



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past year we have continued to experience changes in the world around us. Even as our church finds ways to adapt to this changing world, we find hope in the unchanging and always present promise of God's love through Jesus Christ. We change and adapt not to conform to the world but because we believe that the gift of God's Son is for the world, and that our congregations and worshiping communities are places to gather and be sent into the world, where we will tell the story of God's love in word and deed.

The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the churchwide organization provide ways for the church to move beyond the boundaries of structures and geography and to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and beyond. We engage in this ministry knowing that our church walks by faith, trusting in God's promise in the gospel, and that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." We are connected by the promise that we do all through Christ and can do nothing apart from him.

God gives the Holy Spirit, who uses gospel proclamation — in preaching and sacraments, in forgiveness and in healing conversations — to create and sustain this faith. Just as we rely on God to sustain our faith, we rely on each other to sustain the ministries that offer God's love to the world. Through your generosity to each expression

of this church — your congregation, your synod and your churchwide organization — you add to our collective voice proclaiming God's love for all.

I am grateful for your generosity over this last year. My gratitude spreads far beyond your generous financial gifts. You've shared your gifts of time through countless hours of volunteering, serving and accompanying. You've shared the gifts of your voices as we've tried to discover and learn how God is calling us to be the church now and into the future. And, finally, dear church, you have shared the gift of the realness of God's love with the world around you. Be well, dear church, and stand steadfast in the promise of God's love and grace as you take that promise with you into the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The script is fluid and cursive.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Son of God, Eternal Savior

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

And also with you.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Receive our prayer, O God.

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

Amen.

1 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,
 2 As you, Lord, have lived for oth - ers, so may we for oth - ers live.
 3 Come, O Christ, and reign a - mong us, King of love and Prince of peace;
 4 Son of God, e - ter - nal Sav - ior, source of life and truth and grace,

Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race,
 Free - ly have your gifts been grant - ed; free - ly may your ser - vants give.
 hush the storm of strife and pas - sion, bid its cru - el dis - cords cease.
 Word made flesh, whose birth a - mong us hal - lows all our hu - man race:

you our head, who, throned in glo - ry, for your own will ev - er plead;
 Yours the gold and yours the sil - ver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
 By your pa - tient years of toil - ing, by your si - lent hours of pain,
 by your pray - ing, by your will - ing that your peo - ple should be one,

fill us with your love and pit - y, heal our wrong, and help our need.
 we but stew - ards of your boun - ty held in sol - emn trust will be,
 quench our fe - vered thirst of pleu - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain,
 grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe-Hollantse Boerenliedjes en Contradansers, 1710;

arr. Julius Röntgen

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Minneapolis Area Synod
of the ELCA

Grace, peace, and hope through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Day by day ... they ate their food **with glad and generous hearts**, praising God and having the good will of all the people. – Acts 2:46-47*

In May, we meet for our 2024 Synod Assembly under the theme *“With Glad and Generous Hearts.”* The phrase describes the early church as they gathered on Pentecost. It is also an appropriate description of the past year of our life and ministry together.

In 2023, our hearts were gladdened by:

- Your congregation, along with the other 136 congregations in our synod, faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament, nurturing community, and loving neighbors and neighborhoods.
- The privilege of accompanying congregations in 72 Call Processes; presiding at 14 Ordinations and 30 Installations; and walking with 34 people preparing to become pastors or deacons.
- 142 lay leaders and 28 clergy from 31 congregations learning to be church in the 21st century through our Faith Practices and Neighboring Practices intensive learning communities.
- 6,500 people receiving our weekly enews. (Sign up at mpls-synod.org/sign-up to feel more connected.)
- 100s of rostered and lay leaders involved in synod sponsored peer groups, conferences, and retreats.
- 100s of leaders from synod congregations helping pass the state’s “100% Clean Energy By 2040” and “Restore The Vote” legislation that advance both climate justice and racial justice.
- 100s of leaders faithfully serving as Deans, on Synod Council, and Candidacy, Audit, Program Committees.
- 15 gifted and devoted synod staff members: 10 funded by Mission Support from you and other congregations, and 5 funded by Lilly Endowment and other external grants.

We praise God for the congregational generosity that makes all this happen. At the same time, we recognize that mission support from congregations has declined 16% over the past 10 years, resulting in a reduction in synod staff hours. Especially as we prepare to elect a new bishop this spring, we invite you to consider strengthening your support for the future of the synod’s work.

Conference Assemblies are just around the corner: Saturday, February 10, 9:30 a.m. – Noon. Of particular importance will be conference nominations for bishop as well as for voting members to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, July 28 - August 2, 2025. We encourage congregations to send the same voting members to both the Conference and Synod Assemblies.

As we look at declining mission support or grieve the closing of a congregation, we can become discouraged. In such moments, I encourage you to listen to a remarkable conversation from our 2023 Synod Assembly. Our keynote speaker, the Rev. Otis Moss III, was asked: “what do you say to those who think the church is dying?” Filled with courage and hope, Moss responded, “the church is not dying, it is being born, refashioned, and remade. The early church was an alternative community. Today we use the metrics of the market to evaluate the church – buildings, budgets, numbers. But, the early church looked at **impact**: were people hearing the good news of Jesus who lived and died for our salvation?

Was suffering being relieved? Were people being welcomed and healed?” (mpls-synod.org/our-synod/synod-assembly-2/2023-synod-assembly-archives 4:57:27 of the second day)

Rev. Moss reminds us that we are called to be alternative communities. What might it take to measure our churches by **impact**? The work of synod leadership is to support the 137 communities and the thousands of leaders who are making an **impactful** difference in the 21st century: sharing the good news of Jesus, extending radical welcome into beloved community, engaging their neighborhoods in love with justice.

