St. Luke Lutheran Church
2024-2025 Ministry Plan

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Introduction

St. Luke has been in a vacancy condition since the end of April 2022. The staff, leadership, and church members have worked hard to ensure that St. Luke has not stalled in its mission focus during this vacancy period. We have much to celebrate as we look back on the 2023-24 ministry year.

- We celebrate the fact that, on average, our in-person worship attendance numbers have been stable.
- We celebrate guests who continue to visit our services and engage in ministries. Nearly every Sunday, people enter St. Luke's ministry sphere for worship and Bible study. We celebrate the opportunities God has given us to impact the larger community.
- We celebrate healthy Bible studies that promote community and personal development. I'm grateful to volunteer teachers and facilitators who worked hard to make our Adult Bible Classes safe places for growth and community.
- We celebrate youth and children getting involved in the worship service. The elders have prioritized including children and youth in service positions during the worship services. Younger children were recruited to assist with the candle lighting, and teens have been assisting with communion distribution and reading the lessons. Youth have been added to the worship team for the late service.
- We celebrate the mission work that occurred through our members and partner ministries. Last year, our congregation helped the homeless shelter fill the gaps created when several congregations could no longer assist with the homeless ministry by hosting the homeless shelter for two weeks. Allen and his team of volunteers not only provided a warm, safe place for the homeless in the cold of winter, but they also sought to bring them dignity and demonstrate true community by hosting special meals, inviting the homeless to enjoy casual conversation in the evenings while playing board games or watching movies.
- We celebrate the poverty alleviation work of Circles, which meets in our building every Tuesday evening. Circles is not an official ministry of St. Luke. However, many of its volunteers are members of our congregation, and our church supports the work of Circles by providing them space, gathering donations for their work, and encouraging individuals to volunteer as circle partners.
- We extended our mission work beyond our community through quarterly mission projects. We celebrate the Quarterly Missions and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) volunteers, who organized several mission projects for our members. Through the work of our staff, the LWML, and other volunteers, our members not only had the opportunity to make donations in support of the mission projects, but they also had opportunities to engage in hands-on activities in support of the mission work.
- We celebrate the many individuals who have stepped into our worship arts team to assist with the technology, the worship band, and the vocal positions. We are grateful for those who stepped out of the comfort zone to answer the call for volunteers to assist in the worship services.

Overview

It is said that the greatest challenge a marathon runner faces is the mental game of keeping hope alive in the face of the pain of the run. In many respects, we are like that runner, running a marathon race. We cannot see the destination, we face many difficulties and disappointments, and yet we must not lose hope. God is using this period of testing to strengthen us and prepare us for greater ministry opportunities. We have had a number of Senior Pastor Calls returned, but we cannot allow ourselves to be discouraged. We know that God will make the connections that He desires for us. We have faced staff reductions, both in number and in the hours of service provided. It is to the credit of our volunteers and the determination of the staff that we have largely not noticed the reductions. We cannot let the reductions rob us of hope. God is preparing us for greater things.

Challenges

At the risk of sounding like a broken record or a song stuck in the loop mode, this year's challenges differ little from last year's. While it is rare to have people return to a congregation once they decide to leave, I hoped we would see some return. Unfortunately, we find ourselves a significantly smaller congregation than just three years ago. Most distressing, our losses were largely among the young families in our congregation. Our children and youth programs continue to struggle due to the lack of numbers.

St. Luke's facilities are aging and in need of significant maintenance. We are in need to replace the parking lot, the main projector in the sanctuary, and several HVAC systems that are not functioning properly. A newly instituted regulation requires that we invest nearly $60,000.00 in elevator upgrades within the next two years. The laundry list of maintenance and upgrade needs can be overwhelming.

