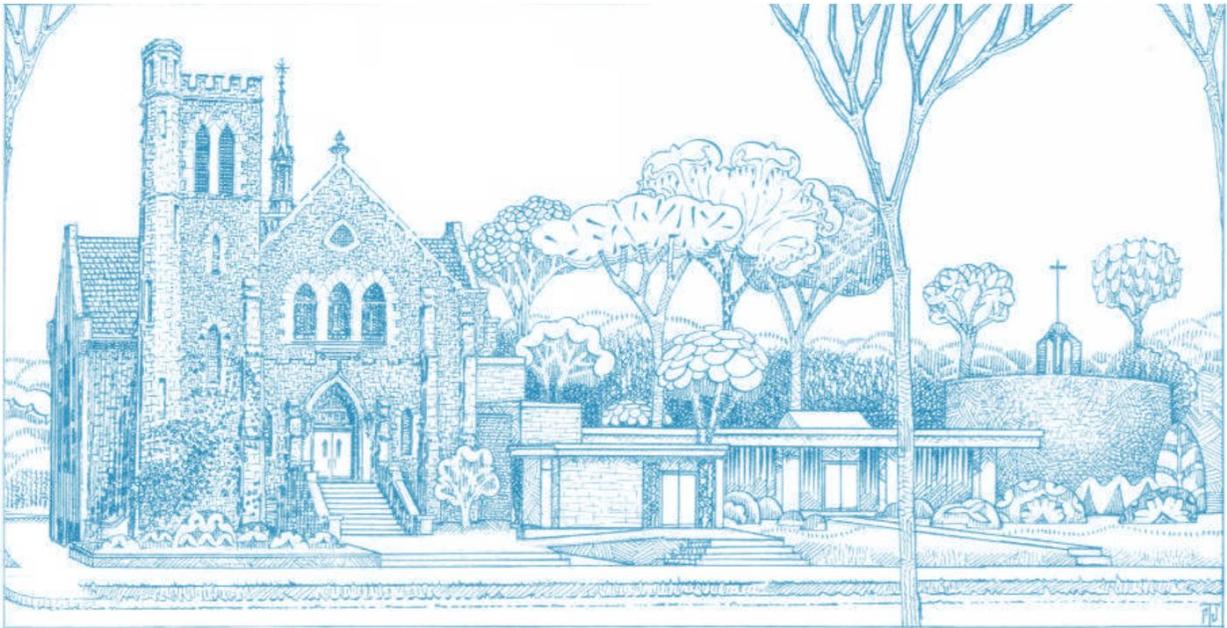


University Lutheran Church of Hope

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*University Lutheran Church of Hope
is a welcoming, Christian community of faith
centered in God's grace and
called to demonstrate God's love for the world.*



2025 Annual Report to the Congregation

Presented at the Annual Meeting

February 8, 2026

Complex World. Thoughtful Church

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Edited by Tim Gustafson. Formatted by Ann Agrimson.



Complex world. Thoughtful church.

Congregational Meeting

Agenda for February 8, 2026

Welcome

Opening prayer and song, "Lead with Love"

Adoption of rules of the meeting

Approval of minutes from February 9, 2025

Treasurer's report for 2025

Presentation and approval of 2026 budget

The Vision and Governance Board's Resolution of Thanks

Video Greeting from our Friends and the Sanctuary Dedicated Fund

Election of new leaders

Recognition of outgoing board members and others completing service

Recognition of staff

Passing of the gavel

Closing blessing

Motion to adjourn

Opening Prayer

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

Song **Lead with Love** by **Melanie DeMore**

University Lutheran Church of Hope

Congregational Meeting, February 8, 2026

Proposed Rules of the Meeting

1. **Robert's Rules of Order** – The 12th edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the meeting, except as particular matters are set out in these Rules for the Meeting.
2. **Voting** – Only members of the congregation are entitled to speak and vote at congregational meetings.
To vote in person: when the presiding officer calls for a vote, members will physically raise their hand and keep them raised until the vote is noted.
To vote by Zoom: **A.** When the presiding officer calls for a vote, use the “Raise your hand” feature on Zoom or physically raise your hand on the screen and wait for it to be noted. **B.** For those in a household with more than one voting member present on the same device, the additional person (people) should add their vote (yes, no, abstain) in the chat line.
3. **Quorum** – The ULCH Constitution does not specify a particular number of members or percentage of the congregation necessary for a quorum.
4. **Speaking during discussion** – **A.** Each speaker on any matter is requested to keep their remarks brief and to the point. If necessary to keep the meeting moving along, the presiding officer may request any speaker to wrap up their remarks. **B.** Speakers for and against the question on the floor shall be recognized alternately. Each speaker shall be required to say their name and whether they rise to speak for or against the question before making other remarks. No more than two consecutive speakers to the same view shall be recognized without a speaker of the opposite view. **C.** If someone wishes to speak and they are participating on Zoom, they can either physically raise their hand so it shows on their screen, or they can click on the reactions and click on the “raise hand” button. The Zoom facilitator will acknowledge them and inform the presiding officer that someone would like to speak through Zoom. **D.** Participants on Zoom also have the option of putting their questions and comments in the chat. The Zoom facilitator will read their comments during the meeting.
5. **Time Frame for the meeting** – **A.** In order to assure that all business is able to be concluded within a reasonable time period, the presiding officer has assigned specific time periods to the various agenda items. It is within the discretion of the presiding officer to expand or constrict these time frames as they see fit. **B.** In order to extend debate on a question after the presiding officer has declared debate ended, a voting member must move to extend debate for a specific number of minutes, which motion must be seconded and then adopted by a two-thirds majority of voting members present. This motion is not debatable. **C.** In order to cut off debate on a particular question, a voting member must move to “call the question.” This motion must be seconded and then adopted by a two-thirds majority of voting members present. This motion is not debatable.

President's Report

Dear people of Hope,

The past year has been a period of change and challenge to our faith community and our city. We saw the end of our interim period following the departure of Pastor Jen, now Bishop Jen Nagel; the departure of our beloved Maria and Jesus; the arrival of our new lead Pastor Amanda Simons; the passing of two dear former pastors, Esther Dant and Craig Shirley; the challenge of having to transition some of our record-keeping and financial-management practices; the departure of John and Karen Pignatello in the middle of John's term as president; and the incredible, shocking events that played out in the invasion of Minnesota by ICE and Border Patrol agents.

Before I write one more sentence, I must acknowledge the steadfast, courageous leadership of Pastor Maria Anderson-Lippert, who kept us grounded and inspired during the interim and continues to do so, and Paul Stever, whose service as minister of worship and music has faithfully maintained our traditions of musical diversity and excellence. Nathan Obrestad has kept us all afloat and on course.

About Hope's finances, I have only good news. First, the budget we are presenting for the congregation's approval is balanced, thanks to many hands but especially to Jack Dant, our interim treasurer. Second, Pastor Amanda is a gifted manager (and preacher, and worship leader) who understands the need for a clear-eyed approach to finance. Third, we have been blessed with the addition of Catherine Menick to our staff as financial administrator; she is hardworking, principled and extremely good at her work. Fourth, the Vision and Governance Board has approved the commissioning of a much-needed financial audit in 2026. Fifth, we are compiling a financial handbook of best practices for staff and lay leaders to follow, replacing our customary piecemeal approach. Perhaps later than most of its members, Hope is letting go its habit of receiving and paying bills by U.S. mail.

It's going on half a year since John asked me to fill in for him as interim president. In that time I have relied heavily on members of the board and executive committee to show me what to do, starting with Linda Herman, whose contributions to the life of this congregation have been countless, tireless and crucial; and Karen Jorstad, whose service as board secretary has been unstinting and whose vantage point enabled her to offer a quiet, even if urgent, word when I was about to make a mistake, which was often. The rest of the board has continued to serve wisely and faithfully, starting with Kelly Brooks, who will shortly take over as president; and ministry liaisons Jaelyn Hawkins (worship), Zach Rau (youth and young adults), Nan Knutsen (education), Ann Beane (Hope in the World) and Tomi McLellan (relational ministries). If I've forgotten anyone, maybe Karen will let me know.

I'd also like to extend special thanks to the facilities team, for doing such (usually) thankless work to maintain and improve our facilities; and the Hopeful Hope group, which has put heart and soul into caring for some of the most vulnerable among us. It has been a heartbreaking year for all of us, but it has been especially so for them.

We have significant tasks ahead of us. We need to improve our security, a priority that has become more pressing since the Annunciation shootings. We need more clarity about what it

means to be a sanctuary congregation. We need to carefully, lovingly, harness our volunteer power to fulfill our potential without burning everyone out. But we are well positioned to meet these tasks, with our beautiful building, our fantastic staff and our amazing, faithful people.

