

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America





# 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 plea - sure, stem our self - ish greed of gain.  
 grant, oh, grant our hope's fru - i - tion: here on earth your will be done.

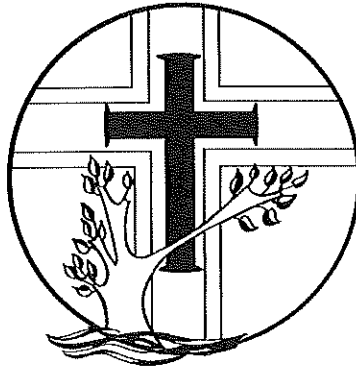
Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 655

Text: Somerset C. Lowry

Music: IN BABILONE, Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenliedjes en Contradansen, 1710;  
 arr. Julius Röntgen

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**Olivet Lutheran Church**  
**5840 Monroe Street**  
**Sylvania, Ohio**  
**[www.olivetsylvania.org](http://www.olivetsylvania.org)**

### **Our Vision**

Celebrating the power of the Holy Spirit by inviting all people  
to become fully devoted followers of Jesus

### **Our Three-Fold Mission**

Create a safer place for growing, learning, listening and loving  
Address social issues by focused engagement in community partnerships  
Make direct connections for learning, mutual support  
and relief with people around the world

Agenda  
110th Annual Congregational Meeting  
Olivet Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Sylvania, Ohio  
January 28, 2024 10:00 a.m.

**Video Review of Ministry and Mission**

**2023-2025 Mission Goals:**

Congregational Mission Goals

1. Work toward an intentional culture of inclusion, support and advocacy for under-represented persons.
2. Create local spaces and times for people of all ages to connect/reconnect. Heal the fragmentation of community.
3. Encourage and provide opportunities for children and youth participation in worship.

Community Mission Goals

1. Enhance our partnership with Urban Wholistics to foster meaningful youth engagement, racial equity and food security.
2. Surround 15-20-year-olds in the Sylvania Community with practical and spiritual support to nurture well-being and provide safety.
3. Address gun violence through advocacy in our communities, across Ohio and at the federal level.

Global Mission Goals

1. Support existing ministries with more frequent direct communication with global partners, including the ELCA's Good Gifts program.
2. Strengthen relationships with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran World Relief, and locally based refugee and asylum seeker efforts through US Together.
3. Promote learning, action, and advocacy related to global climate change.

**Call to Order - Dave Hupp**

**Opening Prayer - Pr. Nate**

**Secretary's Report - Minutes of 2023 Annual Meeting** **Page 3-4**

**Financial Secretary's Report - Mike Vince** **F-1**

**2023 Treasurer's Report - Barry Shaner** **F-2 thru F-4**

**2024 Budget Proposal - Justin Black, Finance Team Chair** **F-5 thru F-8**

**Ballot voting on budget & candidates:**

- Council Candidates: - 2024
  - 3 to be second term: Dave Hupp, Dave Bell, Kent Jackman
  - 1 first term: Steve Sanderson
- 1 Garden of Peace Trustee: John Holshoe, second term

**Announcements:**

**Adjournment - Dave Hupp**

**MINUTES OF THE 2023 ANNUAL MEETING**

**OLIVET EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SYLVANIA, OHIO**

**January 29, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 10:34 a.m. by President Penny Moran. A quorum was established, with 117 voting members present. Pastor Nate opened the meeting with prayer.

**Minutes** of the 2022 Annual Meeting were approved as written.

**Financial Secretary's Report – Mike Vince:**

Mike's totals include monies collected for the operation of the church and exclude any donations to special funds. Total 2022 giving was \$711,160.98, down from \$718,702.88 last year. The Financial Secretary's Report was approved as presented.

**Treasurer's Report – Barry Shaner:**

Although our giving was off for the year, our expenses were also much lower than projected. We ended the year with a \$17,000 deficit; \$20,000 was moved from reserves to cover this difference. The remaining balance in our reserves is \$126,401.70.

We are well on our way to retiring the CLC mortgage debt within the next three to four years. The current balance is \$277,388.00. The Treasurer's report was approved as presented.

**Proposed 2023 Budget – Justin Black, Finance Team:**

The proposed budget for 2023 is \$758,000.00. Justin explained that 60% of the cost of running a church is employee cost. The proposed budget reflects a 3% raise for salaried staff and a 5% raise for hourly staff. The other area of increase is utility costs.

The proposed budget is 7% more than the actual giving for 2022. Justin presented a slide showing giving vs. needs for the past five years.

	<b>Actual Giving</b>	<b>Actual Needs</b>
2018	\$680,000	\$683,000
2019	\$712,000	\$693,000
2020	\$683,000	\$685,000
2021	\$719,000	\$707,000
2022	\$711,000	\$729,000
2023 (Budget)	\$758,000	\$758,000

**Presentation of Ballot for Elections – Penny Moran**

**Council Members:**

Janet Beilstein, Linda Gubbe, Noel Heisler, Steve Mierzejewski

**Garden of Peace Trustee:**

Donna Mens

Ballots were collected for counting as the meeting continued.

**2023-2025 Goals for the Three Mission Groups – Prs. Nate and Melissa:**

The Congregational, Community, and Global Mission Goals were printed in the Annual Report for all members to read. If approved, they will be printed on sign boards and displayed in the CLC hallway, as the expiring goals are now.

**MOTION:** (made by Susan Santoro, seconded by Dave Hupp)  
to accept the new goals as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Financial Audit:**

Bill Cook and Carol DeGroff were sincerely thanked for auditing Olivet's books.

**MOTION:** (made by Bill Hamilton, seconded by Warren Wright)  
to accept the audit report as printed. The motion was unanimously approved.

**TP Collection – Carol Cook:**

Collection of toilet paper for Redeemer's food pantry guests has been an ongoing project this year. Carol thanked the congregation on behalf of the Food Insecurity team for far exceeding the goal of 2200 rolls. Actual number of rolls collected was 5,567! This project will continue in 2023.

**Voting Results:**

The counters reported that there were 111 ballots collected.

All nominees were approved unanimously.

The 2023 Budget was approved with 104 "yes" votes and 7 "no" votes.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m. by President Penny Moran.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia Fett, Secretary

**Pastor Nathan Tuff, Lead Pastor**

Annual Report to the Olivet Congregation, January, 2024

*"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8.*

It is with rejoicing that I express my love for you and for Olivet. We are a congregation thriving with a clear mission and vision, faithful worship, incessant outreach, grace filled inclusion, and compassion for those at the edges and at risk. Profound appreciation flows from my heart to yours on this, my last day at Olivet.

We are blessed with fantastic leaders and staff who will guide Olivet through this time of transition. Our Church Council, Finance Team, and Mutual Ministry Team have provided excellent and faithful leadership in the course of last year's ministry efforts and will continue to do so through the coming months.

Each of our Mission Emphasis Teams (Global, Congregational, Community) is active and engaged in fulfilling our goals established at last year's Annual Meeting. I encourage you to join one of these teams by calling the church office and inquiring. Ministry Team efforts are outlined in the team reports later in this booklet. The efforts of these teams ranges from building ties with our partner congregation in Lwihomelo, Tanzania, providing safe places for marginalized youth to gather for care and mutual support, sponsoring a Ukrainian family, engaging in concerns around gun violence, building a wonderful Sunday School and congregational educational opportunities on many topics, providing for regular visitation of our elders and those in health crises, and engaging center city friends in an urban gardening project. Our ministry activities go well beyond this limited list.

The momentum that is caused by these ministries will continue, because we are governed by our Vision and Mission and blessed by the Spirit. I have often said, "I don't run the place. I'm just the pastor here." Indeed, that has been the case, not because I have been neglectful, but because I deeply believe that given the freedom



and love and resources to explore and discern, any given group of people can faithfully do amazing things in Jesus' name. My departure, which we will all feel to varying degrees and in various ways, does not need to interrupt these ministry priorities and efforts.

May God grant us all the love, justice, and mercy to be bearers of light, and may we always be mindful that there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pastor Nate

**Pastor Melissa Micham, Associate Pastor**

Dear People of Olivet:

I write with deep gratitude for another year of faithful ministry. Each year, I become increasingly enamored of the rich blessings of this community. Through our beloved congregation, Olivet's countless saints, who tend to ministries both routine and emerging, astound me! Thank *you* for your loving service to God and neighbor *and* for the ways you hold fellow parishioners in forgiving love and grace.

