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# Report of Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp

## **Outdoor Ministry at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp: 2024 & Beyond!**

### Summer Camp

2024 brought a safe, fun, fantastic, faith-filled season of outdoor ministry:

- 581 total campers, an increase of 22% over the previous summer!
- 144 Intergenerational campers: families of all kinds coming to camp together
- 8 Day Camp sites partnering with 16 different congregations
- 10 Leaders-in-Training (high schoolers who volunteer their service)
- Evergreen Camp: a new program for adults age 55+

For 2025 we anticipate:

- Continued growth in camper participation; registrations have been coming in faster than ever!
- An All-Staff Alumni Reunion with a day option on Sunday, June 29, or a 3-night option June 29-July 2
- A strong staff team made up many returners and some new folks. We are praying for approved visas and the safe arrival of our international staff.



### Facility Usage and Upgrades

2024 Rentals and Retreats and site updates:

- We saw 954 overnight guests and 548 day use guests
- Innovative annual programmed options include the Young Adult Retreat, Fall Wellness Retreat, Total Inclusion Retreat, and retreats for youth
- A more accessible walkway from the sauna to the waterfront was installed, partially funded by the ELCA Total Inclusion Grant.
- The final facility upgrade funds raised through the CoVantage Cares Campaign in 2022 were spent, completing the projects we set out to do. These included:

- Upgraded commercial kitchen appliances and hood
- Dining hall windows
- Duplex windows, doors, boilers, and roofs
- Emanuel Lodge facade, sliding doors, windows, & flooring

Upcoming projects:

- The "Prepare the Way" Capital Campaign to fund:
  - The purchase of an adjacent property including: a house for year-round staff housing, out buildings for storage of vehicles and seasonal equipment, 19+ acres of land to steward
  - New welcoming signage on US-2
  - Teardown of old structures that are no longer safe to use, making way for new possibilities in the future
  - Establishment of an endowment fund to be used for future facility updates and maintenance

## Healthy Financial Position for Future Ministry

2024 data showed:

- Significant increases in: congregational gifts, individual gifts, memorial gifts, summer camp and retreat fees, and rental revenues – THANK YOU!!!
- A generous legacy gift that supported our endowment fund and summer staff scholarships
- A strong financial position that enables us to pay staff fairly, upkeep facilities, plan for future growth, and meet people's needs in an evolving world



In short, outdoor ministry is alive and well and Fortune Lake! Lives are being transformed, and Jesus' love is being proclaimed. THANKS BE TO GOD!

### Action Items/ Ways to be Involved:

- **Pray** for the ministry of Fortune Lake
- **Attend** summer camp or a retreat and/or **invite** someone to do so: [www.fortunelake.org](http://www.fortunelake.org)
- **Visit** camp and take a tour. Please call ahead to let us know.
- **Stay** at camp through a rental or [FREE!] private retreat for rostered leaders
- **Give** a gift to the ministry. We have a wishlist for big ticket items and summer supplies, and we accept financial gifts electronically or via check. Please remember Fortune Lake when you're writing or updating your legacy plans.



# FORTUNE LAKE LUTHERAN CAMP

138 Fortune Lake Camp Rd, Crystal Falls, MI 49920  
[fortunelake.org](http://fortunelake.org) | 906-214-CAMP (2267)



FortuneLakeLutheranCamp



fortunelake



# Report of Northland Lutheran Retirement Community

**NORTHLAND LUTHERAN**  
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY, INC

[www.northlandlutheranwi.com](http://www.northlandlutheranwi.com)

**February 16, 2025**

Northland staff members met the needs for residents and clients across all of Northland’s entities during 2024. Daily they met our common ministry goals.

Since 1917, Luther Home has been offering service to seniors in the form of nursing home care. Today Northland continues to offer skilled nursing care, but also options for seniors and disabled persons. The operations of Northland are described below.

**Luther Home** – 80 bed skilled nursing facility offering long term care and short-term rehabilitation care

**Luther Manor**-42 bed Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF) offering assisted living

**Northland Village**-100 apartments-housing for low-income seniors and disabled persons

**Northland Terrace Estates**-50 apartments-independent living for seniors

**Northland Homes**-31 single family homes-independent living for seniors

**Interfaith Manor**-51 apartments offering housing for low-income seniors

**New Hope Heights** – 18 apartments offering housing for low-income seniors

**Northland Foundation** – manages financial assets for Northland – makes grants from investment proceeds to Northland entities.

All operations except Interfaith and New Hope are located on our Marinette campus. Interfaith and New Hope are in Menominee. The diverse programs of Northland allow us to offer a continuum of care. They allow us to meet needs where the needs exist.

Each of the entities above has a board of directors as does Northland Lutheran Retirement Community, Inc. (NLRC). The NLRC board meets 10 times each year and the other boards meet 5 times each year. Please consider volunteering for a board. The members of those boards provide oversight to Northland’s operations. They are critical to our operations. I thank them all for their time, support, and insights.

A significant part of the care we provide at Northland is delivered via our Chaplaincy program. Rev. Linda Forray joined the Chaplaincy team at Northland during 2023 helping to enhance the good work being done by Chaplains Karen Ann Hanson and Rev. Keith Kolstad. Our congregation at Northland has many and diverse needs. Our Chaplains help to meet those needs by offering corporate worship, studies, and individual counseling. I am thankful for each of them and the difference they make in the lives of Northland residents.

## **Census and Occupancy in 2024**

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Average no. of residents/units per day</u>	<u>Average Occupancy</u>
Luther Home	59.5	74.4%
Luther Manor	27.2	64.7%
Northland Village	91.0	91.0%
Northland Terrace Estates	47.0	92.0%
Northland Homes	30.0	98.0%
Interfaith Manor	48.7	95.5%
New Hope Heights	16.2	90.0%

These entities represent 372 units. The overall average occupancy for 2024 was 86%. Northland's independent living operations continued to outperform national metrics with a combined average occupancy of 93.2%. Please note the Luther Manor numbers. The average number of residents per day in 2023 was 22. 2024 saw a 23.6 per cent increase in the average number of residents per day compared to 2023.

Staffing continues to be a challenge for all positions. Nurse Aides staffing improved during 2024, but can be a bit like a roller coaster. We continued to rely on temp agencies to cover some RN and LPN hours. Agency cost in 2024 was about \$286,000.00 compared to about \$74,000.00 in 2023. Agency staff cost more than double our wage rate for nurses. With that said, I am happy to report that we have had success recruiting nurses in December and January.

I do believe that the staff members at Northland put the Gospel into action daily. I am confident that we represent the Congregations well. Thank you to our staff members, board members and volunteers and to all the folks who contribute in many ways and those who pray for Northland. It is an honor to serve.

Darrell Lancour

CEO/NHA

2025



# **Report of The Synodical Women's Organization Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLSWO)**

## **SWO Activities Since the 2023 Convention**

Our organization continues to assess the needs and preferences of our area women, and to seek ways to engage them in our women's ministries.

In October we held our synod's women's convention and retreat. The theme was "Our Walk with God" and we explored ways to enhance that walk with journaling, Bible studies, prayer beads, fellowship and worship. Fifty percent of our worship offerings were donated to the Mkuza Girls' School in Tanzania. The prior year we were awarded a \$1,000 WELCA grant which we used. Last year the board was awarded a \$1,000 grant from WELCA's Katie's Fund, and we used to assist victims of human trafficking, and to fund scholarships for first-time attendees to our Convention and Retreat. At the 2023 convention we re-elected the prior year's board and added two new members, Carol Ontto as Secretary, and Julie Beck as the Cluster 2 liaison.

At the convention, the attendees discussed how we can increase participation at our convention by women all over our synod. We formed a task force to review options including the notion of separating convention from the assembly weekend, so we could hold the convention on a Saturday, and in different locations all over the Upper Peninsula, hosted by local churches, to reduce costs and facilitate participation by women in different locations. The task force failed to meet and the question remains on future Convention alternatives.

The Board directed most their efforts that year at planning for the 2024 Convention and Retreat. In addition, Secretary Carol Ontto devoted her attention to poverty and hunger, in her role as chair the Social Justice Committee. Sarah Sleeter, historian, also continued to update the SWO Facebook page with historic photos of SWO events.