Who among us has not felt the Spirit present in our hearts and hallways during these past few months at Hope? I thank God that I had this chance to serve as president during a period of such historic challenge to our city and our community of faith.

In Christ, Eric Ringham

Lead Pastor Amanda Simons

In the past month, several of our Minnesota bishops have asked me, “How is your new call?” as I have gathered with them at the Quality of Call Summit for female ELCA rostered leaders or at the Gustavus Board of Trustees meeting.

My answer remained the same: I am joyful, and I feel called to serve as pastor with Hope at this time.

Four months in and I feel like we have experienced a lot together already because of the times that we are living through together in our nation. As we wrestle and discern together what it means for Hope to be a sanctuary congregation and how to be faithful disciples communally and individually during a time of tremendous political upheaval and threatening violence against our communities by our own government, I am grateful to walk alongside of you and to be a part of this faith community. Together we are striving to be a thoughtful church in an incredibly complex world, reaffirming a very foundational Christo-centered ethos: love your neighbor.

Amid this upturning of the socio-political order and trauma, primary and secondary, created by the federal executive office, we are also entering into the beginning of our relationship together as congregation and new pastor, as well as addressing some concerns that arose during the interim period. I am grateful for the leadership of interim president Eric Ringham and his partnership in addressing these concerns, as well as the leadership and support of our Vision and Governance Board, Financial Controls Committee, former Board members, and our staff.

I am also grateful for my Mutual Ministry Support Team and all of you who have warmly welcomed me and given me the gift of your time through 1:1 conversations. Thank you. I am glad to be a part of Hope.

And if we still haven't had our 1:1 conversation, I still want us to schedule it! I have three questions for you: What brought you to Hope? Why Hope? And what are your hopes for Hope?

God bless you and may our 2026 bring forward opportunities for holy experimentation, joy, sabbath, and purpose.

Pastor Maria Anderson-Lippert

This was a full year - and a challenging one in many ways. And yet, God is and has been present with us through it all and we have navigated it all together. Here are a few of the significant moments from my vantage point from our ministry together here at Hope in 2025.

- **Hope With Creation** - It was a joy to journey through Lent with the theme of Hope with Creation. We tried a new evening prayer liturgy together (Bless This Night) and our confirmation students created a brochure of practices one might take on during the season. Wild Church also continued throughout much of the year - no matter the weather. We settled into a spot on Nicollet Island with which to build relationships and celebrated God's presence with us and with the land and creatures.
- **Children, Youth, & Family** - We had wonderful Sunday School volunteers this spring - thank you Donna Neste and Evan Peterson! And this fall we experimented with a new model for Sunday School which included contracting with an LCM student to teach the children during the worship service. We had two groups go on Amnicon trips this past summer - a high school aged group and an upper elementary/early middle school aged group. They all had a wonderful time. We confirmed 5 Confirmation Students this past October and this fall we started a new confirmation cohort in partnership with First Congregational Church and Holy Cross Lutheran Church.
- **ISAIAH Core Team** - This year I supported John Beane in getting an ISAIAH Core Team together at Hope. That team helped to recruit over 25 people to the Light in the Storm Convening in December. I am encouraged by their leadership and grateful to walk alongside them in organizing our congregation with ways to build power during these troubling times in Minnesota.
- **Pastoral Care** - This continued to be a big part of my ministry and one for which I am grateful. We had 10 funerals at Hope in 2025 and still feel the loss of many of these beloved members of our community. Compassion Care continues to gather most months for continuing education and support, and our Friendly Visitors Ministry is vital to the life of our community in keeping our homebound members connected. It is an honor to care for and alongside this community of faith.
- **Continuing Education: Center for Clergy Renewal Contemplative Immersion at Holy Wisdom Monastery** - This has been an amazing experience of deepening my spiritual life, building relationships with ecumenical clergy from around the country, and enjoying some time of rest and prayer outside of Madison, WI. I'm grateful for this time of continuing education and the opportunity for rest during a busy year.
- **Calling Pastor Amanda** - I am grateful for the call committee's prayerful discernment and thoughtful process in calling Pastor Amanda. It has been a joy for me to begin working with her and for us to be finding our way in ministry together here at Hope. I look forward to a thriving ministry partnership together.

I am grateful to be your pastor and to do ministry together here at Hope, in Dinkytown, and in the city of Minneapolis. May God continue to guide us.

- Pastor Maria

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP YEHIEL CURRY

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

—Colossians 2:6-7

Dear friends in Christ,

As Lutherans, we are set free to love our neighbors and seek justice. In Colossians 2, we read: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (6-7).

I am abounding in thankfulness for you, church. You are an integral part of this mission as we envision a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. The ministries of congregations including yours, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together today and every day so more people may know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. From providing food to people experiencing hunger, to helping train the next generation of leaders that will lead this church, your support is at work here at home and around the world.

Your generosity to each of the three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has made it possible for us to do this work together. Your financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices are so valued.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to continue to walk in Christ, remembering you are rooted and established in faith, and free to love and serve your neighbors. Thank you, church, for the ways you connect with and support our siblings across the ELCA and in our communities.

In Christ, The Rev. Yehiel Curry, Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY, GOD IS AT WORK ACROSS THE ELCA

MISSION SUPPORT

A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Part of our church’s long tradition of meeting human needs, ELCA World Hunger testifies to our hope for and commitment to God’s promise of a time when we will hunger and thirst no more. ELCA World Hunger walks alongside communities in more than 60 countries — including the United States — to create unique solutions to hunger and poverty.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Lutheran Disaster Response shares God’s hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

WHERE NEEDED MOST

Where Needed Most supports the powerful ways we work together around the world — supporting leaders, inspiring young people, fueling ministries and championing global mission. Gifts to Where Needed Most support and sustain the people, congregations, synods and ministries working around the world to realize the hope-filled future God promises.

Bishop Jen Nagel, Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14, 26)

This report to the worshipping communities of the Minneapolis Area Synod is an opportunity to look back on 2025, and to look ahead to the year to come. Most of all, it is an opportunity to name and celebrate some of the ways the Holy Spirit continues to enliven God’s church and our shared life as Church Together. We give thanks to you and your congregation for your partnership in this ministry we share, and for your Mission Support, financial commitments that fuel Synod ministry as well as the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Together we accompany one another in times of challenge and joy, seeking the common good as we bear witness to the love of God that makes possible our love of neighbor. Below are a few highlights of 2025.

Our Shared Life

- In May, we lived out the theme Church Together at the annual Synod Assembly
- We hosted two Tool Kit workshops in 2025, one in March and one in November
- We started a monthly virtual learning series called Learn Together Over Lunch
- We gathered rostered ministers for two Ministerium events and the Bishop’s Theological Conference
- The deans of the conferences hosted regular conference meetings and the Conference Assemblies in February
- Leaders grew in their work through Peer Groups and Power and Boundaries Workshops
- There were several other gatherings of Synod leaders: Children, Youth and Family leaders, Leaders of Color, Retired Pastors and Deacons, Communicators, and more
- Global partnerships were strengthened in 2025. Archbishop Musa Filibus from the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria visited in October and a few people from our Synod visited the Leipzig District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony in September
- The new ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry was installed in October at Central Lutheran, Minneapolis
- Lay and rostered leaders have been exploring new partnerships, creative building use, and how best to steward resources
- Our Executive Committee and Synod Council are restructuring how we fund ministry together, with a focus on more support for our New Start and Strategic communities
- The Resurrection Fund began in 2017. Seeded by money received at the Holy Closure of congregations, the fund makes possible a wide array of ministry across the Synod, including a new round of Imagination Grants beginning in 2026
- Following the adoption of a resolution on Immigration at Synod Assembly, an Immigration Task Force was formed to guide our action, and a Welcome Fund was created to channel support related to immigration

Daily I see Jesus at work in and through you, dear Synod. Thank you for your dedication, for trusting me and our staff during the tender times, and for daring to boldly live into your faith and baptismal identity.

Transitions in our Synod Staff

In 2025, Karen Ohm and Peg Ihinger retired, and we adjusted the portfolios for many of the Synod staff.

Early in the year we welcomed six new staff members: Sarah Maslowski (CYF Connector), Liz Farmer (Assistant to the Bishop for Administration), Karen Alexander (Administrator for Candidacy, Roster, and Call Process), Pastor Jen Collins (Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Vitality), Pastor Ryan Fletcher (Director for Evangelical Mission), and Juan Gonzalez (Director of Family Faith).

With these changes comes much learning and growth, and some intentional changes to our processes. I'm excited about our team and the gifts we bring individually and collectively. Thanks for your patience as we grow into this new season.

You are in our prayers. God bless us with grace for this day and courage for tomorrow.

