Christ Lutheran
CHURCH

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

First Draft: 10.25.2026

Second Draft: 11.1.2026

Final Draft: 11.8.2026

ANNUAL REPORT INDEX
2026

Annual Report Index
2026 Congregational Meeting Agenda
2024 Annual Congregational Meeting (November 3, 2024)
2025 Spring Budget Meeting (May 4, 2025)
2025 Annual Meeting Minutes (November 9, 2025)
2026 Budget Meeting Minutes (April 26, 2026)
Membership Statistics for 2026
Audit Reports for CLC & LLP
2027 CLC Nominee Candidates
Pastors' Reports
President's Report
Little Lamb Preschool Report

COMMITTEES

Christian Education
Christian Growth
Hospitality and Outreach
Property
Social Ministry
Stewardship
Worship & Music
Youth Ministry

2026 Congregational Meeting

Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, IN
November 8, 2026
"Because of you, this Church changes lives!"

Agenda

1. Opening Prayer
2. Approval of Minutes of 2024 Annual and Spring 2025 Budget meetings *(Note: tabled in November 2025 and April 2026 meetings)*
3. Approval of Minutes of 2025 Annual and Spring 2026 Budget meetings
4. Year in Review
5. 2026 Church Council Acknowledgments
6. 2027 Church Council Nominees & Election
7. Closing Prayer

Proposed Rules of Assembly

1. Each speech from the floor on all resolutions and motions will be limited to 3 minutes.
2. A member who has spoken on the pending question(s) may not move the previous question(s). *(Someone cannot comment on a proposal and, at the same time, call for an end to others' comments. Calling for an end to debate must be their first and only comment.)*
3. A motion to end debate by moving the previous question shall apply only to the immediately preceding motion. *(It's not appropriate to call for an end to all comment on all issues or agenda items, only the topic currently under consideration.)*
4. A motion to end debate on all matters on the floor or more than the immediately pending question is not in order. *(See above; it is important that we are able to get through all agenda items.)*
5. Any recount must be ordered by a majority vote before the end of the assembly at which the voting result was announced. *(In the case of a recount request, it should be submitted during the Annual Meeting itself)*

Baptized Members:	467 in 234 households
Confirmed Members:	393 in 225 households
Voting Members:	328 in 190 households

Quorum: **33** voting members

DRAFT Minutes: CLC Annual Congregational Meeting, November 2024

Nov 3, 2026 · @Pastor Tim Knauff

These minutes were reconstructed from the meeting's livestream recording because no minutes were recorded at the time. They are a draft until reviewed and approved by the congregation.

- **Meeting:** Annual Congregational Meeting, Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, Indiana
- **Date:** Sunday, November 10, 2024
- **Source:** CLC YouTube livestream ("Annual Meeting"), auto-generated captions, about 63 minutes
- **Prepared by:** Rev. Tim Knauff, Sr. Pastor

Timestamps in brackets refer to the recording. Names were spelled by YouTube's captions and need checking. The budget was not on this agenda; it moved to the spring meeting.

1. Call to order and opening prayer

Council President Kurt Stefans called the meeting to order at **9:28 a.m.** [04:25] and stated its business: Council elections, a constitutional amendment, and reports. Pastor Tim Knauff offered the opening prayer.

2. Approval of prior minutes

Motion 1: To approve the minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting and the Spring 2024 Budget Meeting together, with the Spring 2024 minutes corrected to show that Angela Wehner, not Kurt Stefans, presided [06:37]. Moved by Becky Fry, seconded by Kathy Lundstrom. **Carried.**

3. Reports received

Business Manager Heather Budnik presented the stewardship results, year in review, and financial results [07:42]. Reports were received for information; no action was taken.

Stewardship campaign. The 2024 campaign set a goal of increasing offerings by $1,717 per week. 64% of giving units returned a statement of intent, believed to be the best response rate in CLC's history, and 76% of those indicated an increase. Pledges totaled about $1,800 per week more than the prior year, exceeding the goal. $629,462 ($12,105 per week) was promised by donors returning a Statement of Intent. An additional $20,000 is expected from recurring Subsplash givers who did not return a statement. In response to a question, Heather confirmed the results meet the budget.

Exploring our welcome. CLC continues to celebrate its Reconciling in Christ designation and hosted a booth at Northwest Indiana Pridefest. Faith formation hours included Coaction on poverty in Northwest Indiana and a series on the history of the land and its Indigenous peoples. With two other congregations, CLC is walking with a refugee family from Venezuela, by way of Costa Rica, through financial help and practical support. CLC hosted its first community tailgate at the Valparaiso–Chesterton football game and its second annual Trunk or Treat. Phil McGuire, a pathologist, spoke in thanks for the congregation's Red Cross blood drive donors [15:24].

Sustaining ministry excellence. Staff highlights included Little Lamb Preschool's NAEYC accreditation and Paths to QUALITY Level 4 rating, and more than $2,200 in NIPSCO energy rebates obtained by building attendant Tony Reinhold. Fifty children attended Camp Firelight VBS. CLC held Worship in the Park, received a sculpture rehomed from Lake View Lutheran Church, Chicago, and acquired handchimes through a donation. Sixteen from CLC (13 youth, 3 adults) attended the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, traveling with Holy Shepherd and Bethel Lutheran for a group of 21. In May 2024 CLC was selected for the ELCA Faith Formation Co-op to develop a youth ministry framework specific to CLC.

Endowment and sharing. The endowment fund has reached about $132,000 and is ready to be invested; only investment income will be spent. Budget funds for the social ministry monthly emphasis were more than doubled by congregational offerings. CLC passed nearly $55,000 to the Indiana-Kentucky Synod, and provided direct assistance through the Steiner Fund and medical assistance funds.

Financial results. The operating fund owes $45,000 to restricted funds, borrowed to cover operations, and is not yet able to repay it. Little Lamb Preschool had a planned operating loss of about $7,700, drawn from its own reserve to bring teacher salaries closer to public school levels while tuition rises gradually. Heather noted that tuition roughly equals teacher pay, with the church covering facilities and overhead. Church operations ended the year with an operating loss of $963 on a budget of nearly $1 million.

4. Actions taken

Endowment fund investment

Treasurer Kate Byrne presented the Endowment Committee's recommendation [32:07]. Pastor Tim Knauff [confirm speaker] explained the two vehicles: the ELCA Foundation, designed for congregational endowments with low fees and full transparency, and the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, which allows CLC to pay forward the mission-builder support that helped fund its own building. CLC's Steiner Fund is already invested with the Mission Investment Fund. Under the endowment bylaws, the Endowment Committee proposes the allocation between the two, and Council approves it on the congregation's behalf with congregational input. Funds are invested consistent with ELCA social commitments. Recent returns were reported as 12.1% year to date in 2024 and 5.4% for the third quarter; further investment details are to be provided.

Motion 2: To open investment accounts with the ELCA Foundation and the Mission Investment Fund for the endowment fund [39:53]. Moved by Sara Long; seconded *[name inaudible]*. **Carried,** including online votes [42:05].

Endowment bylaws revision

Council proposed revisions to the endowment bylaws adopted around 2016–17, correcting inconsistent language such as references to "church council" that should read "congregation council" [42:39]. The printed packet did not show the changes. **The item was postponed to the April 2025 meeting** for lack of time [52:35]. No formal motion to postpone was recorded.

Constitutional amendment: youth representative

The April 2024 meeting adopted an amendment to provision C12.02, exempting the youth or young adult representative from the term limits that apply to other Council members [45:53]. Pastor Tim [confirm speaker] reported that the phrase "and the youth or young adult" had been printed in the wrong place in the packet, and asked to correct it to the intended wording. The meeting agreed by consensus.

Motion 3: To ratify the amendment to C12.02 as corrected [49:46]. Moved and seconded *[names not audible]*. **Carried,** including online votes [51:23].

Motion 4: To amend the bylaw so the youth or young adult at-large representative, elected each year to a one-year term, may serve up to three consecutive terms [50:18]. Moved by Lois Felten, seconded by Chuck Schaefer. **Carried,** including online votes [52:35]. A question about why terms must be consecutive was answered: the constitution already permits reelection after a gap.

Elections

The President thanked outgoing Council members [52:35]: Kurt Stefans, Sarah Long, Scott Schnabel, Jackie, Lois, Chris, Lisa, and Faith Noe.

Motion 5: To elect the Council slate: Judy, Gregg, Sally, Christiana, Anna, and Ellen [53:11]. Nominations from the floor were invited, particularly for Vice President; none were made. Moved and seconded *[names not audible].* **Carried** with none opposed, including online votes [54:52]. The Vice President position remains vacant, and Council will appoint someone to fill it.