I give particular thanks this year for the congregation and her leaders, especially Council President Dave Hupp and Pastor Nate, for supporting my six-week sabbatical in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I learned much over these weeks. Not only about funeral service arts and sciences, but also about how God shows up in the most precise and loving ways to care for me — and you!!

With love and affection for you, Pastor Melissa

**Dave Hupp, President of Olivet Council**

2023 saw an increase of the numbers of people in need and who took advantage of our Food Distribution Ministries: Daily Bread and Olivet Food Pantry. We had hoped to open Daily Bread to inside dining, however we were unable to find enough volunteers to support inside dining. The yearly Rummage Sale was canceled due to not having a leader available to manage it. We will have the sale in 2024 with a willing volunteer to lead. Bible study opportunities have been expanded. Our music and Vacation Bible School programs remain excellent.

Olivet has accomplished several historic firsts this past year. Chris Adams, a youth member on our Church Council, proposed the installation of a bike rack outside the Christian Life Center. With approval from Council, Chris raised the money and installed the bike rack, earning his Eagle Scout rank. In December 2023, Olivet was given \$216,000 to pay the remainder of our mortgage for the Christian Life Center. This amazing gift was given by Harold and Carol Leupp in the hope that others would step up to support Olivet's programs and goals.

We have experienced several roof leaks and multiple water leaks which requires increased maintenance in the older parts of our church. These issues are still being resolved.

Please read the yearly report and take notice of all the hard-working volunteers that have contributed to a successful year of achievement. We sponsored a family from Ukraine with many donations in money, furniture and housing.

Lastly, I wish to thank the members of the Church Council, our pastors, and our many volunteers for making 2023 a remarkable year. I have had an amazing experience in 2023. I volunteered to serve as President for one year due to no one available to serve. I want to give a special thanks to Ed Rupley who is willing to run for President in 2024. I was blessed to have the support of Shannon Walker and the office staff. We are blessed at Olivet with our support staff, and our finance team that has managed our budget with skill and integrity. Barry Shaner and Mike Vince have kept Church Council informed while giving excellent guidance.

Penny Moran stated, "I thank God for leading me to Olivet." Amen to that!

Your Brother in Christ, David Hupp

## CONGREGATION MISSION EMPHASIS

*Create a safer place for growing, learning, listening and loving.*

Becky Cress, convener

### 2023-2025 Mission Emphasis Goals:

Foster an intentional culture of inclusion, support, and advocacy for underrepresented persons.

Address societal fragmentation by creating safe spaces for people of all ages to connect and reconnect with each other.

Encourage and provide opportunities for children and youth participation in worship.

### Youth & Family Ministry Team – Becky Cress

High school senior and Boy Scout, Chris Adams, reached Eagle Scout this year. His final project was to install a bike rack outside of the CLC doors. To raise funds he held a spaghetti dinner in mid-February.

The **Easter Egg-stravaganza** was held April 11 with modest attendance.

Two youth assisted with **quilt-tying** at the end of April. Three more youth helped to pack and load quilts in preparation for donation in September.

Several families, high schoolers, and young adults from Olivet participated in the Northwest Ohio Synod's event, **Stories & S'mores**, at the treehouse village in Oak Openings in May.

**Vacation Bible School**, *Operation Restoration: Mending God's World*, was held from June 19-23 with more than 80 children attending. High school and Body Shop youth volunteered as small group leaders, station helpers, and on the skit team. Many thanks to all the adults and youth who made this ministry possible!

An excellent discussion for parents and adults about developing **mental health in preteens and teens** was led by Linda Lewin in August.

**Rally Sunday** was held September 10. All ages were welcome to reconnect, play yard games, and enjoy doughnuts and cider in the courtyard.

The **Advent Festival** was open to people of all ages. Congregants received Advent devotionals and calendars, participated in activities, and crafted Advent items.

Olivet's **Family Christmas Eve Service**, held an impromptu Christmas pageant in celebration of Jesus' birth Sunday, December 24 at 10 a.m. Nearly 100 people attended.

### Bible Study & Small Group Team - Heidi Lohrmann, Bob Mens & Mike Moore.

**Tender Hearts Social Circle** – Mike Linehan. Regular get-togethers were held at Te'kela.

Pastor Nate led a **Lenten Bible study** Tuesday mornings, and an **Advent Bible Study** Dec. 4, 11, 18.

A **kids' book club**, led by Donna Mens, meets Thursday afternoons in the Teen Room.

Three junior and senior high school youth joined the **Olivet Choir** this fall. Addyson Darm, and Bradley and Blake Lehman attended rehearsals, sang on Sundays, and performed in the Christmas cantata.

**Safety Team** – Shannon Walker, team leader. Two CPR classes were held in late February.

**Equity Team**, Mike Linehan, team leader. A small team continues to update the **artwork** around the church building to better represent and welcome those in our community. This year the team focused on the church office and entryway, purchasing several pieces depicting the transfiguration, Jesus' baptism, and more. The equity team is also examining our media presence and creating a feedback loop.

In the beginning of the year, a team of adults began meeting to think about ways to address growing societal isolation and how LGBTQIA+ teens are more likely to struggle with mental health. The resulting ministry, **Q & A** (Queer & Allies), is a group of youth aged 12-18 yrs who meet monthly for a meal, to learn about a variety of spiritual practices, and for fellowship.

A small **equity library** for adults can be found in the atrium. New books are added periodically. Children's books with themes about equity are being circulated in the sanctuary and CLC bookshelves.

A **Christian Nationalism seminar**, held in the month of October, was well attended.

**Women's Monday Morning Bible Study** - We have had a wonderful year in Women's Bible Study reading the book of Matthew and using videos from the Bible Project and other resources to deepen our understanding. We took a break from our reading of Matthew during the summer and met monthly in the home of Penny Moran (thanks, Penny!) using a study from Anna Madsen in Gather Magazine called "Salvation Now." In December, we had a visit from Jesus' mother, Mary (thank you, Katie Macaro) who told us about her life and her time with Jesus. It was a special day! We will continue our study of Matthew into 2024. All women of the congregation (and their sisters and friends) are invited to be part

study is led by Heidi Lohrmann with subs, Jan Kirk and Donna Mens, in Heidi's absence.

Donna Mens, for Heidi.

**Sunday Adult Bible Study** - Using the devotional, *The Upper Room*, adults meet at 10:10 a.m. in the Teen Room with Mike Moore leading. The group was able to meet all year.

A two-day **Women's Retreat**, led by Jan Kirk, was held March 18-19.

**Guys 'n Gospel**: "Just a group of guys" meeting Tuesday mornings at 7:00 a.m. at Panera Bread on Central Ave. Join us every week or come when you can! Mike Linehan/Bob Mens.

**Sunday School** – Becky Cress

**Spark** (ages 3 yrs to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) was taught by Deb Shock, Becky Cress, and Tom Reynolds

**Club 345** (grades 3-5) was taught by Donna Mens and Karen Rosar

Carol Miller led **music** for all ages of children.

**Body Shop** (grades 6-8) - Led by Pr. Nate and Becky Cress

Youth finished their study of **Lutheran History and the Catechism** in the spring and began the **Old Testament** with the start of the new school year using the curriculum *Collaborate* through Sparkhouse.

**Winter Retreat** at YMCA Storer Camps: Body Shop's first sleep-away retreat since the pandemic took place in February. Youth had lessons, played games, took a night hike, and roasted marshmallows.

Two **scrapbooking fundraisers**, organized by Karen Keefer, were held on Saturday, April 15 and Saturday, October 7 in support of the upcoming 2024 Winter Retreat at YMCA Storer Camps. Body Shop students served food and helped to unload and load guest's vehicles, while parents donated food and themed baskets for a silent auction.

Linda Lewin led an session promoting **preteen/early teen mental health** with Body Shop students in April.

**Acolyte trainings** were held in the spring and fall.

**Christmas Cookie Caper** - On Sunday, December 10, kids decorated cookies, made Christmas cards and delivered Advent devotions to homebound members of the congregation.

**Teacher Recognition** was held Sunday, August 6, for Sunday School teachers and Body Shop mentors.

**High School & Young Adults** (grades 9-12 and a few young adults) – Pastor Melissa and Becky Cress

**Diner Days** were held at Sylvania Diner for faithful conversation, food and fellowship. Six to nine high school youth and young adults gathered with leader(s), and the occasional Olivet guest, on **January 22, March 12, April 23, and July 9**.

