all those that contributed \$5,155 Bishop's Challenge, well above the goal of \$3000. We are really trying to respond to what we are seeing on the streets and in our country. We'd really like to hear from the POP community regarding what people are seeing/experiencing. People are welcome to join the team, make use of lending library, and add comments to the cards in the books. If anyone has questions, feel free to talk to team members.

Approval of 2023 Spending Program of Ministry:

Eric Jorgensen reviewed the financial results for 2022, documented in the Annual Report.

- Details are in the report; Eric gave a high-level summary, noting that the middle column on p.24 shows income was higher than expected, while expenses were about as planned. The net result was a \$6K surplus at the end of the year, thanks to continued cell-tower income and greater-than-

expected building use. There were negative balances in maintenance and utilities; these were balanced out by underspending in other line items.

Eric then presented the 2023 Spending Plan.

- Expense assumptions: Team budgets were, by and large, fixed; a 2.5% increase in salaries was assumed, along with some increase in maintenance lines. There is no way to cut further on the expense side.
- Income assumptions: Member pledge results suggest less giving in the coming year (due to the loss of some families and reduced stewardship results). This has been a trend for several years, though actual giving has been fairly constant over those same years. It may just be that some aren't confident to pledge. It is also assumed that building-use income will drop some, as the Youth Orchestra will no longer be using our space. This assumption may prove to be overly pessimistic, as we may find others to use our space.
- Net result for 2023: A \$19K deficit is forecast; this is not a huge deficit, especially when viewed as \$6 per giving unit per week.
- Question: why is there no line item for the Peace Garden and Racial Justice? Response: the peace garden is supported outside the operating budget; racial justice appears as a line item under Outreach/Social Ministry.
- Eric concluded by expressing his appreciation to Martha Winder, Dorothy Safranek and all the other finance team members and counters.

A motion was made to accept the 2023 Spending Plan; the motion passed.

New Business:

The condition of the parking lot has prompted our insurance company to threaten to cancel our policy; Wendy negotiated with them to get us a few months so we can address this in the spring. Preliminary bids have ranged from \$40K to \$75K, depending on how much is involved. This is not part of the 2023 spending plan; council expects to cover the expense either through appeal/gifts or by obtaining a loan. In order to allow work on the lot to proceed promptly once we have a final estimate, the congregation council placed the follow motion on the floor: *to authorize the Church Council to arrange for funding up to \$75,000 dollars for fixing the parking lot. This could include, but is not limited to, donations and loans.* Discussion: Pastor Peter noted that the motion is really intended to eliminate the need for another congregational meeting, so we can address situation promptly when the time comes. Question: might it be more than \$75K, or as low as \$40K? Response: we need to get firmer bids that account for the actual condition of underlayer. Also, decreases in the price of oil in the coming months could have a significant impact. If the final estimate turns out to be greater than \$75K, we would have to call another meeting. Question: is any work needed for HND driveway? Response: no. Question: Might we want to extend the lot? Response: no; we would not be allowed to, as we've maxed out our pavement/land ratio. Note: Dutch Neck Presbyterian is also in the process of repaving their lot; they will provide guidance as they go through the process. The motion passed (with one voting against).

President Tim Gjenvick concluded the meeting with thanks to: Eric Jorgensen for 20+ years as finance chair; both Pastors (especially through the pandemic), POP for being so agreeable when some congregations were less so; Doug, the choir members and musicians for their contributions to our worship life; Geeta for being a friendly face plus her efforts to connect us to outside groups; Elizabeth Wagner for her work at POP plus being a board member of LIRS; and Charlie Frantz for his support on council (and his jokes).

The meeting closed with the congregation joining in the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
David New
Council Secretary

Special Congregational Meeting
October 29, 2023

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church held a special congregational meeting at the end of the 9:30 worship service where attendees voted on whether to adopt the Reconciled in Christ (RiC) Welcoming Statement, below, and become a Reconciled in Christ Congregation. There were 58 voting members of POP in attendance, so we had a quorum. The meeting was called to order by Tim Gjenvick. Joan New made a motion to approve the statement, which was seconded by Con Sweeney. There was no significant discussion. Several members made brief comments to the effect of “This is self-evident; let’s vote!” Paper ballots were distributed, collected, and counted. The vote to accept the RiC Welcoming statement passed by a wide margin: 61 voted “yes,” 6 voted “no,” and 1 abstained. The acceptance rate of 89% easily surpassed the required 2/3 majority.

Reconciling in Christ Welcoming Statement

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Princeton Junction, New Jersey commits to live as a community of people seeking reconciliation and wholeness in our life together and in our outreach to the world and to all of the beloved children of God.

We affirm the humanity and sacredness of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions so that all of God's beloveds can live lives to the Glory of God.

We commit to the work of anti-racism, liberation, social, and environmental justice so that all of God's beloveds can live lives free from these constraints and to the Glory of God.

We affirm the humanity and sacredness of all those who have experienced exclusion because of race, ability, age, or culture so that all of God's beloveds can experience inclusion to the Glory of God.

