



Esperanza Lutheran Church  
2023  
Annual Report  
Of the year of 2022

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# **Opening the Congregational Meeting**

## **Prayer of Discernment**

God of grace and love, **you have a dream for us. Open the eyes of our hearts to see you at work. Unstop our ears to hear the call of your spirit. Unbind us from our fears that we might go where you lead.**

*Silence for reflection: Where might God be leading us?*

We pray by the Spirit's power in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

# President's Letter

## Ephesians 5:20

*Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Looking back over the past year, we, as a congregation, have much to be thankful for.

**We give thanks** for the Holy Spirit moving through us and breathing new life into us here at Esperanza.

**We give thanks** for the Holy Spirit working through Pastor Sarah and all of us as we look forward to an unknown but hopeful future filled with the love of God and love of our neighbors.

**We give thanks** for the ministry of Pastor Annemarie, who left after receiving a call from Nobel Hospice to serve as a chaplain. We give thanks for the two years of ministry that she provided to all of us.

**We give thanks** for the ministry of Pastor Sarah Stadler, who joined us in November, following the departure of Pastor Annemarie. As an intentional interim pastor, she will be working with our congregation to set a vision for our church as we prepare for the calling of a new pastor and assisting us in the calling process.

**We give thanks** for the outreach activities and programs provided by our congregation. Included among these are programs that address hunger, housing, comforting members in need, LSSW project, newborns, and others.

**We give thanks** for the joy of new members becoming part of our congregation and for the increased attendance in worship and other church activities.

**We give thanks** for the committees that support the life of our church, worship planning, member fellowship, communication – newsletters, advertisements, livestreaming, website, and others.

**We give thanks** for the joy of participating in baptisms.

**We give thanks** for the celebration of life of several members who passed away during the past year.

**We give thanks** for our positive financial outlook – thanks to a fun and successful stewardship program, member giving, increased attendance, and prudent and sound financial management.

**We give thanks** for the music activities including the choir, congregational singing, jazz nights, Lai's classical music performances and other special music events.

While this has been a year where we have experienced many changes and challenges, there is a strong sense of the Holy Spirit moving through us and a joyful anticipation as we move forward.

I personally give thanks to all of you for your support, friendship, love, and encouragement during the past year. It's been a privilege to have been able to worship, sing, study, pray, and work with each and every one of you.

Grace and Peace,

Jim Gisselquist

## Colossians 3:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ<sup>[a]</sup> rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ<sup>[a]</sup> dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

# Treasurer Annual Report

## Review of 2022 General Fund Results

We began 2022 in a difficult position financially. Pledging was down considerably from 2021. Had we built a budget reflecting this, there would have been severe reductions in our programming. Instead, Finance and Council recommended a budget based on giving similar to 2021. We communicated this was a stretch and would require careful monitoring.

Early in 2022, giving trends were falling well short of our budget. The Finance team communicated that the church could be facing a shortfall close to \$40,000 for the full year. Efforts were made to reduce expenses where possible. Contingency plans were developed.

While giving continued to fall well short of our budget, there were some signs of improvement over the summer. Due in part to full enrollment coupled with a sizeable grant from the state, the Preschool was able to make an unplanned donation to the church of \$10,000. Expenses continued to come in below budget.

While the outlook had improved, we were still projecting a shortfall as late as October.

Then by the grace of God, giving in December came in significantly higher than expected. And while full year giving still fell short of the original budget, when coupled with the unplanned Preschool donation and expense reductions, it was sufficient to end the year with a surplus of \$19,431.

## Review of 2023 General Fund Through April

Through April, our financial picture continues to look healthy. Giving is running better than our budget driven by a handful of giving units who have paid their full year pledge.

Expenses are a little higher than planned but much of this is timing. The third quarter invoice for property insurance was inadvertently paid in April. Personnel expenses were a little higher driven by Lenten activities and will likely be offset with lighter activity over the summer.

### COH Preschool:

As a reminder, the fiscal year for the Preschool runs July through April.

The Preschool finished their 2022 school year (12 months ending June 2022) with a net surplus of \$62,048. This was driven by full enrollment and a \$50,000 grant from the state of Arizona.

So far through April 2023 (10 months), the Preschool is running a surplus of \$66,499. This is again driven by full enrollment plus AZ grant funds totaling \$104,000. The grant ends in May 2023 and must be fully spent by September 2023. A sizeable portion of remaining grant funds will be used to replace the old playground equipment. See the attached schedules for fund balances and the church's balance sheet.

### Accomplishments:

The Finance team meets every month on the second Tuesday. Current members are Michael Paradise, Julie Valenzuela, Jim Gisselquist, Joni Thorpe, Mark Entsminger and Pastor Sarah. We are always looking for more help so if you would like to participate, please let us know.

Following is a summary of our work over the past year:

- Significant time and effort devoted to monitoring the 2022 financial situation, including development of contingency spending reductions if needed.
- Secured multiple bids to replace the copier lease that expired March 2023. Negotiated a new 3-year lease that is \$11,000 per year less than the prior lease, without giving up any copier functionality.
- Re-negotiated the existing lease on the postal meter for 1 year at a substantially lower rate.
- Instituted automatic payment of recurring bills.
- Updated signatories on bank and investment accounts.
- Corrected process for calculating fund balances.
- Developed 2023 Mission Plan that included substantial investments in key programming areas.
- Re-instated support license with Shepard's Staff and updated software. This is where we maintain our membership database and track individual giving.
- Transitioned Financial Secretary duties to Jane Gisselquist. Developed job description.