An intergenerational mini-golf and ice cream outing was held **August 9**. Over 30 friends and members of Olivet, primarily youth and young adults, participated in an evening of both frivolity and **meaningful connection**. The Vozniuk family, newly arrived from Ukraine, joined the evening of fun!!

An outing to a **cosmic glow bowl** was held **November 4**. Five youth aged 12-16 attended, ate pizza and enjoyed each other's company.

Our annual Christmas Party was held on **December 16**. Many thanks to **Hunter Morrison** for assisting with this event!!

**Created to Be**, the July 2024 ELCA Youth & Young Adult Gatherings in New Orleans – Eight youth, ages 13-18, and three adult leaders are planning to attend. Two young adults are preparing to attend the first ever **Young Adult Gathering**, held parallel to the Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

**Fundraisers:**

A **scrapbooking event**, organized by Karen Keefer, was held on Saturday, January 14, 2024 to gather funds to cover registration, travel, boarding, and meals. High School youth served food and helped to unload and load guest's vehicles, while parents donated food and themed baskets for a silent auction.

A **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Drive-thru Dinner** was cooked and distributed by youth.

Proceeds went to the Youth Gathering fund.

**Milestones** - Led by Pr. Nate, Pr. Melissa and Becky Cress

**Baptism classes** were held as needed, led by Jan Kirk.

A **Bible Workshop** was held in May for kids third grade and up who had received an NRSV Bible.

A **First Communion Class** led by Pastor Nate was held in May for kids wishing to receive communion.

**High School graduation** was celebrated on Sunday, June 11. Graduates were recognized at each worship service and a reception was held in the courtyard between services.

**Blessing of Backpacks & Electronics** for students returning to classes and working adults was held Sunday, August 20. All who brought something to be blessed received a special tag or sticker for their bag or device.

**Bible Presentations:** Children were presented with Bibles on Rally Sunday – Preschoolers received *The Family Time Bible*, Third Graders received a *Connect Bible NRSV*, and new Body Shop students received *Collaborate: Lutheran Student Bible NRSV*.

**Confirmation:** Five youth were confirmed on Reformation Sunday, October 29. Four preparation sessions were held for students to create their banners and compose and rehearse their faith statements. A small **reception** was held afterward in the atrium for family, friends and congregants.

### Ministries in Support of Our Congregation

**Scrapbooking/Crafting Day** is typically a triannual event at Olivet and we were back to normal in 2023 with the event being held in January, April and October. Karen Keefer continues to lead and organize this effort which supplements specific youth activities such as the Youth Retreat held at Camp Storer each winter; substantially reducing the cost to students/parents. This is also the case with the ELCA National Youth Gathering held on a triannual basis, coming up in July 2024. The event is very popular with women attending to spend a day in our Christian Life Center doing their craft in addition to being served a fabulous breakfast, lunch and snacks. The three events did raise \$6166 in 2023. Our Scrapbooking event is known as the best in the area—all because of the fine effort of Karen. She is tireless in her attention to the food as well as obtaining and offering raffle prizes, a massages therapist, and opportunity to buy scrapbooking supplies from a dealer at the event. A huge thanks to Karen for the many, many years of doing this for the good of the youth of Olivet.

**College Student Outreach** led by Michelle Lane. The College Student Support Ministry began in 2001 and is intended to support any undergraduate college student, home or away, who has their name submitted to the church office. Notices of this ministry are placed in our publications as well as postcards sent to any family with a known qualifying student. The college ministry support program sent Easter cards/gift cards to 15 students this past spring. In November, Olivet sent care packages to this year's students prior to finals.

**Communion Visitation:** Twenty-four members of Olivet Lutheran Church who are unable to attend worship regularly due to infirmity, transportation or other needs received communion in their residences this year. In addition to a quarterly visit from Pastor Nate or Pastor Melissa, these congregational members ensure our beloved saints receive communion each month: **Dave & JoAnn Bell, Shirley Brodbeck, Darla Culberson, Jennifer & Addy Darm, Nancy Hamilton, Rinda Holshoe, Bob & Donna Mens, Mike Moore, Penny Moran, Susan Santoro and Chrisann Shaner.** Many thanks to **Fred Sandmann** who provided worship twice monthly at Kingston Residence of Sylvania for **TEN** years.

**C.A.R.E. Group - Connecting And Reaching (Olivet's) Elders:** We focus on those senior members who are on the prayer list, reside in assisted/nursing home, are homebound or live with a family caregiver. With Pastor Melissa's help, this wonderful group uses cards, calls, and prayers to keep those senior members connected with the congregation. We are so thankful to Ron Gabel who established a memorial (in honor of his wife Mary Lou) which has helped us to provide things that wouldn't have been done without this financial help. One of the major expenditures In 2023 was a special workshop for our Family Caregivers. We have received many cards, calls and notes from our seniors, telling us how much they appreciate the **CONNECTIONs** provided by this group and how close they feel to our church.

On behalf of the C.A.R.E. group- Cindy Riedel

**Coffee & Fellowship:** With the Covid threat tamped down, we are percolating along at the Mark Johnson Memorial Coffee bar with coffee, tea, hot chocolate and sometimes treats. Warren Wright is our faithful barista for first service and Mary Glover, Joyce and Ed Rupley see to it that the Vine has coffee as well as

taking care of the cleanup afterwards. Any Vine attendees that would like to help with supplying the Vine should contact Tina Johnson, marktinajohn@gmail.com. Treats are welcomed at both services. Store bought or homemade, we are not picky. We are "The Welcome Place," and there is nothing like a little treat that says, "Welcome!" Sign up at the coffee bar or contact Tina Johnson.

This special project was totally donor funded and will forever remind us of our beloved member, Mark Johnson, and his love of fellowship with coffee, where people gather and enjoy each other. Thanks to Tina Johnson for making this a reality! Warren Wright, along with others, routinely start the coffee on Sunday mornings. Very simple instructions encourage anyone to "start the brew." Also, we have seen donations of sweets which add to the welcoming atmosphere. Any donations are welcome!

**Archivist:** Deb Shock wasted no time continuing to preserve Olivet's legacy by reviewing and categorizing Olivet's history in documents, photos and records of important events.

**Mutual Ministry Team:** The team's mission is to meet with the pastors quarterly for personal support, to provide a forum for brainstorming, conflict resolution guidance, and prayer.

**Olivet Leisure League:** This has been one of the best times of **the 46 years** this group has been in existence at Olivet. Our senior membership has topped over 55 (with a number of seniors over 90 still actively involved.) Beyond our monthly day trips and activities, members willingly donate items and assist at our annual September Harvest Sale (between worship services.) With the proceeds and the help of Thrivent's donation, we purchased men's and women's personal care items. In record time, the Leisure League members assembled 125 men's Christmas gift bags and 16 deluxe bags for the women living at Sparrows Nest, all clients of Toledo's Cherry Street Mission.

Our enjoyment also centers around monthly bus trips to unique destinations and other fun activities. All members are so cooperative and helpful that we have never had difficulties. Fortunately, this past year we did not lose any current members. However, we will always remember past members - John Schuster, Lois Brinning, Alice Schuster and Lucille Gee who joined many of our other former members in heaven this year. Truly, it is only with God's help that we are able to continue this ministry to keep our seniors active, involved and helping those less fortunate with our gifts to Cherry Street Mission.

- Cindy Riedel, volunteer director

**Olivet Women's Retreat 2023** was held on Saturday, March 18 and Sunday, March 19 in Findlay, Ohio.

Twenty-five ladies had a wonderful weekend of fellowship, activities, and music centered on the book of Ephesians. Learning about God's love through the DVD Bible Study called, "Head Held High," by Lori Wilhite. The Ladies enjoyed a wonderful catered lunch and a delicious dinner before a movie night complete with popcorn. Thank you to our dedicated committee and Pastor Melissa, as we completed our time together with a heartfelt Sunday morning service.

**Please save the date: March 2 & 3, 2024.** The annual Olivet Women's Retreat will be held in Adrian, Michigan, at the Carlton Lodge. Our DVD Bible study will be led by Max Lucado, called, "In the Footsteps of the Savior: Following Jesus Through the Holy Land." We look forward to gathering in fellowship as sisters in Christ for this time together to reflect on Jesus' ministry. Please join us. Invite a friend, a co-worker, your sister - all are welcome.