We affirm the humanity and sacredness of those who wrestle with addiction, physical or mental illness, imprisonment, difficult socio-economic circumstances, and reject that any of these struggles make us people who are not worthy of seeking the love of God. We welcome each and every person who is seeking God's love and grace. You, regardless of or because of these or other societal stigmas, are invited to join with us in the lifelong journey of practicing resurrection with gratitude and grace. You are needed and valued as without you we cannot truly be the body of Christ in and for the world.

The meeting closed with the congregation joining in the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Dave Herrington
Council Secretary

2024 Council Nominees

Michelle Conk

I joined Prince of Peace 27 years ago, just before Mike and I were married there. Having been raised in the Catholic faith, I felt an immediate affinity to both the POP congregation and the Lutheran service the very first time we attended Prince of Peace. I taught Sunday School for many years at POP and so enjoy working with children in any capacity. I have also served on the Board of Trustees for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK).

My background and passion have been in corporate training for the last forty (yikes!) years – first as a trainer, then as owner of a training company in Princeton and finally joining a national insurance brokerage as VP of Learning & Development in 2005 supporting a team of 2500 employees across the country. My role keeps me on a plane and traveling quite a bit, but I love the ever-changing landscape of my profession. My other great passion is baking, and I've been fortunate to turn that into a fulfilling dessert catering business that brings me great joy as well.

Ellen McBrearity

Ellen and her husband moved to the Princeton area six years ago from New Canaan, CT, which had been home for the previous 36 years. They were in Atlanta before that. Ellen was raised Lutheran and has served in almost every capacity in her home churches, except treasurer and choir member. Neither of those positions play to her skills, shall we say. Ellen was a stay-at-home mom and then entered the world of real estate sales as an empty nester, until her retirement. A member of POP since arriving in the Princeton area, she is currently a member of the Spiritual Formation team, and the Mutual Ministry Committee. She also served one year on the Communications Committee during the website redo. Her husband is a member of St. Paul's in Princeton. An avid reader, dog/nature lover, and a walker, she's a pretty good "Grammie" as well. Her immediate family, including two children, a son-in-law, three grandchildren, and two grand dogs are in the Princeton area – a true blessing.

Beth Leigh Mitchell

I joined Prince of Peace this past fall but have been attending PoP for about 2-3 years and HND programs for 6 years. I am a member of the Reconciling in Christ core team. I am a life-long Lutheran, Kingston resident (for 24 years), mother of two (my daughters are 17 and 20), wife (my husband, James and I have been married for 24 years), dog owner (we adopted our dog Janie after meeting her at a St Francis of Assisi pet blessing/pet fair), and attorney working for the State of New Jersey on contract matters (I have worked in for the State for 26 years). At my prior church I served as a member of worship and music and finance teams and as a Sunday school teacher.

Kathy Nowak

My husband, Greg, and I have been members of Prince of Peace since 1987 and raised our three sons in this congregation. In the early years I spent my time teaching Sunday School, organizing Vacation Bible School, chairing the Finance Team, as a member of the Worship and Music Team, and served as the administrative support person for the Imagine Campaign. From 2000 until my retirement in 2021, I was the Prince of Peace Parish Administrator. Currently, Greg and I manage the Racial Justice Library, serve on the Altar Guild, and will be maintaining the memorial garden come spring.

2024 Nomination Team Nominees

Janis Haddock

Janis has been a member of POP for 30 years. In addition to the brief time she served on Council, she has used her gifts in the area of Christian Education. She served as Sunday School director, VBS director, Confirmation teacher and Youth Group leader. She chaperoned many youth retreats and attended 2 National Youth gatherings. Janis has 3 sons who were all baptized and confirmed here at POP and has been married to Larry for 32 years. She is grateful for the relationships that she has made through POP and looks forward to serving in this new role should she be elected.

Dave Herrington

Dave Herrington has been a member of Prince of Peace since 1991, when he and his family moved into the area so that Nancy could be closer to Rutgers University where she was a student. Over the years Dave has worked with various teams at POP. He was Tidings Editor during the 1990's. He worked on the deployment of POP's very first website in 2001. Since 2016 Dave has been POP's Communications Team leader and during this time they deployed building-wide Wi-Fi, produced a photo directory and, along with a spirited group of volunteers, have been livestreaming our Sunday worship services. Before retiring in 2019 Dave worked for Princeton University for 44 years in various positions related to academic and administrative computing.

Peter Perkuhn

I would like to offer to be a member of the church council nominating committee. A PoP member since 2002, I have enjoyed being in the choir and participating in property work days and other church affiliated activities. I believe that having had a number of years working with issues, budgets and planning at PoP may allow me to contribute in finding candidates for council.

Wendy Schutzer

Thank you for considering me for a position on the Nominating Committee. I have been a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church since 1986. In my 38 years at the church, I have been involved in many aspects of church life. I have served on the Christian Education, Social Outreach, Fellowship and Property teams. I served as a member of the Church Council on three separate occasions. Currently, I am a co-chair of the Property Management & Maintenance Team, a member of the Nightingale Handbell Choir, and I assist with seasonal church decorating.