We would be remiss if we did not offer a note of thanks to Joni Thorpe and Jane Gisselquist. Joni handles all the bookkeeping and pays the bills in addition to running the office. But she fields lots of requests from the Finance team and rolls with the process changes we are constantly throwing her way. Jane was approved by the Council to take on the role of Financial Secretary. She has jumped in with both feet and within a few weeks is doing a great job and already making improvements.

Finally, thank you to members and friends of Esperanza for all you do and for supporting the missions of our church, both financially and with your time and talent.

Respectfully Submitted.

Mark Entsminger  
Finance Chair

Michael Paradise  
Treasurer

## Esperanza General Fund

April 30, 2023

	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Budget	April 2023 YTD Actual	B/(W) Budget	B/(W) Last Year
Pledged Giving	248,114	208,400	219,500	89,997	10,997	6,125
Non-pledged Giving	67,497	100,418	75,000	27,918	2,918	3,683
<b>Total Offerings</b>	<b>315,611</b>	<b>308,818</b>	<b>294,500</b>	<b>117,915</b>	<b>13,915</b>	<b>9,808</b>
Rental Donations	4,401	13,373	9,200	6,875	1,575	5,975
Interest, Schwab G/(L), Bldg Fund	159	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer from Spc Needs	0	1,200	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>320,171</b>	<b>323,391</b>	<b>303,700</b>	<b>124,790</b>	<b>15,490</b>	<b>15,783</b>
Worship	10,988	3,572	2,840	272	860	985
Education	394	203	360	388	(268)	(253)
Youth Ministry	0	1,060	1,600	0	525	1,060
Fellowship	149	663	700	753	(603)	(571)
Communication	1,789	1,438	2,200	1,166	(582)	(785)
Service (Synod/Mission)	11,975	10,400	13,400	3,350	0	(1,250)
Support	27,713	26,899	20,300	10,176	(1,683)	97
Property	52,180	56,464	56,274	23,505	(2,889)	(1,559)
Personnel	141,831	144,544	144,647	50,334	(1,646)	3,825
Benefits/Pension	23,904	22,851	18,959	6,505	(216)	1,052
Mortgage	38,048	35,866	41,866	11,955	0	0
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>308,971</b>	<b>303,960</b>	<b>303,146</b>	<b>108,404</b>	<b>(6,501)</b>	<b>2,602</b>
<b>Revenue Less Expense</b>	<b>11,200</b>	<b>19,431</b>	<b>554</b>	<b>16,387</b>	<b>8,989</b>	<b>18,385</b>

# Esperanza Lutheran Financial Position

April 30, 2023

	12/31/21	12/31/22	4/30/23
Checking/Savings Accounts	188,970	214,670	315,932
Brokerage Accounts	61,781	60,408	54,306
Cash Assets	250,751	275,078	370,238
Accounts Receivable	0	13,582	0
Fixed Assets (land/Building)	1,926,684	1,926,684	1,926,684
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>2,177,435</b>	<b>2,215,343</b>	<b>2,296,921</b>
Accounts Payable	1,495	36	0
Payroll Liabilities	(1,039)	(84)	(1,667)
Long Term Liabilities (Loans)	385,233	363,609	356,203
Total Liabilities	385,689	363,562	354,536
Equity	1,791,746	1,851,782	1,942,385
<b>Total Liability and Equity</b>	<b>2,177,435</b>	<b>2,215,343</b>	<b>2,296,921</b>

## Esperanza Preschool Fund

April 30, 2023

	FY Jun 2021	FY Jun 2022	FY Jun 2023	YTD Apr 2023	B/(W)	B/(W)
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Last Year
Tuition/Other	134,945	211,285	187,880	187,857	31,291	(3,073)
Grants	0	50,000	0	104,000	104,000	69,000
<b>Revenue</b>	134,945	261,285	187,880	291,857	135,291	65,927
Instructional	4,272	8,527	12,100	6,109	3,974	1,532
Administration	3,292	10,470	8,700	10,347	(3,097)	(2,150)
Facility	10,654	31,132	22,000	27,541	(9,208)	(12,163)
Fund Raising	3,178	6,591	1,000	4,589	(3,756)	1,231
Grant Spending	0	0	0	38,813	(38,813)	(38,813)
Personnel	106,616	142,517	141,996	137,959	(19,629)	(17,967)
<b>Expenses</b>	128,012	199,236	185,796	225,359	(70,528)	(68,329)
<b>Revenue Less Expense</b>	6,933	62,048	2,084	66,499	64,762	(2,403)

Reminder, Preschool fiscal year runs from July through June.

