

Shepherd of 2024 the Cross



WELCOME - GROW - SEND

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A Message from our Pastor, Pastor Aleese

Have you ever noticed that our worship has a pattern? Even if we adapt some elements, we *gather*, we hear God's *Word*, we receive Christ's *sacrament*, and we are *sent* forth in mission. Take a look at our bulletin, or inside our hymnal, and you'll see this pattern spelled out as our worship flows through four key movements: Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending.

This is the rhythm of our weekly worship. Another way to think about it is that each week we are *welcomed* together, we *grow* in Christ as Christ is revealed to us, and we are *sent* as God's servants.

Welcome. Grow. Send.

At one point in our history at Shepherd, "Welcome. Grow. Send" became a tagline for our congregation. For various reasons, over the years, it got pushed to the side. But recently, when our Marketing and Communications Team was adapting our logo, the team considered adding a tagline. After some conversation, this phrase - "Welcome. Grow. Send" - came back to the surface. And through consideration - along with our Council - we recognized that this phrase is not just some cute-sy way to describe our congregation. Rather, this phrase is a reflection of our worship, a reflection of our lives as disciples, and a reflection of our congregation's identity.

Because it's not just *in worship* that we follow this pattern. Indeed, it is our daily rhythm as we *live out* of our faith. For as we are welcomed in the name of Christ, now we go forth to welcome others. As we grow in Christ as our vine, we nurture places of growth for others. And as we are sent, we live as servants in God's Kingdom.

Welcome. Grow. Send.

This *is* our rhythm as Christian people. *And*, this is a key part of Shepherd's identity. Throughout our history, and to this day, we have welcomed people to find a home in this community of faith. Even beyond our doors, we have extended ourselves throughout the greater Muscatine community to offer welcome to refugees, and we have welcomed people from other churches and denominations as we collaboratively work in God's mission.

And from that shared sense of belonging, we've grown. Growth is all too often measured in numbers of people or dollars in a bank account. But in God's Kingdom,

growth is not measured in digits. Growth is about being *nurtured* in faith as we are transformed by the Spirit. Which is one reason why Shepherd *continues* to be a leader in advocating for, and providing leaders for, numerous faith formation opportunities (not only for Shepherd, but for *anyone!*) as we grow in our relationship with God and one another.

Growth is important. But even growth isn't where we stop. For from that growth we are sent to bear God's light into the world. Over the years, Shepherd has been a shining example of God's hope in our community. And, Shepherd has also sent numerous people *from* this community on to the next step of their journey. Some of us may remember faces of those who've departed from Shepherd. And while we miss them (of course!) we also give thanks for the opportunity to grow *with* them and *from* them, and we send them with our blessing so that they can live out their calling wherever God has led them.

Welcome. Grow. Send.

This is our rhythm of worship, our lived rhythm as disciples, and our rhythm as a congregation. So as we approach another year, may each of *you* be summoned by the Spirit to embody these movements of discipleship - one leading to another. And may we, as a congregation, be open to God's leading as we are sent in service to Christ and to one another.

A Message from our President, Delene McConnaha

Dear Beloved Shepherds,

As we gather for this year's annual meeting, I am filled with gratitude for the ways God has been at work among us. This congregation is not just a place to worship; it is a family where people are welcomed, nurtured in their faith, and sent out to make a difference in the world.

From the moment someone walks through our doors—or joins us online—we strive to express the love of Jesus Christ. Whether it's through a warm smile, a shared cup of coffee, or an invitation to join a small group, we reflect the love and grace of God that embraces everyone.

This year, we've seen new faces and old friends reconnect, and it's a witness to the Spirit working through our open hearts and hands. Thank you for being part of that welcome, for showing newcomers that they are valued and loved just as they are.

One of my greatest joys is seeing people grow in their relationship with Christ. Through worship, Bible studies, youth programs, and opportunities for spiritual reflection, we deepen our faith together.

This year, we've celebrated a baptism and moments of renewed commitment to Christ. We have struggled with Scripture, prayed for one another, and supported each other in times of joy and challenge. This is the heart of our church—to help one another grow into the fullness of life that Christ wants for us.

Faith is not something we keep to ourselves. It moves us to action. This year, we have seen incredible acts of service—feeding the hungry and supporting local families. Each of you is part of this mission, whether through volunteering, giving, or simply sharing Christ's love in your everyday lives. Together, we are living out the call to be Christ's hands and feet in the world.