On a personal note, I am married to Michael Schutzer and we have 2 children. Brad and his wife live in New Providence, NJ. Johanna, her husband and two daughters live in Myrtle Beach, SC.

**Treasurer's Report
Year Ended December 31, 2023**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (POP) began 2023 with a Current Operating Fund balance (surplus) of \$2,874 and ended the year with a Current Operating Fund balance (surplus) of \$12,100. Operating Income for the year was \$432,162 and Expenditures totaled \$422,936 which resulted in a net change associated with income in excess of expenditures equal to \$9,226.

The primary liability of POP is a commercial mortgage on the church properties held by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. As of December 31, 2023, the outstanding mortgage balance is \$279,262. The term of the loan is twenty (20) years at a fixed interest rate of 4.24%, which is subject to an interest rate reset after ten (10) years. A restricted bank account with Thrivent (approximately \$7,700) is also required.

The congregation met our benevolence commitment to the wider church by contributing \$22,000 in mission support funds to the ELCA/New Jersey Synod. Additional 2022 mission support and benevolence giving, often the result of free will offering requests to the congregation, is summarized as follows:

Support of St. Bartholomew (Trenton)	\$	4,650
World Hunger	\$	2,149
Lutheran Social Ministries	\$	480
ELCA disaster relief responses	\$	500

Support of St. Bartholomew (Trenton) included donations to their operating fund, food pantry and other fund-raising efforts to support the local community. Additional contributions to support church ministries such as Spiritual Formation, the Peace Garden and the Labyrinth were also received in 2023.

As of December 31, 2023, POP has financial assets of \$1,692,564 and total financial liabilities of \$279,672.

Respectfully submitted,

Con P. Sweeney

Treasurer

Altar Guild

The ministry of the Altar Guild goes on behind the scenes, and, when all goes smoothly, is often unnoticed. The Altar Guild mission is to attend to everything that relates to the Altar. Our responsibilities include setting up and cleaning up for every service, polishing metals, making or purchasing new paraments, vestments and linens, replenishing supplies of bread, gluten-free wafers, wine, juice and candles, and participating in special rites like the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday.

A new tradition, established during the Covid-19 epidemic, is an outdoor service in the warmer months. Altar Guild continues to set up for this service. In 2023 we renewed the tradition of having a small luncheon for our members.

We discussed designs for a set of new altar paraments. Then, we welcomed our new white and gold paraments from Bramante Studios, for use during high seasons of the Church, such as Easter, Christmas, All Saint's Day, the Transfiguration, and Trinity Sunday. The abstract design was selected to complement PoP's modern architecture and to symbolize the Light of the World and the Easter sunrise. In addition, we added a new hallway banner reflecting prayers for Peace on Earth.

Highlights of 2023:

- 52 regular indoor Sunday worship services were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 9 special services, including Ash Wednesday, Christmas and Holy Week were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 31 outdoor Sunday worship services with communion were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 10 Joyful Noise youth worship services with communion were cared for by Altar Guild members.

Eight volunteers participated in 2023. Thank you to all the members of Altar Guild: *Leena Angel, Phyllis Church, Nancy Durie, Kathy Nowak, Shari Rexroad, Ginger Reiersen, Lisa Schott, and Martha Winder*. Our family members regularly help out; we are grateful to them! We also work closely with Wendy Schutzer, who coordinates plant orders and develops inspiring sanctuary decorations for our major Church seasons.

We are looking for new members; contact us after any service.

Please volunteer with our team to help in this important ministry.

Submitted by Nancy Durie

Building Use Team

The Building Use Team was created several years ago when POP discovered that the community had a need for space to meet and we had a need to provide this space. Over the past year we have had many groups utilize our space on a regular basis. These include the Turkish school, The Singapore Math Group, the Pranavam Dance School, and Power Speakers. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts hold meetings and events throughout the year and AA also continues to meet in person. We have provided space for summer camps for Instrumental Music Groups, Dance Groups and Math Camps. We have made our sanctuary available for many recitals and fundraisers for various causes and the Community Room used for special celebrations. POP is blessed to be able to provide so much to so many.

This year the team spent many hours creating and reviewing procedures, rules and regulations and setting up forms in order to smooth the process of booking the church for events. Recently, we removed the key lock from the double white doors and automated the lock. Outside users are now assigned a numeric code for their scheduled time at the church and therefore only have the ability to enter the church during their booked time. This was a great safety measure and removed the need to keep handing out keys and getting the keys back after usage. A special thanks to Dave Herrington who led this endeavor and continues to maintain the system!

Our church is currently booked Monday through Thursday evenings and every Saturday. Those using our facilities are always impressed by the rooms and are greatly appreciative of us for providing this space. We would not be able to do this without the help of many people. The Property team plays a huge role in keeping our facilities clean, the facilities usable and the equipment working – including replacing lightbulbs, light fixtures, and bathroom locks and adjusting thermostats throughout the church. Our Communication Team has been called on to provide electronics for certain events and Dave Herrington and Con Sweeney have stepped in several times.