- Jan Kirk and the Women's Retreat Committee.

**Cooking (Funeral) Ministry,** supported by a caring and reliable crew of Olivet ladies, attempts to offer funeral support with wonderful meals for grieving Olivet families. This ministry can continue if others volunteer to either help in the kitchen by prepping and serving the main course or by providing a dessert or salad to supplement the meal. Occasionally, circumstances occur with availability whereby we simply offer the welcoming space of the Christian Life Center and the main course is catered, with the addition of donated salads and desserts.

**Advent by Candlelight** was held on November 30, 2023. Our theme was The Wonder of Advent as we reflected on the meaning of the Advent Wreath with the lighting of each candle. Through our devotional readings, shared scripture, and beautiful music, we prepared our hearts for the birth of the promised Messiah, Jesus. Thank you to all who participated in this much-loved Olivet tradition. We were blessed by the musical talents of Sarah Lewis, Carol Miller and the Lady Bells Ensemble, and the vocal talents of



Cindy and Danica Franklin. Thank you to the Hostesses who created beautiful table settings and the Gents of Olivet, for their attentive beverage service. There were approximately 100 ladies in attendance.

- JoAnn Bell and Jan Kirk

**Men's Golf League**, led by Barry Shaner and Ric Shock, typically played on Monday nights in spring and summer, and were able to play this season.

**Euchre:** Joyce and Ed Rupley led the group, which met on the second Thursday of every month in 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Teen Room. Fellowship and fun are the goal of the group and all are welcome with any skill level. Snacks are optional but always welcome. Players draw a random number for table position and rotate through the tables, which allows players to talk to everyone.

**Bookworms**, Olivet's women's book club, was convened by Cynthia Fett in 2006 and has been meeting monthly (summers off) ever since. Books are chosen from any genre, and the chooser leads the lively discussion.

**Rummage Sale: Was on hiatus for 2023 as no leader was available.** Yes, we are hopeful for this year. We invite anyone thinking of assisting—in a co-chair capacity, to share your ideas and/or availability with any of your church leaders. Shannon and the office staff will happily take your call and support/organize as we always have. We have the “drill down”. Olivet's Rummage Sale has a great reputation for being so organized and we do have wonderful sub committee folks who will surely step forward again. Let's do it !

**Can Recycling:** A *shout out* to all those who brought in aluminum cans! Those are recycled with the help of Deb Shock, Bill Hamilton and John Casper. Keep 'em coming and we'll turn them into CASH at the local recycle station. Reminder: WE ONLY WANT POP CANS. Drop them in the blue containers at front and CLC entrances. THANKS!

## Worship

9:00 a.m. Sunday —Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary

11:00 a.m. Sunday —Contemporary Worship, The Vine, in the Christian Life Center

Our Sunday gatherings answer God's call for us to worship. The following groups enable and enhance our corporate worship.

**The 9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Livestream/Sound Tech Team:** Duane Abbott, Shelley McMacken, Matt Olrich, Danny Pietras and Susan Santoro run the live-stream and control the sound for 9:00 a.m. worship, Lenten and special worship services. Prior to services, we set up for the live-stream and do sound checks with choirs and soloists. All technology and on-going improvements with microphones, lighting and livestream are skillfully handled by the extremely dedicated and hard-working team of Tyler Martin and Michael Schuster.

Worship services are livestreamed and also available at any time on Olivet's YouTube channel. The link is included in the weekly Constant Contact email and on our website. - Susan Santoro

**The Vine PowerPoint Team** puts together and runs the PowerPoint for The Vine service each week. This includes finding illustrations to complement the pastor's sermon. The team includes Carol Borton (Coordinator), Margie Burns, Erin Dress, Susan Santoro, and Beth White. Patty Stammer, Communications Specialist, prepares pre-service PowerPoint announcements.

**Welcome Ministry:** facilitated by Chrisann Shaner and Pastor Nate. Fifty-two new members joined our community of faith. There were a total of four baptisms and a confirmation class of five. What a way to grow!

**Altar Guild** has evolved into a collaboration of ladies and even a couple of gentleman who devote time and energy to both of our sacred worship spaces—Sanctuary and Christian Life Center. The “take charge” team of Chrisann Shaner, Cynthia Fett and Linda Hoetzl have led the group admirably this past year with scheduling, ordering supplies, having several meetings and even a summer picnic. Arlene Holtfreter, our leader for over 40 years, has stepped back from full time involvement. May we take this opportunity to praise her

constant leadership which has been so vital to Olivet's worship services. This summer at a special service we paid homage to past and present Altar Guild members for their years of service. Their duties include attending to the weekly pick up and placement of altar flowers, changing of candles and paraments as well as set up and removal of our treasured seasonal decorations used in Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent and Christmas. Baptisms and funerals, of course, require special care. The team who assists at the Vine Service at 11:00 a.m. is even involved in duties such as ushering and communion assisting. Thank you all for the spirit with which you serve God and Olivet.

## Music

**Rejoice & Jubilee Handbell Choirs** have had a wonderful year of ringing some outstanding music for our worship services in the year 2023. I am so very proud of them. We have done a number of arrangements with organ and piano with Sarah Lewis that have been outstanding – some with our Olivet Choir and some by ourselves. When I look back at all of the fantastic arrangements and how beautifully each group rang each number, it makes me beam with pride and love for them. We have been able to ring several small ensembles (4-6 ringers) for our worship services, the Advent by Candlelight Service and also the funeral for my husband, Jim. It has been nice to provide music with a small ensemble when the entire handbell choir is not available to ring. Rejoice was organized in January, 1985. We are starting our 39<sup>th</sup> year of ringing. The original members still ringing with Rejoice are Sue Meyer, Carol Leupp and myself. Helene Lyon joined in 1987 and Judy Gonia and Linda Abbott joined in 1988. Jubilee was organized September of 1990 with original members of Barb Myers, Sue Hamen and Keith Hamen. I'm thankful for all of our members for their dedication to our handbell choirs.

Our December 10, 2023 Christmas Handbell Concert was fantastic. Over 300 people came to the concert. The balcony was full as well and many chairs were set up in back of the sanctuary. It was a beautiful evening for all of us.

I invite anyone who would like to join our handbell choirs to contact me. The only requirement is that you are able to read music, I.E. some background of singing in a choir, playing piano, being in a band, etc. We are excited to ring some outstanding new music in 2024 for our congregation.

God bless you all with good health and happiness. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to be the director of two outstanding handbell choirs serving our congregation. - Carol Miller

**Spark and Club 345 Children** - I would like to take this opportunity to let the children of our congregation know the JOY they bring to my life. Singing with them on Sunday mornings, before they go to their Sunday School classes, warms my heart! We have the best time singing fun and memorable songs about Jesus and messages from the Bible. I think the best one is "John 3:16" – the message says it all. They will remember it for the rest of their lives! The children will be singing for our congregational meeting on January 28, 2024. We all will be blessed to hear their awesome voices praising God!! Thanks, parents, grandparents and others for bringing these beautiful children to church every Sunday. God bless you all.

Ringings & Singings for Christ, Carol Miller, Director; 419-283-1895 (Cell)

**The Olivet Choir:** What a powerful instrument to proclaim the word of God! The past year was rich in activity. Beautiful cantatas. Telling anthems. All executed with precision. This is our story, and this is our song. How can I ever thank the members of our choir for their invaluable contributions? The long hours of rehearsal, the sometimes tedious preparation behind the scenes. They know, the dedicated souls who I am blessed to direct. Still, after 33 years, a joy in my life. Each singer, past and present, has blessed me as I would think I have blessed as well. Each has a special place in my heart. Olivet Choir is a family within the larger family of this parish. Pastors, staff, council, volunteers - we are all ministers of the Word.

Thank you all, for listening to us, either in a pew or at home. We have a mission. We sing to you as we sing to ourselves. Together, we face Christ and are blessed with His embrace.

Affirmatively, Steve Hodge

**The Vine Praise Band**, led by Ashley Lovegood. Happy New Year from the Olivet Worship Band!

In 2023, this wonderful group experienced growth in multiple areas - in the number of members, with their musical skills, and their love for leading the congregation into worship. We are excited to continue growing in 2024, and we are grateful to continue leading The Vine Service in worship.