# Designated Funds (Purpose Restricted)

April 30, 2023

<b>Designated Fund</b>	<b>Balance 12/31/22</b>	<b>YTD Donations</b>	<b>YTD Expenditures</b>	<b>4/30/23</b>
17-0602 Property - Renovation	27,000.61	1,379.00	0.00	28,379.61
17-1045 Special Needs	24,854.78	0.00	0.00	24,854.78
17-0610 Property - Reserve	10,239.29	0.00	0.00	10,239.29
17-0621 Community Garden	5,689.88	350.00	250.45	5,789.43
17-0415 General Mission Projects	5,540.00	514.00	0.00	6,054.00
17-0300 Fellowship Events	2,478.79	475.00	0.00	2,953.79
17-0210 Adult Education	1,003.30	0.00	0.00	1,003.30
17-0140 Music	512.63	0.00	0.00	512.63
17-0220 Vacation Bible School	461.93	220.00	336.66	345.27
17-0481 Prayer Shawl Ministry	276.48	130.00	0.00	406.48
17-1010 Memorials	265.00	0.00	0.00	265.00
17-0450 World Hunger Appeal	119.33	0.00	0.00	119.33
17-0110 Flowers	0.00	350.00	473.38	(123.38)
<b>Subtotal Most Active</b>	<b>78,442.02</b>	<b>3,418.00</b>	<b>1,060.49</b>	<b>80,799.53</b>
<b>All Other Funds</b>	<b>1,685.51</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>16.16</b>	<b>1,689.35</b>
<b>Total Designated Funds (Active)</b>	<b>80,127.53</b>	<b>3,438.00</b>	<b>1,076.65</b>	<b>82,488.88</b>
<b>Total Designated Funds (Inactive)</b>	<b>4,780.56</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4,780.56</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>84,908.09</b>	<b>3,438.00</b>	<b>1,076.65</b>	<b>87,269.44</b>



# Esperanza Fund Balances

April 30, 2023

<b>By Fund</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>12/31/21</b>	<b>12/31/22</b>	<b>4/30/23</b>
General Operating Fund	Unrestricted	91,755	88,902	119,487
COH Pre-School	Purpose Restricted	65,643	101,268	163,481
Designated Funds (Active)	Purpose Restricted	88,573	80,128	82,489
Designated Funds (Inactive)	Purpose Restricted	4,781	4,781	4,781
<b>Total</b>		<b>250,751</b>	<b>275,078</b>	<b>370,238</b>

<b>By Bank Account</b>	<b>12/31/21</b>	<b>12/31/22</b>	<b>4/30/23</b>
MidFirst Checking	51,322	29,754	64,866
MidFirst Savings	137,648	184,916	251,065
Fidelity	61,781	60,408	54,306
<b>Total</b>	<b>250,751</b>	<b>275,078</b>	<b>370,238</b>

# Esperanza Lutheran Financial Position

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May 1, 2023

***“We have an amazing weekday ministry in the ELCA - our schools and early learning centers supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA).”***

***“There are 1,400 schools and early learning centers in the ELCA sharing the Lutheran faith and a solid education. A large majority of these are preschools that connect young families to their local Lutheran community.”*** ([www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org))



When it was announced in church, now 17 years ago, that Esperanza would have a preschool on campus, I knew I had to be a part of it. I had worked for several years at another faith-based preschool in the Valley, and I truly felt called to carry on this ministry at my home church, Esperanza. Today as I write this, I marvel at the fact that our earliest students are now graduating high school, with some already in college! We are privileged to have given them a strong start here at Children of Hope and are happy to have been a part of the educational journeys of nearly 700 children over these last many years.

***“From birth to age 5, a child’s brain develops more than any other time in life. And research shows that the quality of a child’s experiences in the early childhood years helps shape how their brain develops. Positive experiences — like nurturing relationships with parents and early learning opportunities like quality child care and preschool — promote healthy brain development and learning. Early childhood is when kids begin to develop the skills they’ll need for future success in school and in life: language and literacy, problem-solving, focus and getting along with others.”*** ([www.firstthingsfirst.org](http://www.firstthingsfirst.org))

Investing in early childhood education is a wise investment, not only for the children and families we serve, but for the entire community. Research has shown that children who attend early education programs have strong kindergarten readiness skills and higher third grade reading scores, are more likely to graduate high school, and have overall better health. Early education also reduces future dependence on social welfare, crime related costs and incarceration rates, and the need for special education/remediation.

For these reasons we are doing very mindful, purposeful work at Children of Hope as we nurture the children in our care. We have chosen to take our practices beyond state regulations and instill higher quality practices through First Things First’s signature program, Quality First. As of this writing, we are currently in an assessment year with Quality First and are awaiting our Star Rating (we are currently “Exceeding Quality” at 4 Stars but are striving for the highest rating of 5 Stars, which eluded us last year by less than 2 points).

*First Things First supports child care and preschool programs enrolled in Quality First with:*

- *Coaching and professional development for staff to build on what's great about a program and identify opportunities to improve in ways that support children's learning.*
- *Funding to support quality early learning for young children, including the purchase of age-appropriate books, toys and learning materials, as well as new classroom furniture, outdoor equipment, or other improvements to the physical space.*
- *Specialized assistance from a team of early childhood experts in child health, mental health and supporting children with special needs.*

### ***Our Wonderful Staff***



Our amazing staff is dedicated and smart. They continue to seek opportunities to learn and hone their craft. In October we were all extremely excited to attend the national Conscious Discipline Conference in Louisville, KY, thanks to a DES Childcare Grant we received. This positive discipline method has transformed our classrooms and has given our students the skills needed to problem solve, understand their feelings and the feelings of others, and regulate their emotions. In January we happily welcomed a new staff member to our team, Mr. Caleb (Deacon Connie's son). He has been a helpful addition to our classrooms, the children and staff love him!

Deacon Connie and I were so glad to welcome Pastor Sarah Stadler to our monthly Family Chapel Time this year! What a dream team...with both of these wonderful leaders at the helm, all the families and children know Esperanza is a place where their children are nurtured spiritually and that all are welcome. We continue to foster our commitment to Kyrene Resource Center with preschool families bringing donations to Chapel throughout the year for those facing food insecurity in our community.