In Christ, Bishop Jen Nagel

2025 Annual Report



137
worshipping communities, including 3 new starts and 8 strategic ministries



142,410
baptized members in MAS worshipping communities



11
languages spoken in worship

Leadership

- 5** ordinations of new pastors and deacons
- 215** pastors, deacons, and Synod-authorized ministers serving in faith communities
- 21** rostered ministers installed into new positions
- 67** pastors and deacons serving in specialized ministry
- 50** people in candidacy program
- 379** retired rostered ministers
- 22** call processes in **21** faith communities
- 18** rostered ministers on leave from call

Leadership

- 13** Conference Deans (serving 12 geographical conferences, and one for chaplains)
- 17** Synod Council members
- 78** serving on other Synod committees
- 30** voting members attended the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix in August

Initiatives

- To date, more than 25% of our congregations are or have participated in Faith and Neighboring Practices, connecting deeply with neighbors in their community. We recently received another five-year grant from Lilly to continue scaling this program even more widely across the Synod.
- Our second Lilly Funded grant, Family Faith, is taking root. It seeks to support parents and caregivers in sharing faith with their children in ethnic-specific and culturally-specific ways.
- 2025 launched the inaugural year of the Minneapolis Area Synod Youth Choir.

Mission Support

\$2,643,049 pledged by congregations in Mission Support, shared between MAS and ELCA - thank you!

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities continues to celebrate our partnership with University Lutheran Church of Hope, and we are grateful for our collective ministry among students, faculty and staff at the U. As we continue to stretch and grow, and learn what it means to be a community of faith in this twenty-first century, please know that I cannot imagine our ministry, or my ministry, without the gift of the gift of being in relationship with you, people of Hope, and the steadiness your intergenerational presence provides on campus. I am deeply grateful. Some things to note from our ministry over the past year:

- Our ministry last Spring was marked by an energetic class of leaders who took deep ownership of our ministry.
 - We experienced tremendous growth in our community, in part, I believe due to the instability and uncertainty in our political world. We did our best to get to know those newer to our community, and prepared to send a large (in number, personality, commitment, and engagement) class of seniors out into the world.
 - We traveled to Holden Village, offered our first Senior retreat, launched student-led bible studies, and continued to feed students at our weekly meal, Be Fed. We served, played, prayed and rested well together over the course of the semester, in preparation for whatever the Fall semester would bring. We knew there would be both challenges and opportunities, but we did not yet know what those would be.
- In the fall, we celebrated the arrival of another large class of leaders and realized that we had another generation of leadership at our doorstep. This group is newer to the ELCA and Christianity, more quiet and less certain of their leadership than the previous generation. And they are large in number, using their gifts in service of their neighbors, and growing in faith and leadership week by week. Each generation of leaders comes equipped with different charisms, and we're learning how to activate these gifts in service to community. We largely continued with our patterns that started last Spring, spending our energy getting to know people newer to our community, and welcoming people new to campus. Despite losing 21 seniors, our worship continued to gather 50-60 people each week.
- We also hosted our annual Fall Retreat at Luther Crest Bible Camp for a healthy group of students. We celebrate robust participation in student and staff led bible studies – four total this year, including one for students identifying as Queer or questioning, creating a space for healing, learning, and growing in relationship to scripture for students in attendance.
- Last of all, our board has done tremendous work towards making our organization more sustainable for an uncertain future. They have done good and hard work guiding our communications work and re-discovering what engagement looks like for our organization. A special thanks to Hope member Carol Flaten for her service!

Our ministry continues to face the real challenges of significant student transition and shifting energy in our community, but through the grace of God, the accompaniment of this congregation, and a lot of hard work, we are continuing to thrive – albeit in new and ever-changing ways.

We look forward to continuing this important work together. Thank you for everything.
Pastor Kate Reuer Welton, on behalf of Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities' Board of Directors

Call Committee

During the 2025 Annual Meeting, the congregation elected a slate of candidates to serve on the committee to call a new Lead Pastor. Based on priorities the congregation had identified in the ULCH Ministry Site Profile, the Minneapolis Area Synod forwarded to the committee a list of pastor candidates, including those nominated by the congregation, who were willing to consider a call to Hope. Throughout the discernment journey, guided by the Spirit, the call committee began each of our meetings and candidate interviews with prayer. The committee conducted in-person interviews with all the candidates whose names we received, and discerned a finalist, whom we thought best prepared to lead ULCH Hope's ministry. A wide-ranging, four-hour conversation over lunch at committee member John Lauber's home confirmed the committee's decision to present the finalist's credentials to the Vision & Governance Board, with the request for a congregational meeting to call the pastor. The pastor sent this word of greeting to the Board. "My heart has soared with a resounding and joyful yes at every stage of this mutual discernment process. I would love to journey with you as your lead pastor, making Hope's walls porous, being a partner of God's justice-making love, and being rooted in our Lutheran ideology of God's unconditional grace for all while being open to expanding our moral imagination of how we abide in God's love for our neighbors, ourselves, and all of creation." On August 2, 2025, the call committee announced our recommendation to call Pastor Amanda K. Simons, who presented remarks to a luncheon meeting with the Board, and conducted a meet-and-greet with the congregation, followed by a conversation on Zoom. On August 3, the congregation overwhelmingly voted to call Pastor Amanda. The Call Committee: Kelly Brooks, Tom Van Heuvelen, John Lauber, Mary Reimann-Perez, Stephanie Struthers, Dan McLellan and Linda Herman.

Linda Herman, Call Committee Chair and Past President

Personnel Committee

ULCH is fortunate to be served by a highly capable and faithful ministry and lay staff. (The listing of our staff is towards the end of the Annual Report).

The Personnel Committee made recommendations to the Vision and Governance Board for recruiting and welcoming new members of Hope's ministry and lay staff. As required by the ULCH bylaws, three members of the Personnel Committee served on the Committee to Call a new Lead Pastor: Linda Herman (chair), Kelly Brooks, and Stephanie Struthers. The Personnel Committee reviewed and revised job descriptions, posted position announcements, and approved interview and selection procedures for Financial Administrator, Worship Tech Support, and Facility Open and Close.

The Personnel Committee also reviewed the Minnesota Paid Leave Law (implemented January 1, 2026), made implementation recommendations to the Vision & Governance Board, and drafted the necessary revisions to the ULCH Employee Handbook, to be presented to the Board.

Personnel Committee: John Beane, Kelly Brooks, Mark Nelson, Eric Ringham who took the place of John Pignatello, and Stephanie Struthers.

Linda Herman, Past President and Personnel Committee Chairperson

Themed Programming (Now Renamed Hope In Community)

Themed Programming was one of four umbrella groups arising from the Donation Discernment process. The purpose of the group was to encourage the congregation to look outward in its ministry by building bridges (long-term relationships) with external community organizations with whom we share common ministry goals. Themed Programming would work with existing congregational ministries to sponsor community events tied to a theme selected by congregational leadership. To organize an event, the ministry team would work with community organizations (building relationships). Themed programming would support event planning, soliciting volunteers, event setup and takedown, multi-media event communication, and refreshments.

In 2025, Themed Programming submitted a revised proposal to Vision and Governance for Donation funding. While waiting for an answer from V&G, the group continued to meet. We decided to change our name to “Hope in Community”. And we supported two events: (1) May 18th Day of Solidarity and (2) Aug 22nd Courtyard Concert by 10th Wave Chamber Music Collective.

May 18, 2025, Day of Solidarity

On Sunday May 18, 2025, the Themed Programming Planning Team supported the observance of the Day of Solidarity commemorating the 5-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. The Sunday Forum that day was Landscapes of Resistance: Artistic Expressions of Protest, Mourning, and Commemoration, presented by leaders of St. Thomas University’s Urban Mapping Project, who documented the artwork that sprang up spontaneously in the days after the murder. A member of the Sunday Forum Planning Committee who is also a member of the Themed Events Planning Team advocated for this topic, identified potential presenters, and facilitated internal and external publicity; another Sunday Forum member confirmed the presenters, arranged logistics, and moderated the discussion; honoraria were paid from the Sunday Forum budget. After worship the congregation provided pizza from our wood-fired oven, and the Themed Programming Planning team invited and paid for a performance by Brass Solidarity, an ensemble that formed (and continues to re-form each week) at George Floyd Square to advocate for Black Lives. It was a delight to see new faces among us and to show our support for the work that continues to be done by the research team at St. Thomas and Brass Solidarity.