**Gathered at the Table**, our Wednesday worship of Bible study and prayer, has had a small number of attendees. This service was suspended in mid 2023. With Sunday services available online, it is easier for all to access those services at any time.

### COMMUNITY MISSION EMPHASIS

Pr. Melissa Micham, Convener

*Address social issues by focused engagement in community partnerships.*

In 2023, subgroups of the Community Mission Emphasis Team continued established ministries and emerged to focus on these new goals:

1. Surround **15-20-year-olds** in the Sylvania community with practical and spiritual support to nurture well-being and provide safety.
2. Enhance our partnership with **Urban Wholistics** to foster meaningful youth engagement, racial equity, and food security.
3. Address **gun violence** through advocacy in our communities, across Ohio, and at the federal level.

Our **15-20-year-old** team joined forces with members of the community team addressing gun violence from a mental health perspective and two of our congregational teams in a period of discernment. Having identified LGBTQIA+ youth at particular risk of both self-harm and other's violence, we initiated a drop-in opportunity for LGBTQIA+ youth and allies once a month. See more in the congregational report.

Olivet's partnership with **Urban Wholistics Farms** continued this year. Olivet presented a **\$1,000** contribution to the organization at the *Taste and See: Urban Farming* congregational event Sunday, April 30, 2023. Pastor Lee Ann Pomrenke was our guest preacher in worship; the Equity and Community Mission Emphasis Teams supplied a delicious, locally-sourced brunch; and we learned about urban farming from Urban Wholistics and State Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson. Olivet participated in monthly gardening days at Tatum Park this summer.

In addition to projects mentioned in the congregational report, the **Equity Team** (formerly the Racial Equity Team) contributed **\$500** and human resources in the preparation and execution of a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebratory worship service and call to action hosted by Glenwood Lutheran Church.

Addressing **gun violence** is a key concern of our faith community. A team of interested members assembled in the spring. The fruit of their labors was a **Gun Violence Prevention Forum**, offered Sunday, July 30, 2023. Over 80 participants from more than a dozen faith communities joined to learn about Moms Demand Action, Sisters 4 Unity, and other local efforts to reduce gun violence. Additional forums were held at Trinity Episcopal Church on Sunday, October 8, and Braden United Methodist Church on Sunday, November 19, 2023.

Amy Dixon secured a \$1,060 grant from Thrivent Choice Dollars (designated to Olivet by Thrivent Financial members) for the purchase of **five new car seats** for the Salem Lutheran Church community. This ensures access to basic resources for families dependent on ridesharing for transportation. Another \$250 Thrivent Action Grant was used to supply **1400 diapers** in the same community.

The **Food (In)Security Team's** main project was a yearlong ingathering of toiler paper for the **Redeemer Lutheran Church Food Pantry**. Congregational donations of over **3000 rolls** were delivered in 2023.

The team also collected congregational contributions for **Easter baskets** distributed by Sylvania Area Family Services (SAFS), supplemented by a \$250 Thrivent Action Grant; received congregational donations of **backpacks** and secured a \$750 Thrivent Choice Dollars grant for **school supplies** for SAFS; purchased school supplies for Redeemer Lutheran Church and Lutheran World Relief with a \$250 Thrivent Action Grant; and contributed \$300 through Meijer Simply Give for a **\$900 benefit** for the SAFS Food Pantry. Clearly, Thrivent has been a meaningful financial partner this year!

Pastor Melissa attended quarterly meetings of the **Neighborhood Bridges—Sylvania** board. This organization resources physical needs in our community, especially for households with school-aged children. Olivet was a

“Kindness Council Member” in 2023, denoting our **\$500 contribution** in 2022. **Stough & Stough Architects** made a \$500 contribution in 2023 to continue support despite our reduced community mission budget in 2023.

**Olivet Cares** continues to provide information about community resources for mental health, addiction, youth and aging: <https://olivetcares.weebly.com>.

Olivet provided space for the non-profit **Once Is Enough** to host its annual Christmas celebration and give-away. The organization supports families fleeing domestic violence.

Olivet’s quarterly benevolence supported our partnerships with the following ministries: **Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lutheran Social Services (LSS), Genacross Lutheran Services, Luther Home of Mercy, Lutheran Intersynodical Deaf Ministries, and Sylvania Area Family Services (SAFS).**

### **Ministries in Support of Our Community**

**The Prayer Shawl Ministry Team** was started by two avid knitters, Charlotte Shaffer, and Joyce Barger, in the Spring of 2005. Joyce is still very much involved in this important ministry today. Over the years, by knitting or crocheting, we have freely given approximately 1,381 Prayer Shawls. Our shawls are meant to be tangible evidence of our prayers for God’s peace and comfort to the recipients. They are freely given to **ANYONE** in need of comfort or support during an illness or the loss of a loved one. Our shawls are available by contacting the church office. We meet once a month and provide the yarn needed to knit or crochet a shawl along with patterns and guidelines to follow. As we close these meetings, we pray over each shawl turned in. We depend on cash donations to keep this ministry going, and we need knitters and crocheters who would like to create these beautiful shawls. There are no deadlines or nothing to purchase, just using your hands and talent for God’s work. We had a few of our members donate over 160 hats to Cherry Street Mission and 27 Red White and Blue Lap-blankets to Flag City Honor Flight in Findlay.

– Jan Kirk and the Prayer Shawl Ministry Team.

Balance in this fund: \$1,503.

**Giving Trees:** What a generous response for the families of Sylvania Area Family Services and children of Redeemer Lutheran Church. Several thousand dollars in gift cards came from church members and Olivet Christian Nursery School families. The donations were also enhanced with \$2,000, thanks to our Thrivent Choice Fund. PLUS, many beautifully wrapped presents for Redeemer's children. With the gift cards we helped seven families/30 individuals from Sylvania Family Services, 10 children from Redeemer After-school Program and several Olivet members. This is the first year that we included food gift cards as a family gift along with these children’s wrapped gifts.

- Deb Shock

**Daily Bread, Olivet’s Wednesday Free Community Meal:** As we celebrate 14 years of Daily Bread, we are settling into the post pandemic world. After much discussion it was decided that we will continue with the weekly “drive through” meals format. We miss the interaction with those we serve, but we are still able to provide a hot meal. Also, our volunteers are available for prayer and to take prayer requests, which are forwarded to our prayer team. Over the 47 weeks of 2023, we served 4,804 meals, including a record 309 for our Thanksgiving meal.

We continue to respect our environment as much as possible, despite the use of Styrofoam trays for the dinners. We recycle as much as possible, collect compostable waste, and donate unused food to the weekly food distribution whenever possible.

We are blessed and ever thankful for the many faithful volunteers who give so much of their time, talents, and treasures to keep this important ministry running smoothly. Without the generosity and support of our Olivet family, we would not be able to continue to serve the community. We give a special thanks to those who donate the take-home trays we use weekly, and to Main Street Sweets, who graciously donate their unsold pastries to give to our guests.

As we look forward to 2024, we invite you to participate in this valuable ministry in any way that you are able and ask that you please keep us and those we serve in your prayers.

- Holly Lewandowski.

Current balance in the Daily Bread account: \$9,855

## Food Ministries

**Weekly Wednesday Food Distribution:** Each week, seven men and women stand out in the heat, rain and freezing weather giving food to the most appreciative people. We gave food to 4044 families, feeding 10,060 individuals, giving them the equivalent of 90,540 meals. This year because our needs increased so much we changed our traffic patterns, so not to interfere with afternoon pre-school. New traffic directors were added. Thank you to the seven people who so willingly volunteered to help out with this duty. The Northwest Ohio Food Bank has not always been able to provide produce each week, so we purchase lettuce, carrots, onions and sometimes apples, oranges or cuties. Kroger donates bread and pastries. A local bakery delivery man donates his day-old goods. We also have angels who donate eggs and butter, and a local farmer who donates potatoes when he has extra to share. We truly do believe in the fishes and loaves miracle. We share any leftovers with the following: Cherry Street Mission, Glenwood Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Community Center and Redeemer Lutheran Church. We thank you for your monetary donations which helps feed this ministry. - Penny Moran

**Olivet's Food Pantry** is kept stocked by both the congregation and the Northwest Ohio food Bank. Ten men offer to drive to the food bank, load up their vehicles and deliver food back to church. I would like to thank the 18 individuals who, after stocking the shelves, pack up about 60 bags of groceries that are given out each week. Thank you to the office staff and volunteers who so graciously greet and serve our guests. We served 2,788 families this last year; that is 6,931 individual people with enough food for 83,160 meals. The Northwest Ohio Food Bank charges 18 cents per pound of food. We are also able to purchase meat for Daily Bread from them at 20 cents per pound. - Penny Moran

Current balance: \$7,731

Note: In late November, Olivet's office was visited by a rep of Care Source, a local resource organization that assists with needs in the community. They knew of Olivet's commitment to feeding the community through our several food ministries. They wanted to **grant us \$2,000 to assist our programs**. The check was received two weeks later. How's that for a year end miracle!