## ***Washing of the Feet and Blessing of the Food for Kyrene Resource Center***



We continue to be grateful to Joni Thorpe in the office and the entire Esperanza community for supporting and praying for the outreach ministry that is the preschool. We so appreciate the various church members who have served on our board, attended our events, and who share a good word about our program in the community. We really treasure when church and preschool come together for events such as our annual Thanksgiving Feast and Trivia Night.

### ***Events***



As our school year and DES Childcare Grant come to an end, we will be reviewing grant spending with the Esperanza Finance Team and determining the best use of the remaining funds. A sizable portion of the funds will enable us to purchase a long-awaited playground structure that will replace the current structure that is showing wear and tear. We operated at full capacity again this school year and have only four open spots for the upcoming school year. We are very mindful of the faith and trust that our community places upon us to care for and educate its youngest learners and we do not take this responsibility lightly. As we continue to nurture these precious children and their families, especially those born during the pandemic, we remain grateful for the privilege of this ministry.

*Lynn Hockenberger*

*Preschool Director*

## Children and Family Ministries

*"I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving."  
Psalm 69:30*

These words of thanksgiving fill my heart because of the growth and joy that Esperanza's children's ministry has experienced in 2022. It has been a full year of in-person ministry and special intergenerational events. Sunday Funday returned to meeting on Sunday mornings following worship. Our "Pray-Ground" continued, and we introduced new worship bags for older children. The "Pray-Ground" and worship bags invite our children to be part of worship with quiet learning activities. Esperanza youth and their families are a vital part of this place of hope. All our welcome in this special and sacred space in our Sanctuary.

Children of Hope Preschool returned with full classes and in-person Chapel. Throughout the school year it has been my joy to lead chapel and share the "Fruit of the Spirit" with our Children of Hope students and their parents each month in our Sanctuary. Esperanza Lutheran Church and Children of Hope preschool is filled with authentic hospitality and generosity as we serve families in the Ahwatukee Community.



### Children's Activities:

Sunday Funday School weekly 10:15AM -11:00AM

"Pray-Ground and Worship Bags"

Blessing of the Backpacks and Preschool Teachers Sunday

Sunday School families served lunch at our Habitat Build

Sunday School families participated in the CROP Walk

Vacation Bible School "Rockin' for Jesus"

Two First Communion Workshops

First Communion and Gifting Bibles Sunday

Easter Egg Hunt

Worship Children's message

Children of Hope preschool Chapel with children and parents monthly

Children of Hope preschool Halloween celebration

Children of Hope preschool Thanksgiving Feast

Children of Hope preschool visit with Mr. Mrs. Claus and Christmas program

Children of Hope preschool Easter Egg Hunt

Children of Hope preschool Bubble end of the year celebration  
Childrens Christmas worship

**Deacon Leadership:**

Assisting worship minister  
Assisting Minister trainer and scheduler  
Worship planning team  
Preschool board member  
Ash Wednesday and Lenten worship leader  
Holy Week assistant minister  
Easter Breakfast coordinator  
Healing Service assistant minister  
Blue Christmas assistant minister  
Preaching  
Pastoral care resource  
Celebration of Life Assistant minister  
Bishop's Fall Convocation  
Lutheran Day at the Legislature  
Member of the Synod Candidacy Committee  
California Lutheran University Convocator



Thank you to Pastor Sarah Stadler for leadership, kindness, and care. Thank you to the Esperanza staff for all their energy, humor, and creativity. Thank you to the Esperanza community for their support and prayers for Esperanza's Children's ministry. It is truly a blessing to share Ministry in this place of Hope.

In Christ,  
Deacon Connie Rose-Kamprath

# Garden of Eatin'

Garden of Eatin' - Report to Esperanza Lutheran Church 2023

We have had another great year of gardening.  
Highlights include:

- "Wine and Appetizers" Event was a successful opportunity to enjoy each other's company in the garden.
- We continue to compost as a group and welcome contributions from the community. We have obtained 2 new receptacle containers for new contributions. We are excited to expand these opportunities to compose to include church events.
- 11 of our 18 garden beds are rented.
- Our original demonstration beds need repair - we are looking for a boy scout who would like to take this on as their Eagle project.
- We have workdays every other month with our meetings. They always include wonderful potluck meals! We are happy that non gardening friends have been joining us to learn more about composting and gardening
- Kathryn Elsaesser continues to monitor butterfly activity and has a plot to encourage Monarch butterflies to stop in our garden.
- Financially - we are sound and have enough to complete our projects.
- Grateful for Chuck Yount and a preschool father for fixing water pipe links and volunteers that helped us restore the garden back to normal.

Like always, we encourage all to visit and sit a spell in the garden. All are welcome! The table is a beautiful spot to eat a meal, watch the sunset, meet with friends, discover what's growing or read a book from the Little Library. Better yet – join us in learning to garden in the desert.

Submitted May 1, 2023 by Jayne Peterson – Chairperson of the Garden of Eatin



## Habitat for Humanity

This year we began the work on our 26th Habitat for Humanity house as part of the Southeast Valley Lutheran Coalition. Esperanza has been a major contributor in manpower and financial support for this build as well as providing lunch for five Saturdays throughout the build.