I am filled with both gratitude and sadness as I write this, my final annual report to congregations. I have loved serving as your bishop and am profoundly grateful for this calling. We pray for the year ahead, trusting in the goodness and faithfulness of our God, made known in Jesus Christ.

Bishop Ann Svennungsen

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ELK RIVER LUTHERAN PERSONNEL DIRECTORY

CHURCH STAFF

Lead Pastor: Nathan Mugaas

Online Broadcast Specialist: Nick Campbell

Associate Pastor: Anne Schaefer

Staff Pianist: Lisa Griffin

Office Manager: Linda Nielsen

Custodian: Brian Harding

Director of Music Ministry and Worship: Taylor Quinn

Bookkeeper: Lori Sundman

Nursery Attendants: Clara Anderson,
Emma Anderson and Amy Brown

CHURCH COUNCIL OFFICERS

President: David Katzner

Vice President: Kent Larson

Secretary: Matt Glasoe

Treasurer: Mark Johnson

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Sue Hales

Julie Marie Haugen

Connie Natwick

Jeff Schrock

Jennifer Stanley

Tom Werk

ELK RIVER LUTHERAN ANNUAL MEETING

ERLC Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda

January 28, 2024 @ 9:30 am

Hybrid Meeting Options

A. Meet in Sanctuary

B. Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/733768254>

1. Call to order and quorum establishment
2. Devotion and Prayer
3. Old business:
 - a. Congregational Meeting Minutes review and action
 - January 29, 2023 Annual Meeting
 - b. Review of finances from fiscal year 2023
4. New Business:
 - a. Approval of Reconciling in Christ (RIC) affirmation statement (page 19)
 - b. Review and action on 2024 Budget
 - c. 2024 council, council officers, nominating committee and mission endowment fund committee elections
5. Presentation of ERLC 2023 Annual Report
 - a. Report from Pastor Nathan
 - b. Ministry Reports
6. Other Business
7. Adjourn

Elk River Lutheran Church - ELCA Minutes of the Annual Meeting

The ERLC held an Annual Meeting on January 29, 2023. Attendees were in person and online.

Call to Order

President Dave Katzner called the meeting to order at 9:40 am. With 57 present and 16 online, a quorum is declared.

Pastor Nathan Mugaas welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with the Opening Liturgy provided by the ELCA. Members sang "Spirit of God, Descend on My Heart."

Action items

- Motion to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2022 Annual Meeting made by Dale Ziner and seconded by Paula Donnelly. Approved. Motion carried.
- Motion to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2022 Special Meeting, the minutes of the June 26, 2022 Special Meeting and the minutes of the July 24, 2022 Special Meeting made by Jenny Stanley and seconded by Chuck Anderson. Approved. Motion carried.
- Motion to approve the 2022 Treasurer's report as presented by Dave Katzner made by Dale Ziner and seconded by Jeff Schrock. Approved. Motion carried.
- Motion to approve the 2023 proposed budget as printed in the 2022 Annual Report, made by Kari Christianson and seconded by Diane Hahn. Approved. Motion carried.

Election results

- Congregation Council: Jeff Schrock, Sue Hales, Kent Larson
- Council Officers: President - David Katzner, Vice-President - Kent Larson, Treasurer - Mark Johnson, Secretary - Matt Glasoe
- Nominating Committee: Kari Christianson, Vicki Simpson, Ron Stricker
- Mission Endowment Fund Committee: Paula Donnelly, Hans DuBois

Pastor Nathan Mugaas presented the ERLC 2022 Annual Report.

President Dave Katzner adjourned the meeting at 10:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Hales, secretary

PASTOR NATHAN'S 2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2024 VISION AND PLAN

Dear Members of Elk River Lutheran,

As I think about the year 2023, the theme that comes to my mind is “**Creation.**” We celebrated a number of baptisms this year and in that service there is a prayer that harkens back to the creation story in Genesis 1 proclaiming, *“We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight.”* (ELW Hymnal pg 230) The Spirit has been moving here at Elk River Lutheran and I give thanks for these ways we've experienced God's creation and new life together this year, including:

- The completion of our major building project, which has provided us with a wonderfully welcoming new main entrance and a modern, beautiful, comfortable worship space. I give thanks for these ways we have made our building as welcoming as our people.
- Deepening connections with the community by further partnering with other downtown businesses, the city, and by welcoming more outside groups to use our space, including a new AA recovery group meeting every Tuesday evening.
- Growth in programs and worship attendance (This Christmas we had over six hundred people attend services at Elk River Lutheran!).
- Providing space and opportunities for our members to foster meaningful relationships and support one another within the joys and heartaches of life.

For all of the life and new life we have been able to delight in this year, I echo the faith of Ezra the priest from the Old Testament who said, *“You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.”* (Nehemiah 9:6)

The Financial Challenges of Full Ministry

This was the first “normal” year of church programming with a full staff in many years and so that meant a year full of wonderful opportunities, ministry, and connections, but it also meant a more full year of expenses. When this financial challenge was shared with the congregation this fall, members of the church stepped up. Thank you. Because of your generous giving and the one time Employee Retention Credit (a Covid era Federal credit we received in 2023), we were able to finish the year on solid financial footing.



My Sabbatical, Creativity, and God's Creation

I connected with the theme of "Creation" on a personal level in 2023 as well, as I studied and explored creative writing, stand-up comedy, and how to more effectively communicate in preaching and in general. Of course, my sabbatical was a big part of my experience of this year as well. I am so thankful to you all for this opportunity, and especially to the church council for approving my specific proposal, and to the staff for stepping up in my absence. I realize it was a lot to put on Pastor Anne in her first year here, but unsurprisingly, she stepped into the leadership role with grace and aptitude.