**Olivet Christian Nursery School:** Founded in 1967, OCNS offers an enriched curriculum which follows the Ohio Early Content Standards and prepares children for kindergarten in a play-based, parent co-operative setting. OCNS is open to all children ages 3-5 who are potty-trained. Morning and afternoon sessions are offered 9:00-11:30 a.m. (M-F); 12:15-2:45 (M,W,Th); Lunch Bunch option is available for an additional fee, 11:30-12:30 p.m. (M,W,Th). Current enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year is 126 students with eight employees. Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is now open. Please contact **Director, Jennifer Crooks**, to schedule a tour: 419-882-4616 or email: [ocns@bex.net](mailto:ocns@bex.net).

### GLOBAL MISSION EMPHASIS

Pr. Nate Tuff, convener

*Make direct connections for learning, mutual support and relief with people around the world.*

In December of 2022, we established the following new goals for the coming three years:

1. Support existing ministries with more frequent direct communication with global partners, including ELCA's Good Gifts program.
2. Strengthen relationships with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran World Relief, and locally based refugee and asylum seeker efforts through US TOGETHER.
3. Promote learning, action, and advocacy related to global climate change.

2023 was an exceptionally exciting year for our team, including trips to our mission partners in Mexico and Tanzania by members of our Synod and welcoming a family fleeing the war in Ukraine to our community.

In February, we learned of a local nonprofit group called Toledo Helps Ukraine, founded and led by Alona Matchenko, whose goal is to find sponsors and support for families fleeing the war in Ukraine. An Olivet member generously agreed to be a sponsor; a family in need was identified, and we began to make plans for receiving them. We were tasked with providing three months of temporary housing, and the committee accepted Hunter Morrison's offer to house the family in her finished basement for that period. We began collecting furniture and household items for their living space.



On July 19, a few members of our team drove to the Detroit airport to welcome Viktor, Maria, Ivan, and Tymo Vozniuk to America! By this writing, thanks to the efforts and fortunate connections of our team members, the Vozniuks are well settled in their new country, with a new home, employment, medical and dental care, two vehicles, and even a French Bulldog puppy!

For twelve days in May, Bishop Daniel Beaudoin led a delegation of NW Ohio Synod members to Tanzania to attend the May 7 consecration of Bishop Christian Ndossa of the ELCT Dodoma Diocese. The ELCT is the second largest Lutheran church in the world, with over eight million members. Olivet has a partnering relationship with the Lwihomelo congregation of the Dodoma Diocese, led by Pastor Emma Kinyunyu. While there, a group of our women participated in a retreat to build relationships with female Tanzanian leaders. Our congregation sent sunglasses, pencils, T-shirts made by our VBS students and a framed photo of our whole membership waving hello. Pastor Emma gifted us with candles to be used in our worship services. Shared projects there include Aya School, the Mzogole water well, Dodoma Lutheran College, and the Hekima Vocational School.

In September, eight people from Olivet and the NWO Synod participated in a Friendship Trip to Mexico. Attending from Olivet were Pastor Nate, Steve and Cathy Sanderson, Susan Santoro and Roxie Dodge. We explored Mexico City and experienced the hospitality of our partners in ministry in the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM). We learned about the Lutheran Seminary, visited the Missionary we sponsor, Pastor/Professor David Brondos and met several leaders of the ILM. We visited Casa Tochan, a shelter for migrants that assists people with very basic needs for their lives and journey to legally enter the United States. The Casa is a partner ministry with the ELCA program called AMPARO. We have established relationships which will enrich the experiences of those who take further trips. We also gifted the seminary with financial support.

In October, quilts and school kits were once again boxed up and sent to Lutheran World Relief to comfort and support children and adults around the world. Sincere thanks to the dedicated leaders of these annual efforts in Global Ministry.

In November, we welcomed Presidente Roberto Trejo, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Mexico. He and Bishop Beaudoin joined Olivet members for dinner and an evening of worship and discussion on November 8. We gifted Presidente Trejo with a quilt and a prayer shawl. Cynthia Fett, scribe

### **Ministries in Support of Olivet's Global Outreach**

**Olivet Quilters** had another year of making over 200 quilts. In addition to sending quilts to Lutheran World Relief, we gave locally to Salem and Redeemer churches. Our members participated in a raffle for three quilts and were won by three members. Proceeds from the raffle buy quilt batting and other needed supplies. The quilters appreciate the sheets and fabric donated by Olivet members. We meet weekly to assemble quilts, then sew the bindings at home before giving them to Marilyn Machosky and Bobbie Crane to tie. Several quilters make quilt tops throughout the year so we have quilt tops to use and sheets are used for quilt backs.

This year we were delighted to have Linda Hoetzl and Lana Heinz join us on Tuesday mornings for quilt assembling.

Olivet members are welcome to join quilters in the coming year! - Carol Leupp

**Operation Christmas Child:** Thank you, Olivet members, for the 47 shoeboxes sent out through the church. - Deb Shock

### **SUPPORT MINISTRIES**

Shannon Walker, Director of Operations

The following subjects, ministries *and people*, along with the many activities which have been shared thus far in this report, continue to make Olivet the wonderful, benevolent circle of love and activity that I have the privilege to serve with.

**Church Office/Building Staff:** Our office staff is a circle of support for each other in all daily activities.

**Chrisann Shaner**, our office assistant, extends her talents as Membership Coordinator in many other directions: support for scrapbooking events, VBS-director of decorations in 2021, 2022, and 2023; hours dedicated to the care of food guests and record tabulation, tabulating the number of views of worship on

our YouTube channel. **Patty Stammler**, Communication Specialist, shares her expertise in all documents and publications as we strive to keep members well informed of the innumerable activities of our growing congregation including her collaboration with Prs. Nate and Melissa for our varied worship services. Thanks to her for her creative and newsy bi-monthly newsletters.

Our I.T. support comes from a generous woman, **Chris Witzell**, with whom we've been affiliated since 2004. One of my long-term partners in financial matters is **Mike Vince**, our Financial Secretary. Mike's attention to detail in dealing with these important matters of member offerings, bank deposits, reconciliation, accounts payable and such is so appreciated.

Staff and volunteers love sharing in the services offered to guests of our Food Ministries on Mondays and Wednesdays, or any day that someone walks in with a need.

Kudos to our cleaning team of **Andrea Laws, Chrisann Shaner and John Casper**. Your job descriptions change regularly to include unloading food trucks and whatever is needed. We appreciate you each very much.

Constant Contact and website updates are a weekly endeavor of Shannon with the pastors supporting with inspiring devotions and hints of the upcoming Sunday's message/worship.

**Office Volunteers:** Olivet's office has such wonderful support with our volunteers. We especially thank **Cynthia Fett** who has been so helpful on Mondays, a day that is very full of details, managing food guests and other weekly duties, such as managing the acknowledgement cards for memorial gifts to Olivet. **Mary Glover and Pat Sheets** have been faithful on Wednesdays serving guests coming for food. **Penny Moran** who is our keen-eyed proofer and greeter on Thursdays. Mary deserves a "second nod of thanks" as she partners on Friday in readying bulletins and signage, ensuring that all is ready for Sunday.

Look who joined the office volunteers this year - **Janet Kish**. We are so lucky she shares her Tuesdays with us, and do we ever keep her busy. That is her request: "Give me things to do." All our front desk volunteers are so kind and friendly when greeting guests (over 3,000 per year) who come for food, or tending to the needs of callers and visitors.

Throughout this booklet are examples of the numerous volunteers who serve Olivet's many ministries. Many members have answered an occasional plea to assist with projects such as VBS. Thank you one and all!

Want to experience some of the JOY that is felt in serving in the office? We can always use subs to fill in when others need a day off. Give Shannon a call. We accept volunteers on their terms.