As we step into another year, I am excited about what God has in store for us. May we continue to be a congregation that welcomes the stranger, nurtures faith, and sends disciples into the world. Let us walk forward together with gratitude, and boldness, trusting that God is with us in every step of our journey.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your prayers, and your dedication to this community. You are the church, and through you, God's light shines brightly.

In Christ's love and service,
Delene McConnaha, Church Council President

Ministry Highlights: Welcome

We are welcomed together as one in the body of Christ by the Spirit. This year we had the privilege of welcoming **Gracelynn Marie Gilbert** to our flock through the sacrament of baptism. Later in the summer, **Bailey Booth** confessed her faith and affirmed the promises made to her in baptism, joining herself to our shared mission. And be on the lookout! Because soon in the new year we are looking forward to receiving more new members!

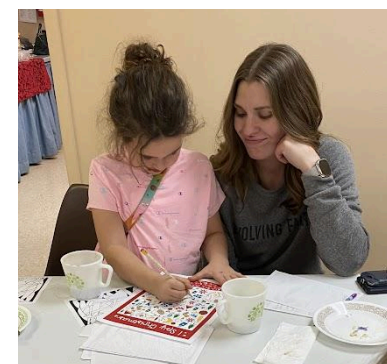


Beyond worship, we also have the opportunity to welcome one another - to hear joys and sorrows from our lives - each week during fellowship, and especially during events hosted by our Social Team (**Christmas Party, Game Nights, River Bandits Baseball Game**).



But it's also beyond our doors that we've welcomed others this year.

We've **welcomed New Era into the collaborative initiative of Faith Together Muscatine** (between Shepherd, Grace, Zion, and New Era) and hosted two joint worship services. Since the fall, Pastor Aleese began providing regular worship services for New Era, on a rotation with Pastor Willie (Zion), Pastor Susan (Grace), and Pastor Erika (Lutheran Living chaplain).



We are stronger together. Which is why we **partnered with four other congregations (Faith United Church of Christ, First Presbyterian, Island United Methodist, Wesley United Methodist) for Lent.**

Over a shared meal, worship, Scripture, and conversation, we had the opportunity to extend welcome to one another (and to grow!)



Beyond our church walls, you all offered welcome to Ukrainian refugees who are beginning a home here in the Muscatine area. Numerous times you all answered the call with needed household items...often at the last minute.

Ministry Highlights: Grow

People at Shepherd often express that they gather together because they enjoy *being together*. But the *reason* we gather is to grow in faith. This year was full of growth through worship - especially as we continued to involve the entire congregation during **storytelling time**, and as we explored special seasons of the church year like our **Advent theme of "Words for the Beginning."**



Outside of worship, kids, youth, and adults gathered in spaces ripe with transformation. As a part of the **Family Faith Night program**, several of our elementary kids and youth participated in the elementary and middle school groups, and our adults grew as a part of **Big Questions and Sojourners**. New for the 2024-2025 school year, a high school group formed.



Outside of Wednesdays, a new group of **Companions** began this fall, and the **summer book club** continued for its third year in a row. **Re:Storied** has also been hosted at Zion, providing an opportunity to dive deeper in God's Word. And in the midst of these groups, **Christians Underground** and **Women's Group** continue to meet on a regular basis. And...did we mention that many of these groups include members from *numerous* congregations?



This summer our kids got in on the fun by participating in **Christian Day Camp** (for its second year), a collaborative effort between *numerous* congregations in the area. This summer Christian Day Camp had offerings for elementary, middle school, *and* preschool. Outside of Muscatine, we



also sent 4 youth to **Camp EWALU** in Strawberry Point.