The notion of sabbatical and weekly times of sabbath comes right out of that original creation story which ends like this: *"On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation."* (Genesis 2:2-3)



I am thankful for the regular opportunities for rest and time with family, but this sabbatical was the rare, uninterrupted chance for me to do some deeper study, unplug, and be completely available for my family as we experienced the great adventure of a six week, eight thousand mile road trip and time together at home. Our tour of the Western part of our country provided a wonderful view of the vastness of God's creation, prompting me to echo the words of the psalmist, *"O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."* (Psalm 104:24)

I understand that not everyone has the opportunity for a sabbatical, so I thank you for this time. It's my hope and prayer that even if you can't take a full three month sabbatical, you find times of regular rest, renewal, and sabbath; opportunities for adventure, time with family and friends, and the exploration of God's vast creation.



Looking To 2024

Starting with the pandemic in 2020 it became difficult to set goals and plan very far into the future. Coming out of the most difficult months and years of the pandemic we moved into our building project and transitioned pastoral leadership, as we welcomed Pastor Anne. We enter this new year in a strong position, having completed the building project and with a full, competent, and established staff. I believe that now is the time to once again do some self-examination and visioning for the future. My and the council's hope is that we can do some leadership training/coaching with the staff and council, to help us meet the challenges of a changing culture by taking advantage of the opportunities that also lie before us.

As I worked to identify goals for this new year, informed by areas of focus identified by our staff and council, I was drawn back to these three words that structured our goals several years ago: Communication, Connection, and Community.

Communication - We will perform a communications audit to ensure we are effectively communicating with our members and the greater community.

Connections - We will offer programs for people of all ages to provide opportunities for members to foster meaningful relationships, support one another, and enjoy life together.

Community - We will love and serve our neighbors through specific programs and events, volunteering and supporting social service agencies like CAER and LSS, and by simply being a loving presence in our downtown neighborhood.

If we can live into these goals with intention and care, I know that 2024 will be another wonderful year of life and ministry together.

Thank you for all the ways you've given of yourself to love and support Elk River Lutheran Church. Thank you, again, for the opportunity of the sabbatical. AND thank you for continuing to put our mission statement into action:

Trusting in God's grace, an accepting, joyful community, serving God and neighbor.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Nathan Mugaas



PASTOR ANNE'S 2023 REPORT

Happy New Year, ERLC!

Grace and peace from God our Creator, Jesus our Light, and the Holy Spirit our Connector!

Looking back on 2023, I'm amazed at what God has done in and through us! As a community, we have grown as people of God, challenged ourselves, and shared the love of Jesus both inside and outside of our walls. I am truly grateful to be on this discipleship journey with you all.

Part of the discipleship journey calls us to be there for each other. As I reflect on my personal losses this year, I'm reminded of the great support that has come out of this congregation. As disciples of Christ, you have walked with me, and provided comfort and hope as I grieved multiple deaths in my family. In the spirit of gratitude, I want to say thank you for these many ways that you have provided blessing to me.



In the January 9th devotion in "Christ in Our Home", we learn that "blessing is a feeling of being cared for no matter what the circumstances." We often overuse the word "blessing" and mix it up with the good feeling of fortune, abundance, and bliss. These types of feelings are good, but they are temporary. Blessedness is a peace that comes from being centered in the divine, and it lasts far beyond whatever feelings we get from the situations in which we find ourselves. You, good people of ERLC, have provided true blessing to me. Through your care, support and concern for me and my family, I felt incredibly rooted in our Creator, and I'm truly grateful for all the ways you have shown up for me.

In our journey of faith, we cling to gratitude as a way to fight against negativity and doubt. These darker days of winter can make it difficult to see the bright side of anything. Yet, it is in true gratitude that we reflect on this past year and write the words in these pages. This brings light and clarity, grounding us in the peace of Christ. In 1Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul reminds us to *"rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances."* Thanks be to God for you, ERLC!



May God's Grace and Peace be yours,
Pastor Anne Schaefer

TEAM ANNUAL REPORTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

2023 was a big year for our Adult Faith Formation ministry! We kept some existing ministries and added new ones as well!

DEI/Social Justice Task Force:

On October 8th we installed our new task force for diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice. They are helping us to stay current with our commitment to our Reconciled in Christ (RIC) identity, and they will also be looking for ways that we can live out that identity in the world around us. We are grateful for their passion and call to work for justice.



Text Study:

We restarted our weekly text study group that discusses the upcoming preaching text with the preaching pastor. We ask simple questions like, “what does this make you think about;” “what questions do you have after reading it;” “what do you want to know more about;” and even “why might we care about this?” There is no prior experience or homework required at all. Some people shared much and others hardly shared at all...all are welcome!

Civil Rights Tour:

Once in June and once in July, we welcomed Pastor Joanne Sorenson from *In Our Hands Adventures* who got a group of people excited for a tour of major civil rights sites and memorials. 22 of our people quickly signed up for this tour that will happen in April of 2024. The tour is designed to be a pilgrimage for those searching for meaning and desiring personal transformation.



LiFE Groups (Living In Faith Everyday):

We had LiFE Group programming twice in 2023. This happened once in the winter and then again in the fall. LiFE Groups are a ministry where the pastors help coordinate people into small groups for weekly gatherings. At each gathering, the group looks at the previous Sunday's preaching text and responds to questions about the sermon or the topic of the day. Groups enjoy connection, honest conversation, and often snacks! We had 7 different groups with over 60 participants. A new round of LiFE Groups will happen again in April of 2024.