**Building Security:** A new category this year involves all doors being locked while school is in session and during office hours. Much thought and conversation went into making this decision. Staff, volunteers and teachers agree unanimously that it works well. Currently, visitors to the church must ring the doorbell for entrance to the church. We expect a quote soon on a system that will give us more capabilities to interact visually and verbally FROM WITHIN THE OFFICE to anyone wishing to enter the building, including a remote control that will allow staff to open the door.

**Thrivent Choice Fund:** Thank you to those who have Thrivent Financial investment products and directed their Thrivent Choice Dollars to Olivet. Through your generosity, we were able to reach out in ways we could not through our regular giving. By directing Choice Dollars to Olivet in 2023, we provided support for Olivet's Giving Tree program, Leisure League's Cherry Street Ministries project, Sylvania Family Services, Once is Enough Program/domestic abuse recovery, Car seats for Salem = \$4627 total. See Dedicated Acct on pg. F-5.

Thrivent members' generosity, by directing Choice Dollars, generated \$6259. that accumulated in Olivet's Thrivent Choice Dedicated Fund. Current balance: \$6248. The request form is available in the church office. Requests fall into one of four categories: 1. Community Outreach; 2. Seminarian Support; 3. Youth; 4. Mission Trips.

**Thrivent Members!** If you have not directed your Thrivent Choice Dollars for the current year, you have until March 31, 2024. If they are not directed by March 31, 2024, they will be lost. We hope to see more involvement if possible.

Olivet's Thrivent Choice Team: Pastor Nate, Pastor Melissa, Donna Mens, Phil Dress, Sue Davis (team leader), Bea French, Bill Hamilton, Matt Olrich, and Derek Cipiti, our church Thrivent representative.

**Landscape Team:** This team of members continues their devotion to all the varied perennial gardens that surround Olivet. The creativity in each garden is awesome and thanks are due to those who donate their time and occasionally their dollars. Thanks to Cathy & Steve Sanderson, Ed Rupley, Tina Johnson, Deb Shock, and Barb Cousino. Beauty surrounds us due to your TLC of our property.

**The Memorial and Honoraria Committee's** ministry is to provide a way for family and friends to memorialize or honor their loved ones. Thoughtfully applied to the mission and ministry at Olivet Lutheran Evangelical Lutheran Church, these gifts are an expression of faith. Honoraria gifts are given to recognize family and friends for special events and/or significant events in that person's life. Olivet's bi-monthly publication, The Olive Press, itemizes all monies received and in whose memory. We invite you to read these as they are publicized.

An updated Memorial & Honoraria brochure is available at church entrances and the Welcome Center to provide information to assist people considering a monetary gift. Committee members: Dave Simko, Charlie Wilson, Shelley McMacken, Barb Bro.

**Of special note this year** - A donation was "walked in" by Margaret Hentges (widow of David Hentges), the surviving daughter-in-law of Alverna Hentges. This **\$9,000 donation** was a surprise gift, as Alverna (and Denise's) residence was sold recently. Margaret knew of the life-long dedication that both Denise and Alverna had for their beloved Olivet and wanted to gift this to us. Approved by Council, the gift was designated as follows: \$7500 to Endowment Fund, \$500 to Altar Guild, \$500 To Olivet Choir, \$500 to Food Pantry.

Year end balance: \$45,903. See Dedicated Fund in Financials. This also includes \$917 categorized as Landscaping, which is remainder of the Ruff family donation of trees several years ago. Plaques on order.

**Personnel Team:** Responsible for developing policies and procedures that assist the staff in understanding the expectations for a position at Olivet Evangelical Lutheran Church. The team, with approval of the Congregation Council, implements these procedures and policies with adherence to Olivet's mission and ministry as our central focus. Olivet has received a resignation from Patty Stammler, our Communications Specialist, who will be with us through January 2024. - Stan Machosky

**Endowment Fund:** During calendar year 2023, the Greater Toledo Community Fund (GTCF) continued its management of the assets of Olivet's Endowment Trust fund. After a disappointing three (3) quarters of market investment returns, the market rallied in the 4th quarter, along with additional gifts from generous Olivet members and friends in the amount of \*\$8,785.00, producing an ending balance of \$41,170.62. \*Note special gift in Memorial Fund Report—Page 17. Our goal, as printed in the Endowment Trust document, is to reach \$100,000 and then make annual distributions of the earned interest from the Fund to those qualifying groups/projects as approved by Council and the congregation. If you wish to obtain information concerning the Endowment Trust Fund, please feel free to contact any of the elected Trustees or the church office staff. Brochures describing The Endowment Trust Fund are available in Olivet's information area at the Welcome Center.

**Finance Team:** Comprised of a group of extremely gifted business professionals with expertise in the field of finance, banking, and management, this team is dedicated to the stewardship of finances of Olivet and meets monthly. The team works with staff to initiate and work out the details to administer the annual budget, as approved by Council and Congregation. Shannon details weekly income vs. goal in Olivet's weekly Constant Contact email which is sent to 350 households. Justin Black (team leader), Barry Shaner (treasurer), Shannon Walker (staff), Mike Vince (staff/financial secretary), Kevin Kornowa, John Gonia and Bob Mens. These gentlemen have given 15 years serving. All are volunteers except Mike & Shannon.

**Tellers** meet every Monday to count the weekly offering. Shannon prepares the deposit for the bank courier to pick up. Thanks to our faithful members: Jerry Dunaway, Greg Fett, John Husman, Nancy Kelley and Marlene Schober. We sadly lost Bea French, who suddenly passed last summer.

**Olivet's William & Martha Cox Garden of Peace** was dedicated on Sunday, November 11, 2007. It continues to provide a safe and serene final resting place for the cremains of Olivet members and their immediate families plus former members, staff, and their immediate families. Brass plaques in the Garden memorialize those interred there, and additional plaques remember loved ones interred elsewhere. A total of forty-

three interments have occurred since 2007, including three in 2023.

**Twenty** additional Olivet family members have now pre-planned their interment here. Arranging interment is a simple procedure for those considering this beautiful life memorial. Brochures with full details are available near the church office entrance or may be requested directly from the office.

The garden provides a beautifully landscaped, peaceful, private, and quiet place for remembrance, prayer, and meditation. 2023 saw revised landscaping work done throughout the garden, including stone added to the front area that approaches the Sanctuary doors. The curved mural wall had its capstone re-caulked this year, and professional repair was completed on the inner garden facing mural, which had several tiles come loose this past winter.

2023 Trustees: John Holshoe (chairperson), Karen Keefer (secretary), Helene Lyon (financial secretary), Ann Hansen, Mike Linehan and Donna Mens. Sandy Husman continues to assist as an ex-officio member and design chairperson. Pastor Nathan Tuff serves as spiritual advisor and Ed Rupley remains the Garden archivist.

**Property Team:** We continue to make progress on sprucing up our spaces. This year we repaired/replaced the exterior doors and painted the outsides and insides of all of the exterior doors (16 of them!). The doors exiting the sanctuary going to the sacristy and hallway on the East side were painted along with the woodwork. The interior wall just to the side of the office door was repaired and painted in preparation for new signage. We also refreshed the small garden by the mailbox (the door exiting towards the laundromat), removing old bushes, planting two new bushes and grass. Weed control is an ongoing project with some dedicated people tackling the tough weeds on an ongoing basis. One of our newer members volunteered to paint the church bell, which sits in the courtyard just outside the office entrance. The brightened bell enhances the courtyard, which contains red roses and burning bushes. Shrubs have been trimmed, which is done for both aesthetic reasons and security reasons. Many hands have helped with these projects. This spring, we will target another garden or two for refreshing as well as continue to spruce up areas with paint.

We can always use additional help. If you have a few hours to spare, we have a job for you. Contact Tina Johnson, Bob Mens, Mike Cook, or Shannon Walker.