The two-story house in Tempe is being built for the Angela Pelosi family. Angela is a single mom with two children: Kash and Coe. The following is the family bio from Habitat:

"When Angela was younger, she had learned about Habitat from articles, news stories, friends and from family. Gleaning from all this information, she knew that Habitat was an organization that helps families in their journey to becoming Habitat homeowners and she too was hoping that Habitat would help she and her two children in that journey as well. After ten years of living in apartments and townhouses, Angela and her two children moved into a rental house. Yet as much as they enjoy having space for their belongings, the area is not the best - - with frequent sounds of gunfire and the visible plight of homeless people. "It is not safe for children to explore," she said. But now, all of that is changing. Angela's dream is finally coming to pass. "As a single mother with two children, it never seemed like a realistic goal. Habitat is giving me the opportunity to qualify when no one else would. I am excited to work for my dream and I am so grateful. You believed in me, and my family and we will forever appreciate the future you have given to us."

Thank you to everyone for your support.



Building a Culture of Generosity was the theme of our fall 2022 stewardship campaign. The program was developed and led by GSB Consultants for Grand Canyon Synod and a grant covered most of the costs. Paul Wagner secured additional funding through Thrivent congregational funds. They were used to provide supplies for education and mailing costs. Other personal donations were made anonymously to cover puzzles, posters, etc.

Linda Dickson served along with Pastor Annemarie and Michael Paradise provided excellent assistance with promotions.

The focus was to demonstrate our commitment to generosity by submitting our intent cards. Our goal was 60 intent cards, we received 58! Great growth from previous year. Generously committing \$33,864 for 2023, a 16% increase over the previous year! God is so good!

Sixteen individuals participated by sharing faith stories during worship, wrote statements for newsletters, and made individual contacts. Thank you people of Hope!

With gratitude to God

Linda Dickson

## **Music & Worship Report**

2022 brought a significant amount of change to Esperanza with respect to Worship and Music.

We welcomed the arrival of interim Pastor Sarah Stadler. She has brought good change to the worship service with the addition of the "Faith in Motion" segment of our service which allows the congregation to truly reflect and apply the message. Her happy and friendly demeanor has been a great addition to our congregation and worship.

We hired a new choral director, Kazin Cole, that brings a lot of energy to the Esperanza Choir. The Christmas Cantata was a huge success and Kazin did a wonderful job as our new director.

We consolidated our services into one service at 9am. It was well received and a good change. The combination of the 2 services into one brought a lot of energy, filled the sanctuary, and people had opportunity to re-connect.

We launched the Worship team to help with the planning and coordination of the worship service.

## **Property Report for the end of 2022**

We are grateful for Denzil Klein and Randy Wright's almost daily work at the church property.

I did a walk around with Denzil and Randy a few months ago and determined that that back property roof is leaking in multiple places and damaging drywall and soffits on the upstairs and lower patios of the back church building. We proposed getting the roof done prior to any more finished drywall repairs.

-Denzil asked for a roof bid and Jim asked for a couple more and we have determined that the one Denzil received was a good one and we should move forward with the church's approval.

-After the back 2 story roof gets approved and fixed we can then move forward with the other drywall work and painting.

Our next year plan is to repaint the exterior of the whole church and to replace that last few remaining AC units that are nearly 25+ years old. I'm thankful for the many hours that many volunteers have given to do landscaping clean up on the church grounds.



## Hunger Ministry Report

During 2022, Esperanza helped tackle one of the most pressing problems in our community: hunger. A Hunger Ministry Plan was drafted in January and approved by the Church Council on February 15, 2022.

On Sunday, March 20, Ms. Solveig Muus provided the sermon at both church services. Employed by the ELCA Grand Canyon Synod, Ms. Muus is Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Arizona (LAMA) as well Director of Advancement at Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center. Ms. Muus encouraged us to love and serve our neighbors, seek justice for all people, and advocate for the poor, hungry, blind, and others in need. During the adult study between services, Ms. Muus discussed hunger efforts church wide and locally, how Esperanza can make a difference, and LAMA policy initiatives.



On May 1, a 15-member team of Esperanza teens and adults prepared and served a pancake breakfast at Grace Lutheran Church (located downtown Phoenix) for the homeless. Approximately 150 people were served. Grace Lutheran has conducted the pancake breakfast every Sunday for the last approximately 20 years.



During the May 31 – June 2 Vacation Bible School, discussions on hunger were weaved into the curriculum.

On May 14, at the Kyrene Family Resource Center located in Tempe, 15 Esperanza volunteers sorted donations, prepared food boxes, stacked food and personal hygiene shelves, cleaned clothes racks, and prepared bags of personal hygiene products.



On June 9, nine Esperanza members prepared and delivered an evening meal for three families being assisted by Family Promise. Family Promise helps families experiencing homelessness and low-income families achieve sustainable independence. Desert Foothills United Methodist Church hosted the families on their campus. Donna Sparber organized this event. Esperanza has participated in this ministry for several years.