Motion 6: To elect the following [55:28]:

- **Endowment Committee:** Amy Boedecker, Chris Trapp, Kurt Stefans
- **Nominating Committee:** Kurt Stefans, Andrew Soleim, Amy Boedecker, Becky Fry, Sara Long
- **Audit Committee:** Brian Boedecker, Bill Scheiderich, Grace Saffrin
- **Synod Assembly voting member:** Tony Reinhold

Nominations from the floor were invited; none were made. Moved by Sarah Long, seconded by Faith *[last name not audible]*. **Carried,** including online votes [59:15].

5. Announcements and adjournment

Angela Wehner presented the new Narcan (naloxone) box to be installed outside the church [57:37], approved by Council and reviewed with CLC's insurer. Trained members were identified, staff training is planned, and congregational training will be scheduled.

Heather Budnik announced youth ministry listening sessions for the Faith Formation Co-op during the 9:20 Faith Formation hour on **November 24 and December 1, 2024**, and the Spring Budget Meeting on **May 4, 2025** [59:15].

A pastor offered the closing prayer [01:01:24].

Motion 7: To adjourn [01:02:27]. *[Names of mover and second not audible]* **Carried.**

Follow-up items from this meeting:

- ☐ Endowment bylaws revision postponed to the April 2025 meeting
- ☐ Council to appoint a Vice President
- ☐ Distribute ELCA Foundation and Mission Investment Fund investment details

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tim Knauff, Sr. Pastor

Approved by the congregation on [date].

DRAFT Minutes: CLC Spring Budget Meeting, May 4, 2025

Nov 3, 2026 · @Pastor Tim Knauff

These minutes were reconstructed from the meeting's livestream recording because no minutes were recorded at the time. They are a draft until reviewed and approved by the congregation.

- **Meeting:** Spring Congregational Budget Meeting, Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, Indiana
- **Date:** Sunday, May 4, 2025
- **Source:** CLC YouTube livestream ("Spring Congregational Meeting"), auto-generated captions, about 54 minutes
- **Prepared by:** Rev. Tim Knauff, Sr. Pastor

Timestamps in brackets refer to the recording. Speakers from the floor are often unidentified. Several budget figures were garbled by the captions and are flagged; the printed budget is the record for complete numbers.

1. Call to order and opening prayer

Council President Angela Wehner called the meeting to order [09:23], thanked the Council for its work (including at least five hours of in-person budget meetings) and those who attended the forums, and offered the opening prayer. The agenda was a financial report, review of and vote on the 2025–26 budget, and closing prayer. Business Manager Heather Budnik and Treasurer Kate Byrne assisted with the presentation.

2. Prior minutes and postponed business

Not addressed. The recording shows no action on the November 2024 Annual Meeting minutes. The endowment bylaws revision postponed from November 2024 to this meeting was also not taken up. Both remain open.

3. Financial report and proposed 2025–26 budget

Angela Wehner and Heather Budnik presented [10:54]. The fiscal year runs August 1 to July 31.

Current year, 2024–25, as of March 31, 2025.

Line	Budget	Actual to date	Annualized	Variance
Unrestricted income	$976,725	$586,695	$878,912	$97,813 under
Operating expenses	$983,704	$649,179	$960,221	$23,483 under
Operating shortfall	$6,979	$62,484	$81,309	$74,330 more than planned

Expenses were under budget; the problem was income. Pledges came in within 1% of forecast, and estimated giving from long-term givers ran about 5.8% ahead. Recurring Subsplash gifts ran about 16% under a $20,000 estimate, roughly $3,000. The shortfall came from sources that cannot be estimated:

loose offerings, occasional givers, and new members. Pastor Tim Knauff [confirm speaker] explained that the 2024–25 budget had been a deliberate stretch goal hoping those groups would also increase their giving, which did not happen. The 2025–26 offering estimate removes those estimates.

Cumulative position. The cumulative operating deficit is $84,326. Separately, about two years earlier the operating fund borrowed $45,000 in cash from restricted funds, recorded as a liability to be repaid. Reaching break-even (restricted funds repaid and operating balance at zero) requires about $109,326. Heather noted that in recent years Little Lamb Preschool's pandemic-era grants (roughly $300,000 to $350,000), along with Employee Retention Credits and PPP loans, had covered building costs such as furnace replacement. That funding has ended.

Cash and cost reductions. Operating checking held $12,692 as of May 2, 2025. Payments are prioritized: payroll, employment taxes, mortgage and Portico Benefit Services, then Synod mission support and the social ministry monthly emphasis. Synod mission support has been paused indefinitely by earlier action; the budgeted portion of the social ministry monthly emphasis is paused for the year (individual offerings still pass through); Christ in Our Home, mileage, and cell phone reimbursements are paused; and no new equipment will be purchased. Staffing and the prior year's 4% salary increase were maintained.

Proposed 2025–26 budget.

Category	2024–25 budget	2025–26 proposed
Ministry coordination and support	$419,420	$415,358
Facilities for ministry	$360,483	$376,096
Worship	$81,360	$74,055
Mission	$76,200	$15,080
Formation	$46,241	$44,040
Restricted fund repayment	none	$11,400
Total expenses / unrestricted income	**$983,704**	**$936,029**

Projected offerings for 2025–26 are $923,962. Mission falls mainly because Synod support is paused. Facilities rise largely because the mortgage rate resets in January 2026, with 10 years remaining and a principal balance just under $1.6 million, near $1.5 million at reset. Restricted funds will be repaid at $950 per month, about four years.

Appeal goal and stair steps. The stewardship appeal seeks to increase offerings by $1,497 per week: $712 to sustain resources, $566 for ministry continuity, and $219 to repay borrowed designated funds. A stair-step graphic by Crystal Koss showed what each level would fund. The base of $923,962 covers restricted-fund repayment and restores the social ministry monthly emphasis. Further steps: $946,962 restores a 3% Synod tithe; $956,962 adds 2.5% staff salary increases; $979,962 raises the Synod tithe to 6%; $989,962 adds a communications specialist; and $1,019,962 restores the Synod tithe to 10%. Crystal noted that the base is a floor to build from, not a ceiling. This year the stewardship campaign followed rather than preceded the budget meeting; the President noted that committees had cut every possible expense and this budget is what is needed regardless.

Questions from the floor [18:15 to 45:05] concerned the meaning of the cumulative deficit, what has sustained operations, staffing levels, debt repayment, the mortgage, the gap between budgeted and actual offerings, and the effect of COVID on giving. A member suggested a Subsplash designation for restricted-fund repayment; staff will consider adding giving designations. A member also offered reflections on stewardship [22:36].

4. Budget action

Motion 1: To adopt the 2025–26 budget as presented [48:18]. Moved by *[member]*; seconded *[names not audible]*. No further discussion or questions from online participants.

Carried by voice vote in person, with none opposed audible. Online votes, monitored by Tony Reinhold: 3 yes, 1 no [51:25].

While votes were collected, Treasurer Kate Byrne announced this was her last meeting as Treasurer, as her family is moving to Frankfort, Illinois. A member who formerly served as church treasurer thanked Kate and Heather Budnik for their work.

5. Closing and adjournment

The President passed on the pastors' thanks, expressed at the forums, for the congregation's spirit of working together. A pastor closed with prayer [51:56]. The recording ends at [53:33].

Follow-up items from this meeting:

- ☐ Approve the November 2024 Annual Meeting minutes
- ☐ Act on the endowment bylaws revision postponed from November 2024
- ☐ Consider adding a Subsplash designation for restricted-fund repayment
- ☐ Fill the Treasurer vacancy

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tim Knauff, Sr. Pastor

Approved by the congregation on [date].

DRAFT Minutes: CLC Annual Congregational Meeting, November 9, 2025

Oct 27, 2026 · @Pastor Tim Knauff

These minutes were reconstructed from the meeting's livestream recording because no minutes were recorded at the time. They are a draft until reviewed and approved by the congregation.

- **Meeting:** Annual Congregational Meeting, Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, Indiana
- **Date:** Sunday, November 9, 2025, following morning worship
- **Source:** CLC YouTube livestream ("Christ Lutheran Church Annual Meeting" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiLyn1LIYZM), auto-generated captions, about 49 minutes
- **Prepared by:** Rev. Tim Knauff, Senior Pastor
- **Reviewed by:** [2025 Council Secretary, if available]

Timestamps in brackets refer to the recording. Names were spelled by YouTube's captions and need checking against the membership roll. Detailed figures are summarized here; the printed annual report is the record for complete numbers.

1. Call to order and opening prayer

Council President Angela Wehner called the meeting to order [08:14] and offered the opening prayer. Business Manager Heather Budnik assisted with the slide presentation.

Quorum was not declared on the record. Attendance was approximately 80 in person, plus online participants.

2. Approval of prior minutes

The President reported [09:15] that the minutes printed in the meeting packet for the 2024 Annual Meeting and Spring 2025 Budget Meeting were from the prior year and had already been approved. In consultation with Pastor Tim Knauff, approval of the current minutes was deferred to the spring 2026 meeting. No formal motion to postpone was recorded.