The theme for the September 2024 Convention and Retreat was "Woven Together." We gathered at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp on the weekend of September 20-22 where we again enjoyed times of fellowship, worship, workshops and contemplation. Fifty percent of our worship offerings were donated for rebuilding efforts at the Mkuza Girls' School in Tanzania. We had a special guest at our Convention, the interim Executive Director of WELCA, Jennifer Hockenbery, who shared information on the final push for the \$1 million campaign for Katie's Fund. In response to her appeal, the Convention participants voted to contribute \$1,000 to the campaign. They also elected the new Board, including President Melzee Jacobson who returns to serve another term, and new Board members Lynnette Broxson, member-at-large, and Donna Ferson, the Cluster 1 liaison, who has since been replaced by Sue Hill.

The newly elected SWO Board met in October to set up schedules and discuss topics to be reviewed in the coming year. We scheduled a meeting every month via Zoom with the exception of an in person meeting at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp in August for final decisions on the use of the camp for the annual convention and retreat. One of the issues of interest was to begin checking into ways that we could schedule a possible Saturday convention to allow more members to attend without having to take a day of vacation. We will be working on updating policies and guidelines for various activities and checking into avenues by which we may reach some of our ladies with regards to what SWO has to offer them.

We ask that you keep the board members in your prayers as we begin to move on putting some excitement and involvement back into the SWO organization.

Mary Ellen, Previous President (October 2022– September 2024)

Melzee Jacobson, President (October 2024– September 2026)

# U.P. Wild's REPORT FOR SYNOD ASSEMBLY

By: Lanni Lantt, Mission Developer

We have a very lively, committed and spirit-filled group within all the branches of U.P. Wild across the U.P. Those that feel a call from the wilderness to go deeper in their faith find that U.P. Wild is a unique alternative that never existed for them. For those who attend and share it is deeply moving- we express our lament, our gratitude and we pray for each other and our bioregion. This ministry affects people at their core and our monthly coffee group allows people to share their religious disconnect in a safe environment. In the Marquette branch, we have 10 people in our core group who are working together on new offerings based on their own passions/gifts.

We continue to grow. U.P. Wild Marquette has 10-20 participants with rotating membership of 50-70. U.P. Wild Keweenaw remains active and meets monthly. U.P. Wild Delta County and U.P. Wild St. Ignace also meet regularly. In 2024, we held our very first U.P. Wild Convocation where all 7 branches from across the U.P. had leadership present for a 2-day retreat at Fortune Lake Bible Camp. We had financial support from the NGLS, which was very helpful to offset costs so people could afford to attend. We will continue this annually going forward.

Our partner, the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan remains our primary funder. The New Episcopal Community Grant from the Episcopal Church is our secondary funder. Our third funder is the SAOM grant from ELCA Churchwide. Fourth is funding from the ELCA NGLS. Fifth are smaller local community grants that are applied for yearly. We do have monthly donors and the donations received from gatherings do cover our programming budget. We remain very creative to keep our costs low by choosing meeting locations that are donation based.

“Safe Harbor Aging Group” is our newest offering to nurture the aging process of the many elders in our group, a drop in coffee group is held monthly, and we consistently offer our Wilderness Walk and Nature Prayer Service monthly. Each gathering feels very much like Spirit/God is very much with us, and people leave knowing that they are loved by Jesus and especially from our community. We are a landing location for many who have voiced very clearly that they have left church and will not go back- but they will come here. Overall, our newsletter outreach is 200+ and our weekly texting tree is 150+. New members are added monthly.

In 2025/2026, U.P. Wild has been asked to participate in “Future Church Pilots” associated with the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. We are very excited to share the successes of UP Wild with the broader ELCA as we do serve as a model of how the church can gather and remain true to our Christian roots.

We have many affirming stories like: “I was nervous to attend a service which is why I like this coffee group- I was raised in a strict religion and wouldn't come if there were any crucifixes- I was assured that I would be with like minded people with similar backgrounds. I feel so welcomed that I'd like to offer my home for gatherings.” -Peter

“I love this community because of the loving souls involved and their welcoming spirit. Also their willingness to reach out more to all of us”- Sharon “Authenticity; all of us participating – that's it's not just one pastor or leader.”-Lisa “The Nature Prayer Service is my favorite and outreach to special groups i.e. aging and those with special daily life struggles I see as important.”-Suzi “The U.P. Wild model is one of the healthiest that I know of in the ELCA. I came up here to worship with you and learn from you so that I can go back to

Milwaukee and start our wild church. I am very impressed with this ministry and what it's capable of within 5 years." Pr. Larry H "This church group is saving me."- Rose "The spirituality of the wild church as had a significant impact on my life." Hal (88yrs) "The wild church vision, passion and leadership are seeding incredible opportunities for so many to grow their faith and purpose." Jerry "Thankful for this community always being there for me." Ken (89yrs) "I can't say enough about the kindness, creativity, and openness in this ministry! Many have been positively impacted in their lives whether you see the long run results or not- thank you a millions times over." -Sue "This ministry is a brave pioneering where every one of us ragamuffins feels seen, heard, and loved." -Angie "This ministry is a palpable manifestation of God's love for the world and for creation. I feel blessed to be a part of it." -Jeff " I can remember watching News stories on TV6 about this group of people hiking around Old Cemeteries. Taking Church group out into some of our Wonderful Wild Places. Just enjoying God and all of His Glory- one hike at a time. Sitting back and watching the Wild Church grow, and evolve, and burst forth into new lands. Reaching high on up to Heaven has been an absolute joy." -James

I am delighted to be working along side new DEM, Pr. Sharolyn Swenson and together we have identified our 2025 goals to be:

- 1.) Nurture existing relationships each of our 7 branches
- 2.) Grow Healing Circles in outreach and depth
- 3.) Help our ELCA congregations feel more connected to this outreach ministry

I am thankful to Messiah Lutheran for publishing our events in their newsletter and would be happy to provide a list of our monthly offerings to other parishes.

**Our website is: [www.upwild.org](http://www.upwild.org) / [lanni@upwild.org](mailto:lanni@upwild.org) / 906-251-0065**





## *Bay Area Campus Ministry*

Bay Area Campus Ministry has been a part of student life at Bay De Noc Community College located in Escanaba, MI for more than forty years, and has touched many lives including my own. See I was a student that attended the Bible Study that my Father, a former director of this ministry taught. It was there I met my wife of almost 25 years now. But now, the ministry has grown so much more than what it was when my father lead. Thank you for allowing me to share some of the things that our ministry does here on the campus.

First of all, the flagship of our ministry is our Monday Night Meal program. Every Monday night churches in our area serve the students (and staff that still may be around) a meal. For some of our students, this is the only full meal they get all week. We know this because several have testified to the fact that they just don't have the means, nor the time to cook a full meal like the one provided. One former student when asked why should I attend Bay De Noc Community College, listed the Monday Night Meal program as a reason to attend here. BACM (Bay Area Campus Ministry) works with over 26 different area congregations to provide these meals. The ministry maintains the schedule, and the continued cooperation with congregations of all faiths. Our ministry provides all paper products (Plates, plastic-ware, napkins and cups), and the churches bring whatever is convenient for them to bring and serve.

Our ministry also serves Bay De Noc Community College campus located in Iron Mountain, MI. There we serve a lunch meal on Thursdays, and have joined together with 9 local congregations of that community. Between both campuses, we have served **hundreds** of meals in the past year.

Not only do we serve meals that feed the physical body, but we also minister to the spiritual health of the students as well. Every Monday night, following the meal, we hold a Bible Study which is attended by about 10 students of various faith backgrounds. At the Iron Mountain campus, we sponsor Pastor Tony's Corner, a place where students with questions of faith, or prayer needs, or just need some encouragement can stop by and speak with Pastor Tony.

Besides the meals, and the Bible studies, we also hold several fellowship activities, some with local congregations, some with other campus ministries, and some within our own group. We have hiked pictured rocks, we have attended winter carnival, held an evangelistic outreach event on campus, sponsored movies, and this spring we are sponsoring a Seder Meal on campus.