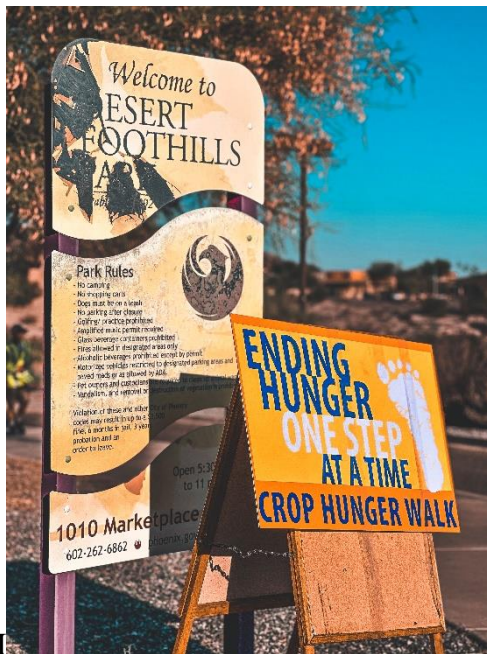
On July 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, and August 17<sup>th</sup>, 20 members and several friends of Esperanza participated in Grace Lutheran's summer heat respite ministry. The summer heat respite ministry provides an opportunity on Mondays through Friday for the homeless to escape the heat and obtain breakfast and lunch. Sack lunches (bread, meat, cheese, fruit-cup, nutria-grain bar, etc.) were prepared at Esperanza and delivered to Grace Lutheran: 160 lunches on July 13, 171 lunches on July 20, and 157 lunches on August 17. These events were organized by Chris Armfield.



On October 15, at the Feed My Starving Children packing center in Mesa, eleven Esperanza members assembled and packed 2,100 meals (9.5 large boxes) for children that are in need of food.



Esperanza organized, and hosted the Ahwatukee Foothills CROP Hunger Walk on November 13 at Desert Foothills Park. Approximately 80 walkers participated. In addition to Esperanza, teams from Desert Cross Lutheran, Mountain View Lutheran, and Desert Foothills United Methodists also walked. The fundraising event received \$11,006 in donations! Seventy-five percent of the donations were used by Church World Services, a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses, to assist with hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Twenty-five percent of the donations were donated to the Kyrene Family Resource Center to help stock food shelves.





On November 27, 12 members and two friends of Esperanza prepared and served a pancake breakfast at Grace Lutheran Church (located downtown Phoenix) for the homeless. Approximately 125 people were served.



Throughout the year, members of Esperanza donated 813 lbs. of non-perishable food to the Kyrene Family Resource Center.

Esperanza members donated \$1,000 to support the Hunger Ministry. \$880.67 was used to purchase ingredients for the pancake breakfasts at Grace Lutheran, and juice drinks and treats for the lunch bags prepared for Grace Lutheran's summer heat respite ministry. A balance of \$119.67 remains in the account.

The 2022 Hunger Ministry was not subsidized by Esperanza's annual budget.

Submitted April 11, 2023, by Peggy and Larry Hanson

## **OUTREACH MINISTRY PROJECT:**

### **Medical Supplies for Ukraine Refugees**

In February 2022, our congregation responded to the needs of refugees fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. We established a connection with the Project C.U.R.E. warehouse in Temple to collect durable medical supplies for Ukraine refugees. Notification to the congregation used announcements before worship services, weekly newsletters, bulletin inserts and an article in the local newspaper. The congregation responded by providing wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and other durable medical equipment. Disposable medical supplies of bandages, ointments, pain relief and surgical supplies were also included in the relief drive.

This project was a great example of Esperanza recognizing a need in the community and responding to support the needs of individuals internationally.

Tom and Susan Vega

### **Lutheran Social Services Angel Tree Project**

Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest (LSS-SW) was seeking assistance to provide Christmas gifts for their client families and individual seniors. We contacted LSS-SW on behalf of Esperanza to provide gifts for 15 families, a mix of refugee and those living of the margin, along with 20 seniors to provide winter pajamas.

Information cards outlining the needs of each family and individual were prepared and an artificial Christmas tree was displayed in the narthex with the cards displayed as ornaments.

Bags and tags were provided to track the packages. A total of 35 cards were prepared.

The program was well received by the congregation and showed a high level of participation. Individuals, families and groups within the church helped to sponsor the drive.

#### **IDEAS FOR FUTURE ACTION IF REPEATED:**

Start earlier: Program began two weeks prior to seeking donations. Receive the program material from LSS-SW in September if possible.

Get consent from congregation council to conduct the program. Make sure all parties understand this is a church supported event.

During the year, check online with neighborhood websites for used moving boxes. The best way to handle transport of the gifts is to box the donations by family. This year required buying boxes at hardware stores. Used moving boxes (size medium) are better than buying new items.

This project should be repeated in 2023. Esperanza should anticipate participation with future LSS-SW service projects.

Susan and Tom Vega

## ARCHIVIST AND HISTORIAN UPDATE

The work continues on archive and historical records of Esperanza, which was approved by the congregation council in the Fall of 2021 and is a continuing ministry project. The work in 2022 included:

- Review of all material (approximately 48-50 bankers' boxes) being held in the off-site storage facility.
- Construct shelving units to properly store the materials, which were stacked on each other in an unsafe manner.
- Replace damaged storage boxes to preserve records.
- Identify and list the contents of all boxes for easier retrieval.
- The congregation council has been informed of progress through status reports.

Future work will include:

- Continuing reports to council of activities
- Adopt guidelines provided by the ELCA in the storage of records and archives.
- Adopt guidelines provided by the ELCA in records retention.
- Begin preliminary work in celebration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Esperanza Luther Church, established February, 1990.