August 22, 2025, Courtyard Concert: At Dusk, by 10th Wave Chamber Music Collective

10th Wave is an instrumental ensemble of professional musicians who perform music composed within the last century, especially by underrepresented composers. In addition to the usual chamber instruments (violin, cello, flute, clarinet, and piano, At Dusk featured marimba (originating in Africa but now associated with Mexico) and tabla (percussion instrument from India). The Themed Programming team helped publicize the event, coordinate volunteer activities, facilitate setup, and provide themed food from local restaurants (samosas from Curry Corner, and tres leches and churros from Durango Bakery, as well as gluten-free pastries from French Meadow). The event was very well attended, with many faces new to Hope. To quote one of our recent Ministers of Worship and Music about the Courtyard Concerts series: “It gets people into the church who might not otherwise be there, and it elevates the profile of a church within the community as a center for the arts.”

Liaison Reports

Education

Both the Sunday School and confirmation programs have undergone changes this year to best meet the needs of their students. Pastor Maria and the Children's Ministry Team have been working hard to make adaptations as needed. For a more detailed description please see Pastor Maria's report in this Annual Report.

The Sunday Forum Committee has planned and presented a wide variety of topics to provide information as well as challenge our community. Several underlying themes have guided this year's forums. Food insecurity was introduced last spring and will continue through this program year. Racial justice has also been a major theme with presentations on the land acknowledgment as well as artwork reflecting the murder of George Floyd in honor of the fifth anniversary of that tragic event. The concept of pilgrimage as well as an exploration of Hope's musical traditions have been covered in several sessions as well. Strong interest remains in **Stories of Hope** and other faith journeys woven into presentations, such as Pastor Amanda's introduction of herself to the congregation. Personal faith stories seem to be the most popular topic of the forum presentations. If you have suggestions that you'd like to see in the future, please contact any member of the committee: Alden Tetlie, Dan McLellan, Rick Chapman, Marty Lewis-Hunstiger, Rebecca Tetlie, and Ann Rolle.

In addition to generating topics, the committee is working to improve accessibility of recorded sessions to enable people to watch presentations they've missed. There is also interest in creating a more visible presence for Sunday Forums that could include an element of fellowship with coffee. The sessions done in the lounge area that presented the Baking Hope ministry and the Advent/Christmas sharing event garnered enthusiasm from the congregation. Along those lines, the committee is exploring re-locating Sunday forums to the chapel to increase participation, especially from newcomers to our church. as well as improve accessibility and sight lines.

Several other regular educational opportunities (mentioned in other parts of this annual report) are offered at ULCH: Hope Book Club, Bible and Brews, neighborhood gatherings, as well as occasional stand-alone topical or biblical studies. ULCH continues to be a congregation where lifelong learning is valued in many forms. Your participation and leadership are always valued and welcomed.

Nan Knutsen, Education Liaison

Hope in the World

For 2025, Hope in the World has experienced a year filled with enthusiastic energy on many fronts, with both joys and challenges. Read on to learn more!

- **Hope With Creation**

A relational ministry between people and the earth, which includes practices, advocacy, and organizational connections. Ideally, "Hope With Creation" is a lens through which we make decisions and carry out ministries at ULCH. Examples of this from 2025 include: Our **Lenten theme** of "Hope With Creation"; the youth put together a resource brochure of ways we could connect with and care for creation; the "Bless This Night" liturgy we used centers creation, embodiment, and justice. In addition, some of us

attended the “**Rise and Repair**” day at the capitol. Rise and Repair is an alliance working to advance Indigenous rights and climate justice. Our Fall neighborhood party again included the popular **Circulation event**, plus the **Sustainable Resource Center** was present to accept our electronics for recycling. There was a well-attended **book study** of The Serviceberry, by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

An exciting neighborhood event is in the works for the Fall of 2026. ULCH will host the “**Northstar Sustainable Living Festival**,” put on by the East Bank Neighborhood Partnership. More details will be shared soon!

Hope is a member of MN Interfaith Power and Light, with the designation of being a **Climate Justice Congregation**. May we continue to lean into the work of being in healthy relationships with creation. We welcome your input and enthusiasm for this important endeavor! - Karen Jorstad, Tim Gustafson and Pastor Maria.

- **Racial Justice Team**

In 2025, the Racial Justice Team (“RJT”) continued to develop the ULCH Land Acknowledgement (“LA”) and to consider activities Beyond LA. To deepen the dialog, RJT held a Beyond LA Activities Adult Forum with various Indigenous reparations opportunities and three LA Congregational Conversations. The congregation expressed value in having a LA and interest in using it more creatively in our worship setting and in a wider swath of our community life together. In 2026, RJT plans to explore how the LA can be used in more creative ways in our congregational life, in our liturgy, and how to move beyond a LA.

RJT also began working in 2025 on a Reparations Action Plan to support reparations to Black and Indigenous communities in Minnesota, including land, labor and economic reparations, which will be submitted to our pastors, the Vision & Governance Board, and the congregation for approval. RJT believes that the attributes of our reparations proposal must contain *truth-telling* opportunities to welcome lament, to advocate for reparations, and to hold systems accountable for change in areas including policing, land, and racial equity in health, education, wealth, employment, and housing. The Plan also intends to recommend a process to advocate for *reparations and equity* to our Black and Indigenous neighbor communities. We hope to do so by (1) annually inviting speakers and/or ministers of color to share our history of injustice and inequities; (2) annually providing education on racial justice and equity work, including anti-racism training, cultural competency development, and DEI-informed leadership development; and (3) annually designating a portion of our annual budget for ULCH reparative action in honor and support of our Indigenous and Black neighbors.

RJT also retained Jessica Intermill in 2025 to do a study of the history of the land where ULCH stands, and to present her research at an Adult Forum. In addition, RJT cosponsored a presentation by Sarah Augustine, the author of *This Land is not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery*. “What was done in the name of Christ must be undone in the name of Christ . . . The good news of Jesus means there is still hope for the righting of wrongs. Right relationship with God, others, and the earth requires no less.” [goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com)

RJT also supported All Nations Church for its *Wopila* [“gratitude” in Lakota] celebration in November and held a congregational read and discussion of *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

- **Embodied Anti-Racism Training**

For the first half of 2025, a dozen ULCH members joined once a month for *Embodied Anti-Racism Training*, led by Rachel Svanoe Moynihan. “In our efforts to distance from the harm of whiteness, we often distance from each other, leaving us fractured and without relationships or reparative ways of being that can replace our patterns of racist harm and hold us through the pain of change.” Embodied Anti-Racism Training provided members with deepened relationships with each other, greater familiarity with how whiteness shows up in our bodies, increased sense of connection with our bodies, and development of skills to disrupt harm in daily life. [Somatic Coaching, Somatic Practices & Embodied Antiracism | Rachel Svanoe Moynihan](#)

- ULCH continued to participate in the “**Wild Church**” network (<https://wildchurchtc.org/>), with monthly gatherings at Nicollet Island Park, the 2nd Saturday of each month at 2:00.
- The **ISAIAH Core Team** had its first meeting on Oct 29, 2025. We quickly organized a phone bank to contact members of the congregation to attend ISAIAH’s 2026 launch event on Dec 13, 2025, at the Minneapolis Convention Center, entitled “A Light in the Storm.” We succeeded in getting 20 people to participate in the event. We were inspired by dozens of speakers. We learned about ISAIAH’s People’s Agenda for the 2026-2027 legislative session. This agenda focuses on federal cuts (hitting low-income Minnesotans), including healthcare, food assistance, public education and getting ICE out of Minnesota. We learned about the action events on the Palm Sunday Path, starting with Caucus Night (Feb 3) and ending on Palm Sunday (Mar 29). In January, the team will conduct two Caucus Night training sessions (including an adult forum).
- **BEACON Interfaith Housing Collaborative** and **Bread for the World** (yearly Offering of Letters), continue to be lifted up through the leadership of Donna NESTE.
- The **Hopeful Hope Team** continues to support our immigrant neighbors, working towards justice for all. We also remain part of the wider group of churches making up the **Solidarity Circle**, meeting monthly, doing the same work.
- Through **Hope in the World, benevolences support** the following: Bread for the World, East Bank Neighborhood Partnership, Bright Stars of Bethlehem, Portland House, and Reconciling in Christ. An annual contribution is also made to Lutheran Campus Ministry, which is under the leadership of Pastor Kate Reuer.
- **Clean Energy** - submitted by Stewart Herman

In defense of Creation, our use of electricity has dropped dramatically, from 87,000 kWh in 2019 to 58,000kWh in 2025. And our electricity bills have dropped from almost \$10,000 to less than \$3,000 per year, thanks to the solar system we installed in 2022 and the LED bulbs we installed in 2023. In addition, two kinds of credits received from Xcel effectively cover most of our electricity bills. These savings effectively are helping pay off the loan from the Trust that helped finance the construction of the solar system in the first place.