Regular Studies and Gatherings:

We launched a new monthly women's Bible study that takes place at Guardian Angels Riverview Landing. This is led by Pastor Linda Campbell and has 8-12 people there each time. Ongoing ministries also kept their regular meetings including a monthly women's Bible study, weekly men's and women's breakfasts, and a weekly men's Bible study on Zoom. There always seems to be a group meeting for fellowship, Bible study, or task-based reasons. We are thankful for a community that likes to gather.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

The Building Committee saw the culmination of the *Powered by Love* campaign in 2023 with the completion of the sanctuary remodeling project. After celebrating our first Christmas in the nearly complete sanctuary in 2022, the Building Committee started 2023 by working through final construction punch list items with Terra Construction and their subcontractors. The final upgrade of the project completed in late March when the new sound system components finally arrived. Reach Communications was onsite to complete installation and training just in time to celebrate Easter in April. As a congregation, we celebrated a special service of dedication on June 4, 2023, where we blessed the new sanctuary space and entry and celebrated everyone's efforts with a reception.



As we live into our new space, we find small issues that need to be addressed. Greg Pouliot and others from the Building Committee have continued to work through these items with Terra Construction, Landmark Electric, and others. These kinds of items are expected; Terra Construction has been great in helping to get those issues resolved.



Sanctuary and Entry Remodel Timeline:

- Developed the final design proposal with Terra Construction and CNH Architects in Q1 2022
- Presented the final sanctuary and entry design to the Congregation in April 2022
- Supported the bidding process and received a final construction proposal in June 2022
- Presented the construction proposal for congregation approval on June 26, 2022
- Started construction in September 2022
- Re-selected the audio/video contractor and re-started the A/V design
- Coordinated with Terra and CNH to address construction issues, changes, and schedule challenges, fall 2022b
- Celebrated receiving the temporary certificate of occupancy on December 16, 2022
- Celebrated Christmas in the new sanctuary, December 2022
- Completed A/V installation and final punch list items in March 2023
- Celebrated our first Easter with all sanctuary systems operational, April 2023
- Dedicated the renovated sanctuary and entry on June 4, 2023



The Building Committee would like to thank everyone at ERLC for their support, inputs and flexibility during the planning and construction process. We are extremely happy with the results and look forward enjoying this space for years to come.

Respectfully Submitted,

ERLC Building Committee - Adam Horner, Martha Hippe, Pastor Nathan, John Natwick, Greg Pouliot, Krista Schrock, and Ron Stricker

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY

PreK through 6th Grade Students

Each Sunday, kids come to worship with their families, but they get to leave during the scripture reading and sermon time in order to engage with their peers in a lesson more fitting to their age group. The number one goal of this time is to show kids that they matter to God and this congregation. We use Bible Stories to help teach this in a variety of ways. We played games, did crafts, read stories and talked a lot about Jesus. Students have a good time coming to Kids Connect! Pastor Anne writes most of the curriculum, and either Pastor Anne or a volunteer leads the lessons. The volunteer roster is small, so we are desperately needing more volunteers to help out in the months ahead.

We also gathered students in grades 4, 5, and 6 to have a few fun nights at the church. We hung out in order to build community, eat yummy food and just play. Students ran around to play the games and learned of all the best hiding spots in the building. They also learned that the church is a place accessible to each of them exactly as they are.

We recognized a few milestones with some of our young people as well. 14 students celebrated their 1st Holy Communion, and 7 third grade students received a new Bible and learned how to use them! It is an honor to watch our young people grow within this community of faith.



CYF Nights

Our monthly events for our Children, Youth and Families are called CYF Nights, and they have been a lot of fun for everyone. Each night, we eat a meal together, have large group time where we do an icebreaker, sing some songs, and listen to a speaker. We usually end the evening in a small group where we go deeper into the topic or theme of the night. One of the most memorable CYF Nights from 2023 is when JustMove (Joe Davis and Dave Scherer) came out to sing, rap, dance and speak to us about inclusion, diversity, and antiracism. It was a fantastic night! Some of our other themes included The One Thing (January), Mental Health (February), Advent (November) and Serving our Neighbors (April) where we made 621 sandwiches for area food ministries. The goal of these nights is to grow in our faith and grow closer to God and each other. They have done this and so much more!



VBS

In August, we celebrated that we are all called to be heroes for Jesus in *Hero Headquarters VBS*. It was an exciting time to welcome 24 students in PreK through 6th grade. Each of the four sessions

included a full meal, games, activities, songs, skits, crafts, and a service project for our real-world heroes. We made cards for the firefighters and EMTs, made a thank-you poster with our handprints for the police station, sent cards to the emergency medical teams at Mercy Hospital, and donated many pounds of food to CAER Food Shelf.

We could not have pulled off this incredible week without the help of many volunteers. We had 25 people gather to build our set and decorate the space, and then another 22 volunteers to work face to face with the kiddos during the program week. It takes a village to pull off an amazing week like this, and ERLC absolutely rose to the challenge!



Confirmation

On most Wednesday nights throughout the school year Pastor Nathan can be found teaching a wonderful group of twenty Confirmation students in the Community Room. These seventh and eighth graders are spending the 2023-2024 Confirmation year studying the stories of the Old Testament. We spend time learning the stories and what they have to teach us about who God is and who we are as people, we enjoy small group time exploring the story themes and getting to know each other more, AND we also have a lot of fun playing games and being silly.

Confirmation Service

On October 29th, eleven 9th grade students confirmed their Christian faith publicly during our worship service. We celebrated this great act of discipleship and look forward to where God may be leading each of them in the future. These 9th graders used the months of September and October to write their faith statements, choose Bible verses that guide their lives, serve their community by creating a trunk for Trunk or Treat, and created the worship service where they each confirmed their faith. Many of them spent the next two months continuing to come to High School Youth Group!



High School

Our High School students gather with Pastor Anne most Wednesday nights to grow in their faith. They do this through Bible studies, service projects and fun events. This group asks deep questions, supports one another, and looks for ways to get closer to Jesus. We were able to get a few couches and extra chairs to help make the Youth Room more accessible and conducive to our time together. We keep the closet stocked with snacks that make them feel welcomed and accepted as they are. The students have been grateful to have their own space in the church building. One student recently said, "I know I'm loved cause of all of these good snacks!"