If you are around the church while people are using it, take the opportunity to welcome them and learn more about their programs. We have been able to do what we do at POP because of their generous usage and donations.

Building Use Team –

Dave Herrington, Christian Oehm, Dorothy Safranek and Con Sweeney

Christian Education

Sunday Morning Adult Class

The congregation continues to support the Sunday morning Adult Forum. This past year we welcomed many guest teachers. As a part of becoming a Reconciling In Christ congregation our guest teachers were Pastor Serena Rice, Jamie Bruesehoff, Pastor Bruce Davidson, and our own Martin Rexroad. In January Beth Gephardt from Lutheran Social Ministries share the work this ministry partner is doing in New Jersey. In February our friend Francisco Herera led a session on the Augsburg Confession. In September Pastor Christine Ruth on House Next Door Sunday led a session on trauma. In November Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Dean Brown led a session on stewardship. We appreciated our own Rev Dr Paul Rorem for his occasional sessions enlightening the class on favorite Lutheran hymns. Also in the spring Pastor Peter and our field Ed student Daniel Marone led a session on the Pharisees. In the fall Pastor Peter led a series on Holy Currencies which also was our Stewardship theme this year. Finally in December Pastor Peter led a discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the outbreak of war in the Holy Land.

During Lent we look forward to our current Field Ed student Sara Manning leading a series on creation and ecology. As a part of this series Sara will lead a field trip to Princeton Seminary's Farminary in April. She will also lead a class on the Lutheran Diaconate to which she belongs.

Pastor Class

Pastor Peter continues to hold Pastor Class on various Wednesday evenings through the year. In the fall he led a four week discussion on The Book of Concord. He will continue this discussion later this spring. Pastor Class is an online zoom class to which all are invited.

Confirmation

Last year Prince of Peace partnered with Abiding Presence and St Bart's for confirmation instruction. We had three confirmands in the spring, Andrew Grimm, Emma Druckenbrod, and Diana Jorgensen. Currently we have two students in confirmation, Morrigan Clarke and Brody Moore. Pastor will be working individually with them. Both Morrigan and Brody will be attending the ELCA Youth Gathering this year in New Orleans. Pastor Peter and Pastor Dale will be in attendance.

Field Education

Daniel Marrone completed his Field Ed at Prince of Peace in April. In September Sara Manning became our Field Ed student. Sara has led worship and preached. She meets in supervision with Pastor Peter weekly. Sara will be teaching the Adult Class in the spring and will accompany pastor on pastoral care calls.

Pastor Peter

Communications/Digital Team

During the past year Prince of Peace's Communications Team has been performing these services on an ongoing basis:

- Maintaining POP's WiFi network
- Livestreaming worship services on Facebook
- Ongoing troubleshooting re more reliably providing the above service
- Copying worship service videos from Facebook to YouTube
- Maintaining POP's WordPress website, and monitoring it to ensure that it receives security patches on an ongoing basis
- Updating POP's website to reflect current information and activities
- Acting as software troubleshooters as needed
- Producing the monthly Tidings of Peace newsletter

Additionally, over the past year the Communication Team has run the following special projects:

- Investigated the cost of deploying digital signage at POP
- In cooperation with the Property and Building Use teams, successfully deployed a Wi-Fi connected digital smart lock on the outside door of the Community Wing

New for 2024

With the Council's current project to update POP's By-laws it has come to our attention that many of the activities undertaken last year by our so-called Communications Team more accurately fall under the purview of the long dormant Digital Team. (For more about this see articles B13.04 and B13.05 in the revised By-laws printed in this annual report.) Consequently, as of January 1, what was formerly called the Communications Team will be the Digital Team. Members of the Digital Team who have been performing functions more correctly aligned with the Communications Team will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. If you would like to join either the Communications or Digital teams, we would be delighted to have you! **Contact Dave Herrington for more information.**

POP Communications/Digital Team

Rich Carlson (Editor, Tidings of Peace)
Anil Chindha
Tim Gjenvick
Dave Herrington (Chair)
David Jeedi
Con Sweeney
Dan Ungar
Newman Wilson

**Finance Team
2023 Annual Report**

The Finance Team is responsible for maintaining the financial records of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (POP), making disbursements, recording income, interfacing with financial institutions, and handling all related financial matters that may arise.