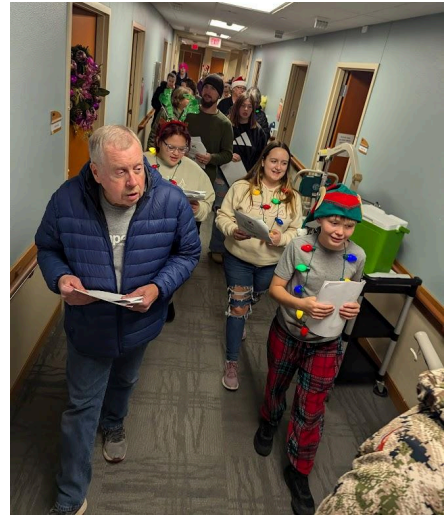
In lieu of a traditional Sunday School time, our Education Team led several **Shepherd Kids Days**. Our kids explored the sacrament of Holy Communion on Good Friday, dove into the topic of stewardship this fall (and also did some service projects around the church), and had a special Kids Elves afternoon before Christmas as they learned about the Christmas story, rang bells at HyVee, and grocery shopped for the MCSA Food Pantry.



Ministry Highlights: Send

Each Sunday we close our worship service with something like - "Go in peace. Serve the Lord." Each season might vary in wording, but the commission is the same: to go forth as laborers into the harvest.

This year you all were sent to offer your service by participating in **Family Faith Night Service Nights - like caroling and packing diapers**. You also participated in numerous **drives** to respond to needs within our community, gathering things like socks, diapers, and winter outerwear. At the initiative of some Council members, we also jumped started our **regular collection of food items for the MCSA Food Pantry**.



During the holidays, you **supported 20 families in having a Christmas Breakfast bag** provided for them and gave **gifts to 16 Lutheran Services of Iowa kids** through the Angel Tree. And, based on a spontaneous plea to gather money for our kids to grocery shop with during their Shepherds Kids Day, you raised \$196 in cash on one Sunday alone! (continue to send those dollars up with our kids!)



As an annual event, Shepherd hosted **Soup Fest** in early November, raising \$1,432.00. Half of those proceeds went to the Almoner's Fund - a community wide discretionary fund to respond to needs not covered by other resources - and the other half supported the ministry of the Southeastern Iowa Synod. In addition to this Products of the Flock contributed \$390.00 to the Emergency Discretionary Fund.



Beyond these service projects, Shepherd also participated with other Faith Together Muscatine churches to serve the greater community through another **Trunk or Treat** event. Together we hosted at least 200 kids

And even within our own congregation, we sent one of our own - Owen Christy - **off to college** to continue his journey. Wherever we go, and wherever we find ourselves, we are sent in Christ's name to do the work of God.



Welcome. Grow. Send.: By the Numbers

Total membership as of January 1, 2024: 165

Baptized members: 165

Confirmed members: 96

In 2024, we received new members by:

Holy Baptism: 1

Transfer: 0

Affirmation of Faith/New Members: 0

From other sources for statistical adjustment: 0

Total received in membership: 1

In 2024, we reduced membership by:

Death: 1

Transfer: 0

Inactivity: 0

Request for removal: 0

From other sources for statistical adjustment: 0

Total removed from membership: 1

Total membership as of December 31, 2024: 165

Baptized members: 165

Confirmed members: 97

Members confirmed during 2024: 1

Welcome. Grow. Send.: Entrusting Our Financial Resources to Christ

Statement of Financial Position¹

Checking

General Checking Funds	\$13,172.99
Total Checking	\$13,172.99

Savings

General Savings Funds	\$10,459.16
Designated Savings	\$10,405.29
Total Savings	\$20,864.45

Capital Campaign Savings

Capital Campaign	\$684.49
HVAC Capital Campaign	\$20,680.00
Total Capital Campaign Savings	\$21,364.49

Total Banking Accounts **\$55,401.93**

Christian Day Camp **\$5,590.79**

Faith Together Muscatine **\$1,522.57**

Year to Date:

General Budget - Income:	\$128,268.18
General Budget/Other Income ² :	\$133,654.18
General Budget - Expenses:	\$144,783.57

**Difference between General Budget/Other Income
and General Budget Expenses:** **-\$11,129.39**

¹ Note this financial report is presented on a cash-basis, which does not include any fixed assets. See note under Audit Committee Report noting the rationale for presenting a financial report on a cash-basis. Balances are as of 12/31/2024.

² Other income includes: Wonder Years rent, Building use rent, and Crown Castle payment.

Audit Committee Report

Note: A preliminary report by the Audit Committee was presented to the Congregation Council during Council's meeting on Tuesday, December 17, 2024. At that time, Council moved to present the audit committee report to the congregation for approval. If you have specific questions or concerns, contact our Audit Committee members (Konnie Wilke, Kim Barling), treasurer (Linda Adams) or office manager (Kathy Dunham).