3. Year in review

The President presented the year in review [10:17], with Heather Budnik reporting on Little Lamb Preschool. Reports were received for information; no action was taken.

- **Stewardship campaign, "Who Is My Neighbor":** the goal was to increase offerings by $1,497 per week. 116 giving units (55%) returned statements of intent, and 81 of those (70%) indicated an increase. Pledges totaled $561,374 annually ($10,796 per week), with an additional $52,040 expected from recurring online givers who did not return a statement.
- **Little Lamb Preschool:** 129 children enrolled for 2025–26, against a capacity of 142. Most families are not CLC members. The preschool holds NAEYC accreditation and Indiana Paths to QUALITY Level 4, which allows it to accept vouchers.

- **Building use:** Girl Scouts, two Alcoholics Anonymous groups, Gamblers Anonymous, grief support, Stephen Ministry, Red Cross blood drives, and the overnight warming shelter.
- **Refugee family support:** $28,697 raised; $22,307 assistance provided for rent, car and insurance, band instruments, and summer camp.
- **Social ministry monthly emphasis:** gifts to local, Indiana, and worldwide organizations as listed in the annual report. Local support totaled $10,063; Indiana-Kentucky Synod support totaled $36,786. Worldwide organizations totaled $23,491.
- **Community partnerships:** Worship in the Park with Bethel Lutheran, Gary, and other congregations; ongoing partnership with "We Make Indiana," a multifaith, multiracial public policy movement that has met at CLC; Lutheran World Relief quilts and school kits loaded as an intergenerational project.
- **Volunteer ministry:** Heather Budnik noted that CLC hosted the overnight men's shelter for years without a budget line, entirely through volunteers. The men now have a permanent home at Daybreak Shelter.

4. Financial report

Business Manager Heather Budnik presented the financial results [22:28]. The report was received for information; no action was taken.

Church operations, fiscal year 2024–25. After spending reductions late in the year, the church finished with an operating loss of about $4,477 on a budget of just under $1 million. Operating reserves stood at negative $26,313. Non-offering support included a $20,000 John W. Anderson Foundation operating grant, the final Employee Retention Credit installment (with about $2,200 in interest), and $5,000 from Little Lamb Preschool.

Little Lamb Preschool. Little Lamb is a ministry of CLC, not a separate entity; the church provides space, utilities, and infrastructure. Its operating loss was planned: COVID-era funds were used to raise teacher salaries while tuition was gradually increased to a sustainable level, which leadership believes has now been reached. Current monthly tuition: beginner 2-day $175, beginner 3-day $222, PreK $216, five-day $297. Operating Income totaled $288,029, with expenses totaling $316,636.

Restricted funds repayment. In 2023 the operating budget borrowed $45,000 from restricted funds. The current budget repays $950 per month; the balance owed is $42,150.

First quarter, fiscal 2025–26. Unrestricted income was $286,215 (31% of budget), helped by memorial gifts designated to operations and by annual and quarterly givers. Expenses ran at about 22% of budget. Operating reserves are now positive at $56,608.

Looking ahead. Leadership is cautious about resuming Synod mission support until it can be sustained, given cyclical giving and known obligations: a paid youth ministry leader, the mortgage rate reset after January 15, 2026, continued restricted-fund repayment, and property needs. Those needs include a new youth leader office (converting the AV room and two unused hallway closets, placing the youth leader with the rest of staff), preschool fire doors now out of code compliance, aging HVAC units, and worn carpet. Youth gatherings have moved to the room off the Fellowship Hall, and the former youth office is becoming music space.

Questions from the floor were answered regarding preschool tuition, youth staffing costs in the current fiscal year, and the current mortgage rate. **The current rate was not known at the meeting and was to be reported back.**

5. Recognition of outgoing leaders

The congregation thanked outgoing Council members [37:32]: Angela Wehner (President, moving to the Nominating Committee); Kate Byrne (Treasurer, who left earlier in the year; Council appointed Heather Abbring to serve in the interim); Karen Hernes (Christian Growth); Christine Bull (Christian Education); and Crystal Koss (Stewardship).

6. Nominating Committee report and elections

Kurt Stefans, past president and Nominating Committee chair, presented the report [38:34] and noted corrections to page 8 of the printed report. Heather Abbring, appointed Treasurer by Council, was included on the ballot for election. Sally Eckland-Baker agreed to continue in Hospitality. Brian Boedeker's Audit Committee term continues.

Slate presented:

Position	Nominee
President	Bill Iltzsche
Vice President	Tim Kratz
Treasurer	Heather Abbring
Christian Growth	Jerri Simms
Christian Education	Ellen Swayne
Stewardship	Jonathan Bull
Youth Representative	Isabelle Eckland-Baker
Hospitality	Sally Eckland-Baker
Endowment Committee	Bill Scheiderich; Heather Abbring
Nominating Committee	Angela Wehner; Sarah Long
Audit Committee	Scott Casbon

Nominees present were asked to stand and were recognized.

Motion 1: To elect the full slate by a single voice vote. Moved by Karl Schmidt, seconded by Mike Felten [43:15]. The President held the vote open about 37 seconds for online participants. **Carried.**

Motion 2: To elect the slate of nominees as presented [45:26]. **Carried** by voice vote, with the same online voting period. *[names of mover and seconder inaudible on recording]*

The President congratulated the new Council members.

7. Announcements and adjournment

The Spring Budget Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, April 26, 2026**, with congregational forums on **April 12 and April 19, 2026** [45:56]. The President urged members to attend at least one forum so questions can be answered in advance, out of respect for online participants who depend on the livestream window to vote.

Pastor Tim Knauff closed with prayer [47:30]. The meeting adjourned at approximately [time]. **[No motion to adjourn was recorded.]**

Follow-up items from this meeting:

- ☐ Report the current mortgage rate back to the congregation (Heather Budnik)
- ☐ Approve the 2024 Annual and Spring 2025 Budget minutes at the spring meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tim Knauff, Senior Pastor

Approved by the congregation on [date].

DRAFT Minutes: CLC Spring Budget Meeting, April 26, 2026

Oct 27, 2026 · @Pastor Tim Knauff

These minutes were reconstructed from the meeting's livestream recording because no minutes were recorded at the time. They are a draft until reviewed and approved by the congregation.

- **Meeting:** Spring Congregational Budget Meeting, Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, Indiana
- **Date:** Sunday, April 26, 2026, before worship
- **Source:** CLC YouTube livestream ("Spring Congregational Budget Meeting" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWXjSAm1zNI), auto-generated captions, about 67 minutes
- **Prepared by:** Rev. Tim Knauff, Senior Pastor

Timestamps in brackets refer to the recording. Names were spelled by YouTube's captions and need checking. Speakers from the floor are often unidentified on the audio.

1. Call to order and opening prayer

Council President Bill Iltzsche called the meeting to order [07:48] and offered an opening prayer. The presiding officer stated the purposes of the meeting: to elect Synod Assembly delegates and to act on the proposed 2026–27 budget. Business Manager Heather Budnik presented the financial material, and Pastor Tim Knauff assisted with parliamentary procedure.

Quorum was not declared on the record. Attendance was approximately 70 in person, plus online participants.

2. Prior minutes and Synod Assembly delegates

Prior minutes were not addressed. The November 2025 Annual Meeting had deferred approval of the 2024 Annual and Spring 2025 Budget minutes to this meeting. No action on any minutes appears on the recording. These, together with the November 2025 and April 2026 minutes, remain unapproved.

Motion 1: To elect the following as delegates to the Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly [09:20]: Phyllis Schroeder, Robert Luckett, Bob Neradt, Donna Neradt, and Kurt Stefans . Moved and seconded *[names not audible]*. **Carried** by voice vote.

3. Financial report and proposed 2026–27 budget

Heather Budnik presented the financial report and proposed budget [09:57]. CLC's fiscal year runs August 1 to July 31, following the school year of Little Lamb Preschool.

Current year, 2025–26, as of March 31, 2026. The budget forecast an $11,400 surplus, the amount needed for restricted-fund repayment. Actual results were $52,570 ahead, with a projected year-end surplus of about $30,000, roughly $19,000 above plan. Summer property work, including Little Lamb window replacement, is still ahead. The cumulative operating surplus is $26,251. Checking held a little over $88,000.

Restricted funds. CLC has repaid $950 every month as committed; $7,600 has been repaid this fiscal year, leaving $37,400.

Restorations. Synod mission support resumed at about 1.5% ($11,500 to date), and the budgeted social ministry monthly emphasis resumed at $1,200 per month. Christ in Our Home subscriptions and staff mileage and cell phone reimbursements remained paused.

Stewardship campaigns.