## *Bay Area Campus Ministry*

Other past activities include:

- \* Fall Bon-fire
- \* Spring Appreciation Dinner for local churches that had brought meals to campus
- \* Spring Break Retreat at Wisconsin Dells
- \* Winter Retreat at U.P. Bible Camp

Thank you so much for allowing me to share about BACM, and thank you for your generosity as we invest in the future of the Kingdom of God through the life of these students.

**B.A.C.M.**

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Tony Morrison,  
Director of Bay Area Campus Ministry

# Report of the Lutheran Campus Ministry at Michigan Technological University



Dear partners in Christ of the NGLS,

This has been a year of deepening and renovating for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Michigan Tech. We had an amazing response to our Feed My Sheep Campaign (thank you!), and while this project to license our kitchen has taken longer to complete than expected, the time has allowed our ministry to grow and thrive in other ways this academic year:

- + Weekly **Worship & Bible Study** on Sundays, where 7-12 students engage, also helping with Sunday School, Greeting, and assisting in worship.
- + A newly formed **LCM Band** has been leading worship once per month this academic year - what a joyful noise they make!
- + We enjoyed bonfires and **adventures** up the Keweenaw this fall and a Young Adult Winter Retreat to Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp in January.
- + With Cooperative Campus Ministries at MTU, LCM organized an **Interfaith MLK Day** service with over 100 people in attendance and have also helped organize three **Interfaith Luncheons** with over 25 different religious communities from the area in attendance.
- + We took 5th out of 50 with our St. George-themed snow sculpture and raised money for Habitat for Humanity in our Soup & Pie lunch during **Winter Carnival** in February.
- + Seven LCM students will take part in our **Alternative Spring Break**, building houses with Habitat for Humanity in Asheville, NC.
- + **Project Feed My Sheep**: In order to return to our weekly Student Community Meals, it was



necessary to undertake a kitchen renovation to bring everything up to licensable code. Grants from NLCM along with the generosity of over 70 synodical donors are making this project possible! Now...if the Spirit could speed up the delivery of our industrial hood, we could bring this project in for a landing and re-launch this vital student feeding ministry before the school year is out!

In this shared ministry endeavor – between congregation, synod, and students – I am so grateful for the honor of serving as Campus Pastor. Thank you for your continued support, prayers, and engagement with this vital young adult ministry.

In gratitude for your partnership,

**Rev. Sarah Semmler Smith**  
pastor@goodshepherd906.org  
www.goodshepherd906.org





As the church gears up for Advent and Christmas, campus ministry quiets down in the beginning of December as students hunker in for their finals and preparations for home or graduation. We round out the year with a finals breakfast. The Sunday before finals we put out a bunch of snacks (brain food) and let the students make their own care packages with lots of sweet and salty choices. This year, the Sunday before we had our farewell dinner and devos, an opportunity for saying goodbye to those graduating and those who might be moving away for student teaching. As someone in their second year of campus ministry, I am still getting used to the revolving door of campus ministry, but also starting to prepare for some of the newness and trust which this also requires.

This summer I found myself at Living Waters, a camp downstate, where I met two young people who said they were headed to NMU for the fall. This gave me a realization, that part of this type of ministry is believing people will show up, and college students are hungry for free food, but also for real conversations about life and faith. Yes, we need to work on how we get our name out there and figure out where we can best connect with students. We also need to believe the spirit is working in what we are doing from the start. Every semester, a new face shows up and participates in a new way that is unexpected and can only be explained by a partnership with God.

This year we were still centered on Sunday Night Suppers and Devotions to follow (Dinner and Devos). We took requests from the students at Fall Fest to start and make our menu for the year. I share the responsibilities of Campus Ministry with 2 other colleagues, Priest Marna Franson and Deacon Erica Thomas. They are both campus ministers in their respective denominations and together we create Sacred Space, and we serve out of Common Grounds our student coffee shop, but also my office. The space is hosted by students Monday through Thursday and sometimes Friday. We also have student leaders who help connect with students, lead events, and work alongside us to serve the community. This year we had a grant through one of our partners which allowed us to have an extra student leader. Marna hosted a Thursday time slot, Time with Marna, where the students and she focused heavily on food. Spice tasting, tea tasting, and how to cook certain meals, really take on the idea, once you leave this place you need tools outside of your profession like how to cook for yourself and others.

Last spring we did a mission trip to Sanibel, FL to help with hurricane recovery, a trip that was also done the year before. This year we are headed to North Carolina for hurricane recovery working with an ELCA camp, Lutheridge, and Lutheran Disaster Response. With only a few students, it will be a small trip, but the greater focus of this last year has been service to the greater community. We participated in Northern's Make a Difference Day, worked with Yoopers United making cards, and volunteered at a Film Fest, Trunk or Treat, Crop Walk, and Feeding America. The students recognize they are being served and serve one another constantly, but this year, we have seen our students making space to help others and walk alongside the greater community.

I look forward to 2025 and hope we will continue to dream about what to do in this new space at Common Grounds, and the possible partnerships existing to help improve the space with the sale of the Lutheran Campus Ministry house in Marquette. We also continue to work on how to communicate better with alumni and the synod in real-time. Blessings on the year.

# Augustana College

Dear Friends:

In its mission statement, Augustana College declares itself to be “deeply rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and an inclusive expression of Lutheran higher education.” The college’s new strategic plan, *Augustana Bold & Boundless*, reaffirms this rootedness. Approved by its board of trustees, which includes Northern Illinois Synod Bishop Stacie Fidler, the plan has three core goals:

- Engaged and holistic learning
- Student success in life and career
- Serving our neighbors through engagement with our community, region and world

Strategic plans are all well and good, but if I may borrow from Luther’s Small Catechism, *What does this mean for us?*

It means that the purpose of Augustana College is to afford an opportunity for a liberal arts education that speaks to all dimensions of human existence, in a manner consistent with the higher education values of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

It means that as a community dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion, Augustana prizes interfaith engagement, commitment to justice, spiritual exploration, reasoned examination, vocational discernment, and freedom of academic inquiry and expression

Since its founding, Augustana College has educated and graduated people of purpose, with deep passions, the skills to accomplish ambitious goals, and extraordinary gifts for leadership. Our graduates possess a way of thinking about, and looking at, the world that equips them with a panoramic view of their communities and the world, which motivates them to have impact wherever they are. This is what Augustana has done since 1860 and we aspire to continue to shape graduates who make their communities with tools they learned to use with us.

At a time when many private liberal arts colleges in the Midwest are facing declining enrollments, we are grateful that the steadfast support of alumni and friends of the college has allowed us to keep an Augustana education in reach of families. This helps us continue to stake our future on the need of society for people whose education is framed by purpose. People who are not daunted by hard decisions because they have a set of values, derived in the context of community, to help them navigate the unforeseen. This future is unreachable without effective partnerships like that with the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the ELCA, for which my colleagues and I are deeply grateful.

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Kathryn Talentino, president of Augustana College

February 27, 2025

**Dear Friends,**

Warm greetings on behalf of our faculty, staff, students, Trustees, and alumni! Grand View University engages, equips and empowers learners to explore their vocations, fulfill their potential and serve the world. Informed by our values of excellence, inclusive community, adaptability, faith, global curiosity, agility, and positivity, Grand View aspires to be a leader in innovative education that integrates knowledge, learning, skills, and transformational experiences to ignite curiosity and prepare adaptable, independent, creative and confident people. Here are some highlights from this past year:

**Faith Life and Campus Ministry –**

Grand View’s Director of Faith Life, Rachel Cohen, is responsible for leading Christ-centered formation and discipleship opportunities for Grand View students as well as overall campus engagement for Grand View University Campus Ministry programming, which includes people of many faith traditions. The Director of Faith Life also participates in institution-wide strategic planning, decisions regarding the allocation of resources as well as seeking to acquire resources, and leading projects, events, and initiatives involving a broad range of constituencies both on and off campus.