To the Congregation Council of Shepherd of the Cross Lutheran Church ("SOTC")

Audit Committee Authorization and Purpose

Pursuant to section C13.03 of the Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of SOTC, the Congregation Council elected three voting members of the congregation to serve on the SOTC Audit Committee. The primary purpose of the Audit Committee is to assist the Congregation Council in fulfilling its general oversight of the congregation's accounting, financial reporting, and internal control systems.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Records and Statements

Management of SOTC is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the organization's financial records; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

The Audit Committee was instructed to conduct a financial audit and submit a written report to the Congregation Council summarizing the 2024 audit process and results. Any limitations or deficiencies noted during the audit process and recommendations for improvement were to be included in this report.

The Audit Committee designed and performed procedures to obtain evidence concerning the amounts presented in the December 31, 2024 financial statements. The procedures selected were dependent on the Audit Committee's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial records and statements. In making those risk assessments, the Audit Committee considered existing internal controls relevant to the organization's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements.

Limitations

Independent outside certified public accountants were not engaged to conduct the financial audit and, therefore, the Congregation Council is reminded the performance by the Audit Committee of various auditing procedures and this resultant final written report are not to be construed as an independent financial audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards nor should this be considered a fraud audit.

Opinion

Subject to the aforementioned **Limitations** and the **Current Topics for Consideration and Deficiencies** and **Prior Topics for Consideration and Response of Council** which follow, the Audit Committee believes its work sufficient to provide the Congregation Council reasonable assurance that:

1. the financial records are materially accurate;
2. the financial controls are designed and operating effectively; and
3. the congregation's December 31, 2024 financial statements accurately reflect the congregation's financial results and position in all material respects.

Current Topics for Consideration and Deficiencies

1. Pursuant to a recommendation in last year's Audit Report, several additional individuals have been trained to serve as money counters. It was noted during the current audit, however, that occasionally two counters have not been available or willing to perform this important control function. On such occasions, the Office Manager unilaterally counts, documents and deposits the funds. This occasional lack of dual control over this function presents a financial risk to the church and puts the Office Manager in an awkward position. We recommend the Council reemphasize to each trained counter the importance of their role in the dual control process of counting and documenting funds given to the church.

Response - Both Council and the Administration and Finance Team have reviewed this recommendation. Council agreed to make a verbal announcement requesting additional counters, in addition to adding the request for counters to the church volunteer sign up in January 2025. The Administration and Finance Team reviewed the Deposit and Reconciliation Form, along with the Money Counting Instructions, to ensure that the process for counters was clear. Training will be provided for new counters and reminders will be offered to current counters as needed.

Prior Topics for Consideration and Response of Council

1. As noted in several previous audits, the Statement of Financial Position is prepared on a cash basis. Since accrual accounting is not employed, no accounts receivable or payable are shown on the financial statements. Also, no amounts for the church building, equipment, fixtures and land are shown as assets of SOTC. Obviously, omission of these assets greatly understates the true net assets position of the church.

To keep the Congregation fully informed as to why such assets are not included in the financial statements published in the Annual Report, please review the following *Response of Council*.

Response of Council:

In 2022, Council – in collaboration with our Property Board and Technology Teams – worked to complete a Fixed Asset spreadsheet. The intent was to outline our assets a) to have a complete listing of our assets outside of bank accounts, and b) to aid in planning for future large purchases (i.e. replacement of AC units, computers, etc.). We were able to complete a portion of this spreadsheet for planning purposes, but were unable to accurately complete the spreadsheet to reflect an accurate listing of what our assets are worth. Because of this, Council moved to continue presenting our statement of financial position based on a cash basis. When an estimate of our assets is necessary, we will rely on numbers provided by our insurance company.