The Finance Team's accomplishments for the year are:

- Prepared financial statements for each month of the year
- Paid all vendors and staff reimbursements
- Distributed congregants' contribution statements
- Recorded all funds received and deposited these into POP's bank account
- Began an audit of POP's financial records and processes under the direction of a retired CPA using the NJ Synod's audit guidelines
- Began to migrate POP's recordkeeping from QuickBooks to Icon Solutions thereby reducing costs, improving efficiencies, and permitting true fund accounting

In addition to its regular duties, the Finance Team will be doing the following in 2024:

- Complete the audit which is underway and present its findings to POP's council
- Complete the Icon Solutions migration
- Update financial statements
- Introduce quarterly financial reporting to the congregation
- Documenting POP's financial procedures
- Securing a separate and secure workspace for the Finance and Property Teams' records
- Providing financial management support to the House Next Door (HND)
- Start the annual spending plan preparation earlier

Finance Team: Phil Herrington, Greg Nowak, Dorothy Safranek, Con P. Sweeney, Martha Winder

Parish Care Team

Parish Care is caring for each other in our Church Family and Community. We offer care/support in times of joy, sorrow, when there are concerns or worries, there is a need for someone to listen or just because. Through our caring actions we hope to make all feel welcomed by our church family - no matter what is happening in their lives. Through our care we renew our relationship with God and Jesus and we can then go out into the community and share the good news with others as Joyful Disciples Living the Faith.

We show our care in many different ways.

- Assist with daily needs: provide rides, meals, send notes, make phone calls, visit those that cannot get here.
- Communicate with our community: mail materials on spiritual and development growth for newborns and dealing with grief, provide Care Notes, mail advent calendars and Valentine Day Care Boxes to young adults away at school and Valentine Bags to our Senior citizens not able to get out, mail Sunday bulletin to homebound members, make periodic visits to those that cannot get to church on Sundays. Provide greeting cards and calendars to local senior residences.
- Provide for Special Events: Memorial/funeral services and receptions, graduations, weddings, and installations. For funeral receptions we provide a space where folks can gather with family and friends to remember and for some nourishment for the body along with support for all those grieving.
- Provide prayer cards and knitted prayer pocket squares.
- Taking the time to greet, welcome and get to know the folks in our church family.
- 2024 Calendars and greeting cards were gathered and distributed to 7 local senior living facilities

All of these things tell all, that they are important members of our family and loved by GOD.

There are many folks to thank for their service to this ministry. I would like to mention just a few:

- Ginger Reiersen and Chris Wethe for their continued care for our Care Notes display in the breezeway.
- Many thanks to the many others that contribute their time and talents, funds, items, home baked goodies for Valentine Day Care Package project and those provided meals and soup as needed.
- The Joyful Knitters for keeping our prayer squares well stocked.

Without your generous support we would not be able to reach so many.

We would like to invite all to join our ministry. We have a few specific and many open-ended projects, and a need for an "on-call" team of providers.

***Respectively submitted,
Martha Winder***

Peace and Cherry Tree Gardens

The Peace Garden, located behind the House Next Door, and the Cherry Tree Garden, located behind the Community Room and named for the preschool for which it was first started, produced about 800 pounds of fresh vegetables and herbs to donate to St. Bart's in 2023! This included kale, collard greens, peppers, tomatoes, green onions, potatoes, peppers (hot and not), lettuce, green beans, okra, parsley, fennel, basil, oregano, garlic, turnips and even figs to name just a few! Some weeks there were even cut flowers for the grateful recipients in Trenton. The food went quickly and was much appreciated, which made it all worthwhile! Thank you to POP for covering the not-insignificant cost of water as the church has done since the Peace Garden was begun in 2014.

We are also grateful for the volunteers who worked once or twice a week to plant, harvest, pack, and deliver fresh food to those in need. Our season started with more volunteers than when it ended, but God provided as needed! Lois and Dave Case put in many hours before moving.. Community volunteer Fran Lalka helped early in the season. POP members Liz Zarillo and Varshini Kaki answered the call for more help later in the season. Berta Schott, Shari Rexroad, and Nancy Reyes kept the gardens throughout the season.

Two special volunteers coordinated what to plant and where. In 2022, Laura Poethke, member of an ELCA congregation in the Burlington area, asked if she could help at POP to learn more. She soon began coordinating much of the Cherry Tree Garden and gardened with the children in the nursery school at St. Barts. With that experience, she will be leaving us to start a new food pantry, garden and related programs at her own church. We are so grateful for the time, effort, and skills she shared with us for the past two years!

Last but certainly not least, "our" Master Gardener, Hightstown resident Nancy Nicosia, will be retiring from POP's gardens after more than 20 years of volunteering here. Nancy started the Cherry Tree Garden years ago and was there for us from the beginning of the Peace Garden, putting in countless hours throughout the years, not just twice a week. She's also been doing most of the drives to Philadelphia to get free plants and materials from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. We will sorely miss her dedication and expertise at POP's gardens.

Shari Rexroad completed Master Gardener training this year and has generously agreed to manage POP's vegetable gardens so has started learning the ropes from Nancy Nicosia. Since the number of volunteers already dropped in 2023, we'll need LOTS more volunteers in 2024! (We can no longer get donations from PHS unless we have volunteers to do those Philly trips.)

Gardening will resume in March and we'll need volunteers—no experience necessary - to help for a few hours once or twice a week, whenever you can, through October.

Please contact POP liaison Nancy Reyes or Master Gardener Shari Rexroad to volunteer.