Summer Bible Camp

Camp is such a fantastic opportunity to connect and grow in your faith in new and exciting ways. Plus, it's also a great time to make new friends or strengthen existing friendships! We had 15 campers take this challenge between four different camp opportunities at Summer Festival Camp at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter or Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, MN. We heard fantastic speakers, sang songs to God, dove into new spiritual practices, played tons of games and had access to an obscene amount of food! Some campers used scholarship funds, so thank you to anyone who has donated to these areas of ministry!

**SUMMER
FESTIVAL**



DEI AND SJ (DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE) TASK FORCE

The DEI & SJ task force is well on its way towards getting things off and running. The task force consists of 11 members, with a true passion for this work. Our first meeting was in early October and since that time, much has been accomplished.

The task force has provided/recommended the following items to the Church Council for consideration: Revised RIC Affirmation language, DEI and SJ task force requested budget for 2024, and suggested donation to RIC (Reconciling Works). Additionally, the group has brainstormed ideas in the following areas: Events, Collaboration, Education, Projects and Materials. All with a keen eye on the mission of DEI and SJ. Bottom line, there are many great things going on and lot of activity, much of which you as our congregation will see in the coming months.

Task Force Members Include: Amy Anderson, Paula Donnelly, Grace Hagberg, Kevin Jenkins, Pauline Kuhn, Debby Pouliot, Pastor Anne Schaefer, Diana Schansberg, Jeff Schrock, Lorie Schulstad-Werk, and Dale Ziner.

RIC Affirmation Statement Adopted in 2014

Here at Elk River Lutheran Church – ELCA – we are committed to being a loving and welcoming community of faith, centered in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel and consistent with our Mission Statement, to the best of our ability, we promise to provide worship opportunities, programs, ministries, leadership opportunities and pastoral care to all who seek God in this place. We all belong to the Priesthood of All Believers.

As a community striving to serve God and neighbor and to be open to all people, we at Elk River Lutheran Church welcome all to join us as we struggle to better understand the mysteries of God's teachings. We are challenged by Christ to care for, to love, to understand and to listen to each other, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin or economic status. We celebrate together our unity as God's people. ERLC is a place where all are welcomed to participate fully in the life of this congregation and each person is invited to share his or her own unique gifts.

To this end Elk River Lutheran Church is officially now a Reconciling in Christ congregation and affirms our position of Welcome and Ministry with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Proposed Revised Version

Elk River Lutheran Church is a Reconciling in Christ congregation and is committed to being a loving and welcoming community of faith, centered in the good news of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel and consistent with our Mission Statement, to the best of our ability, we promise to provide worship opportunities, programs, ministries, leadership opportunities and pastoral care to all who seek God in this place. As a safe community striving to serve God and neighbor, we welcome and affirm people of any race, ethnicity, age, gender identity and expression, marital status, family structure, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, national origin, immigration status, and/or socioeconomic status. We celebrate together our unity as God's people. We are committed to racial equity, working towards racial justice, and being inclusive in what we do and who we are. As we strive to better appreciate the mysteries of God's teachings, we are challenged by Christ to care for, love, understand, and listen to each other. We want to be a sanctuary where all are welcome to participate fully in the life of Elk River Lutheran sharing their own unique gifts, whatever identity you claim or claims you. We are committed to learning and growing together.



GENEROSITY TEAM

This past spring, a decision was made to replace the Stewardship Committee with a new team called the Generosity Team. The decision to change the name was based on a recognition that the term “stewardship,” which has a long, historical meaning in our church, may not be as easily understood by those who are unfamiliar with the term. By contrast, the word “generosity” likely has a more universal meaning for most people, and may therefore be more easily understood.

With the name change also came an expanded focus. In the past, we have largely focused on a period of time, usually in the fall, when we conduct our annual stewardship campaign. We have continued to give special attention to this period. However, we have also begun to focus greater attention on the rest of the year by continually recognizing the many ways members of this congregation contribute to the ministry of Elk River Lutheran Church with their gifts of time, talent and money, and by continually lifting up the idea that generosity is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

To initiate this new focus, the Generosity Team developed, with the assistance of Linda Nielsen, generosity messages which are delivered via the overhead sanctuary screens during the Offering segment of the Sunday morning services. The primary goal of these messages is to connect the Biblical practice of generosity with the many acts of generosity performed by members of this congregation. These messages are designed not only to lift up the centrality of generosity to the Christian faith, but to thank our members for everything they do to make this church and our community better places.

In 2024, the Generosity Team will continue to explore ideas for lifting up the practice of generosity in Elk River Lutheran Church. Thank you everyone for your generous gifts of time, talent and money!



Thanks for Your Generosity!

Team Members: Chuck Anderson, Linda Campbell, Kari Christianson, Milo Christianson, Julie Marie Haugen, Pastor Nathan



HOSPITALITY TEAM

The Hospitality Team consists of nine members. Our mission is to create an atmosphere of fellowship and community. We serve all areas of food related events for Elk River Lutheran Church and provide seasonal decorations and table centerpieces. We maintain the Café and fellowship area (first floor) and the community room tables and kitchen (lower level). We monitor and purchase supplies such as coffee, lemonade, table coverings and paper products. Some of the ways we serve are:

- **Sunday morning Fellowship Hour** serving coffee and doughnuts. This is supported through donations from the congregation.
- We served 9 member **funeral luncheons** and 13 luncheons for Dare Funeral Home in 2023, providing a welcoming and caring atmosphere for the families and friends of the deceased. Each luncheon, depending on size, requires three to six volunteers plus the coordinator and up to five hours of service for each luncheon.
- We set up and served **Ash Wednesday soup supper and dinner church** throughout Lent.
- Assisted with the food service for the Block Party in May.
- Assisted with the prep, serving and cleanup of the **meals for Vacation Bible School**.
- Coordinated and hosted **Pie Sunday in November**, serving pies brought by members of the congregation.
- Coordinated and hosted **Heritage Sunday in December**, inviting members to bring special treats indicative of their heritage.
- **Assisted CYF with meals when needed**. The pizza and hot chocolate bar was a big hit in December.
- We also help members to celebrate **special events** such as milestone birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

We welcome new team members. We meet the first Monday of the month at 10 am. If interested in becoming a team member or just want to occasionally help serve coffee on Sunday mornings, please contact Linda Nielsen, ERLC Office Manager or Co-Chairs: Barb Overbye or Gwen Krizek.