Respectfully submitted by the SOTC Audit Committee:

Kim Bartling
Konrad Wilke

Welcome. Grow. Send.: Through the Work of the Church

Annual Meeting Minutes – January 28, 2024

Call Meeting to Order

Meeting called to order by Kim Bartling at 10:09 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Roger Luft to approve this meeting's agenda. Second by Mike Schulte. Unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes from Congregational Meetings in 2023

MOTION by Mark Petersen to approve the minutes from the 2023 Congregational Meeting. Second by Roger Luft. Unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report - Statement of Financial Position

- o **Statement of Financial Position: Pg. 14-15 on Annual Report. Presented by Mark Petersen on behalf of Treasurer Matt Bentz. Note: Balances are as of 12/31/2023.**
 - o **General Budget: \$135,636**
 - o **General Budget Revenue: \$127,064.95**
 - o **General Budget Expenses: \$126,500.00**
 - o **General Budget Gain: \$564.65**
 - o **Checking balance: \$16,863.22**
 - o **General Savings balance: \$11,189.94.**
 - o **Capital Campaign Savings balance: \$21,318.70.**

Questions may be directed to Pastor Aleese or Matt Bentz.

MOTION by Marlys Grete to approve the 2023 Statement of Financial Position. Second by Kaia Petersen. Unanimously approved.

Audit Committee Report

- **Committee members include Konnie Wilke, Wendy Thompson and Roger Luft. Questions may be directed to committee members, Treasurer Matt Bentz or President Delene McConnaha.**

Roger Luft presented a brief summary of the Audit Committee Report. The Audit Committee recommends that we encourage more people to count money after church services, so the same people are not counting all of the time. The Audit Committee recommends setting up a rotation of 8-10 people.

Nominations and Elections for Council Positions, Synod Assembly, and Nominating Committee – *nominations can be found on page 29 of this report.*

- **Council Positions**
 - **Council President: Delene McConnaha**
 - **Council Vice President: Gladys Reif**
 - **Secretary: Erin Jorgensen**
 - **Treasurer: OPEN**
 - **Liaison 1: Connie Hoekstra**
 - **Liaison 2: Joanne Drinkall**
 - **Liaison 3: Melissa Booth**
- **Synod Assembly Voting Members: Leslie Eichelberger and Connie Hoekstra**
- **Nominating Committee**
 - **Vice President: Gladys Reif**
 - **Outgoing Member of Council: Kim Bartling**
 - **Member of Stewardship Team: Mackenzie Gilbert**
 - **Voting Member of Congregation: Leslie Eichelberger**

MOTION by Mike Schulte to approve the slate of nominations as presented. Second by Gary Grete. Unanimously approved.

Treasurer Position

No nominations put forward from the floor for a two-year term for the Treasurer position.

Presented three options for part-time treasurer options as offered by the Administration and Finance Team. Council is entertaining amending the constitution to allow a non-member to perform Treasurer duties. Questions, please contact Pastor Aleese.

Year in Review

This year, we do not have a video to present because other things have taken priority including leadership decisions and shared ministry. We have been Sharing the Good News by Cultivating Faith, Fostering Community, Embodying Collaboration and Extending Ourselves in Service.

Adjourn

MOTION by Leslie Eichelberger to adjourn this meeting at 10:22 a.m. Second by Mark Petersen. Unanimously approved.

Congregational Meeting Minutes – June 23, 2024

Call Meeting to Order – Delene McConnaha

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Mackenzie Gilbert to approve the agenda as written. Second by Kaia Petersen. Unanimously approved.

Report on Financial Position of Congregation

Report from Treasurer on Financial Position of Congregation – Linda Adams

- **General Funds Income: \$44,843.41**
- **General Funds/WY Income: \$46,593.41**

- **General Funds Expenses to date: \$54,361.48**

- **Difference between income and expenses**
 - **Not including WY payments: \$-\$9,518.07**
 - **Including WY payments: -\$7,768.07**

Figures are as of May 31, 2024

No motion needed

Presentation, Discussion, and Vote on Cell Tower Lease Agreement

- **Lease between SOTC and Crown Castle Towers was reviewed by Jamie Boston as well as SOTC insurance company.**
 - **Lease is signed for 50 years, however it is reviewed every 5 years.**
- **SOTC negotiated \$1100/month rent, and each year, rent with increase by 2.5%.**
- **Discussed the use of the funds from the cell tower – SOTC Council has discussed using the funds for internal and external ministry. Delene suggested taking thoughts for the use of the rent funds to Council members. No decision has been made at this time.**

- **Discussed conduit that was buried last year and the trucks for construction going over that. Nick Gilbert is not concerned about the conduit being affected. After initial construction, it will only be light-duty vehicles.**

MOTION by SOTC Council at the May 28, 2024, Council meeting to recommend to the congregation to approve the Cell Tower Lease Agreement as presented. Second by Leslie Eichelberger. Unanimously approved.