Unfortunately, our list of challenges would not be complete without discussing our current financial constraints. First, the members of St. Luke have been and continue to be very generous in their support of our ministry. Yet, the funds we have received in a general offering year-to-date through April represent a 5% decline from the previous year. The following chart provides an overview of our contributions received in calendar years 2019 through 2023:

General Fund	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
Annual Giving	# of Units	% of Ttl Donated	# of Units	% of Ttl Donated	# of Units	% of Ttl Donated	# of Units	% of Ttl Donated	# of Units	% of Ttl Donated
$100 or Less	39	0%	20	0%	19	0%	21	0%	17	12%
>$100 to $1K	54	3%	43	2%	30	2%	32	2%	29	20%
>$1K to $5K	74	20%	63	20%	70	22%	62	21%	51	35%
>$5K to $10K	37	29%	35	31%	36	34%	32	31%	30	20%
>$10K to $15K	16	23%	15	23%	9	14%	13	21%	12	8%
>$15K to $20K	8	16%	6	12%	8	16%	5	12%	4	3%
>$20K	3	9%	4	12%	4	12%	4	13%	4	3%
Grand Total	231	100%	186	100%	176	100%	169	100%	147	100%

Ave per unit:	$3,840.83	$4,435.56	$4,632.10	$4,352.97	$4,627.13

The decline in giving is largely representative of our congregation's current size. Nonetheless, if we do not see a marked improvement, we will face some very difficult decisions regarding a reduced budget projection and reconfigured staff in the coming months. Please do not hear the previous statements as a rebuke or an attempt to lay guilt for your decisions regarding giving. St. Paul wrote, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

Opportunities

We cannot miss that God has placed before our congregation many opportunities. While aging, our facilities are highly valued by the community. St. Luke has served the community by providing shelter for the homeless, gathering spaces for those seeking mutual support to fight against addictions, classrooms, dining spaces for families with children, seniors gathering in mutual support, and many different types of groups that fall between the two. These gatherings create outreach opportunities. St. Luke has a rich history of entrepreneurial missionaries, from founding MOST by congregational members to gathering coats in the fall. Often, St. Luke's most engaging mission work is done when God's people see a need in their community and respond. We want to celebrate God working through these everyday missionaries and equip, empower, and encourage all to recognize their call to be missionaries in their everyday mission environment, reaching out so that Christ might restore. A final opportunity that we can celebrate is the mission field around us. Our congregation is centered on a rich mission field opportunity. Our facilities are located near large pockets of people struggling to survive financially. We are near large communities of immigrants, many of whom have been unwillingly displaced from their homes and communities. Our proximity to two universities, massive medical facilities, and the county sheriff's office could provide opportunities for strategic partnerships with the types of organizations that historically were the centers of the church's mission field.

The 2024-2025 Ministry Plan

As with last year, this ministry plan is organized around the ministry health framework, which is comprised of four processes: connecting, engaging, growing, and sending.

Connecting

Our ministry plan includes the following Congregation-wide Community Connections:

- Quarterly Mission Project: God has used St. Luke's resources to bless unique mission projects in our community. However, we can do more. We can do more to be engaged in the mission work as not silent projects. In the coming ministry year, we will select at least 50% of our quarterly mission projects based on the opportunity provided for our members to be involved in the mission work of the organization. We believe this shift will ensure that the quarterly projects are a win-win for all involved.
  - We anticipate receiving $6,400.00. Frequency: 4 per year

- Low-threshold youth events (more fun-focused to invite friends too): We will connect with youth who do not have a church home by providing at least two low-threshold youth events like ultimate frisbee and Nerf Wars. These events are intended to be easy entry points for students to invite friends.
  - Budget Impact: $0
- Pizza Dinners for Glencoe Hills: We will offer a weekly pizza dinner for residents in our neighboring apartment complex, Glencoe Hills. This will be an opportunity to seek the stories of our neighbors.
  - Budget impact: $0 – The SLC has earmarked $2,500 from this year's external mission excess to use for this mission opportunity.

Engaging

Engaging those who gather for worship and fellowship strengthens connections with Jesus and each other. The primary goals of our worship services can be captured in three words, inspiration, testimony, and care. Engaging activities extend beyond the sanctuary; they are our actions toward one another as we live in a community. The congregation's gatherings are not the place for passive spectators. God calls all of us to encourage each other.

- Goals for the traditional Worship service:
  - We will continue to develop our liturgical service that embraces the rich history of our Liturgical roots.
  - We will seek to increase special music and choir involvement in the early service.
- Goals for the contemporary Worship service:
  - We are seeking to add a full-time or part-time worship team leader to assist with our worship arts program. The individual will serve in both services, with a focus on the late service. In addition to playing a primary instrument for the service, the individual will prioritize recruiting and developing musicians for the worship team.
  - We continue to recruit instrumentalists and vocalists for the late service.
- Goals for the Worship Arts Media Team:
  - We will continue to add individuals to the media team. The media team volunteers operate the A/V equipment for the services and ensure that we can livestream an engaging worship service.