Submitted by Nancy Reyes, liaison

Property Management and Maintenance Team

In 2022, the Property Management and Maintenance (PMM) Team was established as distinct from the Building Use Team. The following is a summary of what the PMM team was involved in over the course of 2023.

January

Messick Plumbing was brought in to resolve an issue with the sewer drain. The plumber determined that a drain cap had fallen off one of the pipes in the side yard near the road causing a blockage in the sewer drain piping. The sewer drain piping was cleaned with snaking equipment to clear out any clogs and a new drain cap was installed to prevent anything from getting inside.

Verizon resolved an issue with the phone system involving a faulty port.

February

Pastor Peter Froehlke, Tim Gjenvick, Wendy Schutzer, and Sean Cuddahy met with Joe Gallagher, who had been the previous caretaker of the church property – devoting many years of voluntary service to ensure Prince of Peace was always well maintained. The meeting took place on February 16. The purpose of the meeting was to educate the PMM team on the specifics surrounding property matters including contracts, vendors used, and historical maintenance work. As an outcome of this meeting the PMM team was able to compile a spreadsheet with information related to building systems, annual inspections, and contracts for each of the vendors Prince of Peace uses for property maintenance and repairs. With the help of Joe Gallagher, the PMM Team was also able to obtain a number of key construction drawings of the buildings and site.

March

Candelori Electric came to resolve a lighting issue in the sanctuary which required the use of a lift.

April – May

After successfully raising \$56,700 in funds through donations, Frank Harrison Paving was contracted to repave the church parking lot. All of the work was completed by the beginning of May. This included the entire parking lot being repaved and restriped, filling in all of the pot holes, relocating the handicap parking to be adjacent to the sidewalk, and correcting some of the drainage issues. Later in August, the handicap signs were permanently moved.

Messick Plumbing was called back to Prince of Peace for another sewer issue. They were able to fix the issue, but it was determined that there is a problem with the piping near the connection with the sewer main on 571 that will need to be addressed in the long term. This will require the involvement of the West Windsor Sewer Authority. Messick Plumbing prepared a detailed report for use by the PMM Team.

August

Wendy Schutzer met with Bud Lochen, the custodian for Prince of Peace. It was a productive meeting that allowed for a better understanding of the cleaning services currently being provided, and the types of cleaning services that pose a particular challenge at this church. The custodian was asked to provide pricing on some overdue tasks (carpet cleaning, floor cleaning, etc.). He also was asked to provide pricing on additional weekly cleaning for the Old Wing which is to be done on Saturdays.

The West Windsor Township Health Department performed its annual inspection of the facilities.

The gutters and downspouts were replaced with wider gutters to better handle the runoff from the roofs during a rainstorm. Great Heights Roofing and Siding was contracted to do this work.

September

The electrician from Tafrow Electric replaced the timer on one of the water heaters, as well as installing a new timer for the building flood lights that serve the parking lot. The electrician also did a walk through of the property providing pricing for other repairs and improvements being considered by the PMM Team.

October – November

Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy met with Pastor Peter Froehlke to further define property management and maintenance responsibilities at POP. It was determined that 7 areas required oversight. Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy will focus on the church building as well as the House Next Door. Additional volunteers will assist in managing the other 5 areas – with Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy providing overall leadership to the group. Below is the list of the 7 areas and the volunteers who have agreed to provide oversight:

1. Prince of Peace (Church Proper) – Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy
2. The House Next Door (HND) – Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy
3. Outdoor Chapel – Nancy Durie
4. Memorial Garden – Kathy Nowak
5. Peace Garden – Nancy Reyes
6. Labyrinth – Nancy Herrington
7. Tree of Life Chapel – Nancy Herrington

In October Bud Lochen was authorized to proceed with the additional cleaning of the church carpets (minus the Sanctuary carpets). In November he cleaned and polished the Narthex floor.

A tree fell adjacent to the children's playground. Princeton Tree Service was brought in to remove it. The cause of the tree falling over was due to carpenter ants damaging the roots of the tree. Princeton Tree Service did an assessment of the other trees on the property while they were on site and made some additional recommendations of work that should be done. The PMM Team is evaluating this.

Other Projects Undertaken by PMM Volunteers

Several small but important projects were addressed by the PMM volunteers over the course of the year:

- New locked thermostat covers were installed over the thermostats in the Community Room and Old Wing hallway. The thermostats were programmed based on the current use of the building.
- The St. Barts donation boxes were redistributed for cleanliness and insect purposes. One box was kept at the Community Room entrance with the remainder of the boxes being relocated to the shed in the back of the property. A sign was posted at the Community Room entrance directing people to the shed for any overflow.
- A new hook was installed on one of the Women's bathroom doors.
- New trash cans were purchased for the bathrooms.
- New lids were purchased for the large trash cans in the Community Room.
- Laminated signs were posted around the building to assist users of the building.