In August, following transitions with Campus Ministry staff, we moved forward with combining the Director of Faith Life and Campus Ministry Associate roles. Under the new model, the Director of Faith Life serves as the advisor of the Campus Ministry Team in addition to overseeing all faith-based groups on campus. Campus Ministry offers a variety of programming for the Grand View community, including weekly Chapel, a weekly self-care and prayer hour (called “hygge hour” as a nod to our Danish heritage), pastoral care if needed, our Hospitality Hub fully stocked with snacks and drinks, and a community food pantry which is a joint ministry between Luther Memorial and Campus Ministry. We partner across the University for service projects and campus wide activities such as Homecoming events, student leadership, first year experience activities, and conferences.

**In addition, a collaboration with FCA has allowed many of our student athletes to have team chaplains to help them navigate faith and life.**

The search for a Campus Pastor is ongoing. In July 2024, Rev. Jeffery Alvestad was hired as Interim Campus Pastor and Interim Pastor of Luther Memorial Church where he plans to serve until August 2025. Luther Memorial Church is in conversation with another ELCA congregation down the street to determine if an Area Mission Strategy (sharing a pastor) might offer the best opportunity and support for both congregations and Grand View University.

Our goals for 2025-2026 include moving forward with hiring a campus pastor, which may be in partnership with another congregation; expanding our weekly programming for our students through a pending partnership with Hope+Elim in Des Moines to bring Kairos college ministry to Grand View; and working to increase connections with ELCA congregations within the state of Iowa in order to recruit youth who might consider attending Grand View.



## Grant Activity

Grand View has been blessed to receive five Lilly Endowment Inc. grants. We'd love to have pastors from your synod participate. The grants include:

**Moses Project:** The Moses project is a program designed to assist and support rural pastors through networking, developing strategies to enhance and renew their congregations, and guide them through various challenges in their ministerial service.

<https://www.grandview.edu/the-moses-project> or <https://www.mosesproject.org/>

**Faith Forward:** This program empowers parents, grandparents, and faith mentors to pass on their faith to the next generation. Kristi Wicks is the program director and has 20 church leaders participating in the first cohort. They met on campus in April 2024 and continue in a hybrid model through March 2025.

<https://www.grandview.edu/faith-forward>

**Jordan Project:** This is a project designed for female pastors serving in rural communities. Directed by Sara Anderson, pastors partner with congregational leaders to explore their congregation's history and imagine an updated vision for ministry rooted in the community's needs.

<https://www.grandview.edu/the-jordan-project>

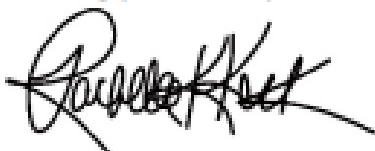
**Iowa Preachers Project:** This program provides a collaborative workshop experience for public proclaimers of the Gospel. Each year, the Preachers Project gathers a cohort of preachers across denominations for conversations, teaching, and intentional assessment of sermons, all aimed at improving the wider church's proclamation and witness. The Project operates in partnership with Mockingbird Ministries, an organization based in Virginia that connects the Christian faith with the realities of everyday life with a large online presence and that also publishes books and magazines, hosts conferences, and distribute podcasts.

<https://www.iapreachers.org/>

**Nexus:** The Nexus Institute is designed to help young adults discern their vocations through theological learning and leadership development. Nexus is partnering with the Jacobson Institute to host a Faith and Leadership camp in July 2025.

<https://www.grandview.edu/about/community/camps-clinics/nexus>

Wishing you God's peace and joy,



Rachelle Keck, PhD, JD  
President

# LUTHER COLLEGE

Greetings from Luther College and our hometown of Decorah, Iowa. In these times of challenge and change, I am honored and excited to have stepped into my role as the 12<sup>th</sup> president of Luther this February. I am proud to share with you some of the ways that our Luther community continues to live into our commitment to prepare students for lives of meaning and purpose in service to the neighbor.

Luther College is known for drawing excellence out of all its students, and we are proud to report that our alumni testimonies earned Luther the No. 1 spot for learning opportunities and community and social life among our peers in Iowa and in the Associated Colleges of the Midwest in a recent Wall Street Journal survey. Luther also scored well in areas of character development, career preparation, learning facilities and campus facilities.

Examples of significant learning opportunities from this past year abound. Faculty member Todd Pedlar earned his seventh consecutive NSF-funded physics research grant, enabling students to contribute to an international research collaboration on elementary particle physics. Our nursing program approaches its 50th year of collaboration with the Mayo Clinic. Education majors continue to fulfill their student teaching placements in locations as varied as our nationally-ranked local Decorah Community Schools; metropolitan systems like Des Moines, Chicago, or Minneapolis area schools; or recently expanding internationally in Norway. Study away entered the second year of offering J-term courses specifically for first-year students. It is all part of a larger initiative to ensure that all Luther students have access to participation in documented high impact practices, such as internships, study away opportunities, and capstone projects. As a result, 99% of our 2024 graduates reported participating in two or more of these high impact practices.

In the past year, Luther has also continued to be recognized for our commitment to sustainability. For the fifth year in a row, Luther has been named a “hidden gem” institution in Iowa and the larger Plains region. We are also proud to have been ranked among the Princeton Review’s Top 50 Green Colleges in the nation, demonstrating our deep dedication to sustainability. Luther ranked seventh in America in 2024 among baccalaureate institutions for sustainable campus practices. This past year, we earned a Bicycle Friendly University silver award by the League of American Bicyclists. Last summer, students conducted significant summer research projects in prairie ecosystem restoration and conservation, using as their laboratory our 800 camps acres of natural lands.

We recognize the cost of higher education is a concern. We continue to increase avenues and opportunities for need-based, scholarship, and merit assistance, and these efforts have resulted in an overall reduction in the average net cost of attendance at Luther for the past three years. We have expanded our Luther College Impact Award, which offers four years of free tuition for qualified students in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. We have also joined with 18 other four-year institutions to form the Iowa Private Transfer Collaborative, a grant-funded initiative to improve transfer pathways for students. We have been selected as one of 80 new members of the FirstGenForward Network to support first-generation students.

Our students continue to demonstrate passion for and excellence in the arts. The theme of this year’s annual Christmas at Luther performance was “Seeking Refuge for a Weary World,” and involved more than 400 student performers, and marked another year of exciting growth in on-campus, regional television, and livestream audiences. During the 2024-2025 academic year, three of our choirs were chosen to perform at regional and national professional conferences: Cathedral Choir at the November 2024 Minnesota American Choral Directors Association conference, Norskkor at the February 2025 Minnesota Music Educators Association midwinter conference, and Nordic Choir at the national American Choral Directors Association conference in Dallas, Texas. The Nordic Choir and Jazz Orchestra toured internationally in summer 2024 summer—to Norway and Brazil, respectively—and in summer 2025 summer our Concert Band revives a longstanding tradition of touring in Japan.

While our athletic teams continue to win championships ranging from men’s soccer, women’s tennis,

and both men's and women's swimming and diving in the past year, our greatest pride is reserved for our impressive number of 42 all-time NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship recipients, and the 73 Norse to earn Academic All-American, one of the most recent being softball catcher Abby Spore who was also Luther's 2024 NCAA Woman of the Year nominee. Currently at 22 varsity teams, Luther is set to add women's wrestling in the fall of 2025. The ongoing renovation of the 200,000-plus square foot Gerdin Fieldhouse for Athletics and Wellness will create new opportunities for all students and the greater Decorah community.

It has been a year of celebration, growth, and transition. We want to recognize our retiring President Jenifer K. Ward, who during this year stepped into the role of president emerita and senior advisor for strategic initiatives. We are grateful for her service, wisdom, and leadership, and we wish her the best in her retirement after the close of this academic year.

We do not take for granted the wide network of support that makes all of our work possible. Thank you to all of our local and regional partners, our alumni, and our supporting congregations and Synods. In the rapidly changing landscapes both of the church and of higher education, we continue to lean into the gifts of our Lutheran identity to offer us vision and encouragement in a complicated world.

Soli Deo Gloria!