Campaign	Commitments	Recurring estimate	Non-respondent estimate	Total estimate
Who Is My Neighbor (2025–26)	$561,373	$52,040	$223,788	$837,201
Dare to Disciple (2026–27), as of April 24	$493,000	$86,958	$297,963	$847,921

Actual 2025–26 campaign receipts as of April 24 already exceeded the estimate at $**850,444.** Pastor Tim explained the remaining "faith" band: Christmas and Easter guests, new members, unexpected gifts, and members increasing their commitments.

Proposed 2026–27 budget. Unrestricted income and expenses of $992,372, against about $949,000 projected income for 2025–26. Predictable offerings are $847,321, leaving a faith gap of just under $115,000. The budget includes a 3% staff salary increase (the first in at least two years), Synod mission support at a 3% tithe, and restricted-fund repayment of $11,400 per year.

Questions from the floor [22:25 to 41:54]:

- **Why the year turned positive:** increased and fulfilled offerings, annual gifts arriving across the year rather than at year end, the youth director moving from full-time to half-time, and last year's minimal budget.
- **Mortgage:** 10 years remain. The rate resets every five years each January 15 (effective with the February 15 payment) and is about 5.75%.
- **Mission line decrease:** a member later noted it reflects Synod support returning to the planned 3% rate.
- **Pastor Erica's housing allowance:** a member noted the allowance appears cut by about half (about $15,000) with no corresponding salary increase. Pastor Tim explained that housing allowance is designated from salary annually with Council, and a reduction should show as a matching salary increase. The discrepancy is likely a spreadsheet error. Pastor Erica's compensation will not be reduced.

4. Budget action

The proposed 2026–27 budget came to the meeting as a recommendation of Council and required no second. Arising from discussion at the April 19 forum, Council proposed an amendment to restore paused items.

Motion 2 (amendment): To amend the proposed budget to [41:54]:

- restore cell phone reimbursements for both pastors and the youth director at $70 per month ($840 per year each);
- restore mileage reimbursements for the senior pastor, pastor, and youth director;
- restore Christ in Our Home at $155 per quarter;
- add a line item of about $500 for an Indiana-Kentucky Synod best practices review, conducted by the Synod treasurer in place of a costly external audit. The internal audit committee review continues.

The total of the amendment was $5,440. Moved and seconded *[names not audible].*

Motion 3 (amendment to the amendment): To increase the restored mileage reimbursement amounts by 10% [42:55], about $180. Mileage is reimbursed at actual miles at the federal standard rate, up to the budgeted amount. Moved by *[member]* and seconded *[names not audible].* **Carried** by voice vote, with online votes received via livestream chat [45:01].

Paul Conover commented that staff communication and travel lines should be roughly doubled, to about $10,000, in next year's budget. The comment was noted for next year.

Motion 2, as amended: Carried by voice vote [46:05].

Motion 4 (main motion): To adopt the 2026–27 budget as presented by Council and as amended, with the understanding that Council will correct the apparent error in Pastor Erica Gibson-Even's housing allowance and salary lines at its next meeting [46:36]. The meeting confirmed by consensus that this provisional approval was acceptable, and that the budget includes the 3% salary increase. Results of Council's correction are to be shared through the Scribe and email. **Carried** by voice vote, with online votes received via livestream chat [48:39].

5. Sheltered in Grace presentation and adjournment

Following the business portion, Council presented the Sheltered in Grace campaign for information [49:10]. No action was taken.

Property Manager Milan Coburn, project manager for the roughly $3.5 million addition 20 years ago, reviewed the building's five design principles and explained the roof: the shingles installed in 2009 are failing, and the structurally insulated roof panels make undetected leaks a structural risk. An infrared survey found no current leaks. A manufacturer warranty settlement yielded about $3,000.

Pastor Tim Knauff presented the campaign:

- **Foundation Goal:** $120,000 for roof replacement. Any amount beyond actual cost goes to mortgage principal.
- **Hallelujah Goal:** additional principal reduction. The mortgage balance is about $1.486 million with a monthly payment of $16,518. After a principal reduction, CLC can request reamortization over the remaining 10 years; a $100,000 reduction would save about $13,000 per year.
- **Status:** $56,765 committed (46% of the Foundation Goal), with 100% participation from Council and the Property Committee. A leadership donor offered a dollar-for-dollar match on the next $15,000.

- **Timeline:** commitments by June 1, 2026; gifts by August 1, 2026, so roofing can proceed in the fall. Commitments online at clcvalpo.org/shelteredgrace, on cards, or by mail. Gifts of appreciated securities, IRA rollovers, and tax refunds are welcome.

The recording ends at [1:07:12] as worship began. ***[No motion to adjourn or closing prayer was recorded due to the worship livestream scheduling]***

Follow-up items from this meeting:

- ☐ Council to correct the housing allowance and salary lines and report the correction via Scribe and email
- ☐ Approve the outstanding 2024 Annual, Spring 2025, November 2025, and April 2026 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tim Knauff, Sr. Pastor

Approved by the congregation on [date].

MEMBERSHIP STATISTIC FOR 2026

Members received

Baptisms: 4

Adult Baptism: 0

Affirmation of Faith/Transfers: 21

Members removed

By death: 1

Moved/Transfers: 29

Pastoral Acts

Funerals: 1

Students confirmed: 2

September 23,2026

Christ Lutheran Church
Valparaiso, IN

Audit Committee Report

This year, Chris and Julie Walda, who are affiliated with the Synod, conducted a Best Practice Review. On August 28, they performed a thorough examination of our source documents and provided recommendations for improvement. The Audit Committee reviewed the report and concurred with its findings and recommendations. The report is attached.

Recommendations:

1. Create a use policy for church issued debit cards for church employees and LLP as outlined in the report.
2. Look into the suggested payroll service of Brotherhood Works (Payroll & HR Platform - Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company)
3. Look at reviewing the treasurers roles and responsibilities.

Respectfully submitted by:
Brian Boedeker
Scott Casbon

September 10, 2026

Christ Lutheran Church
Valparaiso Indiana

Independent Accountant's Report

The objectives related to the procedures performed for Christ Lutheran Church financial books, records and operations include a determination that:

- Appropriate procedures are in place governing key financial operations and are followed;
- Proper segregation of duties is in place for key financial transactions and are not being circumvented;
- General ledger balances are appropriately reconciled to their underlying assets (i.e., bank statements) and liabilities (i.e., accounts payable) in a timely and accurate manner;
- Assets are properly classified in line with the donors' intentions;
- The Sunday (or special) offering is handled and counted appropriately;
- Monies generated and expenses incurred as a result of a special event are accounted for and can be traced back to the general ledger;
- Expenses are appropriately approved and supported by the appropriate documentation;
- Personal identity information is properly safeguarded both in system and paper form;
- Controls over the payroll process are in place and operating as intended;

While we did not find any areas of major concern, we would like to make suggestions in the following areas.

CASH RECEIPTS

Offering is collected and counted by teams after the church service and taken to the bank for deposit. Electronic giving is offered through Christ's giving software Subsplash. The church secretary opens mail and logs any donations. They are then placed in a lockbox and included in the Sunday deposit. The financial secretary enters both plate and electronic donations into Subsplash to credit donors.

We selected ten Sundays and traced the amounts from the offering count sheets to the bank statements and the general ledger. We found the process is working as intended.

Recommendation

No recommendation needed. Keep up the good work.

CASH DISBURSEMENTS

The church has done a good job reducing the number of checks written each month. All utilities are automatically withdrawn and debit cards are used for day-to-day transactions.

We judgmentally selected transactions from the fiscal year and traced them from the general ledger to the receipt and authorization. All transactions were well documented and authorized.

Debit Cards

Several employees use a debit card for online transactions and some in-person purchases. The use of debit cards is an efficient way of conducting business and does not subject the employee to utilize their own funds to be reimbursed at a later date.

Employees are required to submit an original receipt to the bookkeeper. The receipt is verified to the banking transaction. Each card has a dollar limit on purchases.

Recommendation

We recommend that each card holder be given a copy of a use policy for debit cards. The policy should outline what type of purchases are acceptable, the requirement to submit an original receipt in a timely manner, the responsibilities for use – no personal transactions, what to do if that happens, who to notify in case of fraud/lost card. Each card holder should be asked to sign an acknowledgement of receiving the policy and agrees to adhere to the document.

PAYROLL

Payroll for the church employees and the preschool employees is processed using PayrollMate software. The software creates payroll information, but the bookkeeper creates the direct deposit from the online banking, pays the employment taxes, and processes and files the quarterly and annual returns.

A review of the quarterly 941 returns and the annual W-3 return found a discrepancy with the declared federal wages. Clergy salary is often confusing when completing these returns and their omission on the Form 941 is a common error.

Recommendations

We recommend that Christ consider using Brotherhood Works as a full-service payroll processor. This service is provided through Brotherhood Mutual, located in Indiana, and specializes in church payroll. They are a low-cost option and will relieve the accountant from the time needed to log into different systems to pay employees, transfer funds from LLP to the church, pay taxes and file returns.