- The two faucets in the kitchen were replaced.
- The broken refrigerator was removed from the kitchen.
- In the corridor, a hole in the drywall made by a door swinging into the wall was repaired. A doorstop was also installed to prevent this from happening in the future.
- Some repairs were made to the sidewalk bollards.
- The outside door lock of the Community Room was replaced with a new digital lock so physical keys will not have to be issued to outside building users. They will be issued digital access codes that can be revoked when their usage contracts expire.

Looking Forward to 2024 and Beyond

2023 gave the PMM Team an opportunity to identify a number of potential projects that are in need of being done. In 2024, a priority of the PMM Team will be to confer with POP leadership and other church representatives to determine what repairs and improvements are to be supported in the coming year.

It is anticipated that some repair and cleaning tasks identified will be able to be completed by volunteers. Other repairs will require engaging outside professional services. This will be carefully evaluated and prioritized based on need. Consideration will be given as to whether the work is able to be deferred to 2025 and beyond – or must be addressed in 2024.

As part of this effort, the PMM Team would like to restart “Work Days” for 2024 – perhaps 2 days per year. This would give church members the ability to assist in addressing minor cleaning and repairs that need to be done.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Schutzer and Sean Cuddahy

The PPM Team

Sean Cuddahy
 Nancy Durie
 Bob Durie
 Nancy Herrington
 Dave Herrington
 Joan Prins
 Peter Perkuhn
 Kathy Nowak
 Nancy Reyes
 Wendy Schutzer

Racial Justice Team

In 2023 POP's Racial Justice Team continued to lead Prince of Peace toward a better understanding of various marginalized racial and cultural groups treated unjustly in our country so that we can recognize our complicity and become better advocates for justice by:

- Sponsoring Speaker Shirley Satterfield, Princeton historian and founder of Witherspoon-Jackson Historical and Cultural Society to share the Black History of Princeton
- Organizing a Black History Walking Tour of Princeton using Witherspoon Jackson Historical and Cultural Society's Self-Guided Heritage Tour
- Advertising/representing POP at WHAM Interfaith Worship for MLK Day and Juneteenth
- Advertising/supporting Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM)
- Adding a Land Acknowledgement, recognizing that here in NJ we are on Lenni Lenape land, to POP's weekly bulletins and website
- Sponsoring program ad and trip to Nanticoke Lenape 42nd Annual PowWow
- Continuing displaying orange banner in sanctuary for 225 days and later in POP's narthex to honor and pray for Indigenous children killed in residential schools
- Providing Weekly Meditations read during Lenten worship on Indigenous needs and injustice (THANK YOU, Nancy Herrington!)
- Enhancing and expanding POP's Free Racial Justice Lending Library with relevant book donations from team and congregants
- Increasing number and recognition of Banned Books in library including Pastor Froehlke's Banned Book Club focused on 1619
- Gratefully welcoming our new volunteer librarians (THANK YOU, Kathy and Greg Nowak!)
- Submitting monthly newsletter articles sharing highlights of meetings, advertising upcoming opportunities and inviting participation in our work for racial justice
- Submitting monthly newsletter articles delving deeply into cultural holidays and traditions to educate the congregation (THANK YOU, Con Sweeney!)
- Supporting Pastor Froehlke's Adult Forums and Pastor's Classes such as Israel-Gaza history and suggested other racial justice topics and ELCA sponsored curricula
- Posting "Love Thy Neighbor" banner and signs as antisemitic and Islamophobic hate increased

Team members also represented POP, sharing their learning with the team

- by attending workshops by ELCA NJ Synod and ELCA in other parts of the country
- as active members of local and state-wide civic, religious, and educational organizations such as NJ Synod Anti-Racism Team and Justice Groups, NIOT, PPBC, Second Chance NJ, and FaithNJ which are working for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Racial Justice
- by attending conferences exploring possibilities for reaching out to Hispanic neighbors
- by reaching out to local activists and Rev. Sara Lilja regarding affordable housing issues and legislation to investigate related advocacy
- by attending various workshops and webinars on many other justice issues and
- by dedicating time in monthly meetings to discuss the various cultures within the Asian
- diaspora and related issues to increase our understanding so we can advocate against

- Anti-Asian incidents

POP's Racial Justice Team meets on Zoom on the first Tuesday of every month from 7-8:30 and is always looking for new members as well as suggestions and related concerns. To join our team and/or email list, contact Nancy Reyes at 609-273-1239 or nancyauerreyes@gmail.com

Submitted by Nancy Reyes, chair

Stewardship

The stewardship team's primary responsibility is to arrange and lead the fall stewardship emphasis. The culmination of the emphasis is the in-gathering of financial pledges for the next calendar year. These are utilized by the finance team to build the spending plan. Thank you to everyone who was able to submit a pledge.

2023's emphasis was **Circle of Blessings - Holy Currencies**

Holy Currencies are flowing here at Prince of Peace! Pastor Peter talked about them in sermons and at Adult Forum - Time & Place, Gracious Leadership, Relationships, Truth, Wellness, and Money. Prince of Peace is a thriving congregation of disciples when all these currencies are flowing and for the most part they are flowing well.