    Measures of Success
    - Add four more individuals to the back of house media team.
    - Offer media/sound training twice in the ministry year.
  - Adding instrumentalist and vocalist for the late service.

Measures of Success

- We will add at least two more instrumentalist to our team.
- We will add at least four additional vocalist to the worship arts team.

– Preparing six special music pieces for each service this year.

Measures of Success

- We will include at least six special music pieces in each service.

- Youth-Led Easter Pancake Breakfast
  - The youth will hold an Easter Pancake Breakfast between worship services to help strengthen relationships among our St. Luke membership.
  - Budget impact: none…food will be donated by congregation members
- Congregational Christmas Event: Sue Regner will lead an intergenerational Christmas event to help strengthen relationships amongst our St. Luke membership.
  - Budget impact: $300
- Church Picnic
  - Budget impact: $500
- Children's church during the late church.- The spiritual development of our children is a significant priority for St. Luke. While we emphasize the parents' role of raising their children in the faith, St. Luke partners in their work through our Children's Church. This opportunity allows students in our Sheepfold program to experience age-appropriate components during our Living Praise worship service.
  - Budget impact- $2,500.00
- Summer Intergenerational Experiences: We will hold 4 evening intergenerational experiences called LIFT (Living in Faith Together) which will be comprised of the following components: sharing a potluck dinner (Breaking Bread Together), enjoying fellowship (Playing Together), worshipping (Praying Together), and studying the Bible (Studying God's Word Together).
  - Budget impact: $50
- Volunteer Development: As St. Luke's staffing has changed, it has become clear that we need to develop our members to use their gifts to further the ministries at St. Luke. We will seek to increase volunteerism in areas including, but not limited to, worship service teams, fellowship, communications, and building care.
  - Budget Impact: $0

- The fellowship team will plan and implement a variety of community building events. The team will explore ways to demonstrate hospitality and support to members and guests.
  - Estimated budget impact: $0.00

  Measures of Success
  - Three fellowship events.
  - One of the three events will have the focus to increase fellowship with each other and the community.
  - Increase the fellowship team size by 10%.

- Last year a couple of members introduced doughnuts as a part of our Sunday morning hospitality. While the initial cost was largely covered by the donations of generous members, we are including the cost for their purchase in our budget to demonstrate our value of brothers and sisters in Christ breaking bread, or dunking doughnuts together.
  - Estimated budget impact: $7,500.00

Growing

A healthy congregation is a congregation forming the membership to live out their faith in their everyday community. Currently, our congregation has divided its formation processes according to age groupings: adult, youth, and children. The adult growth opportunities include Sunday morning Bible Classes, Homegroups, Special focus study groups, and Adult Education.

- Adult Education: We will provide 3 adult education opportunities on Sunday morning. Our adult education strategy may also include parent seminars, faith milestones, adult confirmation, and training opportunities for those serving in the church. We will strive to increase participation in our Sunday morning adult education program by 10%. We will strive to offer an adult confirmation program (new member class) at least three times in the coming ministry year.
  - Estimated budget impact: $920.00

- LifeLight: Offer 3 units of our in depth LifeLight Bible study
  - Estimated budget impact: $80

- Married People ministry: We will continue our yearlong married people strategy that consistently seeks to strengthen marriages. Included components will be:
  - Date nights
  - Babysitting reimbursements: We will reimburse participants for their babysitting expenses to encourage parents to go on dates to promote healthy marriages.
  - Small group study
  - 1-2 large group events
  - Estimated budget impact: $1,900

- Sheepfold: Our children will continue to be shepherded by loving and caring leaders during weekly Sheepfold classes.

- Estimated budget impact: $708

- Youth Group: Junior and Senior high students will continue to be provided with youth Bible study and fellowship opportunities.
  - Estimated budget impact: $860

- LCMS Youth Gathering: We will participate in the triennial LCMS Youth Gathering, in New Orleans, LA.
  - Estimated Budget Impact: $0

- Confirmation: Family-based confirmation will help parents and students experience the catechism as a family and encourage discussion.
  - Estimated budget impact: $40

- Two Youth Retreats: We take a yearly youth retreat to help our students “get away” from the everyday stressors of life and focus more fully on God. One will be in South Haven, MI, focusing on discipleship, and the other is TBD
  - Estimated budget impact: $850

- Women’s Retreat: We will provide a women’s retreat this upcoming year. At this time, we are unsure whether it will be an offsite or an onsite retreat.
  - Estimated budget impact: $300

- Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML): The LWML is a women’s group that meets regularly to study God’s Word and organize fundraising initiatives for mission work around the world.
  - Estimated budget impact: $100

Sending

Our goal as a congregation is to send people out into their everyday mission environment so that as we reach Christ restores.