### **Accomplished Projects - 2023 At a Glance**

#### **Phones, Communication and Computers:**

- The 2022 expanded computer network system set us up to move forward with a new Wi-fi based phone system. After searching for different providers, we have chosen to work with Comm-Core, a Maumee based company. Having worked with their phone systems in the past, Tyler knew that they are very simple and make the migration process very easy. At the time of this writing, all migration documentation has been signed, phones have been installed, and we are only pending the cutover to the new phone system. The cost of this was only \$1600 and a budgeted expense for 2023.
- New fiber cable has been purchased and needs to be run through the church for future bandwidth needs.
- Habitec security system expanded to cell service earlier this year-providing much more efficient coverage.
- Tyler's propensity to save money but get better coverage also led to signing up for Buckeye Broadbands's offer for their new fiber optic service. Coverage for 12 months at only \$30 per month vs. \$140.
- We love the addition of the three TVs at our entrances running digital messages promoting and informing of our ministries and events. The first system, Xibo, served us well for about six months (at no cost) and then became very problematic. After much research, a system called Yodeck was purchased as a cloud-based solution. This new system was extremely simple to set up and will not need the same level of management that Xibo did. The three TVs were converted to the new system in late 2023. The cost of Yodeck is under \$200 per year. Let's just say: this is a case where you get what you pay for! We thank staff member, Patty Stammler, for the beautiful messages she creates weekly to showcase Olivet's ministries to all.
- The computers at Olivet received a major upgrade this year. All computers were upgraded from a standard hard drive (HDD) to a solid state drive (SSD). These SSDs make the computers significantly faster for

both day-to-day activities and also during the startup process. The SSDs were donated to Olivet.

- A slightly used laptop was donated and set up using enterprise grade features given to Olivet for free from Microsoft. This includes a free backup option for the data on the computer and free enterprise grade anti-virus. This newer laptop replaces an old computer and is essential to our Wednesday food programs.

### **Lighting:**

- There are only a few storage rooms that still need LED lighting. Tyler continues to research appropriate replacement LED's for the Christian Life Center.

Atrium lighting conversion remains a bit expensive and not worth replacing at this time. Lights in the Atrium are rarely used because skylights bring in plenty of light during the day.

A must to acknowledge, even though it was a 2022 accomplishment, are the GENIUS sanctuary lighting controls! VERY SIMPLE BUTTONS work the lights located conveniently in three places: 1. near the original location on the wood cabinet; 2. in the choir loft, and; 3. in the stairway leading from the office. It's exciting every time they are used. Thanks again, Tyler & Michael.

### **Christian Life Center Worship/Music:**

- A new digital drum kit was acquired thanks to an anonymous donor. \$1500.
- The Power Point sharing system was changed to Next Cloud
- Speaker mounts and cables for power were planned and purchased (\$1600) to allow the speakers to be suspended above the stage. They will be installed when they arrive.

### **Other projects:**

- Roofing repairs on our roof (it's 17 years old).
- One of our very tall and unhealthy Cottonwood trees on the west side began to feel threatened by high winds. Upon quickly getting an estimate, it was determined that it was already split at its base and considered an emergency. The tree was taken down the next day, especially given its location on Olivet's border so close to the neighboring car dealership. Cost: \$5,000.
- In December, 2022 the attic pipes burst. The church's insurance covered most of the repairs/labor. Ceilings were replaced from east to west ends of the main hallway, including one office ceiling tile; pipes and attic insulation were replaced. Also covered was the destroyed/water logged Fire Panel located in the nearby janitor closet. Although restoration of the building items first listed took about three months due to work time being limited by OCNS school day schedule, the Fire Panel replacement was delayed by the Lucas County regulators/Fire Inspectors and finally approved in early November. The Fire Panel was completed and inspected FINALLY in early December. The invoice for \$ 15,080 was paid on Dec. 22. The final insurance check is due soon for the amount held back pending proof that completion/invoice was paid.
- New folder equipment for office: Our 18 year-old folder required service this fall. A partial repair helped but its complete demise was in November. We managed to hand-fold all December bulletins and newsletters while we researched a replacement. This wonderful tool folds all sizes of paper at lightning speed as did our former machine, so it was a must to replace. We received our new one Jan. 15 at a cost of \$1,700, well spent. Thanks for your research and ordering of it, Chrisann. Happy Day for Mary and all of us.



### Planned and Budgeted for 2024:

New restroom floors for the main school hallway restrooms. BADLY NEEDED! Approximately \$3,000.

### Wish List for the Future: (not budgeted)

- Computer upgrades will be necessary before October, 2025. \$300 for each of seven computers.
- Piano for the CLC: \$5,000. Keys experiencing trouble on 2017 current piano.
- New beltpack microphones for the Sanctuary - \$2300. An additional wireless handheld mic would be handy for some events. Current mics are all functioning.
- Speakers for the CLC: Step 1 accomplished with speaker mounts purchased. Step 2 - new speakers, \$3,000. Matching subs for speakers - \$2,000.
- Permanently mounted projector in the Sanctuary - \$2,000-\$4,000.
- A TEAMS meeting room — completely set up/interactive room for meetings—\$4,000. Without using individual devices.
- New roof for entire building. Estimated use left: 5-7 years. CLC roof installed 2006. Original East-West roof was replaced in 2007.
- New parking lot pavement: Several areas have been only resurfaced. The entire lot will need replacement. Estimated \$100,000.
- Olivet's organ - This fully electronic organ was installed in 1984 and is starting to show its age. A meeting was held with an Allen Organ representative and the local dealer representative from Craig's Pianos. From this meeting, it was determined that a brand new console and speakers for the sanctuary would cost around \$200,000 to \$250,000. The organ is still supported by service and parts if needed.

It bears repeating year to year that **we owe Tyler Martin a debt of gratitude** for all of his collaboration to tackle so many tasks. His propensity to research, analyze and make recommendations are integral to our operations at Olivet. His very detailed report is available in the church office and is submitted to Council. Excerpts of it are contained within my report on pages 19-20.

Thanks to the many folks mentioned and not mentioned in the pages of this Annual Report. You all make Olivet what we are - a caring, wonderful group of souls praising God through our daily work together.

I love sharing the joys and the challenges for these 20 years of my rewarding ministry among YOU ALL !

I humbly thank you for your tribute last month and the kind sentiments in cards and the beautiful handblown glass pieces presented by Pr. Nate. Your love was overwhelming, expressed after that awesome choir Cantata that Skip and I were privileged to attend.

♡ Shannon

We have the most devoted staff.

Check out the longevity of our wonderful team, led unwaveringly by Pr. Nate who, together with Pr. Melissa, offer such a balanced pastoral team. Their multitude of gifts complement each other beautifully.

**Pastoral Team**

Nathan J. Tuff, Lead Pastor (2014)  
pastornate@olivetsylvania.org

Melissa Micham, Associate Pastor (2016)  
pastormelissa@olivetsylvania.org

Rebecca Cress, Director of Children's, Youth  
and Family Ministry (2021)  
rcress@olivetsylvania.org

**Music Staff**

Dr. Stephen Hodge, Adult Choir Director  
(1991)  
stevehodge7464@gmail.com  
Part-time salary

Carol Miller, Handbells Director (1991)  
carolamiller5@hotmail.com  
Part-time salary

Ashley (Kohn) Lovegood,  
Praise Band Director (2020)  
ashleyatolivet@gmail.com  
Part-time salary

Sarah Lewis, Organist/Accompanist (2022)  
sapianohymn@gmail.com (newer address)  
Part-time salary

**Administrative/Building Staff**

Shannon Walker, Director of Operations  
(2003)  
operations@olivetsylvania.org  
Full-time salary

Chrisann Shaner, Membership Coordinator  
(2005)  
membership@olivetsylvania.org  
Part-time, 20 hrs./wk.

Patty Stammler, Communications Specialist  
(2009)  
communications@olivetsylvania.org  
Part-time, 10 hrs./wk.

Mike Vince, Financial Secretary (2001)  
kvince@bex.net Part-time salary

Andrea Laws, Day Custodian (2009)  
Part-time, 20 hrs./wk.

John Casper,  
Christian Life Center Custodian (2006)  
Part-time, 12 hrs/wk.

**Sunday Nursery Staff**

Mary Glover, Part-time, 3 hrs./wk.



HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME 2024 PLANNED EVENTS

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER, FEBRUARY 13  
INCLUDING BILL GENSON'S DIXIELAND STYLE MUSIC

ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

WOMEN'S RETREAT, MARCH 2 & 3

OLIVET CHOIR CANTATA, MARCH 17

PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 24

EASTER, MARCH 31

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL—JUNE 17-21

RUMMAGE SALE—HOPEFUL FOR LATE JULY

AND MANY MORE TO COME !!





# 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 signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

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“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

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Through your generosity, God is at work across the ELCA. A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice. Read stories and learn more at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://elca.org/SOFIA).