By generating our electricity, we have cut our “carbon footprint” by about 20%. To eliminate the remaining 80%, we are exploring alternatives to the burning of fossil fuel.

Grateful for everyone involved in this important work, led by God's grace.
Ann Beane, Hope in the World Liaison

Relational Ministries

Relational Ministries include the many and varied small groups and ministries that build and nurture our connections with one another. Whether learning and sharing in small groups, encountering God and community in nature, making bread, crafts, or going on retreats together, the people of Hope have found ways to love and encourage one another, to serve, and to simply have fun and enjoy life together. Our relational ministries thrive through committed and compassionate lay leaders. The sections below highlight the joys and vision for our Relational Ministries.

Tomi McLellan, Relational Ministries Liaison

Baking Hope (Rebecca Tetlie & Bryan Kufus)

Baking Hope had a great year! We lived into our new mission (adopted in 2024) and streamlined our meetings, with Bread Board meetings 3 times/year and operations meetings for the baking leaders for specific bakes. Friday night potlucks around the oven provided a way for bakers to share time together. As always, new bakers were welcomed to join each baking event. Distribution Sundays saw more reservations as everyone was encouraged to take home bread to share. The pizza bake on Sunday, September 14th in coordination with “Circulation Day” fed more people than ever before with 70 pies served and many interested students stopping by.

New in 2025: Thanks to Thrivent grants acquired by Kathy Carpenter & Rebecca Tetlie, the kitchen crew has new aprons embroidered with the Baking Hope logo designed by Tomi McClellan. Bryan Kufus and John Jacobson standardized recipes in the Baker’s Guild format for more baking leaders to follow. Lawn signs were added to announce upcoming pizza events to the neighborhood.

Highlights

- Baking Hope offered seven Bread Bakes and three Community Pizza Bakes in 2025.
- Many volunteers participated in these ten Baking Hope events: A total of 34, including five new this year.
- We consistently increased bread quantities to 5 cycles in the woodfire oven this year (90 loaves/bake), which is both manageable and demanding of the volunteer pool. This leaves 50-60 loaves on a Sunday morning for distribution, minus donated loaves. Each baking event also includes production of scones in our church kitchen ovens concurrent with the outdoor bread bake.
- Roughly 25-28% of what is baked goes out in one form or another as a direct donation (e.g., Portland House, Friendly Visitors, Communion, volunteers). Our income streams fund pizza bakes and the costs of baking and equipment.
- We baked seven types of yeast breads this year: North Road Sourdough, Dinkytown White, Maroon & Gold, Rosemary, Multigrain, Whole Wheat, and Seeded Sourdough.
- Scones: Lemon Poppyseed, Mixed Berry, Chocolate Cherry, Cranberry White Chocolate
- Community Pizza Bakes attracted many more students this past year and featured new toppings: Sausage & Sauerkraut with Hot Honey, and Marguerite Pizzas with Fresh Mozzarella & Basil.
- The December bake consisted of kitchen-baked breads in the convection ovens.
- Thanks to Stewart Herman and members of the facilities crew for mulching around the outdoor oven to spruce up the grounds for community pizza bake events.

Memorials received in 2025 have inspired the initiation of a piece of artwork to be designed and created for the oven in 2026.

Bereavement Ministry (Lisa Morse)

Hope's Bereavement Ministry provides outreach to those in our faith community grieving the loss of a loved one. Through a team of nine dedicated card writers, over 50 thoughtful, hand-written notes extended a word of comfort on behalf of the congregation this past year. These cards are a reminder to the bereaved that others care about their pain, and they are not alone in their grief.

Fellowship Meal (Sheila Hougen)

In early 2025, after 15 years, Becky and Dan Halvorson decided to pass the torch and let someone else step in and provide a Fellowship Meal each month. A team of three—Sheila Hougen, Deb Bordson, and Ann Beane—decided to give it a try.

We could not fill the shoes of Becky, Dan and their team, but we could keep the tradition going with some creativity. During the year (except for June, July, and August) we provided a monthly fellowship meal. We served tamales, sloppy joes, tacos, pizza, chili, Christmas Special, potato bar and more. In May we supported a pizza bake with the Bread Oven Group. We had volunteers bring salads and desserts most months, making the meals truly a project of many! Thanks to all of YOU who helped in the meal productions.

We were able to give some of the money collected to the work of supporting immigrants. In March we combined a Bread for the World letter campaign with our mealtime and many letters were written. (Thanks to Donna Neste for organizing the letter writing.)

It always takes shoppers, cooks, table setters, food preparers, salad makers, dessert makers and a clean-up crew to make the fellowship meal a success. If you want to work with the team to put together the fellowship meal, there is always some way you can join in. Just let us know!

Friendly Visitors (Rosalie Eldevik)

Through building trustful and meaningful long-term relationships, our 15 dedicated Friendly Visitors keep our homebound members connected to our church community. Easter plants, poinsettias, and oven-baked bread are provided by the church to support their monthly visits. This year we both mourned and celebrated the lives of members we visited who died: Nancy Swanson, Carmen McCoskey, Cyndi Ganzkow-Wold, Marge Halvorsen, and Jeanne Berkeland. They continue to be deeply missed. Thank you to the congregation for the continual support of this ministry, and of course to our dedicated Friendly Visitors themselves.

Funeral Committee (Sue Hanson)

There were 9 deaths in the congregation in 2025. I believe there were 7 receptions that the funeral committee hosted. Each reception requires about 15-30 individuals to help, depending on group size. We line up cake providers, a team to set up the hall, a serving team and a clean-up team. It is a very important service offered to families and very rewarding for those of us that do the work.

I have a great list of volunteers to call upon but I need more help with coordination. Pat Frolen was the lead. We all miss her presence with us, and we need to continue doing this important work. Please consider helping with coordination!

Craft Group (Ann Agrimson)

The Hope Craft Group has been meeting once a month for (I believe) 20 years. This group is open to all: members and non-members; those who knit/sew/crochet/bead/draw/paint/sculpt/etc., from beginners to experts. We gather in the Lounge on the second Friday of every month to work on our projects and be in community. People can drop by any time between 7:00 and 10:00pm. It's a lovely way to learn a new skill, have an in-depth conversation, listen to some humorous stories, and start the weekend.

Hope Men's group (Eric Ringham)

The Hope men's group formed five years ago in response to the isolation that some of us were feeling during the pandemic. Except for rare scheduling conflicts or illnesses, we have met online twice a month since January 2021. We generally have between four and eight members at each meeting. We begin and end each meeting with a prayer, and each member present has an opportunity to talk about whatever is on his mind. Our meetings last no longer than one hour; we have no budget and prefer as little formal organization as possible. We're always ready to welcome new members! Anyone interested in trying a meeting should email Eric Ringham at eric.ringham@gmail.com.

Hope Quilters (Marty Lewis-Hunstiger)

The Hope Quilters meet every Monday, approximately 9am-1pm except for occasions when the Fellowship Hall is not available - some also meet occasionally on Friday nights to accommodate people who can't meet during the day. We use donated fabric, thread, and yarn, to make quilts of all sizes and weights, from blankets for newborns to lap robes to quilts large and thick enough for sleeping on the ground. Most are donated to Central Lutheran Church's Free Closet and other local non-profits or given to individuals who need them. Every person of any age who is baptized at Hope receives a quilt. We also give quilts to staff members when they leave. We held two quilt blessings this year, giving the congregation an opportunity to see our work and join in sending these gifts out into the world. Our budget goes to purchasing batting and maintaining the sewing machines we use. We are glad to accept donated fabric and find good homes for the pieces we can't use. Please consider joining us - no experience necessary.

Recreation Ministry (Bryan Kufus)

Our group of six was formed in 2018 with a mission to create a sustainable volunteer led group that would create recreation opportunities at ULCH. We believe that these outdoor recreation events provide us a way to get to know each other in God's great outdoors and build our sense of community.

In 2025 the recreation ministry held one event:

- Our long-standing traditional camping and paddling trip was on the St Croix River at Interstate State Park in Taylors Falls on June 12-14. Unfortunately, weather was an issue, and this was the first time we cancelled the paddling portion of the event. We did camp together with a total of 14 campers

Our plans for 2026

- We will offer the same event in 2026 on June 10-13 at Interstate State Park if we can secure campsites
- We hope to organize another summer or fall bike ride in 2026 on a local trail tba.
- A spring Eloise Butler wildflower and bird sanctuary walk.

2025 Women's Retreat Report. (Ann Beane & Beata Rydeen)

The theme for the Women's Retreat was "Awe & Wonder." We centered the retreat on celebrating things that bring awe and wonder to us and then taking them forward into our lives.

Our guest facilitator was Pastor Ashley Osborn from Valley of Peace Lutheran Church in Golden Valley (ELCA). She was very warm and insightful, and made the topic come alive. The retreat took place over a casual Friday evening 4-9, and again, 8:30-4 on Saturday.