President Brad Chamberlain



# Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Dear ministry partners in the Northern Great Lakes Synod:

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) is grateful to share highlights from our seminary in this 2025 report to supporting synods. Thank you for your continued support of our innovative and thriving seminary. As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to 2025-2026, I am pleased to share some key highlights and our aspirations for the future:

- This year, LSTC bids farewell to President James Nieman as he retires after thirteen years of dedicated leadership. His vision and guidance have left an indelible mark on the seminary, from fostering a culture of innovation to championing LSTC's mission of theological education and social justice. In a heartfelt video shared with the community, President Nieman reflected on his tenure and expressed his hope for LSTC's continued growth. As we navigate this transition, an interim president will be announced in February and the next president selected by the end of the spring semester.
- A major milestone this year was the conclusion of our 2021–2024 Strategic Plan, *For Such a Time as This*, and the introduction of our new 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, *On the Way*. This forward-thinking roadmap reflects LSTC's commitment to remaining adaptive and innovative as we prepare future leaders for ministry and public engagement. Centered on themes of sustainability, inclusion, and mission alignment, the plan focuses on deepening partnerships, enhancing educational accessibility, and supporting the holistic formation of students. As we look to the future, this strategic framework ensures that LSTC remains a beacon of theological excellence and a force for justice in the church and the world.
- This year marked the formal establishment of the Office of Enterprise Innovation (OEI), a bold initiative to extend LSTC's reach and impact through digital programming. Led by Vice President Keisha Dyson, the OEI is the creative engine behind Project Starling, our new commitment to and program for asynchronous learning. This initiative provides innovative opportunities for students, including Synod Authorized Ministers (SAM) and those pursuing certificates in theological education, to engage with content at their own pace. We look forward to launching the Project Starling platform in June. On this platform, we will introduce an asynchronous TEEM certificate as well as a training program for Synod Authorized Ministers. We will also provide learning resources for lay audiences interested in deepening their theological studies. By introducing professional development courses, continuing education programs, and advanced digital tools, Project Starling exemplifies our commitment to offering theological education for all.
- In Fall 2024, the LSTC Board of Directors elected Greg Lewis and Mark Bartusch as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson respectively. We have also welcomed new board members, including Teresa Cintron, Paul Erbes, Joseph Falese, Stacie Fidler, Preston Fields, Greg Kaufmann, Mercy Ndosi-Shoo, Larry Tietjen, and Patricia Cornelius Woods. Their orientation underscored our commitment to strategic governance and collaboration. We look forward to their ecumenical expertise enriching our community for many years to come.
- LSTC is thrilled to announce the appointment of Dr. Christian Scharen as the Gordon Braatz Chair of Worship. A distinguished scholar and teacher, Dr. Scharen brings deep expertise and a passion for exploring the transformative power of worship in faith communities. In this new role, he will advance LSTC's commitment to preparing leaders who are deeply rooted in liturgical tradition while engaging contemporary challenges and opportunities. His leadership will enrich the seminary's worship life and academic programs, equipping students to serve with creativity, wisdom, and a strong theological foundation.

- This year's upcoming Homecoming celebration will bring alumni, students, and faculty together for a vibrant time of reconnection and learning, anchored by the Queer Symposium. This impactful event will highlight LSTC's commitment to affirming and inclusive theological education, featuring workshops, panel discussions, and keynote presentations exploring the intersections of faith, identity, and justice. Participants will engage deeply with critical topics, fostering dialogue that strengthens our community and equips leaders for ministry in diverse contexts. The combination of Homecoming festivities and the Queer Symposium promises to create spaces where all are welcomed, valued, and empowered to serve. Visit [LSTC.edu/events](http://LSTC.edu/events) for information about this event and others.
- We look ahead to our 165th commencement exercises, to be held again this year at St. Paul and the Redeemer Episcopal Church, at 4945 South Dorchester in Hyde Park. This welcoming and well-equipped venue provides an ideal setting for our commencement celebrations, offering ample space for the ceremony as well as opportunities for fellowship and connection. This year's commencement speaker will be Bishop Yehiel Curry, a steadfast leader and LSTC alumnus.

To learn more about LSTC, please visit [www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu).

Sincerely,

James Nieman, President Emeritus (retired Jan. 31, 2025)

Michael Cooper-White, Interim President

Greg Lewis, Chair, Board of Directors





## 2024 Annual Report to the Synods

***Wartburg College is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.***

Guided by our vision, we are answering the call to prepare resilient leaders of positive change for service in a complex world. This will be realized by building on our distinctives and embracing new opportunities to be the leading institution in educating the whole person.

### Enrollment and Student Success

- Fall 2024 undergraduate enrollment was 1,452 students from 38 U.S. states and 39 countries, which includes 184 U.S. students of color and 70 international students. More than 20 Christian denominations and several world religions are represented. Twenty-one students are enrolled in the online Master of Arts in Leadership.
- The five majors with the highest enrollment are business administration, biology, exercise science, elementary education, and music education.
- To amplify focus on the first-year experience as a key indicator in student persistence and success, Wartburg partnered with Credo, a higher education consulting firm, to participate in a five-year initiative called Moving the Needle. With the support and guidance of the Credo team, Wartburg faculty and staff will identify, further develop, and implement impactful practices to improve student retention.
- Alumni & Career Connections, a new partnership between Wartburg's Advancement and Student Life divisions, will optimize alumni engagement toward student success. Ignited by a \$1 million gift from Mike and Marge McCoy, the initiative includes a new mentoring platform, Knight Nation, and intentional programming to help students explore opportunities for their future while leveraging our alumni base.

### Strategic Positioning

- Starting in fall 2024, the college launched the Wartburg Commitment, a new pricing model and value proposition designed to help students consider, afford, and experience Wartburg College. The comprehensive program includes a new competitive price, reduced financial barriers for lower- and middle-income families, and funding to increase access to immersive experiences.
- Wartburg received a \$2.3 million gift from the John Sauer '78 estate to grow the Knight's Experience Fund, a new endowed fund that helps offset the cost of experiential learning opportunities for all Wartburg students.

### Academic and Co-Curricular Programs

- Wartburg was one of 25 schools and the only one in Iowa to earn a Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose. The classification acknowledges colleges and universities that have committed to campuswide efforts to advance leadership in pursuit of public goods such as justice, equity, diversity, and liberty. The designation is presented by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the American Council on Education, and the Doerr Institute for New Leaders at Rice University.
- Wartburg announced two new online graduate programs in health and human performance — a Master of Science in sport science and data analytics and a Master of Science in high performance — beginning fall 2025. The programs, which build on the college's reputation for excellence in undergraduate health sciences programs and athletic dominance, will produce students ready to lead and serve in athletic and nonathletic venues.
- Wartburg received a \$185,000 grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust to help transform technology in more than 60 classrooms and advance the college's vision of becoming a fully wireless campus by 2030. The five-year initiative will begin in 2025 and will equip faculty with advanced tools for effective teaching, promoting innovation and creativity in addition to creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment.



- In fall 2024, Wartburg faculty implemented a new General Education curriculum – THRIVE – which stands for Thinking Critically, Human Culture, Reasoning, Information Fluency, Vocation, and Effective Communication.
- The Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was renamed in honor of former president Jack Ohle and his wife, Kris. The Board of Regents approved the change in spring 2024, and the rededication of the Ohle Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was held during Homecoming 2024 festivities.

### **Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry**

- Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry supports students in their journey to find connection, presence, and purpose in their life at college. We seek to meet the spiritual and religious needs of our diverse campus community while also building bridges of compassion and understanding through interfaith/ecumenical engagement. Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry oversees over 19 student groups and programs.
- Wartburg College received an \$8,100 Northeastern Iowa Synod Community Engagement Grant to help engage religiously diverse students, employees, and community members as well as grow religious literacy on campus. This grant supplements funding for our Bridge program, which equips students with skills in bridge building across differences, and is executed by our Interfaith and Religious Diversity Council.
- Kelly Sherman-Conroy, an indigenous educator, church leader, and scholar, received the 2024 Graven Award. The annual award for Christian vocation highlights the powerful and positive effect of a strong sense of Christian vocation as it interfaces with service to the community, the church, and the world.
- Nathaniel Knutson '24 received the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Fund for Leaders Direct Full-Tuition Scholarship, which will help him continue his education at Wartburg Theological Seminary.
- Dr. Caryn Riswold, professor of religion and the McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission, published her fourth book, "ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion."