Thank you to all who responded with financial commitments for 2024 to our Holy Currencies Stewardship emphasis.

God is Good! All the time!

Joan New, Arundel Clarke, and Pastor Froehlke

Reconciling in Christ Team

We affirm the humanity and sacredness of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions so that all of God's beloveds can live lives as God created them and to the Glory of God.

2023 was the Reconciling in Christ's (RiC) first full year of activity. It's accomplishments for the year are:

- Led the congregation to adopt a welcoming statement and to become a formal, participating congregation in the ELCA's Reconciling in Christ program which has been since 1983 a public way for faith communities to see, name, and celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. This occurred at a congregational meeting on Reformation Sunday, October 27th
- Interviewed congregants to determine POP's receptivity to joining RiC and to address any questions or concerns
- Digitally surveyed the congregation to measure its willingness to participate
- Several team members participated in the Lutheran Youth Ministry's *Faith, Hope, and Love: Building Safer & More Welcoming Congregations for LGBTQ+ Youth* workshop at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in April
- Two members attended in March an event at the Princeton Theological Seminary hosted by the Gender and Sexuality Association for Seminarians
- Invited LGBTQIA+ advocates in for sessions with the congregation to explain the need for RiC. These speakers included Jamie Brusehoff, Pastor Bruce Davidson, Donald Maher, and Jesse Hershberger
- Arranged a pulpit swap with Pastor Serena Rice of Abiding Peace Lutheran Church to allow her to preach on RiC
- Invited Pastor JJ Simpson-Keelan of Living Waters Lutheran Church to speak in 2024. Paster JJ, in turn, has invited the team to come and speak about POP's journey to RiC in the New Year
- Guided the creation of the RiC team's initial webpage on POP's website
- Team made themselves available after services during fellowship to answer questions or provide information
- Sponsored a fellowship session in September and conducted a workshop for God's Work, Our Hands
- Provided information on POP's Facebook page
- Lisa Schott conducted a Temple Talk in August on the importance of RiC
- An information board was placed in the narthex to provide updates on the team's activities
- Team met weekly and followed the RiC program for how to become an official member
- Working on a program of communication, outreach, and education for 2024

Reconciling in Christ Team: Pastor Peter Froehlke, Tim Gjenvick, Beth Mitchell, Joan New, Lisa Schott, Con P. Sweeney

Social Outreach Team

Our Mission: To encourage, stimulate, and lead our disciples at Prince of Peace to reach out to the community, state, synod, and the world. To identify, understand, and minister with Christian faith, love, and compassion to the needs of others.

2023 has continued to necessitate developing creative and safe ways to carry out our outreach ministries because of Covid 19. We have been working together with other teams, the House Next Door, the Council, and the pastors to provide ways to use our gifts, our time, and our compassion to address social, emotional, educational, and physical needs, and justice issues of those in our community and beyond. Here are some of the ways the Social Outreach Ministry Team has supported and facilitated these efforts:

* On-going support of our sister congregation, St. Bartholomew (St. Bart's) by supplying groceries, clothing, and small household items for them to distribute to the community around them, although they can no longer distribute clothing because they don't have enough volunteers. During the growing season, over 800 pounds of fresh organic vegetables and herbs went to them to distribute from the Peace and Cherry Tree Gardens. During August, Prince of Peacers donated 29 full backpacks to be given to school children, and on Halloween, several folks worked at their Trunk or Treat event, giving out candy, some of which came from Prince of Peace. For Thanksgiving, we donated 30 turkeys and hams for their Thanksgiving baskets. Monetary gifts have also been given.

* Offerings during the Wednesday Advent and Lenten services were given to support ELCA World Hunger, as were the donations through the envelopes that were provided with your regular offering envelopes.

* Supporting Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSM/NJ) in several ways, including supplying 20 bags of groceries and several grocery gift cards for their Easter Food Drive and providing the money to fulfill the Christmas gift wishes of 20 children. In January, Beth Gebhart, director of many of their outreach ministries, spoke at an Adult Forum on the ongoing work of LSM/NJ.

* Responding to specific requests as they arose.

Thank you for your ministry in these and so many other ways. The love of Christ shines through you and your generosity as we build relationships with each other and those in need. If you would like to serve on the Social Outreach Ministry Team, you would be most welcome. Let Berta Schott or one of the pastors know.

Your Social Outreach Ministry Team,

Berta Schott, Dave New, Nancy Herrington, Nancy Reyes, and Susan Crossen

Statistical Summary

Disciples received in 2023:

Beth Mitchell
Anul and Varshini Chindha, and Mimi
Dunja Salhezaki, and Aurora
Stephanie Moore, and Brody
Phil Herrington
Wayne Daughtrey

Disciples Removed 4

No Baptisms in 2023

Confirmation

Andrew Grimm
Diana Jorgensen
Emma Druckenbrod

Funerals

Bob Reieron
Joe Gonzalez
Len Krauskopf

Disciples

2022: 276

2023: 282

Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice. Read stories and learn more at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America