The retreat has always provided a special way to build a stronger faith community, while at the same time offering an experience to explore a new topic. We had very positive feedback (despite some initial skepticism) and had some new attendees due to the Hope location.

Worship and Music

This continued to be a year full of transitions as we bid farewell to Interim Pastor Susan Debner and welcomed Pastor Amanda Simons. Minister of Music and Worship Paul Stever completed his first full year leading worship and music with us.

Throughout the year, the musical offerings during worship, as well as the music series, have continued to be varied in style and connect our community to many world cultures, languages, and different periods of history. Our Hope Choir has led worship most Sundays September-May. Starting in July 2025 we have added ad hoc handbell ensembles with new and experienced ringers. The ULCHers band has continued to lead worship about once every month or two. Volunteer and paid musicians have enhanced worship with special services around Easter and Christmas time as well as a Bach Cantata with the Choir in Lent 2025, Reformation Sunday, and with solos and ensembles in the summer and other times throughout the year. We had the opportunity to utilize Tim Gustafson's lovely liturgy as well as Jason Lukis' Seeking Refuge Liturgy for outdoor worship and other services throughout the year. Their leadership and the work of countless volunteers have enriched our services and made outdoor worship possible, offering us connection and visibility to our greater neighborhood.

Alongside changes in staff this year, we also had changes introduced to our worship space.

- * The temporary prayer wall that had been introduced in December 2023 transitioned to a new, more permanent, prayer wall for our community in October 2025.
- * The Steinway grand piano that was rebuilt by Paul Klitzke returned in June 2025, with a few weeks of overlap where we still had the Baldwin we were borrowing and could enjoy some two piano duets.
- * We have been without an audio/visual staff member since July 2025 and have had to give up our zoom option and make other simplifications to streaming in fall 2025. Many thanks to Matt Fry, Nathan Obrestad and many volunteers who have stepped up to help us continue our audio/visual ministry.

Throughout all these changes, we are so grateful to all our musicians and members that assist in visible roles during worship as well as behind-the-scenes roles that make worship and music possible. Your volunteer ministry allows us to come together virtually and in-person, making our community stronger. Thank you.

Paul Stever, Minister of Worship and Music
Jaclyn Prince, Liaison for Worship and Music

Youth & Young Adults

Gather Twin Cities is a young adult ministry for those ages 19-35 who are looking for connection with other young adults. It began in 2018 and has since blossomed into a once a month gathering on Sunday evenings as a place for young adults to meet and engage in conversation, worship, forums, and fun activities. ULCH has been a longtime supporter of the Gather Twin Cities ministry, as a host site. This past year Gather Twin Cities hosted a variety of events including worship, fellowship meals, ice cream social justice, and outdoor events.

ULCH hosted Gather events in March and October 2025. The March 2025 event was meant to be an Ice Cream Social Justice event; however, the speaker was unavailable and a small group of five of us were in the lounge where we visited. In October 2025, another Ice Cream Social Justice event was conducted with about fifteen people and was a success. ULCH will continue to serve as a Gather Twin Cities site for upcoming events in 2026 and is a proud supporter of this ELCA Young Adult Ministry.

For youth, ULCH hosted a fundraiser at Easter breakfast in April 2025 for donations to send two groups to Camp Amnicon. Those groups were ages 10-14 and 14 and up for an Apostle Islands trip. There was also ecumenical day camp in June 2026 that involved children and youth from many congregations. Currently, there are not many opportunities for youth events during the fall and winter seasons; hopefully, this will change in 2026.

Finally, for University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (UMTC) campus ministry students, there has been a weekly bible study on Tuesdays at 6 pm during the semester. ULCH has provided snacks and sandwiches for this event, and it has been a great use of our lounge space. This is the first time ULCH has hosted a young adult bible study, and we hope to continue our partnership with UMTC campus ministry in providing our building as a meeting space for young adults.

Zachary Rau, Liaison for Youth & Young Adult

Gratitude and Generosity

The primary activity of the Gratitude and Generosity Committee in 2025 was the planning and execution of the November stewardship campaign, Lead with Love (inspired by the song, Lead with Love). Working with Pastor Simons, we followed patterns from previous years, once again concentrating on financial stewardship. The emphasis included inspiring and memorable gratitude and generosity messages from Hope members Ann “Clancy” Wagner, Elizabeth Campbell, and Ron Sorenson (who clearly hinted that the last pledge submitted might possibly nominate that pledger as a 2026 Gratitude and Generosity speaker.) It also included an adult forum on November 16th led by committee member Ben Hartmann, which followed an earlier adult forum on Hope’s financial picture led by interim Treasurer, Emily Carpenter. Pledge cards, which had been mailed to members, were first received during the November 23rd worship and as of mid-December pledges and verbal confirmations of intent were slightly less than last year’s total pledges. Pledges were followed with thank you notes sent to those pledging.

The Gratitude & Generosity committee again thanks all who faithfully considered their future faith responses in 2026, those who assisted in encouraging reflection and responses, and those who helped with the notes of appreciation. A special thanks to Pastor Simons, who even amid her orientation and “newness” to Hope, generously shared her time, wisdom and direction.

The Gratitude & Generosity Committee: Ben Hartmann, Don Hauge, Karen Westwood, Bill Sanden

“Opening Doors 2” Capital Campaign

After two years, our Opening Doors 2 has received contributions for a total of \$272,448.00 in the past two years. With these gifts we have supported the paying down of our mortgage and are on track to retire the mortgage in early 2027. We have repaired and restored our grand piano, contributed to the remodel of the Fellowship Hall kitchen and the Lounge kitchen, and the divider between the Fellowship Hall and Heritage Hall has been replaced. In the next year, the Vision & Governance Board will determine the outreach fund recipients.

We are thankful for the congregation’s generous support and look forward to finishing strong in 2026. This year we expect that we will all work to discern what challenges to engage in 2027.

Erik Strand & Ben Hartmann, co-chairs of Opening Doors 2 Committee

Facilities

Thanks to all who support the work of the Facilities committee! It has been a busy and productive year, as committee members and other volunteers used their skills in design, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and carpentry. Those volunteer skills reduced our need for outside contractors and so achieved significant cost savings. A “V” below indicates that church volunteers did all or most of the work.

Projects completed in 2025, in no particular order:

- (V) Total renovation of the Kitchenette, Library, and installation of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant bathroom
- (V) Redesign and refresh of the Lounge and Lead Pastor’s office
- (V) Installed a new accordion curtain between Heritage and Fellowship Halls
- Installed a limestone cap on the East patio wall
- Installed a new freestanding outside sign next to the main sanctuary door on the south side, and renovating the existing sign outside the chapel
- Installing a drip irrigation system in the Courtyard for the new landscape plantings
- (V) Purchased major items including new refrigerator and freezer for main kitchen, new floor scrubber, new patio chairs, and new blind for Library
- Replaced the carpet in PEASE classrooms 107 and 206
- Arranged boiler maintenance, inspections, and service to maintain and optimize the heating system
- Restriped the parking lot and patched deteriorated areas of asphalt
- (V) Maintained the gardens by removing weeds to make room for desirable plants protected by mulch
- (V) Mulched the grounds of the bread oven to suppress weeds
- (V) Ongoing repairs of plumbing in bathrooms and kitchen

Looking forward to 2026, our larger projects and goals include:

- Acquiring and installing new bookcases in the Library
- Selecting a contractor and beginning the needed repair and tuckpointing of exterior stone
- Completing upgrades to the Fellowship Hall kitchen
- Repairing and refinishing the two smaller exterior doors on the south side.
- Replacing unreliable thermostats and temperature controllers in offices and classrooms.
- Planning and installing additional security cameras and lighting improvements for the parking lot and grounds.
- Improving the security of our doors.
- Exploring ways to make our natural gas heating system more efficient
- Reviewing alternatives to eliminate the burning of fossil fuels by using other cost-efficient technologies.
- Renewing the rain gardens with new native plants and remove unsuitable existing plantings.
- Cleaning and sealing the new limestone patio wall cap.

We are grateful to all facilities members who have generously contributed their time and skills. Members and other helpers include Tim Abrahamson, Muffi Abrahamson, Paul Demeules, Stewart Herman, Craig Nelson, John Pignatello, Bob Paschke, Nathan Obrestad, and Tim Speidel. And thanks to all who recognize and encourage our work. Together we made a difference in 2025!

Craig Nelson and Robert Paschke, Facilities Co-chairs.

ULCH Financial Controls Committee (FCC) Report

The FCC works with the Executive Committee, and especially with the treasurer, to review the quarterly financial statements and annual budget projections, and to make financial suggestions as needed. FCC members: Candy Carlson, Emma Carpenter, Dan O'Loughlin, and Tim Abrahamson.