### **Recognition**

- Kirk Kleckner '81, Mike Mallaro, Matthew Petersen '06, and Gordon Sween '89 were elected to the Board of Regents. Kleckner of Bradenton, Fla., is founder and former president of ValuationUSA; Mallaro of Cedar Falls, Iowa, is executive chairman of the board for VGM Group; Petersen of Denver, Colo., is a partner at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP; and Sween of Minneapolis, Minn., is a retired health care executive.
- The Wartburg Medal was presented to professor emeriti Gloria Campbell and Dr. Lynn Olson in December 2024. The Wartburg Medal recognizes individuals who have provided significant service to the college over a sustained period and who have a personal commitment to the college's mission, quality, and character.
- Boboya Gabu '26, a Davis United World College Scholar from South Sudan, received a \$10,000 Projects for Peace grant to carry out a summer humanitarian effort empowering individuals living with HIV/AIDS with marketable skills.
- Georgia Nissen '24 received the prestigious R.J. McElroy Graduate Fellowship, designed to encourage persons of accomplishment, intelligence, integrity, and leadership ability to pursue challenging academic careers.
- Dr. Mike Bechtel '94, associate professor of science education, received the Engaged Campus Award for Emerging Innovation from the Seed Coalition, formerly Iowa and Minnesota Campus Compact, for his work with sustainable agriculture. Also honored were Bethany Christians '24, who received the Presidents' Student Leadership Award, and Krystal Madlock, associate dean for inclusive community, who received the Presidents' Civic Engagement Leadership Award.
- Dr. Rebecca Nederhiser, conductor of the Wartburg Community Symphony, was a finalist for the American Prize's Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award in Orchestral Programming.

Wartburg continues to find focus in a vibrant mission that transforms the entire college community as we learn, work, and serve together. Thank you for your prayers and support as we share in the work of strengthening the Lutheran traditions of higher education and Christian vocation.

### **Dr. Rebecca Ehretsman, President**



Dear Partners in the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Greetings from your siblings in Christ at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, where the Holy Spirit continues to stir things up.

First, we are very excited to announce that Wartburg received a 7.4-million-dollar grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to fund The CaSTLE Project, the “Country and Small Town Lived Ecclesiology” Project. Its purpose is to instantiate a new *baptismal ecclesiology*, focused not on “pastors and programming,” but rather on the formation of Christian discipleship in daily life. In this ecclesiology, the vibrancy of a congregation and the strength of its ministry is not measured by the number of members and the presence of an ordained pastor, but by the transformation of individuals (through participation in the worship and spiritual life of their congregation) prepared to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the roles and relationships in their personal and occupational lives. *Leadership formation* for rural and small-town congregations is a key piece of this ecclesiology. Learn more here: <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/the-castle-project/>

Second, we are thrilled about the continued growth of our innovative, competency-based TEEM program, *Journey Together/Caminemos Juntos CB-TEEM*, which is offered entirely in Spanish or English. This flexible program allows students to engage in an **action-reflection model** of educational formation while working closely with a **mentor, academic advisor, supervisor, and peer cohort**. Students progress at their own pace through **nine competency modules**, including an **internship**, as they serve in a church or other ministry setting. The program typically takes **three to five years** to complete. While students are always welcome to visit campus, all courses are conducted **fully online**, eliminating the need for travel. **Scholarships** are available for eligible students through Wartburg and the ELCA. Additionally, this competency-based model is available to **cohorts of lay leaders**, offering a distinct pathway separate from the candidacy track. This option is specifically designed for those called to **lay ministry** rather than ordination.

Finally, Wartburg Theological Seminary is committed to the holistic support and care of our students as they prepare for rostered and lay leadership. One aspect of this fulsome commitment comes to life thanks to a six-figure grant from the Immanuel Foundation, which will provide fully funded counseling with licensed mental health providers for all students, faculty, and staff [through UWill]. Beginning July 1, 2025, and continuing for three academic years, this grant will provide access for up to 10 counseling sessions per individual per academic year.

The church needs faithful and visionary leaders, and we are committed to partnering with you in their formation. We invite you to **pray for, identify, and encourage** those whom God may be calling into public ministry. At Wartburg, they will receive the **theological, spiritual, and practical** preparation needed to proclaim the **good news of Jesus Christ** in a world longing for healing and hope.

We give thanks to God for you and for our partnership. To learn more about Wartburg Seminary and our strategic, innovative programs, please visit us at [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu).

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Johnston Larson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



**The Holy Spirit is alive and at work through our joint ministry!**

*"He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God."*

- 2 Corinthians 9:10-12

Like the blessing of loaves and fishes, many gifts to LSS from congregations were (or can be) multiplied beyond their original size due to an anonymous donor's gift through the **Loving Lutherans** challenge, doubling the impact of your generosity.



**Our shared ministry is growing in the UP!**

Superior Futures for Youth is expanding from five to ten Michigan Counties served. The program assists young people (ages 12-24) in crisis, providing support to those at risk of running away or facing homelessness. Through intervention services, immediate needs are addressed, and supports are provided to youth, and when appropriate, to their families, in order to achieve stabilization and help young people achieve their self-determined goals.

**Don't see your Congregation listed? YOU CAN STILL QUALIFY and have 100% of your contribution matched!** We came very close to reaching the \$1 million goal in 2024, and the anonymous donor has agreed to extend the challenge until it is met. That means if your qualifying contribution reaches us before the total of \$1 million is met from Loving Lutherans Congregations, it will be matched. Visit [www.lsswis.org/LovingLutherans](http://www.lsswis.org/LovingLutherans) or contact [sarah.halstead@lsswis.org](mailto:sarah.halstead@lsswis.org) to learn more!



**Congratulations to the Northern Great Lakes Synod 2024 Loving Lutherans qualifying congregations!**

- First Lutheran - Ewen, MI
- First Lutheran - Gladstone, MI
- Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran - Rhinelander, WI
- Immanuel Lutheran - Negaunee, MI
- Messiah Lutheran - Marquette, MI
- St. Paul Lutheran - Ironwood, MI
- Trinity Lutheran - Stambaugh, MI
- Trinity Lutheran - Rapid River, MI

**OUR VISION**

Healthy communities filled with people using their God-given gifts to serve.

**OUR MISSION**

Act compassionately.  
Serve humbly.  
Lead courageously.

*President and CEO, Héctor Colón, pictured below.*

**95%** overall client satisfaction



**30,000+**  
impacted



**200%**  
Growth of services  
in UP of MI







Thank you for taking the time to learn about the ministry of Region 5 as you prepare for and engage in the business of your synod assembly. This synod joins with eleven other synods in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois to form Region 5: one of the 9 regions across the ELCA.

As a region, your synod bishop, staff, and other leaders gather with their colleagues throughout the year. These gatherings are a way for them to support and pray with one another; and to share their ideas, experience and expertise with one another to faithfully minister in your synod. The twelve bishops, along with the regional candidacy manager, make up a regional steering committee. Their collegiality is important in establishing great working partnerships for years to come.

The Region 5 steering committee affirmed in 2023 to work together to provide a 3 year cycle of professional ethics education-aka Boundaries Education. This 3 year cycle began in 2024 with a basic professional boundaries education event for rostered ministers and synod authorized lay leaders. Approximately 1,000 rostered ministers gathering at over 40 locations across the region engaged in this day of worship and learning. In 2025, we will focus on gender justice for our shared learning day, and the third focused topic in this rotation is racial justice, slated for 2026.

Region 5 continues to gather bishops and staff in the region on an annual basis for shared support, learning, worship and fellowship. In 2024, we gathered in Madison, WI for resource sharing and collaborations for mobility, holy closure conversations, leadership support of licensed lay leaders and synod authorized ministers, first call placement, and more. As candidacy and leadership manager for region 5, most of my time is spent working alongside synod candidacy committees. "Candidacy" is the term used to describe our process of forming and preparing people to serve as a pastor or deacon in the ELCA. Ministry also includes training for new candidacy staff and volunteer committee members in your synod.