Bank Reconciliation

The church accountant performs the monthly bank reconciliation for both the church and preschool through the Blackbaud accounting software. We reviewed the church and preschool for the fiscal year and found they were completed accurately and timely.

We did note one small issue with the report that the software produces. It does not list checks outstanding as of the reconciliation date. This is not a critical issue but would help anyone reviewing the report to see if there are checks that have been outstanding more than 60 days.

Recommendations

No need for a recommendation. Nice work.

TREASURER DUTIES

To better equip congregations with the skill set needed for the accounting tasks, many are reevaluating the constitutional role of the Treasurer. Christ Lutheran employs a part-time bookkeeper to handle the day-to-day responsibilities, therefore the Treasurer role needs to shift. The current treasurer is new to the position and consulted with us about the best practices in this role.

Recommendations

We recommend that the treasurer views her role in accordance with oversight of the accounting records. This involves a review of the bank statements, ensuring that unusual transactions do not occur without explanation: a review of the payroll system to account for the annual salary and benefits adjustments are properly recorded; and prepares the

monthly reporting to the congregation's council and can adequately answer any questions or address concerns.

LITTLE LAMB PRESCHOOL

Little Lamb is maintained on a separate general ledger and bank accounts from the church operations. Tuition is collected electronically and checks or cash only on an exception basis.

The director has a debit card which is used to buy supplies and other items used in the daily operation. Where payments are needed the director sends a check request to the church accountant who issues the check.

The Little Lamb payroll is processed with the church employees. The bookkeeper initiates a bank transfer from the preschool checking account to reimburse the church for their share.

Recommendations

We recommend that the preschool director also be given a copy of the debit card policy as recommended above.

We recommend that the preschool employee payroll is also processed using Ministry Works, as recommended above. Their system would allow for the preschool employee payroll to be properly deducted from the preschool checking account.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you.

Sincerely,

Chris Walda & Julie Walda

2027 CLC Nominee Candidates

Tim Kratz
Position on Council: President
Family: Spouse: Kelly Children: Melanie, Timothy and Kayla
Member: Since 2018
Previous Positions: Property and Vice President

Position on Council: Vice President
Family: Spouse:
Member: Since
Previous Positions:

Aster Sorenson
Position on Council: Secretary
Member: Since 2026
Previous Positions: None

Heather Abbring
Position on Council: Treasurer
Family: Spouse: Steve Children: Dana and Jenna
Member: Since 2007

Position on Council: Hospitality and Outreach
Family: Spouse:
Member: Since
Previous Positions:

Gregg Copeland
Position on Council: Property
Family: Spouse: Vickie
Member: Since 2003

Anna Stewart
Position on Council: Social Ministry
Family: Spouse: Sam Graber Children: Lukas and Rachel
Member: Since
Previous Positions:

Position on Council: Worship and the Arts
Family: Spouse:
Member: Since
Previous Positions:

Ellen Swayne (ellenjswayne@aol.com)

Occupation:	Retired Teacher
Member:	Since 2017
Past Church Membership:	First Baptist Church, Laredo, TX
Previous positions:	Christian Ed, Synod Voting Member, Nominating Committee, Secretary
Interest:	Reading and cross stitching

YOUTH REPRESENATIVE

Libby Novak

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

Bill Scheiderich	Heather Abbring
Amy Boedeker	Kris Trapp
John Obermann	Roy Summerville

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Bill Iltzsche (chair)	Sara Long
Nikki Soleim	Amy Boedeker
Kathy Stefans	Angela Wehner

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Brian Boedeker
Scott Casbon
Grace Safrin

Report of the Senior Pastor 2026
Rev. Tim Knauff, Jr.

Thinking back over this year, it is striking to me how many times, and in how many ways, we came together when we were needed. Most recently of course is the Sheltered in Grace roofing appeal: the base goal was to repair the roof at an expected cost of about $100,000; you gathered over $200,000 for the project. Not only did you protect the Sanctuary you love, but you made a commitment to reduce our mortgage payments, freeing resources for ministry. As I write this I can hear the roofers at work!

Or remember when the terrible derecho hit and neighbors were without power, without houses, with terrific damage and debris. In the office we had the privilege of fielding your phone calls, your emails, your offers of hands, hard work, financial support, generators, food, and more. You showed up for each other, for our community, for our region.

You also showed up for Little Lamb Preschool families and members of the congregation. Little Lamb scholarships help families attend and, crucially, stay in our preschool when bumps in the road hit. Similarly your generosity to our congregation's Steiner Fund, Social Ministry emphases, and our discretionary "help" fund have mean that when people call, when our beloveds are hurting and scared, we can step up.

Above all you show up for each other every Sunday morning, every potluck, every activity, every class, every group. Through Stephen Ministry and Faith Formation Hour gatherings, through Priscilla Circle and Choir and Circle, Quilting and Braille Ministry, you show up shoulder-to-shoulder and heart-toheart, supporting and caring for each other in remarkable, tangible ways. This is what makes this congregation such a blessing: here we are seen, here we look forward to hearing from each other, here we are welcomed and always interested in meeting new friends and hearing new stories. You come together and show up for each other and it makes a difference.

Thank you for the part you play in the living, breathing, serving, hugging, heart-beating body of Christ here. It is a gift and privilege to serve alongside our talented, dedicated team, and a gift and privilege to be one of your pastors.

In God's amazing grace,

-Pastor Tim

Annual Report to the Congregation - Pastor Erica Gibson-Even

We have been together in ministry for 15 years! In the beginning of November 2011, I joined the CLC staff as Interim Associate Pastor. In no particular order, here are 15 things I thank God for in our time together!

1. It is a blessing to step into an ever-flowing stream of faith. One of the richest blessings of pastoral ministry is the opportunity to be a part of something so much bigger than ourselves - I'm grateful for the legacy of faith that shaped CLC through all the decades since its beginning.
2. I'm grateful for the generosity of this congregation in sharing their lives with me as a pastor. It is a deep privilege to be a part of the joys and sorrows of your lives, and to see God at work in and through you.
3. 15 years together has allowed me to be a part of the confirmation of young adults who were babies born just after I arrived at CLC, baptize the great-grandchildren of founding members who I have buried, perform marriages of young adults whose confirmation I participated in, and be alongside so many children and adults as we grow together in faith. A joy!
4. One of the best things I tell folks about CLC is that this is a community full of folks who are keen to hear the Gospel - the good news that in Jesus, God's grace is always first and last in our lives and world. I celebrate when in different settings, our youth notice if that Gospel isn't getting priority. I'm humbled by the thoughtful attention to the preached Word in our congregation, and grateful for the ways we listen together for grace.
5. A sense of openness and humor that allows us to try new things. We are willing to be playful, to take worship seriously but not take ourselves too seriously, to allow for experiments, for new ministries to arise and others to conclude with grace.
6. Care - we are at our best when we are a community that does our best to love one another, from moments of Sunday morning connection to investment in Stephen Ministry and delivering Caring Meals.
7. From my first season of getting to know Christ Lutheran, I have been grateful for the congregation's commitment to service and loving our neighbor. Supporting LWR with quilts and kits, our season of hosting the Men's Overnight Shelter, growing together in the Sacred Ground program on race and faith, welcoming and supporting a refugee family - God has been at work in our midst, and keeps calling us to new ventures!
8. Music - I love to sing with you! Whether it's our familiar Holden Evening Prayer, chanting the Lord's Prayer a capella, old favorite hymns or one of the many excellent new ones I love to inflict on you, there is something precious about singing together, and the gift of enough seasons alongside one another to be able to pick out familiar voices from across the sanctuary.
9. The staff team that I'm blessed to be a part of is one that works collaboratively and with mutual respect and encouragement. This is not a given in any work environment - so it's a reflection of the hopes and expectations of our congregation - thank you!