Financial Administrator Transition

At the end of February 2025, our former financial administrator resigned, and the FCC helped facilitate the transition to an interim financial administrator. In March, Emma Carpenter, who had been serving on the FCC, graciously accepted the temporary financial administrator position, while Candy Carlson generously filled Emma's position on the FCC. Candy and Emma deserve our accolades as their help in navigating a challenging transition was an incredible gift to the congregation.

In October, we welcomed Catherine Menick as our new financial administrator, and we are grateful to be blessed by her organizational skills, attention to detail, and eagerness to serve our congregation in this capacity. Candy withdrew from the FCC at the end of 2025, and Emma will rejoin the committee in 2026.

Tasks Accomplished in 2025

- We interviewed the candidate for financial administrator and recommended Catherine Menick as highly qualified to fill this position.
- We recommended Hope have a financial audit as soon as possible to confirm that our financial practices are in line with the ELCA Minneapolis Synod's guidelines.
- We recommended that Hope form a new committee, the Ad-Hoc Policy Committee, tasked with creating and recording both new and existing policies to facilitate the ongoing financial record keeping and provide best practices for financial controls at ULCH. Membership in the committee include, but is not limited to, Pastor Amanda Simons, Catherine Menick, and Candy Carlson.
- We audited the Bequest Account to ensure that the expenses were properly categorized.
- We consulted with the treasurer and the rest of the executive committee throughout the year and made recommendations to the 2026 Budget.
- Our former bank, Bremer Bank, was purchased by Old National Bank, a large regional banking conglomerate that no longer provided the services we desired. Hope concluded its relationship with Bremer and began a new relationship with Sunrise Bank in Saint Paul, which both provides us with the service we need and focuses on socially responsible community banking in the Twin Cities.
- We monitored our cash positions to ensure our monies are invested to provide us with interest income that supports the mission of the congregation.

Tim Abrahamson, FCC chair

Trust Board

I. Grants

The ULCH Trust Board received 14 requests for 2025 funding and was able to provide funding for 11 of them, for a total of \$34,625 (the unfunded requests were outside of the funding scope).

Hope Church Trust grants for 2025 were distributed for the following:

Project Name	Grant Amount
Small Sums (work items)	\$3,500
Civil Discourse Workshops	\$1,500
Give Us Wings (Uganda)	\$2,000
ULCH Website	\$2,500
Prayer Wall	\$1,550
ULCH Land Title Research	\$1875
Amnicon scholarship for PEASE	\$7,000
Giving Voice Chorus	\$1,500
Be That Neighbor	\$1,500
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$3,700
Geothermal/heat pump study	\$8,000
TOTAL	\$34,625

The 2025 grant application process began in September 2024. The Trust Board made preliminary decisions in the fall based off the last 5 years of financial income in several trust accounts. We then finalized grant decisions in early 2025, after year-end financial information was available. We were able to fund several grants with additional funds when the numbers came in higher than originally expected.

II. Finances

Financial numbers in this section can be found in the financial reports on page 34. 2025 end-of-year balances for all ULCH Trust accounts

Account Name	Balance
Equalization account	\$427.77
Old National checking account	\$4,379.64
LPL investment account	\$610,906.02
ELCA Foundation account	\$339,806.89

For more information on the ULCH Trust Board, go to www.ulch.org/trust-board, or contact a Trust Board member.

Co-Chairs: Shelly Parry and Leena Rapacz; Treasurer: James Flaten; Secretary: Tim Hopkins
Board Members: Meri Hauge, Kathy Kufus, Kerry

Leadership Development

“Leadership Development” is the ULCH committee responsible for nominations and recruitment for constitutionally mandated leadership positions in the Congregation. This includes executive leadership roles (President, Vice President, Past President and Treasurer), Vision and Governance Board members, and other select congregational committees. In any given year, the Committee identifies open positions and, in consultation with Executive leaders and the lead pastor, creates lists of possible candidates. Committee members then reach out to individuals to gauge their interest and availability and develop a slate of candidates. The elected members of this year’s committee were Jan Sanden, Karen Westwood and Jacob Lanthier. This year’s work was complicated (yet enriched!) by the arrival of our new Lead Pastor in the fall when we typically begin our work, followed by Karen Westwood’s departure for a Fulbright in North Macedonia shortly thereafter. However, new technology and a spirit of flexibility and understanding enabled us to complete our work. We are blessed with strong and abundant leaders in this congregation and all those we corresponded with thoughtfully considered the invitation to accept a leadership role in the congregation. We are thus pleased to be able to present another exceptionally strong list of candidates for ULCH leadership. Karen Westwood, Jacob Lanthier, Jan Sanden - Leadership Development Committee

Leadership Nominations

Names in **bold** are nominees. *Ending** is the annual meeting held in February of that year.

Officers

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
President	1 year	Kelly Brooks	2027	<i>N/A</i>
Past President	1 year	Eric Ringham ¹	2027	<i>N/A</i>
Vice President	1 year	Matthew Fry	2027	<i>N/A</i>
Treasurer	2 years, 1x re-elect	Mark Nelson	2028	Term 1

Vision and Governance Board Members -at-Large

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Worship and Music	2 years, 1x re-elect	Jaelyn Hawkins	2028	Term 1
Education		Nan Knutsen	2027	<i>Term 1</i>
Youth and Young Adults		Zach Rau	2028	Term 2
Relational Ministries		Tomi McLellan	2027	<i>Term 1</i>
Hope in the World		Ann Beane	2027	<i>Term 1</i>

Financial Controls Committee

¹ Completing term of John Pignatello

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	3 years, 1x re-elect	Tim Abrahamson	2029	Term 2
Member #2		Dan O'Loughlin	2027	Term 1
Member #3		Emma Carpenter	2028	Term 2

Personnel Committee

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	3 years, 1x re-elect	John Beane	2029	Term 2
Member #2		Elizabeth Lincoln²	2027	Term 1
Member #3		Stephanie Struthers	2028	Term 1

Facilities Committee

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	3 years, 1x re-elect	Bob Paschke	2029	Term 2
Member #2		Tim Speidel	2027	Term 2
Member #3		Tim Abrahamson	2027	Term 1
Member #4		Paul Demeules	2027	Term 2
Member #5		Craig Nelson	2028	Term 2

Gratitude & Generosity

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	3 years, 1x re-elect	Ben Hartmann	2029	Term 2
Member #2		TBD	2029	Term 1
Member #3		Bill Sanden	2028	Term 1
Member #4		Karen Westwood	2028	Term 1

Leadership Development Committee

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	2 years, 1x re-elect	Karen Westwood	2027	Term 2
Member #2		Jacob Lanthier	2028	Term 2
Member #3		Jan Sanden ³	2027	Term 2

Synod Convention

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Lay Delegate #1	1 year	Jan Sanden	2026	N/A
Lay Delegate #2		TBD	2026	N/A
Alternate		Kelly Brooks	2026	N/A
Youth Delegate		TBD	2026	N/A

² Completing term of Mark Nelson

³ Completing term of Esther Dant

Trust Board

<i>Title</i>	<i>Term Length</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ending*</i>	<i>Term</i>
Member #1	4 years, 2 consecutive terms max	James Flaten	2029	Term 2
Member #2		Shelly Parry	2028	Term 1
Member #3		Leena Rapacz	2028	Term 2
Member #4		Tim Hopkins	2030	Term 2
Member #5		Kerry Pearson	2029	Term 1
Member #6		Kathy Kufus	2029	Term 1
Member #7		TBD by the Trust Board	2030	Term 1

Treasurer's Report

This year has been a year of transition in many respects – new pastoral leadership with the calling of Pastor Amanda Simons, and mid-year changes to several other positions: the Financial Administrator position, Vision and Governance Board President, Treasurer, and the Worship and Music Liaison. While change can be challenging, it can also bring new energy, insights, and perspectives to our community.

Our new Financial Administrator, Catherine Menick, has been a welcome addition to our staff, offering a fresh perspective and a well-informed, in-depth review of our financial operations. She, along with Pastor Amanda, Nathan, the V&G Board, and the Financial Controls Committee, have worked hard to implement many financial system improvements, with more to come. Many thanks to Emma Carpenter for her invaluable support of the Financial Administrator role during the search for a permanent replacement.

The general trend for the year was month-by-month giving and overall income falling short of expenses, especially given the higher than anticipated natural gas costs and other unforeseen operational expenses. That all being the case, December saw strong levels of giving and receipt of stock gifts, with YTD giving totaling \$625K. This giving, combined with rental, parking lot, and interest income brought total income for 2025 to \$822K, which represents 109% of budget.