Tom Vega  
Archivist / Historian

Beginning in April 2021, following research for updating the Congregation Constitution, it was discovered there was no person to maintain the church archives or congregation history. In April of 2021, church member Tom Vega contacted the congregation council, detailed the need for this activity, and has volunteered to serve in the ministry of Archivist and Historian to Esperanza. This was approved by the council in the Fall of 2021.

With information and help provided by John Gemma, work has begun to collect, catalog, protect and store church records and documents. These efforts have been guided by information and instruction from the Office of Secretary of the ELCA, Archives Section, The National Archives and Record Administration, and the Concordia Historical Institute. Reports have been submitted to the pastor and congregation council on the progress of this ministry. The objective of this ministry is overall compliance with archival practices and methods, along with beginning the steps to educate and inform others in the continuing history of congregational life of Esperanza Lutheran Church.

Submitted,  
Tom Vega  
Archivist / Historian

## Prayer Shawl Ministry 2023

The Esperanza Prayer Shawl Ministry began meeting at Esperanza in 2009 and meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. The group currently has over a dozen members and we welcome anyone who would like to join. As of 2023, our records show that 870 shawls have been donated.

The group makes prayer shawls, both knitted and crocheted from yarns purchased by the members as well as from yarn donated to the group. A card is created and attached to each shawl. The card has a prayer written on it, and when all the shawls are gathered, we repeat the prayer and bless each one.

The shawls are offered to anyone who needs some comfort in a difficult time, but they are also offered to those who are celebrating life's special events – such as weddings, births, or other occasions. The shawls are displayed in the sanctuary and are offered without charge.

Everyone is welcome to join us!



## Hope for Newborns

Hope for Newborns is a group of volunteers which makes and collects items for Arizona infants who are in need. The group meets at Esperanza on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of every month to collect donations for Arizona newborns, share creative ideas and help each other. The donations are collected and delivered to hospitals or care centers where they are given to families of newborns who are in need. The group has changed names during our history, but Esperanza has allowed us to meet in the Fellowship Hall for over 15 years.

The group, which is open to Esperanza members as well as those who do not belong to the church, meets at 10:00 a.m. on the third Friday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. Items collected for the newborns are organized into Newborn Kits – each kit includes 1 hat and bootie set, 1 blanket, one nightgown or onsie, 1 washcloth and 6 diapers in a large Ziplock bag. The donations are delivered to Valleywise Health Medical Center and Dignity Health's Chandler Regional Medical Center. We also donate extra items when we have them to UMOM, Project Linus, Helen's Hope Chest and Salvation Army.

In 2022, Hope for Newborns donated nearly 3,800 items, filling 200 kits and Christmas stockings. As of April of 2023, it appears we will be exceeding our 2022 donations.

## ANIMAL PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

If you asked a dog who received a *doggieprayershawl* what he thinks of it, he would tell you that it's soft and warm and he feels the love and prayers knitted inside. Cats like the feel of the yarn in the *doggieprayershaws for kats* against their fur. Photos of several happy customers, both cats and dogs, are on a poster in the Narthex next to the prayer shawl crate. Likewise, there are pictures of dogs and cats who have crossed over The Rainbow Bridge and have received a *doggieprayershawl* given to their human in their memory. These pets report that the little box containing their ashes are often wrapped inside the shawl and the shawl itself is a reminder and a comfort.

The animal prayer shawl ministry is a donation ministry. The suggested donation price is \$20 which includes a shopping bag, card with appropriate sentiment and tissue paper with which to wrap the shawl. Of the \$20, half goes to Crest-Care, a national Chinese Crested rescue and half goes to Esperanza.

This ministry was introduced a year or so ago with the belief that "if you minister to pets, you minister to the people who love them." At first, there were about a dozen donations with revenue going to 2DaRescue. After that flurry, though, there has been only occasional activity.

Therefore, in an effort to support this ministry and yet keep the shawls fresh and dust free, they'll now be brought out only on certain occasions – for instance, for Blessing of the Animals and for the Christmas season. Anyone who is looking to gift a *doggieprayershawl* or *doggieprayershawl for kats* though is welcome to contact me, Alice Schultze, [roseypetunia@cox.net](mailto:roseypetunia@cox.net) to choose from the current selection.

Thank you,

Alice Schultze



## Pastor's Report 2023

From the Lutheran Book of Worship (AKA “the green hymnal”):

*O Lord God who has called us, your servants, to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown: give us faith to go with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us. Amen.*

When I was a college student, one of my campus pastors prayed this prayer from the Lutheran Book of Worship at least once a week in one of our campus worship services. Its words encapsulate what it is to be a college student, ever at the edge of possibility, the unknown startingly present, the horizon as vast as a savannah. At age 20, the manifold possibilities for my future bothered me not at all. Not knowing where I was going was just another day in college. For a summer in my mid-20s, I found myself at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center in the Cascade Mountains of Washington state, where they also prayed this prayer at least once a week, and I began to understand why. Just slightly older, I had begun to see the future differently. Suddenly, the possibilities, the unknowns, the horizon seemed threatening instead of exciting and secure led by God's hand and supported by God's love.

I imagine many of us are in this place today. Or at least were in the fall of 2022.

God has called Esperanza to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths we haven't traveled, through challenges we do not yet know. And so we pray for good courage.

We are still in the middle of the interim process. The transition team will yet fill out the Ministry Site Profile, and the call committee will then interview candidates. We don't know how long that process will take or how many candidates will be available for an interview. Beyond the call process, we are discerning how God is calling Esperanza to do ministry among our own community and in the larger community. There are many possibilities, unknowns, and a horizon as vast as a savannah.