10. When I came to CLC, I was the first woman called to serve as a settled pastor here. That can often be a rocky season in the life of a congregation and a pastor, when our hopes for who we want to be run headlong into decades of habit. We all had some adjusting to do, but from the get-go I knew there was a solid commitment from the congregation and many faithful leaders to support and pray for my ministry. I've since heard stories from folks who have joined CLC over the decades - some who joined just after we began because women could serve as leaders on Church Council, some who joined when their baby girl was born and they wanted to be in a church body where she could grow into whatever calling God gave her, and some who have joined because they can now be a part of a faith community with a woman pastor. It has very little to do with *me* as a pastor, but a whole lot to do with how we understand God's call and our faithfulness, and I am proud to be part of such a community!
11. Similarly, I rejoice in the growing sense of welcome that is a part of our particular gift and calling as a congregation. In the last 15 years, we have welcomed children to God's table, and to be more widely integrated into the life of the congregation. Young folks who are engaged in the life of the church have a whole fleet of adults who not only love and pray for them from a distance but also know them well and help them be full participants in the life of the congregation. And in recent years, the Deepening our Welcome process has made us into a place where that Grace we treasure is spoken clearly for all our siblings. As I pastor I have fielded "am I welcome here?" questions from our LGBTQ neighbors in this congregation and in previous ones - where once I had to answer only "well, you won't hear hate from the pulpit," I now get to say, again and again, "Yes!!"
12. The kindness and care our family has experienced at CLC. Many children of clergy have some pretty rough stories about the way congregations have treated them, either with expectations of perfection or dragging them into hurtful church politics. I'm so grateful that our children have had the opportunity to grow in a church that is caring and invested in the lives of all its young people!
13. I'm grateful for the encouragement and support I've received from our congregation, again and again. Beginning with the rough interim season, folks have stepped up to be partners in ministry.
14. We have borne with one another in love. Every pastor and every congregation bring their own unique strengths and struggles - I'm grateful for all the ways we've been equipped to be gracious with one another!
15. We have been learning how to all pull together. In challenging seasons, we've increasingly faced the challenges together rather than turning to pick at one another - through difficult interim days and staff transitions, a global pandemic, financial challenges and a constantly changing society, God has been at work helping us to pray and laugh and hope together.

Thank you for 15 years of walking together in following Jesus! God has been so faithful to us and I am keen to see what new callings and gifts will meet us in the coming year.

Christ Lutheran Church – 2026 President Report
Bill Iltzsche

It has been an inspiration and a privilege to work along with the Church Council this year as we have had to find remedies to major congregational concerns. It has been a pleasure to serve in this capacity.

Because of changes to the makeup of our membership during and after COVID, CLC faced a serious financial problem in 2025, forcing us to make hard decisions concerning our budget. Council members and financial staff also had to do some creative maneuvers to insure our bills would get paid. Thanks to God's help and the success of the 2025 stewardship drive, and to the generosity of the congregation and their change in giving patterns, we came through our difficulties and started 2026 off on a high note.

Then came March, and the problem of our sanctuary roof. Through long hours of discussion and ideas, the council came up with our stewardship drive, "Sheltered in Grace", a bold plan to go above and beyond the immediate need by using anything pledged over $120,000 to go towards mortgage principle reduction. Again, many thanks to the congregation for coming through on this vital drive.

Among other items of note:

- We have returned to synod tithing at 3% of our budget, with high hopes of increasing that amount further.
- Money budgeted for social ministry is back to normal.
- The Endowment Committee was able to make grants available for the first time this year.
- We have joined a group of nine county churches in the faith-based "We Make Indiana" group in support of affordable housing.
- Though we no longer host the homeless men in our community, we continue to show our support for the Daybreak shelter as individuals.

I urge you to read all the committee reports for the year, and you will learn more about what this church is accomplishing for our members, our community, and the world as we continue to walk in Christ's footsteps.

Submitted with blessings to you all,
Bill Iltzsche, CLC Council President

2026 Little Lamb Preschool Annual Report

CHRISTIAN MISSION STATEMENT

Little Lamb Preschool, in union with Christ Lutheran Church, serves God by shepherding God's children as we nurture the whole child in partnership with families.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

We are a Christian preschool whose goal is to provide excellence in education and a loving, safe learning environment for every child. Based on the philosophy that young children learn best through play, we provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for them to explore, make discoveries, and learn respect for themselves and others. We firmly believe that all children are wonderful gifts from God to be cherished and nurtured. In collaboration with families, we encourage and support children to learn and grow socially, emotionally, academically, physically, and spiritually.

BOARD MEMBERS

Our hardworking, committed LLP Board members include Cailey Flora, Chairperson; Traci Coil, Vice-Chair; Kelli Ciesinski, Secretary; Heather Budnik, Treasurer, Kerstin Koch, Laura Peart, and Vickie Copeland.

LITTLE LAMB STAFF

Our excellent, dedicated staff includes Teri Coplan, Colleen Vatthauer, Cheryl Mulder, Abbey Vavrik, Lisa Church (teachers), Dani Dziedzinski, Mallory Raab, Renee Shiplov, and Trinity Winars (teaching assistants), and Laura Venstrom (Director).

After long careers here at Little Lamb, this year we celebrated with Jen Gottlieb and Mary Comstock as they moved into retirement. We are so grateful for their many years of ministry with us.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

God (as always) has blessed Little Lamb Preschool with an unbelievably dedicated and hardworking team and wonderful families. We currently have 9 energetic and joyous classes. Each age level is busy learning, growing, and forming relationships. The children and every LLP team member bring joy into the school day. **LLP has 113 students attending** within four classrooms. We offer two 5-sessions per week, four 3-sessions per week, and three 2-sessions per week classes. This year we are planning on continuing our very popular Extended Day program -Lunch Bunch. It begins in January and runs through May. The students experience lunch at school, provided by Valpo Schools Nutrition. Our developmentally appropriate curriculum is updated on an ongoing basis following guidelines from Indiana's Foundations for Early Learning Standards, Creative Curriculum, NAEYC Accreditation Standards, and a partnership with community Kindergarten teachers. Children attend Chapel Time weekly and participate in daily classroom devotions. We plan to offer a week-long STEAM camp during the summer. We are employing a family engagement tool called ***brightwheel.*** It is an app to increase communication between school/teacher/parent. We have two large fundraisers per year to help us meet our financial obligations. We host an all-school carnival in the fall and an art show and breakfast in the early spring. These are whole family events that reach well beyond our walls of CLC and host around 350 people. **LLP is an NAEYC** (National Association for the Education of Young Children) **accredited+ preschool, a Level 4 *Paths to QUALITY* school** (Indiana's rating system for Early Childhood Centers) **and a member of the ELEA** (Evangelical Lutheran Education Association). In the fall of 2026, we were approved for On My Way Pre-K funding from the State of Indiana to provide funding for students in need who are enrolled in our pre-k or Young Fives classes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We appreciate the CLC Staff supporting us through music experiences (Brian), Chapel and Program Openings and staff support activities (Pastor Tim and Pastor Erica), scheduling (Jenny), finances (Heather) and continual property maintenance (Milan). We thank congregation members who helped our LLP ministry and those who support us in prayer and encouragement. We especially thank all that have financially donated to our school by providing equipment, memorial gifts, scholarships, monetary gifts, and educational materials. Your help reaffirms our church and school's commitment to providing an excellent Christian early childhood education. We are grateful to be included in prayers in worship at CLC monthly, and we pray for you all in chapel, as well!

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We continually strive to improve the quality of our program, while maintaining its respected reputation, by meeting the educational, social and spiritual needs of our students, their families, our congregation, and community. LLP is maintaining Level 4 *Paths to QUALITY* school and our NAEYC Accreditation (Accreditation + rating). during the 2026-2027 school year. We will reapply for accreditation later this school year. We are also participating in a cohort with VCS and local preschools to bolster relationship between preschools and the Valparaiso Community Elementary Schools.

Little Lamb will turn 40 at the start of the 2027-28 school year, so plans are beginning to celebrate the incredible impact this ministry has had and will continue to have for years to come, God willing!

Little Lamb Preschool is very thankful to be a ministry of CLC and an outreach to the Valparaiso Community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Venstrom, Director

Christian Education Annual Report 2026

SUNDAY SCHOOL

- We had Sunday School for our children PreK-4th grade. Teachers teamed up and provided lessons for 3 groups: PreK-Kindergarten, 1st/2nd grades, and 3rd/4th grades.

- We integrated an opening program for Sunday School. Every Sunday, the children met in the Little Lamb Annex to sing songs, be silly, and pray together before going to their classrooms for lessons.

- We are integrating memory work passages and church liturgy into this time for the 2025-2026 school year. We had a Sunday School Christmas Program and a cookie reception during The Faith Formation hour in December 2025.

FAITH FORMATION

- We provided a 2-week program for the congregation on the book The Anxious Generation by Jonathon Haidt during Faith Formation hour on March 1st and 8th . We discussed how technology effects our families and young people. We had good discussions and provided helpful resources.

SUMMER PROGRAMING

- We hosted 3 "Family Faith Gatherings" throughout the summer

- The June 14th activity – A potluck service was held after church. There was a bible story and families worked on a college depicting a nature scene before and after the meal.

- The June 28th activity was held at Sunset Hills. The families met after church and brought a lunch. There was a bible story and a service project of families pulling weeds in the Sunset Hills gardens.

- The July 12th activity was held after the service. The congregation learned about the CLC Bioswales and had a chance to add to the nature colleges.

Christian Growth 2026

This congregation is so blessed by the dedicated members who serve as part of the Christian Growth Committee! The mandate of the Christian Growth Committee is ***"implementing programs and activities to increase the spiritual growth of the members of the congregation".***

Bread Breakers, led by Amy Knauff

Bread Breaker groups spend time together sharing meals and fellowship throughout the year usually rotating hosting, using the church hall or going out to eat as a group. There were many groups that met throughout the 2025 - 2026 season. Our '26 - 27' kick off took place on Sunday, September 27th..