The team members are Karen Acers, Barb Burandt, Peg Davies, Sue Hecker, Gwen Krizek, Sandy Krumwiede and Barb Overbye. Jane Cazett and Dixie Rud have joined our team in 2023.



MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND

After the generous gift from the Patten Family in 2016, the Mission Endowment Committee became active in 2018.

As we worked to recover from COVID and rejuvenate the committee, we found 2023 a quiet year for the Endowment Committee. The committee has been discussing ways to let people know how to support the mission of ERLC through the Endowment Fund. We are always open to hear of new and different groups in our community to contribute to. We were able to award two disbursements for the year. We gifted \$1,000 to Lutheran University Nigeria through the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA. We also funded Financial Peace University for up to 20 interested households at a cost of \$1,498 including childcare as needed during the classes.

A gift of \$3,839.50 was received from a member's estate in March of 2022. Past grants have been given to CAER, ERLC for Financial Peace University, ISD #728 School Lunch Debt Relief program, Thumbs Up, and Open Doors for Youth.

The financials are as follows:

	2023 (12/31/2023)	2022	2021
Endowment Fund Principle	\$216,161.67	\$201,275.22	\$211,941.90
Cash for Grant Disbursements	\$6,163.82	\$6,405.27	\$3,770.72
Total Fund Assets	\$222,325.49	\$207,680.49	\$215,717.62

Keeping with the goal of awarding grants quarterly, applications are due January 15th, April 15th, August 15th and October 15th. The Endowment Committee will notify applicants of the committee's decision within 60 days of each submission deadline. The application form is available in the church office or it can be downloaded from the ERLC Mission Endowment Fund page on the ERLC website. Information regarding "Leaving a Legacy of Faith" by donating to the ERLC Mission Endowment Fund is also available in the ERLC Office.

Direct website link: <https://www.elkriverlutheran.org/mission-endowment-fund.html>

ERLC Mission Endowment Committee Members:

Hans DuBois, Chair
John Campbell, Financial Secretary
Paula Donnelly, Recording Secretary
Kerry Livingston
Brad Tesdahl
Pastor Nathan Mugaas, Advisory Member
Kent Larson, Advisory Member



MUSIC MINISTRY

We were all so excited to start 2023 in our new sanctuary. Although the new sound system hadn't been installed yet and there were a few finishing touches left to do, we were anticipating a great year in the space. All the ensembles began their rehearsals there. Each prepared for their appearances in upcoming services. Here are some stats from each ensemble.



Throughout 2023, the **Riverside Ringers** appeared 10 times in our services. Their rehearsals were on Tuesdays and they ended the year with 20 ringers in their roster. For each service they performed a solo piece but later in the year they added one or two congregation hymns to lead. Highlights for the Ringers were ringing on Palm Sunday and performing in the Bells & Carols event.



The **Worship Band** rehearsed on Mondays and ended the year with 9 members total (not all would play on a given Sunday). Once a month they led the contemporary service music and performed a solo song. They also became the "Pit Band" for the Kids' Palm Sunday and Christmas Eve programs. Highlights for the Band were participating in "Play Music on Your Porch Day" and leading worship services when I was gone.



The **Choir** appeared 12 times in our services and ended the year with 27 singers in the roster. They rehearsed on Thursdays. Similar to the Ringers, they performed a solo song and led one or two congregational hymns for each service they appeared in. A significant thing that happened to the choir was the loss of two members: Ron Stricker and Jim Acers. Both passed away in the Fall. They were beloved, talented and skilled in music, and are still greatly missed. Highlights for the choir was singing with the Worship Band and participating in all the hymn sings.



The **Instrumental Ensemble** appeared twice in the Fall. They performed and led hymns for *Music Sunday* and *Christmas Eve*. They rehearsed on Sunday or Wednesdays. By the end of the year their roster was up to 13 members. A highlight for them was adding two clarinets, a trumpet, trombone, and tuba.

Besides the regular ensembles, the music ministry offered many **community events** throughout the year. In May, we had a hymn-sing at Varty's greenhouse event. In the summer, the Kaleidoscope Quartet sang in our services and performed a concert. We also gathered 65 members of our congregation to sing the National Anthem at a Twins game in August. The Fall was a busy season for community events with two hymn sings at Guardian Angels By the Lake, a hymn-sing at Riverview Landing, and the Autumn HymnFest in October. The Christmas season brought three caroling events. In mid-November, twenty-five carolers led carols at the Downtown

Christmas tree lighting, thirty-one carolers provided music during the Santa in the Park event, and fourteen carolers joined the Riverside Ringers for the Bells & Carols event at Riverview Landing.

A few highlights for me in 2023 was implementing “Town Hall Forums” for the musicians, getting more families involved in the music ministry, leading music during CYF nights, having some time off on Sundays, and leading Lessons & Carols with Lisa at the end of the year.

2023 was filled with many enriching ways to connect our musicians.

~ Taylor Quinn



QUILTING TEAM

As part of our outreach, the ERLC quilters made 158 quilts and 76 School Kits/Backpacks this year for our mission. The quilts and schoolbags make a real difference in the lives of those who receive them. We could not fulfill the Elk River Lutheran Church's Mission without the help from our congregation. We are grateful for them.