But we need not fear. Because God is at work. *Actually*, God is at work. God will lead us. God will guide us. Even if we make the wrong decision, God will work it out for good.

In these few months I have been with you, my focus has been on refining the processes that empower staff and leaders, enrich the spiritual life of this community, and bring clarity to administrative and leadership questions. With the council's input and approval, we now have a personnel policy and a policy to safeguard against child sexual abuse at Esperanza, including the preschool. Trained Lay Communion Ministers are regularly visiting homebound members of the congregation, and the Outreach and Worship teams are now meeting regularly. Every staff member has a job description, and annual ministry reviews are forthcoming. Proposed constitutional changes will soon be coming your way so that we can live faithfully by our constitution. The next step is to establish a functional team structure across the congregation so that everyone has clarity about who is responsible for what ministry—and so we might strategically and carefully choose and then implement ministries. This will encourage us to work together and be even more effective in fulfilling God's mission for Esperanza.

With these processes in place, my hope is that, whatever God is calling Esperanza to do in the next phase of its life, this community will be well equipped to do it.

Though we stand at the edge of possibility, the unknown startingly present, the horizon as vast as a savannah, we can be of good courage—because God's hand is leading us and God's love is supporting us.

With good courage,

Pastor Sarah

**Esperanza Lutheran Church**  
**Congregation Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 22, 2023**

**Members Present:** Sign-In Sheet(s) attached

**Call to Order:** Jim Gisselquist, Council President

**Meeting began at:** 10:25am

**Opening Prayer and Devotion:** Pastor Sarah Stadler “Prayer of Discernment”.

**Time for reflection** “we are speaking to God as well as listening to God” A copy of the prayer was handed out to each member.

**Agenda:** see attached (copies of Agenda were on hand for members to take).

**Jim had each council member stand and be recognized:**

**Chuck Yount**

**Susan Brown**

**Michael Paradise**

**Craig Peck**

**Julie Valenzuela**

**Paige Somero**

**Kelly Edwards: absent**

**Beth Leaf: absent**

**Pastor Sarah Stadler**

**Approval of May 2022 Congregation Minutes**

- **Motion made to approve by Laura Drowne/2<sup>nd</sup> by Joni Thorpe**
- **All in favor by a show of hands/Minutes unanimously approved.**

**Focus on Hunger: Jim Gisselquist**

- **A big Thank You to Larry and Peg Hanson for all their time and hard work in spearheading this mission to feed the hungry.**

**Approval of Mission Plan: Jim Gisselquist passed the floor to Mark Entsminger/Finance Chair (the main purpose of this meeting)**

- **Mark presented us with an overview (see attached numbers)**
- **Note: these numbers were printed and viewed by the Congregation last Sunday during a Q and A session.**
- **Thank you to Joni Thorpe for her hard work doing the bookkeeping, paying bills, etc.**
- **Thank you to the Finance Committee, the Council and the Congregation for their continued support.**
- **Brief discussion from Mark.**
- **Motion to approve the 2023 Mission Plan made by Steven Thorpe/2<sup>nd</sup> by Steven Thorpe/2<sup>nd</sup> by Dennis Fox. All in favor by a show of hands/Approved unanimously.**
- **Comment from Jim: Thank you Mark!**

**Candidates for the Nominating Committee:**

**Linda Dickson**

**Beth Fisher**

**Herb Pinske**

**Jane Gisselquist**

- **Motion to approve candidates made by Joni Thorpe/2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Somero**
- **The floor was opened for any others interested (looking for 2 more to make a maximum of 6)**
- **Comments from Herb: asking the congregation to take time to consider an invitation to a committee before just saying “no”**

**Offers from the floor to be on the committee:**

**Jayne Petersen**

**Pam Yount**

- **Motion was amended to approve the 6 candidates. All in favor by show of hands/motion carried.**
- **Comment from Jim: Thank you to previous members of our Nominating Committee.**

**Upcoming Synod Assembly Meeting: Pastor Sarah Stadler**

- **Date: June 9-11**
- **Where: Oro Valley AZ**
- **Pastor Sarah and Deacon Connie will be attending. We are seeking 2 voting members to join us (1 male/1 female)**
- **Craig Peck and Linda Dickson volunteered.**
- **Motion to approve made by Michelle Tinsley/2<sup>nd</sup> by Susan Brown. All in favor say yes/Motion passed.**

**Announcements: Pastor Sarah Stadler**

- **Transition Team is in place consisting of the following members: Liz Farquhar, Michelle Tinsley, Paul Wagner and Paul Beeks.**
- **2024 Anniversary Task Force needed to celebrate Esperanza's 35<sup>th</sup> in 2024.**
- **Notice of amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregation**

**Comments to above Notice from Tom Vega:**

- **1870s Robert's Rule of Order developed. Since Esperanza currently does not have a Historian, Tom has volunteered. Tom has offered to be both Historian and Archivist to sort and organize the church's historical documents.**

**Closing Blessing: Pastor Sarah**

**Motion to adjourn meeting made by Craig Peck/2<sup>nd</sup> by Michelle Tinsley**

**Meeting adjourned at 11:08am.**

**Respectfully submitted by,**

**Susan Brown**

**Council Secretary**

## **Passages**

### **Baptisms**

Ryan Nies

### **Confirmation**

### **Deaths**

Heidi Gerrish