Caring Meals, led by Amy Knauff

The Caring Meals ministry uses www.takethemameal.com to line up meal providers with the meal receivers. There are numerous volunteers on the caring meals mailing list. Meals are provided to families due to illness or injury, death of a loved one, birth of a baby, or some other difficult time. Since the last annual report, CLC provided meals to different households throughout the year for various reasons.

Referrals can be made through the church office or one of the pastors. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this ministry, contact Amy Knauff @ 219-242-7448 or amyknauff@gmail.com.

The Retreat Planning Committee, led by Pastor Erica

The church retreat was held February 20th - 22nd. 2026 at Lindenwood Retreat Center. Planning for 2027 has already begun so think about joining us … fun is had by all!

Faith Formation Hour

Our Faith Formation Hour occurs weekly from 9:20 am-10:20 am on Sunday mornings. An ongoing Bible study continues with Dave Keammerer in room 120.

A variety of presentations about different ministries we support, issues of interest, book studies, Bible studies and intergenerational topics and sessions, which are scheduled in the church hall and other rooms as needed each week. Details are in the weekly scribe, eNews and on the website. We also work with Pastor Tim to host "Getting To Know CLC" the new member class during this time throughout the year.If you have ideas for programs or studies you would enjoy, please Pastor Erica through the church office.

Grief Group, led by Cheryl Slack

Christ Lutheran Church offers a Grief Support Group every other week on Wednesdays from 9:30 - 11 am in the Conference Room. (209) with dates listed weekly in the Scribe.

The group serves adults who have experienced a loss of a spouse, parent, child, friend, or neighbor. The group is facilitated by Cheryl Slack, a Stephen Minister. You may contact her at 219-241-0677 or cdslack56@gmail.com or one of the pastors if you have any questions and the upcoming dates when they meet for the rest of the year. There are currently 8-10 regular individuals who attend the grief group with plenty of space for additional persons. .

Funeral Meal Ministry, led by Marilyn McGawn

The purpose of the Funeral Meal Ministry is to offer church families a time of fellowship and sharing with a meal or light refreshments following the funeral, memorial service or celebration of life for their loved one. In the past year meals were served for two funerals, for approximately 200 guests and volunteers. The families involved were most appreciative and let the volunteers know how meaningful this ministry was for them.

Thanks to the countless volunteers who provide food and/or help serve at the funeral meals. We would certainly welcome more volunteers who would like to be involved in this ministry. Contact Jen Bias in the church office if you would like to be added to the volunteer list.

Stephen Ministry, led by Dr. Tim Knauff

Stephen Ministry offers highly confidential support and encouragement for folks who are suffering or facing issues, both inside and outside our congregation. At this point, we have e Leaders one being new and 11 active Stephen Ministers for a total of 16 who are available. During the past year we averaged 12 - 18 Care Receivers. CLC takes responsibility to train the new Stephen Minister for our network. There are currently seven in the class that includes 4 from our congregation. Our well-trained and caring Ministers are ready to walk with you for a variety of different concerns. Over the years, Stephen Ministry has supported those facing divorce/separation, adoption or pregnancy issues; retirement concerns, depression, loss of job, loss of spouse, anxiety, loss of faith; people feeling isolated or lost and many for. To find a Stephen Minister contact either one of our pastors at 219-462-6660 or by finding one of our Stephen Ministers who wear the blue name tags.

Christ Caring Visitors, led by Holly Knauff and Beth Coburn

Christ Caring Visitors are CLC members that meet monthly with our members who live in Assisted Living Facilities and who are homebound, reminding them they are an important part of the Family of God at CLC. Currently there are 11 CLC members serving in this ministry who see 18 residents or homebound CLC family members. Each pair of visitors brings smiles, conversation, prayer, Holy Communion and flowers from the bioswales. Please let us know if you would like to become a Christ Caring Visitor, or if you know a member that would like a visit. You may contact the church office, Holly Knauff @ hknauff@gmail.com or Beth Coburn @ bethmarie.coburn@gmail.com for more information.

Hospitality and Outreach
2026

Members:
Sally Ecklund-Baker, Jacquie Chevalier, Judy Chevalier, Ellen Swayne, Lucas Ecklund-Baker

The team has been providing treats at the welcome center throughout the school year. Sign ups are appreciated as well as any extra goodies that can be left in the fridge.

We are sending welcome cards to visitors that have signed the guest book.

Last holiday season we collected 105 coloring books and 50 boxes of crayons that were distributed to Family House and Hilltop.

We hosted a Lent Dinner with help from others in the congregation.

We advertised our Easter Services in Valpo Neighbors Magazine again this year.

Mission Bears continue to find homes and give comfort. We had many bears registered and will continue this mission with bears for baptism.

We are looking for others to join the committee. Please reach out if you are interested in helping plan or volunteer.

Thank you,

Sally Ecklund-Baker
Hospitality and Outreach

Property Committee Annual Report to Council 2026

Committee members: Gregg Copeland (chair), Milan Coburn (property manager) Scott Schnabel, Paul Conover, Betty Luckett, Tony Reinhold, Ed Seykowski.

The property Committee manages a budget of almost $200,000 to maintain and enhance our facility and grounds as our church continues to grow and serve the community in many new ways. This includes salaries for our Property Manager, Custodians, and building attendants. Our budget also supports utilities, repairs and upkeep, and Major expense projects. As the buildings and grounds are ageing many mechanical systems have reached their normal life span and need replacement such as, HVAC equipment, roofing, flooring and parking lot pavement. As costs continue to rise, we have implemented several energy saving programs and strive to manage a schedule of expected repairs and replacement to control when and where the congregation's funds are spent.

We would also like to thank all of the many people who volunteer their time to support the many ministries of the church that work with property and are responsible for the upkeep and beautification of everything from, circle garden, bioswale garden group, flower planters in and around the church, to Alter guild and so many others.

Some of the many projects that we have completed this year are:

- Dedication of the new circle garden in the front of the church.
- Popcorn fest setup and teardown of food concession fund raiser to benefit our youth group ministry.
- Accepted proposal and signed contract to replace sanctuary roof (job scheduled to begin October 5th)
- Completed the Sheltered in Grace fund raising program (Thanks to the Congregation for pledging more than $215,000. For the roof project and to help pay down the mortgage principle).
- Installed the final 8 replacement windows in LLP (all windows and trim replaced)
- Reconfigure walls and doorways in music and choir rooms and recarpet both.
- Completed annual lawn weed control, tree and shrub pruning, removed several damaged ornamental trees.
- Completed fire inspection, extinguisher inspection, and corrected several deficiencies noted on previous inspection.
- Replaced condenser fan motor on HVAC unit (east gathering space)
- Replaced underground wiring on east bank of parking lot lights. (rodent damage in light pole bases)
- Completed work on six LLP classroom doors to bring them up to current fire code.
- Build out of a new office for the Youth Director.

- Troubleshooting and repair of security and fire alarm systems.
- Remodeled underused room to be new space for Youth to meet.
- Work on creating a new proposed budget for council approval.
- Had parking lot patching and seal coating done.
- Planning and getting proposals to replace one HVAC unit over gathering space, (one each year for the next five years).

Social Ministry and Mission Committee

Annual Report 2026

Committee Members: Diana Iltzsche; Bill Iltzsche; Lisa Owen; Irene Adams; Tim Sutherland; Kathy Sutherland; Kathy Lundstrom; Tony Reinhold; Karen Seykowski; Becky Fry; Adam Gibson, Wanda Rogers, Katie Sirko; Phyllis Schroeder; Anna Stewar (Chair)t; Mary Michna; Pastor Tim Knauff (pastoral representative)

The work of the committee is to offer our church family opportunities to learn about, support, and volunteer with organizations working on hunger, housing, homelessness and mission, with an added focus on social justice around diversity. Monthly emphases fall under these areas and provide giving and in many cases volunteer opportunities. Each of these organizations–ranging from local, regional, national, to international organizations–is a line item in the Social Ministry and Mission budget, as well as receiving designated giving from CLC members.

The list below describes, for each month, the ministries to which we invite the CLC family's attention, increasing awareness of opportunities to serve with our time, prayers, and resources.

This listing provides Financial Giving and Volunteer Opportunities - within NWI community, ELCA IK Synod, and internationally - resulting in Giving of $25,000+, from Congregational Budget and over-and-above Offerings.

- **January** = *Hunger/Housing*: First Contact Christian Resources & Mike Steiner Fund
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC members welcome to volunteer at Meals on Wheels and First Contact
- Volunteer Opportunities: Advocacy/Writing letters via BFW, ELCA Advocacy, and 5calls.org

- **February** = *Hunger/Poverty*: Hilltop Neighborhood House/Food Pantry & Refugee Family support
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC takes leadership/provides volunteers for Hilltop Soups Fundraiser
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC members walk alongside Valpo family transitioning to life in the U.S.