March was National Quilting Month and we had 88 quilts blessed. The quilts were donated to Lutheran World Relief. LWR distributes about 300,000 Mission Quilts a year to people who have endured war, natural disasters, economic strife, drought and other crises. Some of those crises make the headlines, many more never do. But everyone who receives a quilt gets a jolt of love and encouragement.

June we wrapped a quilt around our graduating seniors as they continue on their life journey.

September 24 was a very special day for our quilters. We celebrated 10 years of quilting and our congregation supporting us with fabric, sheets, batting, supplies, and cash donations for shipping and supplies. We blessed 68 quilts and 69 School Kits/Backpacks. With the help of the evening Bible Study Group and other members, school backpacks were filled with basic school supplies and given to LWR. It allows children in need to attend schools with their tools & backpacks.

After our celebration someone from the Hospitality Team asked if the quilters would make something for the back of the wood divider in the lower level. A group of 5 quilters created a hanging from the donated fabric.

July, September, and December we donated a total of 18 quilts, 2 quilts a month to Lutheran Social Service Refugee Services which offers hope and a helping hand to refugees as they start anew in Minnesota.

Our group has grown to 13 quilters and everyone is welcome to join us. We meet every Tuesday at 9 a.m. until around 11:00 a.m. You don't have to be a seamstress to join us. Come check us out in the lower level of the church.

~ Linda Felska and Sue Hecker



WORSHIP / MUSIC TEAM

2023 was the final year for the Worship/Music Team. Starting in 2010, the “Worship Team” was an advisory group that hashed out ideas, weighed pros and cons, and served as a sounding board for new worship ideas. Around 2015 they were renamed the “Worship/Music Team”. Besides having an advisory role, they also tended to many behind-the-scenes activities including volunteer coordinating, communion inventory, decorating, baptism certificates, and much much more. Their mission was to “proclaim our Lutheran heritage as we worship through music, the Word, the sacraments, and God’s grace” and “strive to create a worship experience that is inviting, inclusive, uplifting, Christ-centered, and deeply spiritual.”

In 2023 the team included Pam Black, Karen Froelich, Sue Hales, John Natwick, Dan Nelson, and Sue Sass. After the new sanctuary was finished, they assisted the Building Committee with getting new furniture for the chancel as well as organized the sanctuary cabinets for paraments, candles, and sanctuary decorations. They decorated the sanctuary for Ordinary time, RIC Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas. At the end of their time together, they advised the staff on the team's future, in whatever form it would take.

We are deeply grateful for the work of the Worship/Music Team. They were the unseen glue that held our worship services together since 2010. Their legacy is felt and seen as we worship every week.



1. Ordinary Time before sound system installed
2. Lent before sound system installed;
3. Easter
4. Autumn
5. Advent
- 6 Christmas



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Here's some brief info on Worship volunteers for 2023. Greeting and reading scripture were popular along with ushering. We gained a few more helpers with Communion serving and mid-week Communion filling. We were low on Communion Stewards, PPT Operators, and soundboard operators.

Role	8:30 Service	10:30 Service
Greeters	51	40
Ushers	30	24
Scripture Readers	29	26
Communion Servers	25	21
Communion Stewards	6	10
Communion Set-up/Clean up	10	6
PowerPoint Operators	9	15
Soundboard Operators	4	5
Mid-Week Communion Fill	11	

Keep serving,
Taylor



STATISTICAL REPORT 2023

	2022	2023
TOTAL MEMBERS (AS OF DECEMBER 31)	695	721
BAPTIZED	609	638
CONFIRMED	502	514

ACCESSIONS	2022	2023
Received by Baptism	7	13
Confirmed	6	11
Received by Transfer	38	30
Total	51	54

LOSSES	2022	2023
By Death	8	14
By Transfer	1	2
Inactive	27	0
Total	36	16

NET GAIN/LOSS		
	51/36	54/16

AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE	2022	2023
In Person	143	196
Online Average**	312	335

EDUCATION ENROLLMENT	2022	
Sunday School (LIFT!)	39	45
Confirmation	25	31

PASTORAL ACTS	2022	2023
Baptisms	6	13
Confirmations	6	11
Funerals	5	10
Weddings	0	4

**Per ELCA "Tracking Online Worship Attendance"

LOVE INSIDE OUT CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has pledged and given to the 2023-2025 LOVE Inside Out Capital Appeal! We have received 117 pledges totaling \$708,277.99. To date we have received \$274,920.23. The current Building Fund balance is \$195,009.27.



Below you'll find the stated goals of the campaign. To date we have continued to make mortgage payments from the Building Fund with these donated dollars, which allows General Fund money to support the day to day ministry of the church. As soon as this summer we may begin looking at the Redashing (repair) of the Exterior Stucco! Again, thank you for your generous support of this campaign and the ways it will help our church and the community experience God's LOVE inside and out.

LOVE Inside Out Capital Appeal Goal - \$850,000

\$380,000 - Monthly Mortgage Payments

- \$271,460* (principal and interest payments for 2023-2025)
 - \$108,000* (principal and interest payments on second mortgage)
- *these were estimates made at the establishment of the the campaign

\$120,000 - Redash (repair) Exterior Stucco

- Needed not only for the cosmetic appearance of our building, but also longevity. Exterior brick of this building is timeless and looks great, but the stucco is showing its age. Once the stucco is repaired, this building and its unique architecture will really shine.

\$220,000 - Outdoor Beautification & Signage to Improve Our Visibility

- Install updated streetside signage and a large cross to communicate to the entire Elk River community "WE ARE A CHURCH!"
- Reconfiguring the drive-thru to provide better traffic flow and pickup/dropoff space.
- Create our envisioned patio space on Main Street for congregational and community use.