- MULTIPLI: Multipli trains the People of God (1 Peter 2:9) to create and lead new communities where anyone can discover Jesus. Jesus never meant for the formal church to be the only ones to share Jesus and make disciples. Multipli believes that God’s mission of going and making disciples can be led by ALL of His people. St. Luke’s goal is to send at least 2 people through the 9-month training program and cover half of their registration fees.
  - Budget impact: $500

- Kids Hope USA: Kids Hope USA is a national organization that helps churches partner with public schools to provide mentoring relationships to at-risk children. With our larger number of retired parishioners, this ministry would provide a great way for them to use their time and skills to mentor the younger generation. We will launch this partnership in September 2023

   – Budget impact: $1,350

- Congregational international mission trip: We will explore the possibility of holding an international mission trip this coming fiscal year.
   – Budget impact: $0
- POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach) ESL Classes: We will begin a partnership with POBLO to offer ESL classes at St. Luke and identify a lay coordinator to head up this ministry.
   – Budget impact: $0

2024-2025 Proposed Budget

Fiscal Year Ending in 2024 Budget Review

Below is the budget approved by the St. Luke's Voters' Meeting on June 26, 2023. It is for the fiscal year ending 2024 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024).

Category	Approved	Actual – YTD April 2024
General Offerings	$686,000.00	$554,398.77
Specific Ministries	$11,395.00	$15,788.88
Other Income	$64,494.00	$60,809.57
Total Income	$761,889.00	$630,997.22
Personnel	$372,651.40	$246,773.59
Ministry:	$29,415.00	$15,444.69
Admin:	$54,419.58	$44,328.69
Building:	$264,628.28	$218,803.94
Missions:	$79,995.00	$71,228.75
Total Expenses:	$801,109.26	$596,579.66
Total Net Operating Income:	$-39,220.26	$34,417.56

Budget Project 2024-2025

Category	Proposed FYE2025 Budget
Projected Income	
General Envelopes	$723,800.00
Specific Ministries	$11,135.00
Other Income	$74,812.00
Total Projected Income	$809,747.00
Projected Expenses	
Personnel	$430,746.02
Ministry	$30,353.00
Admin	$54,116.12
Building	$267,132.40
Missions	$83,515.00
Total Expenses	$865,862.54

Budget Projection for 2025	
Total Projected Income	$809,747.00
Total Expenses	$865,862.54
Total Net Operating Income	$(56,115.54)

Cash Position 2024-2025

Funds	As of 4.30.2024
Undesignated Cash	105,980.64
Board Designated	137,147.24
Donor Restricted	79,817.70
Current Cash Position	**322,945.58**

Appendix 1
Vital Statistics Review

2019-2024 Membership Statistics (By Calendar Year)

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024YTD
Baptized Members	971	958	391	363	345	347
Confirmed Members	751	746	315	299	294	299
Average Weekly Attendance	326	147	149	170	178	175

2019-2024 Membership Trends (By Calendar Year)

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024YTD
Transferred In	10	3	9	4	5	8
Reaffirmation of Faith	8	2	8	0	3	0
Adult Confirmations	0	0	2	1	2	2
Total Gains	18	5	19	5	10	10
Baptisms	12	3	3	6	1	1
Junior Confirmations	14	0	0	6	3	2
Asleep with the Lord	1	2	6	3	8	0
Transferred Out	34	19	19	13	29	0
Released from Membership	26	0	568[1]	27	1	3

2019-2024 Worship Participation Statistics (By Calendar Year)

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024YTD
8:30 a.m. Service In-Person	131	0	75	85	82	84
8:30 a.m. Service Online	0	0	29	14	5	9
10:30 a.m. Service In-Person	198	147	83	87	95	91
10:30 a.m. Service Online	0	42	25	14	2	NA

[1] This number includes many individuals who had not lived in the area or attended for many years.