Presentation, Discussion, and Vote on Proposed Constitutional Changes

MOTION by SOTC Council at the May 28, 2024, Council meeting to recommend to the congregation to approve the Proposed Constitutional Changes as presented. Second by Marlys Grete. Unanimously approved.

No discussion.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Delene McConnaha.

Congregational Budget Meeting Minutes – November 24, 2024

Call Meeting to Order – Delene McConnaha

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Mackenzie Gilbert to approve the agenda as written. Second by Connie Hoekstra. Unanimously approved.

Report from Treasurer on Financial Position of Congregation – given by Pastor Aleese on behalf of Linda Adams, absent because ill (current as of Nov. 17, 2024)

- **Checking Account Balance: \$10,579.00**
- **Savings Account Balance: \$20,032.73**
 - **Designated Savings: \$7,574.41**
 - **Undesignated Savings: \$12,458.26**
- **Capital Campaign Savings Balance: \$21,356.36**
 - **Reserved for HVAC: \$20,680.00**
 - **Undesignated: \$676.36**
- **General Funds Income: \$110,691.47**
- **General Funds/Other Income: \$113,794.47**
- **General Funds Expenses to date: \$122,695.89**
- **Difference between income and expenses:**
 - **Not including other income: -\$12,004.42**
 - **Including other income: -\$8,901.42**

Thank you video from Bishop Current for SOTC Mission Support
Delene updated total amount SOTC has been given to \$4631

No motion needed

Presentation and Discussion of Budget

- **Proposed 2025 Budget**
 - **2024 SOTC Budget: \$139,842.37**
 - **2025 Proposed SOTC Budget: \$147,187.93**

Vote on proposed budget

Note that the budget, as presented, has been reviewed and recommended by our Congregational Council for adoption on October 22, 2024.

MOTION by SOTC Congregational Council to approve the 2024 budget as presented. Second by Mackenzie Gilbert. Unanimously approved.

No discussion.

Cell Tower Update

- At the end of August/early September SOTC received, signed, and sent to Crown Castle the contract for the cell tower. Crown Castle, in turn, signed the contract and sent it back to us.
- This means that we are now in the “option” period of the contract. We have received \$2000 for Option Year 1. Crown Castle still has the option to back out of the contract if something comes up with zoning, etc. Council agreed that these funds be put into Savings
- We also received a \$500 reimbursement for our attorney fees. These monies went into checking to cover that expense.
- Once “improvements” begin (aka: construction), we will start to receive a monthly rent of \$1,100.
- Council has begun discerning how to allocate money once we move out of the option period. When monthly rent checks begin, we will most likely split the \$1100 rent by percentages Strong inclination by Council is for a percentage to stay at SOTC and a percentage to support broader missions
- Questions can be directed to Council members: Delene McConnaha, Gladys Reif, Erin Jorgensen, Linda Adams, Kathy Dunham, Connie Hoekstra, Joanne Drinkall, Melissa Booth.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Delene McConnaha

Agenda for Annual Meeting – January 26, 2025

Call Meeting to Order

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes from Congregational Meetings in 2024

Report from Treasurer on Statement of Financial Position

Report from Audit Committee

Nominations and Elections for Council Positions, Synod Assembly, and Nominating Committee – *nominations can be found on page 23 of this report*

Year in Review

Adjourn

Nominations for Election, January 2025

Council Positions

	Completing Year 2 of term (January 2025- January 2026)	Nominated in 2025 for a 2-year term (January 2025 - January 2027)
President		Daryl Eichelberger
Vice President	Gladys Reif	
Secretary		Melissa Booth
Treasurer	Linda Adams	
Liaison 1	Connie Hoekstra	
Liaison 2	Joanne Drinkall	
Liaison 3		Melanie Wachtel

Synod Assembly Voting Members

Leslie Eichelberger
Blaine Booth

Nominating Committee

	Completing Year 2 of term (January 2025 - January 2026)	Nominated in 2024 for a 2-year term (January 2025 - January 2027)
Vice President	Gladys Reif	
Outgoing Member of Council	Kim Bartling	
Member of Stewardship Team		Heather Allen
Voting Member of Congregation		OPEN