\$130,000 - Principal Buy-Down

- Prepayment of our mortgage will allow us to free up additional funds for ministry and mission.



TREASURER'S REPORT

The Council thanks you for the financial support so generously given over the years and especially this past year. This congregation responded well to appeals to catch up on pledges, so that income and specifically giving were close to expectations. Unfortunately, we've seen increased expenses this past year requiring us to consider cuts in some expenses.

We received a one-time Covid-era grant of \$132,000 called the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) in 2023. We utilized \$47,500 to balance the 2023 books and propose using \$39,500 in the 2024 budget. This use will only be utilized if needed toward the end of the year. We are earning a good amount in short-term interest with the balance.

In the budgeting process your Council looked at many variables. We think you will agree our best asset is our incredible staff, so we have included a cost of living pay increase of 3% for them. In trimming where we can, we were left with choices to reduce our Synod contribution, cut staff positions, or utilize part of the ERC grant to balance the budget, which we propose to use ERC funds.

Future use of the ERC grant may include contributions to the Deferred Maintenance Reserve Fund, the Community Outreach Dedicated Funds, and a financial systems audit, with the balance to the Operating Reserve Fund.

We have received \$274,920.23 (~39%) of pledges in the first year of the 2023-2025 Love Inside Out Capital Campaign. Thanks to all for your dedication to this! It will allow the Council to maintain our mortgage commitments and we are well on our way to funding the next building improvement phase. We did receive 92.5% of pledges for the Powered by Love Capital Campaign. We have about \$1,353,000 principal balance in our 2 mortgages.

This is certainly an exciting time in this Church. Our staff has proposed inspired plans for inclusion, community involvement, and congregational support. I am confident that we will continue to financially support these efforts.

~ Mark Johnson, Treasurer



Financial Report and Budget

	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
General Income	\$ 516,450.00	503,876.05	509,400
Employee Retention Credit		47,500	39,500
Total Income	\$ 516,450.00	551,376.05	548,900
General Expenses:			
Office/Admin	\$ 32,499.00	35,320.98	31,500
Worship	\$ 8,985.00	7,461.33	6,110
Hospitality	\$ 2,750.00	6,484.32	6,050
Music	\$ 4,650.00	3,981.38	6,335
CYF	\$ 9,525.00	5,992.26	8,365
Adult Faith	\$ 800.00	853.71	1,280
Facilities/Building	\$ 41,500.00	48,646.32	43,930
Staff	\$ 368,941.00	387,608.89	398,615.18
Benevolence	\$ 46,800.00	53,482.48	46,800
Total Expense	\$ 516,450.00	549,831.67	548,985.18
Profit/Loss	\$ -	1,544.38	-85.18

Balance Sheet

Account Balances	2022 Year End	2023 Year End
General Checking	\$ 77,691.23	\$ 82,443.28
Building Fund	\$ 183,912.34	\$ 195,009.27
Operating Reserve Fund	\$ 42,000.00	\$ 43,053.96
MIF Account	\$ 5,687.52	\$ 5,594.78
ERLC Endowment	\$ 207,680.49	\$ 222,325.49
Employee Retention Credit		\$ 79,386.92
Dedicated Accounts:		
Deferred Maintenance Rsv Fund (prev. Capital Improv.)	\$ 46,170.39	\$ 11,613.41
CYF	\$ 6,715.22	\$ 5,367.71
Memorial	\$ 14,033.31	\$ 14,182.59
Comm Outreach	\$ 8,956.73	\$ 7,876.23
Good Samaritan	\$ 1,153.53	\$ 1,290.53
Quilting	\$ 944.73	\$ 799.97
Hospitality	\$ 3,450.76	\$ 3,575.76
Program Fees Received		\$ 4,075.40
Total Dedicated Accounts	\$ 81,424.67	\$ 48,781.60
Total Account Balances	\$ 598,396.25	\$ 676,595.30

Liabilities	2022 Year End	2023 Year End
MIF Mortgage Loan	\$ 1,170,152.99	\$ 1,118,023.13
MIF Construction Loan	\$ 5,290.66	\$ 234,924.38

COUNCIL BALLOT 2024

Terms for Current Council Members:

Matt Glasoe (2025)
Julie Marie Haugen (2025)
Conni Natwick (2025)
Tom Werk (2025)
Jeff Schrock (2026)
Sue Hales (2026)
Kent Larson (2026)

Outgoing Council Members

Dave Katzner (2024)
Jennifer Stanley (2024)
Mark Johnson (2024)

Congregation Council: (Three Needed, three 3-yr terms)
(Vote for 3)

- ☐ Kelli Horner
- ☐ Amy Anderson
- ☐ Zoey Day

Council Officers candidates – 1-yr term:
(Vote for 4)

- ☐ President – Kent Larson
- ☐ VP – Tom Werk
- ☐ Treasurer – Julie Marie Haugen
- ☐ Secretary – Matt Glasoe

NOMINATING COMMITTEE BALLOT 2024

Current Nominating Committee Members

Amy Anderson (2024)
John Auel (2024)
Diana Schansberg (2024)
Kari Christianson (2025)
Vicki Simpson (2025)

Nominating Committee: (2-yr. term)

(Vote for 3)

- ☐ Jennifer Stanley
 - ☐ Mark Johnson
 - ☐ Kara Hennig
-

MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE BALLOT 2023

Current Mission Endowment Fund Committee Members

John Campbell (2025)
Paula Donnelly (2026)
Hans DuBois (2026)

Outgoing Mission Endowment Fund Committee Members

Kerry Livingston (2024)
Brad Tesdahl (2024)

Mission Endowment Fund Committee: (3-yr. term)

(Vote for 2)

- ☐ Sue Sass
- ☐ Linda Campbell



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www.elkriverlutheran.org