- **March** = *Mission/Diversity*: Lutheran Diaconal Association
- Volunteer Opportunities: Host Diaconal Sunday and Deaconesses are servant leaders in Valpo/beyond

- **April** = *Homeless/Housing*: Co-Action (formerly Housing Opportunities)
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC members volunteer at Co-Action (incl. 2 serve on Board)

- **May** = *Mission/Diversity*: LGBTQ Outreach of Porter County & Reconciling in Christ
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC Booths and volunteers at NWI Pride events

- **June** = *Hunger/Housing*: Food Banks of Northwest Indiana & Project Neighbors
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC food donations to P.C. Food Pantries & volunteers for Project Neigh.

- **July** = *Mission/Diversity*: ELCA G.M./Arusha Hosp.-Tanzania & AMOS Med. Mission Trip-Guatemala
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC provide supplies for AMOS Mission Trip & ARC Blood Donations

- **August** = *Mission/Diversity*: Global Refuge (formerly LIRS) & Lutheran Braille Ministries
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC hosts vols. to create Braille Bibles and other publications

- **September** = *Mission/Diversity:* Compass Int'l Family Prog. & Proj. Neigh. Freedom Recovery Fund
- Volunteer Opportunities: Pack Away Hunger event in Crown Point & Compass volunteers
- Volunteer Opportunities: Proj. Neighbors vol. days and service on NWI African Amer. Alliance Board

- **October** = *Hunger/Poverty*: ELCA World Hunger/Luth. Disaster Response & Lutheran World Relief
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC LWR Truckload Ingathering Site incl. CLC Quilts/Care Kits/School Kits

- **November** = *Homeless/Housing*: Daybreak Center (formerly N.C. Men's Shelter) & Gabriel's Horn
- Volunteer Opportunities: CLC members can volunteer at new Daybreak (prepare meals/serve meals)

- **December** = *Mission/Diversity*: Bethel Lutheran Gary (ELCA Urban Ministry) incl. Bethel/CLC Partnership
- Volunteer Opportunities: Interfaith Action Network, We Make Indiana (L.C./P.C.), Worship at the Lake

In addition, the committee has been working or supporting the following:

- We continue to help with Hilltop's annual soup supper fundraiser each spring; this year's was "very successful" and held on March 3, 2026 in the Porter County Expo Center. We no longer host because the size of the event become too large, but we still help/support.

- Partnership with Bethel Lutheran – clean up event in May – had to cancel annual outdoor worship and picnic this August (would have been our sixth) due to extensive damage and ongoing issues following the August 11th derecho in the area.
  One example: A group of about 20-30 of us (including CLC members and several additional groups), helped out with tree and debris removal Aug 29, 2026 in the Pulaski neighborhood of Gary. Various CLC members volunteered across Lake County in the storm's aftermath.

- Steiner Fund. Our social ministry fund to help CLC members opened the year with a balance of $21,789.97. Our social ministry emphasis brought in a total income of $1655.43. We dispersed $5,068.44 to CLC members in need (including impacted from the Derecho storm). The balance at the end of October is $18,376.96.

- Efforts to support diversity and justice in our communities include working with the Interfaith Action Network, We Make Indiana, and Northwest Indiana African American Alliance. These groups provided numerous events/forums addressing social justice.

- CLC members provided a welcoming presence at regional Pride events and a CLC Rainbow "Parents" group has been meeting once per month on Thursday evenings at CLC (most recent was Sept. 23).

- We hosted three blood drives in 2025 (June, August, December planned). Also Feb 24th (~40 units collected), June 15th (49 units collected), August 18th (48 units collected), next scheduled for Dec 14th. [Previous December, in 2025, netted 43 units.]

- CLC continues to host the Lutheran World Relief in-gathering each October, welcoming and receiving donations from congregations across the state. On October 17, we loaded a semi-trailer coming from Fort Wayne, and it left Christ Lutheran close to full–the fullest we can recall from recent memory.
    - Signedup Volunteers helped with paperwork, provided bake goods, moved boxes. Several of our 2026 CLC goals for quilts, kits (baby care, fabric, personal care, school), and aluminum can recycling were met. Ingathering totals were quilts 2067 (246 from CLC), Pers. Care Kits 1106 (408 CLC), Baby Care Kits 342 (CLC 315), School Kits 1444 (CLC 140), and Fabric Kits (40 (CLC 40). Sunday School kids and youth assembled 140 kits on Oct. 4. Our quilts were recently offered for sale for a $50 donation.

- Our campus is used by Lutheran Braille Workers, who compile Braille Bibles at CLC.

- Multiple CLC members have become very involved with We Make Indiana, which has a chapter in Porter County. Monthly meetings for WMI-Porter County have been held at CLC throughout 2026 (CLC's in-kind contribution to this chapter of the organization). The Interfaith Action Network–of which CLC is an active member–has formally affiliated with We Make Indiana to help facilitate a Lake County branch. Interfaith Action Network continues to use its own name and to host organizational events as well.

- Indiana-Kentucky synod of the ELCA. Upcoming regional meetings including Breakout Sessions relating to social ministry (Oct. 24 in South Bend).

- AMOS fundraising, collecting supplies, and sewing baby blankets continues, with a trip planned in early November to Guatemala and Honduras

- Civil Rights Pilgrimage History trip, upcoming in February 2027.

- Daybreak: Continuing opportunity for SMM members to vol./observe while helping to serve a meal (to help us know how to be more helpful to Daybreak).

- Deaconess Erin Brown visited our congregation in July to share about her current ministry through the ELCA, working in South America.

- Continued support for refugee family & ELCA IN-KY synod activities such as "Know Your Rights" event, Compass IFC fundraising event.

- CLC Endowment applications for various projects – The Fund accrued around $6800 in the past year and these dollars supported 5 grant proposals and recipients, and some of these projects are social ministry related.

- Derecho response / support. See elsewhere in this report under Bethel Lutheran Partnerships and Steiner Fund how CLC helped with storm responses in our congregation, Valparaiso, and NWI Region. The Council is discussing a potential return of an emergency response fund in the budget (for future unforeseen emergencies.

- Early in 2026 restoration of monthly emphasis contributions occurred in the CLC budget

- In October the Committee approached Worship and Arts Committee about potential purchase and display of an art piece of John Lentz entitled "Jesus Christ: Liberator". The Committee also participated in the 2-Sunday Mission Fair.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Stewart, Church Council representative, as well as Tim Sutherland and Lisa Owens

CLC Stewardship Committee
Annual Report

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" ~ 1 Peter 3:15

This verse inspired the Stewardship Committee this past year as the committee often talks about hope: how do we find it, how do we create it, and how do we foster it in others. I always come out of Stewardship meetings with a tremendous sense of hope. What a gift from God hope is! And we have plenty of places in our church to find hope.

For example, this past Spring, we completed the *Dare to Disciple!* Annual Appeal. In total, we had 109 statements of intent (SOIs), out of 205 total givers. Fifty-nine percent of givers had increased their SOIs commitments, while twenty-seven givers reported no change, nine givers reported a decrease, and nine givers indicating no exact amount, but participated in the appeal. This level of commitment and SOIs contribution is fantastic, but our SOIs were only part of the appeal with the congregation also asked to personally dare yourself to do something more for God this year. This "Dare Jar" is still in the Gathering Space and it is filled with our congregation's commitments and challenges. This gives me hope every time I pass it!

We also had several speakers as part of *Dare to Disciple!*, including Karl Schmitt, who spoke about Daring to live in Community; Becky Fry, who spoke about Daring to love and serve our neighbors; and Erin Schmidgall, who spoke about Daring to share Joy and Hope. These speakers gave me and many others hope with their words!

Last Fall, we also hosted our third annual Chili Cook-off. We have 42 attendees, including several visitors who wanted to sample our congregation's best chili recipes. This friendly competition includes prizes for best chili, spiciest chili, kids' choice, and best side dish. We plan to continue this tradition and hope more will come to sample some of our congregation's cooking talents.

As we look ahead to what Stewardship hopes to do this year, we are planning to shift our next Annual Appeal to Fall 2027. This is mainly due to our successful Sheltered in Grace, our special appeal to repair our roof and reduce our mortgage principal. We hope that the congregation can celebrate this incredible accomplishment very soon!

Stewardship continues to aim for inspiring members to do more for Christ – both the savior and the church. Yet that can take many forms. There is plenty of evidence that this church shows up when God comes calling. If you feel like God is calling you to do more or to do something different, we are happy to help you find the best place for your talents and time.

I am so thankful for this congregation's generosity in time, talent, and resources. We are blessed to have so many, doing so much, spreading hope. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

~Jonathan Bull, Stewardship Committee Chair