As a region, we also share in the care of archival records. Region 5 archives are housed at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Our archivist, Sue Dodd, collects records of and responds to inquiries concerning synods, deceased rostered personnel, and dissolved congregations within region 5. This work both preserves institutional records and documents the historical record of the institution within the context of the larger world. As congregations in the region make decisions to close, Sue is a resource to you in determining what records to save and how to transfer them to the archives. Thank you for your synod's participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

Rev. Ramie L. Bakken, Candidacy and Leadership Manager [ramie.bakken@elca.org](mailto:ramie.bakken@elca.org)  
Sue Dodd, Region 5 Archivist [sdodd@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:sdodd@wartburgseminary.edu)



## ELCA Federal Credit Union: Faithfully delivering financial services to ELCA members, congregations and ministries



The ELCA Federal Credit Union provides a wide range of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA across the country. **In addition to being the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals**, the Credit Union offers a rich variety of products including savings and checking accounts, CDs, loans, lines of credit and credit cards.

And now, we provide home mortgage loans for purchasing or refinancing and home equity loans and lines of credit.

**We serve ministries** with federally insured deposit accounts, a flexible credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 for small projects such as building repair and purchases. Our Workplace Banking program presents the opportunity for ministry organizations to offer our Credit Union products and services along with other exclusive perks to their employees.

In 2025, a new cohort will join the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, **designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds**. In this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts, and our partner MIF matches those deposits up to an established amount. Together, we have served **more than 700 rostered ministers** who, collectively, have made emergency savings deposits of more than \$1 million.

Our strong online presence allows members to access their funds anytime, anywhere—as consumers expect.

### Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **As a not-for-profit financial cooperative chartered to serve our church, we offer socially responsible banking solutions often priced more competitively** than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our members.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values.**

**Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.**

**For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, [elcafcu.org](http://elcafcu.org) or call us toll free at 877-715-1111.**





## The Mission Investment Fund: Empowering communities with financial services



For more than 150 years, the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a *financial services ministry of the ELCA*, has been a **steady and reliable financial partner** for congregations, ministries and individuals. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ministries and communities through customer-centric support and flexible financial resources.

In 2024, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, create new education and youth ministry areas, fund schools and programming for the next generation, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. These projects ensure that ELCA ministries remain welcoming, inclusive and equipped to serve their communities.

### By the Numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$610,534,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$547,491,000
- **Total Assets:** \$774,550,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.5%

### Why Is MIF the Right Choice?

- **Proven Stability:** With over a century and a half of experience, MIF has weathered changing economic and political landscapes, maintaining financial strength for ELCA ministries.
- **Deep Expertise in Church and Ministry Financing:** We understand the unique needs of faith communities and have longstanding experience in congregation and ministry-building projects.
- **Competitive Rates and Terms:** Our financial offerings are structured to support ministries of all sizes.
- **A Full Suite of Financial Services:** In partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, we provide a range of financial solutions for congregations, ministries, and individuals.
- **Faithful Stewardship:** Investments in MIF directly support loans that fund hundreds of capital projects across the church.

With 2025, MIF has entered a new era of modernization—enhancing our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. While embracing innovation, we remain rooted in the trust and stability that have defined us for generations. Through every season, we stand with ELCA members, congregations, and ministries, walking together in faith and financial stewardship.

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### *MIF at work in the Northern Great Lakes Synod (as of December 31, 2024):*

- 2 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$154,289
- \$3,231,989 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](http://mif.elca.org) or contact your Regional Manager, LuAnn Ferguson: 773-380-1708 [luann.ferguson@elca.org](mailto:luann.ferguson@elca.org)



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT FOR CONGREGATIONS



## 80 YEARS.

That's how long congregations like yours have shined Christ's light in the world through Lutheran World Relief. What started as a response to World War II has grown into an outpouring of love for every neighbor in need, everywhere in the world.

Wherever there is war, disaster or poverty, your compassion is there to offer help and hope. And in 2024, our ministry together has expanded to reach our neighbors here in the United States. Thank you for making history with us!

Watch the **80th anniversary**  
video at [lwr.org/80](https://lwr.org/80)



Dilan Cabiroğlu working on a robotics project at the youth center.

## IN TIMES OF CRISIS: TÜRKIYE 📍

**SITUATION:** In February 2023, massive earthquakes **destroyed 90% of the buildings** in the city of Antakya. More than **50,000 people died**, and nearly **2 million became homeless** in what survivors called an "apocalyptic" disaster.

**IMPACT:** Your congregation's generosity meant emergency supplies reached the epicenter in record time. Since the quakes, you have provided **hot meals, clean water, LWR Quilts & Kits, temporary shelter** and even longer-term container homes to help families get back on their feet.

For a tragedy of this magnitude, the scars of emotional trauma run deep. In a matter of minutes, our neighbors lost their homes, jobs and loved ones. Schools were destroyed, and playgrounds were filled with rubble and broken glass. As families work to rebuild their lives, you are helping them heal.

Seventeen-year-old Dilan Cabiroğlu's family was grateful to move into their new container home, built with your support, after losing everything. But she soon grew bored and listless. She watched her father fall into depression. Dilan still attends school online, because hers is too damaged to open in person.

Everything changed when she started hanging out at a **youth-friendly community center** that — through your generosity — offers **games, sports, activities, classes and counseling** for teens. The goal is to help youth process the disaster and find hope for the future. Today, Dilan has a new outlook. She's attending counseling to address her trauma and, inspired by the opportunities you've provided, is dreaming of being a nurse.

"Here, I learn new things and meet new people, my head is cleared, and I become more energetic," she said. "If it wasn't for this place, I would probably still be experiencing the shock of the earthquake."

**Header Photo:** Mary Nyajurk lives in a displacement camp in South Sudan. Your congregation's love taught her how to grow nourishing foods to keep her family healthy.



## QUILTS & KITS: UNITED STATES

**SITUATION:** In September, Lutheran World Relief announced that the Quilt & Kit Ministry was expanding to reach our neighbors in the U.S. Unexpectedly, hurricanes Helene and Milton ravaged communities in North Carolina, Florida and beyond just days later.

**IMPACT:** Thanks to the quilters and kit makers who faithfully fill our shelves, LWR began packing trucks before the storms reached land. An initial shipment of **10 truckloads of Quilts & Kits** were distributed in hard-hit communities in North Carolina, Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana. Immediately after the storms, your generosity also made it possible to rush bottled water and other essentials to western North Carolina and Florida. Then we provided cash grants to our local partners to **distribute food, water and other urgently needed supplies** to provide comfort and dignity to families in their time of need.



Edward Lynch lives at a shelter for homeless veterans in Asheville, North Carolina. After Helene flooded their home, all 165 residents were moved to a hotel until the shelter can be rebuilt. Edward was excited to pick out his LWR quilt. "I'd just like to say thank you to the people that put their time and love and patience in making these beautiful blankets for everybody," he said. "It is going to remind me where I've been and where I'm going. **I can say I got this when I lost everything, and this is one of the first, nicest things I got.** And it gave me something to hold on to in the midst of a crisis."



Gabriel Gatluak, who is disabled, and his family received seeds and support when they arrived at the camp. Today, Gabriel works for LWR to support other new arrivals to the camp. Watch a video about him at [lwr.org/gabriel](http://lwr.org/gabriel)

## FOR THE LONG TERM: SOUTH SUDAN

**SITUATION:** Violence, grinding poverty and four years of extreme flooding have uprooted over 4 million people. While this is an urgent crisis, you are helping families learn skills to thrive in difficult circumstances.

**IMPACT:** Your compassion has traveled to the hardest-to-reach displacement camps, where exhausted families arrive starving, traumatized and empty-handed after walking for days.

When they arrive, your love greets them with a medical screening to check for malnutrition. Parents with malnourished children receive nutrition counseling and support, along with seeds and training on how to grow a variety of nourishing foods in their home gardens.