Operations spending finished at \$120K, 123% of budgeted, and our total expenses continued to decline vs budget, closing out the year at \$742K, or 99% of budgeted spending. Ministry area spending averaged 45% of budget; we encourage ministry areas to spend as planned.

All of this, combined with the strong response to our fall pledge drive, has allowed for the successful development of a balanced budget for 2026. We look forward to a new year of visioning and boldly going forth in mission, with knowledge that we stand on a strong financial foundation.

Thank you for your ongoing, faithful support of our community and ministry.

In Christ, Jack Dant, Interim Treasurer

2025 Actuals – Profit and Loss

Income Statement
University Lutheran Church of Hope
For the Year Ended December 31, 2025

	Actual	Budgeted	Variance
INCOME			
Giving	\$ 624,706	\$ 570,125	\$ 54,581
Rental Income	\$ 164,741	\$ 152,209	\$ 12,532
Interest Income	\$ 33,050	\$ 28,921	\$ 4,129
Total Income	\$ 822,497	\$ 751,255	\$ 71,242
EXPENSES			
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 468,557	\$ 485,949	\$ (17,392)
Administration	\$ 43,479	\$ 48,578	\$ (5,099)
Operations	\$ 116,495	\$ 97,716	\$ 18,779
Education Ministries	\$ 2,749	\$ 4,000	\$ (1,251)
Hope in the World	\$ 6,247	\$ 17,100	\$ (10,853)
Worship Ministries	\$ 10,308	\$ 13,661	\$ (3,353)
Relational Ministries	\$ 1,695	\$ 3,950	\$ (2,255)
Mission Support	\$ 36,082	\$ 39,363	\$ (3,280)
Youth & Youth Adults Ministry	\$ (8)	\$ 2,100	\$ (2,108)
FINANCE			
Mortgage Expense (General Fund Only for 2025 Actual)	\$ 52,896	\$ 135,924	
Solar Loan (2025 Includes P&I)	\$ 12,439	\$ 8,631	
Transfer from Building Fund to Cover Mortgage	-	\$ (83,028)	\$ -
Total Finance	\$ 65,335	\$ 61,527	
Total Expenses	\$ 750,941	\$ 773,944	\$ (23,003)
Net Operating Surplus	\$ 71,557	\$ (22,689)	\$ 94,245

2025 Actuals – Balance Sheet (1)

Balance Sheet
University Lutheran Church of Hope
As of December 31, 2025

	<u>2025 Actual</u>
ASSETS	
Sunrise Checking	\$ 168,014.91
Sunrise Savings	\$ 35,008.31
Bremer/Old National	\$ 24,482.16
e*Trade	\$ 595,630.53
Total Banking	\$ 823,135.91
Accounts Receivable	\$ 1,006.53
Total Current Assets	\$ 824,142.44
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 2,683,651.78
Total Assets	\$ 3,507,794.22
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Total Current Liabilities	\$ (5,146.13)
Long-term Liabilities	
MIF Mortgage	\$ 155,349.23
Notes Payable	\$ 107,005.65
Interest Payable	\$ (21,090.69)
Total Long-term Liabilities	\$ 241,264.19
Total Liabilities	\$ 236,118.06

Continued on next page

2025 Actuals – Balance Sheet (2)

EQUITY

Dedicated Funds	
Every Meal	\$ 1,303.29
Youth Fund	\$ 4,593.72
Disaster Relief	\$ 1,039.00
Baking Hope	\$ 5,061.02
Outreach Donations	\$ 2,114.00
	\$
Bequests Received	225,766.22
Music Fund	\$ 1,647.48
Fine Arts	\$ 3,864.02
Friendly Visitor	\$ 4,110.12
Trust Equalization Account	\$ 427.77
GATHER	\$ 4,122.27
Rolling Waters	\$ 3,940.00
Color of Hope	\$ 1,500.00
Opening Doors 2	\$ 70,498.28
Other Dedicated Funds	\$ 43,557.49
Total Dedicated Funds	\$ 373,544.68
Total Other Equity	\$ 2,898,131.48
	<hr/>
Total Equity	\$ 3,271,676.16
	<hr/>
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$ 3,507,794.22

Building Fund Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet

University Lutheran Church of Hope

Mission Investment Fund - Building Fund Account

As of December 31, 2025

	<u>2025 Actual</u>
ASSETS	
MIF Bank Balance	\$ 69,389.08
Total Assets	\$ 69,389.08
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Total Liabilities	
Total Equity	\$ 69,389.08
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 69,389.08

*The building fund will receive the Opening Doors 2 balance in 2026.

ULCH Trust Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet

University Lutheran Church of Hope

Mission Investment Fund - Building Fund Account

As of December 31, 2025

	<u>Total</u>
ASSETS	
Old National Checking	\$ 4,380
LPL Investment Account*	\$ 610,906
ELCA Foundation	\$ 339,807
Total Banking	\$ 955,093
Note Receivable - Solar Loan	\$ 104,095
Total Assets	\$ 1,059,188
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Total Liabilities	
Total Equity	\$ 1,059,188
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 1,059,188

* Formerly Raymond James

2025 Actuals – Benevolence Giving

**Benevolences Given
University Lutheran Church of Hope
For the Year Ended December 31, 2025**

Organizations	Amount
ELCA Mission Support	\$ 36,082
Lutheran Campus Ministries	\$ 2,500
Portland House	\$ 500
Camp Amnicon	\$ 7,000
Bread for the World	\$ 300
Total Giving	\$ 46,382

2026 Budget

Pledge to Budget Planning

University Lutheran Church of Hope Pledge to Budget Planning Worksheet

Year	Pledges	\$ Change in Pledges	% Change in Pledges	General Giving Budget	Pledge/ Budget Ratio	General Giving Actual
2026	\$ 512,818	\$ 51,896	11.26%	\$ 615,382	1.20	
2025	\$ 460,922	\$ 6,232	1.37%	\$ 562,325	1.22	\$ 570,125
2024	\$ 454,690	\$ 20,799	4.79%	\$ 554,722	1.22	\$ 567,001
2023	\$ 433,911	\$ 5,204	1.21%	\$ 529,371	1.22	\$ 507,832
2022	\$ 428,707	\$ 20,181	4.94%	\$ 510,161	1.19	\$ 569,690
2021	\$ 408,526	\$ 6,231	1.55%	\$ 502,487	1.23	\$ 503,483
2020	\$ 402,295	\$ 31,835	8.59%	\$ 492,000	1.26	\$ 503,839
2019	\$ 370,460	\$ 23,465	6.76%	\$ 482,020	1.30	\$ 481,700
2018	\$ 346,995	\$ 42,631	14.01%	\$ 495,707	1.43	\$ 464,718

2026 Budget

University Lutheran Church of Hope Annual Budget - Fiscal Year 2026

INCOME		Total
Giving Income	\$	616,516
Rental Income	\$	162,150
Interest Income	\$	15,000
Total Income	\$	793,666
EXPENSES		
Salaries & Benefits	\$	492,724
Administration	\$	55,861
Operations	\$	104,152
Education Ministries	\$	4,250
Hope in the World	\$	12,200
Worship Ministries	\$	15,210
Relational Ministries	\$	3,184
Mission Support	\$	39,350
Youth & Youth Adults Ministry	\$	1,400
Total Expenses	\$	728,331
FINANCE		
Mortgage Expense	\$	52,896
Solar Loan Expense	\$	12,439
Total Finance	\$	65,335
Total Expenses	\$	793,666
Net Operating Income	\$	0.00

University Lutheran Church of Hope Staff For 2025

Lead Pastor	Amanda Simons (since October 2025)
Interim Lead Pastor	Susan Debner (into August 2025)
Pastor	Maria Anderson-Lippert
Minister of Worship and Music	Paul Stever
Church Administrator	Nathan Obrestad
Financial Administrator	Kari Olson (into February 2025)
Interim Financial Administrator ...	Emma Carpenter (February - October 2025)
Financial Administrator.....	Catherine Menick (since October 2025)
Custodian	Geremew Beshah
Sunday Opener/Closer	Seth Strudthoff (into July 2025)
Sunday Opener/Closer	Evan Peterson (since fall 2025)
Worship Technology	Seth Strudthoff (into July 2025)
Sunday School	Madeline Lind (September – December 2025)

Statistical Report

Membership beginning of 2025 748

Members received in 2025

Baptized Children	1
Baptized Adults	0
By Affirmation of Faith	0
By Transfer	7
From Other Sources	0

Total Gains

.....	8
Number of Baptized who were Confirmed	5

Members removed in 2025

Deaths	11
Transfer	1
Other	0
Total Removed	0

Membership as of December 31, 2025 744



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Thoughtful Church.

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