Congregations like yours have also made it possible for 10,000 people – primarily widows and single mothers – to receive **livelihoods training** in fishing, raising poultry or vegetable farming. They also learn the basic business and financial skills needed to launch small businesses to sell their products. Thanks to your enduring compassion, food security has increased by 50% among camp residents. Malnutrition has significantly decreased, and thousands of people have lifelong skills and stable ways to feed and support their families.

**Your compassion makes all of this possible. THANK YOU!**  
Until your love reaches every neighbor.



Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. **At Global Refuge we remain committed to the work of welcome, no matter the challenges.** For 85 years, Global Refuge (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has championed the work of welcome by providing support to immigrants and refugees as they rebuild their lives in the United States. Founded by heartbroken Lutherans in the United States who felt called to provide a home for those fleeing violence of the World Wars, Global Refuge has continued this good work welcoming more than 800,000 newcomers since 1939.

Our mission states, “As a witness to God’s love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.” With help from Global Refuge, families are welcomed into their new homes with a hot meal, adults are enrolled in English language classes, children are enrolled in school, and Global Refuge partners guide newly-arrived refugee(s) in using public transportation and accessing community resources.

Unfortunately, on January 24, 2025, Global Refuge and the 9 other national resettlement agencies received a **stop-work order** from the U.S. Department of State as it relates to our funding for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, effectively cutting off vital support to families who have already lawfully resettled in the United States. The stop-work order directly affects thousands of refugees who rely on resettlement services for essential support such as housing, food, English classes, and job placement. While we were anticipating a pause of the refugee resettlement program and work with future clients, this stop-work order for clients in our care came as an unexpected blow. However, we are committed to carrying out our mission, through our hope in the promise of the resurrection, and remain steadfast in our holy work of welcome.

Despite the challenges, we are heartened by continued and growing support faith communities are providing for our work. **More people of faith are getting involved in our work each year to meet the ever-growing need.** In fact, 85 new faith communities became supporters of Global Refuge in 2024.

With the support of these new partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2024 we were able to...

- Welcome **18,622+ refugees** from countries across the world.

- Empower and support **116 clients** and **67 Businesses** through personal and business loans.
- Open **a new office in Mexico** to expand our Camino A Casa programming and serve **1017 clients** start again at home.
- Write and distribute **10,000 Hope for the Holidays cards** that provided messages of welcome and hope to newcomers.
- Attend the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans where we engaged **20,000+** youth on the work of welcome and packed more than a **1000** welcome kits.

In a political season rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages that villainize newcomers, we have a unique opportunity to change this narrative and refocus on all the gifts newcomers bring to community. We invite you to join us in this work!

- **Support Refugees with a gift** – If you or communities you’re connected with are willing to support financially, please use/share this link: [www.globalrefuge.org/give](http://www.globalrefuge.org/give)
- **Learn more and Advocate** – Explore resources with more information about executive orders and accompanying actions: [www.globalrefuge.org/advocate](http://www.globalrefuge.org/advocate)
- **Know Your Rights** – Our partners at AMMPARO have a great resource for communities to read about their rights and those of immigrants in their care. [www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/](http://www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/)
- **Explore Resources** – Visit our Congregational Resources page to explore all the resources available to you: [www.globalrefuge.org/congregations](http://www.globalrefuge.org/congregations)
- **Sign up for our Monthly E-newsletters** – Get the latest updates for faith leaders by emailing [outreach@globalrefuge.org](mailto:outreach@globalrefuge.org).
- **Volunteer with us** – Support refugees in your community and beyond: [www.globalrefuge.org/volunteer](http://www.globalrefuge.org/volunteer)

Thank you for your continued support. The many ways Lutheran communities embody Jesus’ ministry through the work of welcome is truly inspiring.

Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.

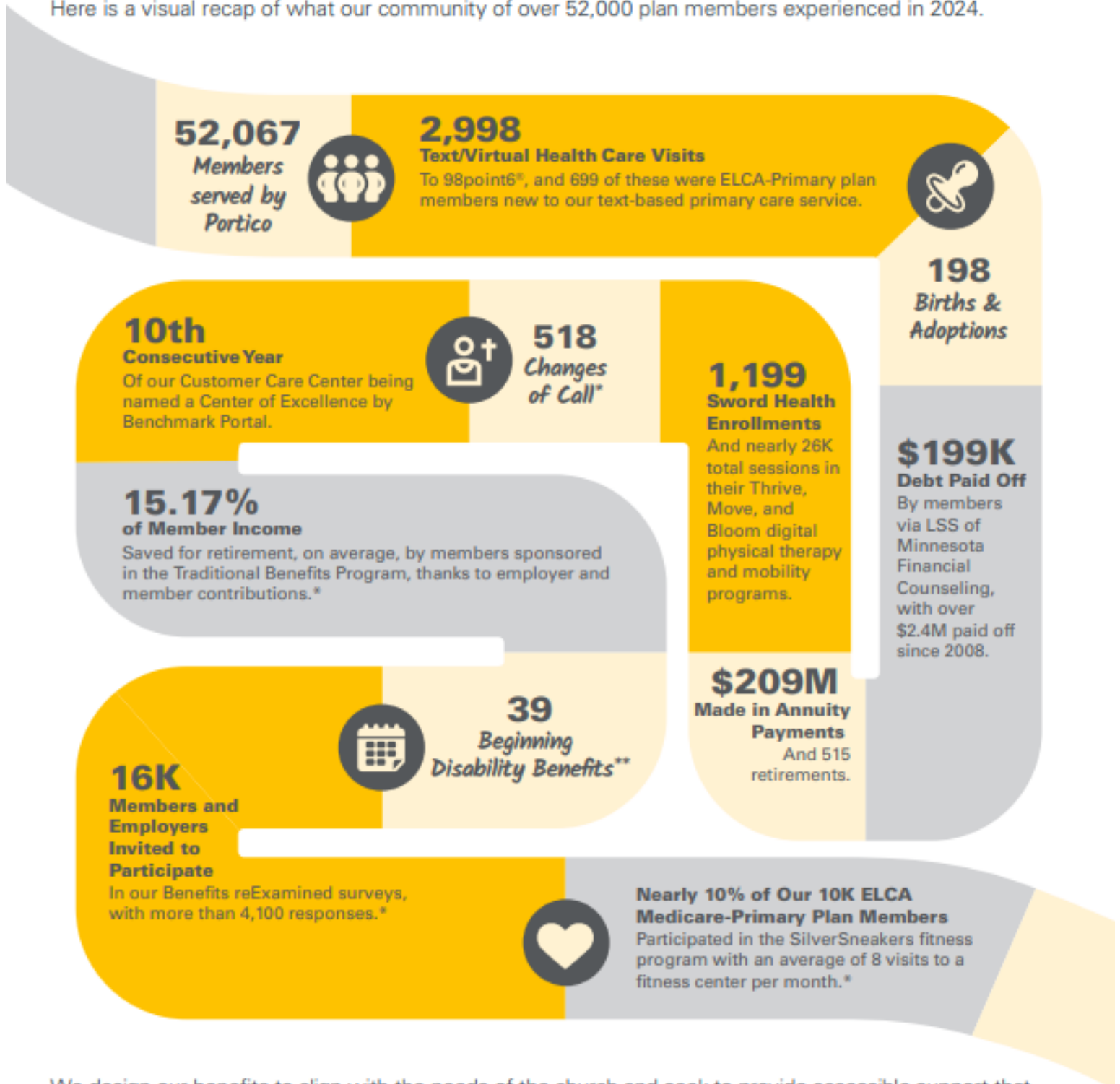


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# The Impact of Our Benefits

## Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico is dedicated to helping our rostered ministers and church professionals live holistically healthy lives, so they can serve others with confidence and grace. Here is a visual recap of what our community of over 52,000 plan members experienced in 2024.



We design our benefits to align with the needs of the church and seek to provide accessible support that enhances and improves everyday living and brings value to those who serve.

\*Source: Traditional Benefits Program. All other numbers and percentages are drawn from across Portico's benefit programs.

\*\*Total as of 2023; 2024 disability claims numbers have not been finalized.